urban revitalization

the palmer springs district

colorado springs, colorado

student | joel schiffli

urban revitalization

undergraduate landscape architecture thesis

spring 2010
THE PALMER SPRINGS DISTRICT
An Urban Revitalization Development
Colorado Springs, Colorado

A Comprehensive Project Report

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LA 404 Comprehensive Project

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JPSDESIGNS
THE PALMER SPRINGS DISTRICT

Located within Colorado Springs, Colorado and branded as the Palmer Springs District, this project reveals the urban revitalization design of a downtown district and how it can be restored by re-establishing the vitality and economic health of the city. A challenge to urban revitalization becomes the impact it has on the social, environmental, and economic health of the city. In response to this challenge, this project explores a mixed-use development, a strategy based on the principle of allowing more than one type of use within a building or a set of buildings. It also proposes the redevelopment and relocation of a minor league baseball park and also the redevelopment of a historic trolley route that will bring visitors to and from the Palmer Springs District.

Two primary phases constitute the study for this comprehensive project. The first introduces and analyzes the principles of mixed-use developments. This phase also highlights some of the design opportunities that can grow from this type of strategy and evaluates how effectively mixed-used development principles work in other cities. Evaluations of case studies have been taken into consideration for the design and development of the Palmer Springs District. These case studies helped establish goals and objectives to drive the design of the master plan.

The second phase explores how urban revitalization and mixed-use development principles can be applied to the City of Colorado Springs for future use and demonstrates how one site within the city can serve as a catalyst for future developments. This phase consists of the selection of a particular site within the downtown area, researching the existing contextual features and historical background of the site. This information provides the foundation for design guidelines that will take part within the master planning process. The master plan is based on primary goals such as connectivity, economic gain, and conserving natural environments. The revitalization of this downtown area will create a safe and unique urban mixed-use district development and entertainment space, which will serve both as an origin and a destination.
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COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

With over 300 days of sunshine throughout the year, Colorado Springs, Colorado is home to more than 50 exciting and unique attractions and has an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities everywhere you look. Colorado Springs is Colorado’s second largest city with a population close to 600,000, which has evolved over the decades into a charming vibrant city. Colorado Springs has extensive parks and open spaces with trails that wind through magnificent rock formations and shady mountain forests. Colorado Springs is known for its rich and diverse cultural activities.

The purpose of this urban revitalization project is to revitalize existing developments and re-establish the vitality and economic health of the downtown by reconnecting the residents to the heart of their community which is the downtown. This project explored why urban sprawl has affected the decline of neighborhoods and developments within the downtown area and how it can be changed to spark new vitality within the center of a downtown. The design is based on connectivity and conserving natural environments that will create a safe and unique urban mixed-use district and entertainment space, which will serve both as an origin and a destination.

The revitalization of this downtown area has increased the density and re-established the land uses to their fullest potential. The planning and design of this urban revitalization project enables a seamless transition between single-family residential to townhomes to mixed-use buildings. The design also allows for great connections regionally with accesss to Pike’s Peak Greenway through the Midland Trail. Also, the redevelopment of this area allows for a greater connection between Downtown Colorado Springs and Old Colorado City. The design also implements the relocation of Sky Sox Stadium, which is the minor league baseball team in Colorado Springs, to the downtown area to help improve the economic health of the city.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The growth of urban sprawl has had a major impact on the economic growth and stability of large cities that seek the social interaction of the residents and visitors within downtown districts. The connection of residents and visitors from historic downtown districts and new downtown districts is important in the stability of these large cities. These downtown districts are the hub and heart of the surrounding community that must be revitalized to provide a historic mark for the youth and generations of the future. This review of literature provides information on ways to revitalize and redevelop downtowns, specifically urban spaces, urban parks and recreation uses and downtown redevelopments.

Importance of Revitalized Downtowns

The ingredients of a typical city such as open park space, entertainment venues, commercial/retail businesses, walkability, etc., are most likely located within the downtown, the heart of the city. Many older cities or metropolitan areas have lost their downtown areas due to urban sprawl. The health of a downtown is an important indicator of the economic health of the entire metropolitan community, affecting everything from property values in surrounding locations to a community’s ability to attract investors to its economy (Moe 180). Downtowns need to be revitalized if they are left abandoned or under-utilized to help boost the economic health for their community. Downtowns usually consist of family-oriented businesses which actually will help the local economy through their profits. Abandoned buildings within historic downtowns can be important for smaller new businesses, due to the possibility of low costs for rent.

Increasing density at the heart of the community provides cities with a more stable livable atmosphere (Platt 204). The idea of increasing the density from the center of the city rather than the outer areas has a greater impact on the economic health as well as the social interaction of the community for its residents.

There are many ways in which cities and towns can be revitalized to increase the density and one way is by providing mixed-use developments which has been implemented within the Palmer Springs District. By having an influx in pedestrian activity and interaction within downtown districts, it will spark the economic gain and help cities prosper rather than decline.

Downtowns bring together the varied mix of economic, civic, and social functions (Schmitz 48). They are places that bring the residents and visitors together in one place to meet and interact. Downtowns are the heart and soul of the metropolis. They are also the keystone that keeps the whole city in place (Moe 180). Restoring these historic districts provides a great asset to the downtowns which they cannot afford to waste or lose.

Identity

Designing and implementing methods such as walkability, streetscapes, and other street elements strengthens the identity of a downtown through the residents and visitors interaction. The basic building blocks that make up these elements, or patterns, can be combined to reflect and create the unique character of a downtown area. Elements such as districts, nodes, landmarks, and edges all make up these building blocks (Platt 29). Historic downtown main streets make up a district and edges can be physical boundaries such as waterfronts or highways. Also, identity plays an important role in the redevelopment of urban spaces. Identity will affect how people perceive a particular urban space as they venture through the downtown. Identity can comprise of almost anything that sparks the attention of a resident or visitor. A mixed-use development or pedestrian mall may be two ways of providing a downtown district with a memorable identity (Urban Land Institute 11). These two types of developments can provide great social networking for residents and visitors within downtown districts. By implementing these two types of developments within the Palmer Springs District, along with the character of the city, the aesthetic and social quality of the area increases through the eyes of the residents and visitors.
Mixed-Use Developments

The concept of place making, providing the creation of active and pedestrian-friendly urban environments through effective and efficient design has become a marketable strategy that both public and private sectors embrace through mixed-use developments (Urban Land Institute 24). By providing mixed-use zoning within downtown areas, cities can build more community-and pedestrian-oriented centers where pedestrians can live, work, and shop in one place. Utilizing spaces to their fullest potential will boost the socioeconomic outlook on downtown districts. In the planning stages of mixed-use developments, pedestrian circulation and orientation are two critical elements, without these two mixed-use developments will not achieve a sense of place. Colorado Springs, Colorado has adopted a comprehensive plan in 2001 that emphasizes the development of downtown centers that mix different uses. The city is changing their regulations to develop these mixed-use centers and also updating elements of existing zone districts. As stated by city staff and Clarion Associates:

“There is very little in the current zoning and subdivision codes to address mixed-use development, and some existing regulations may actually hamstring and discourage mixed-uses. Ultimately, a new set of zoning development and design standards and guidelines will be needed to guide and manage future mixed-use development in Colorado Springs (ULI 145).”

When revitalizing these urban downtown spaces, the designer must recognize the cultural and age group that will interact in activities within these sites. Urban spaces have to be multi-generational spaces, where children, adults, and grandparents can all interact together. Recognizing the historic value of a downtown can be very important in any design. Preserving the unique and fragile identity of historic buildings can be utilized in the making of mixed-use developments. There are many examples of mixed-use development projects. Mizner Park in Boca Raton, Florida is one mixed-use development that has a two block long main street with retail space and a linear park that spans the middle of the street within its town center. Residential resides over the retail space along one side of the street while along the other side office space occupies the space above the retail space (ULI 8). This is a great example of a redevelopment that has been successful in being the heart of the downtown for the city of Boca Raton. This case study can become a catalyst for future developments in other cities that are seeking the pedestrian-oriented places that mixed-use developments bring to a downtown.

Design Principles

One of the biggest growth sectors in American downtowns appears to be entertainment. A key design possibility would be the development of a baseball park that is built within the entertainment district of a downtown that provides a great amount of public interaction and economic gain for a city. One prime example would be Coors Field in Denver, Colorado. Instead of building the park in a remote location outside of the city or along an interstate highway, the city centered the park downtown, at the very edge of Lower Downtown. This provided easy access and walking distance to of fices, restaurants, and cultural attractions on an accessible site (Moe 190). The success of the location of the ball park being close to these attractions gained the attention of city officials who decided to provide other public improvements that consisted of district streetscapes and restoration of prominent landmarks in the downtown area. Providing an entertainment venue such as a baseball park in the heart of the downtown in Colorado Springs, rather than on the outskirts of the city, pedestrians will become closer to public venues, entertainment, restaurants, offices, and downtown life.

A key element in the revitalization of any downtown district would be the development or redevelopment of urban parks. As stated in The Humane Metropolis by Rutherford Platt, within densely populated areas, parks are perceived to be an essential part of the quality of life (Platt 61). These spaces are vital for the ecological health of urban environments. They provide wildlife habitats and cooling of the urban heat island within these downtown districts.
An Urban Revitalization Project

The reasons for declination of downtown districts need to be recognized by the designers and planners before they revitalize and redevelop these downtown spaces. If designers are able to recognize these past mistakes such as the affects urban sprawl has had on the growth of downtowns, then there is no reason for these downtowns to become abandoned in the future and run into the same problems as they did before in the past.

Implementing the design principles and methods such as mixed-use developments, urban parks, walkability, and streetscape design are crucial in the redevelopment of downtowns (Banerjee 470). Downtowns provide residents and visitors with a quality of life that makes them want to return. The users of these downtown spaces need to be able to relate to these elements and spaces, otherwise they may not appreciate them. Downtown districts need to promote a healthier and vibrant lifestyle for their current and future users to extend the quality of life for the heart of the city.

Providing an urban park that can become an extension of the existing park along I-25 in Colorado Springs can provide pedestrians with a more nature-driven corridor between downtown districts. Urban parks also promote social networking for the community, while also providing the opportunity for recreational uses for urban residents.

Another key element of any downtown revitalization project would be taking into consideration the walkability of the spaces. Within downtown districts, residents and visitors main mode of transportation from entertainment venues, offices, restaurants, and open spaces is walking. The use of walkability supports a healthier lifestyle by promoting physical activity and also reduces the carbon footprint from automobiles on our environment (Schmitz 22). There is less desire and motivation from residents and visitors to walk or ride bicycles if there is no downtown spaces to commute to.

Streetscapes play an important role in the revitalization of downtown spaces. The aesthetic and social quality of a downtown can be improved through the layout of the streets and the streetscape elements that are provided. Streetscapes promote pedestrian safety, healthier lifestyles through walkability, and social gathering. Without streetscape design, there would simply be concrete or asphalt guiding the path for users. Streetscapes can provide a great amount of detail with the use of vegetation, forms, and colors that make up the paths and spaces for users. These details all work together to create a comfortable environment while inviting pedestrians to explore an area and allow them to enjoy the setting their in (ULI 181). When all these elements combine they convey an image of a downtown in which residents take pride in.
PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study examines the potential for an urban revitalization project to re-establish the vitality and economic health of a downtown by reconnecting two distinct downtown districts of Colorado Springs and its residents through the use of a mixed-use development and entertainment venues.

Sub-problems

- Analyze the importance of revitalized downtowns within large cities.
- Determine how identity affects the character of downtown districts.
- Analyze how mixed-use developments create vibrant pedestrian-oriented community and neighborhood centers.
- Develop core design principles for the design of urban spaces to provide community interaction between downtown districts.
- Analyze the information researched to develop an urban revitalization project for the city of Colorado Springs in Colorado.

PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

This project provides a vision for the revitalization of a downtown district in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The mixed-use development within this project becomes a catalyst for future revisions to city regulations and land uses to further develop the comprehensive plan for the City of Colorado Springs. The provisions set forth within the proposal will establish background information and case studies on design guidelines that can be utilized in future developments. It re-establishes the streets as the principal public space of community and connectivity between districts.

Also, it provides connections between existing greenways and parks linking the public spaces and community. The Palmer Springs District develops an economically viable connection between districts within the heart of the city. Providing this connection between the two downtown districts enables an integration of public art into Old Colorado City. Currently public art sculptures are only found within downtown Colorado Springs. The orientation of the urban revitalization project, with emphasis on the baseball park, provides majestic views of Pike’s Peak and the Front Range Mountains. Taking advantage of natural landscapes is a key design element in the development and design of pedestrian-oriented places.
PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

The project site is located within the central downtown area of Colorado Springs, Colorado. The site has been utilized in recent years as a light industrial to commercial land use district. A lot of the existing buildings have been abandoned due to the economic recession. One of the main businesses still located within the project site is an automobile junkyard. The east side of the project site has I-25 which is the main interstate that splits Colorado Springs in half. Fountain Creek is located along the southern end of the property and can be used for water-runoff from the site. Another issue with the project site is developing the land and increasing the density to its fullest potential to benefit economic gains for the City of Colorado Springs. The client for this urban revitalization project is the City of Colorado Springs. The users for this newly developed district are the surrounding community and visitors to this vibrant downtown.

Site Goals and Objectives

• Goal: Enhance connectivity within the downtown of Colorado Springs.
  o Objective: Utilize existing trail systems for connections between different downtown districts.
  o Objective: Provide urban vegetation connections throughout the site along sidewalks, streets, and Fountain Creek.
  o Objective: Reduce the use of vehicular transportation through the downtown district by enhancing pedestrian friendly streets.
• Goal: Redevelop existing buildings into mixed-use developments.
  o Objective: Utilize residential and commercial buildings into one development to provide better connections between users.
  o Objective: Provide urban spaces and entertainment venues for users within the mixed-use development and surrounding area.
  o Objective: Provide pedestrian promenades or malls that enhance safety and create seamless transitions within the built environment.
• Goal: Increase and diversify the economic health within the downtown.
  o Objective: Sustain or enhance cultural, recreational, and educational experiences and uses within the community.
  o Objective: Provide spaces for community interaction for networking, farmer’s markets, and festivals.
  o Objective: Enhance existing buildings for reinvestments opportunities.
PROGRAM

This comprehensive project reveals the potential for an urban revitalization design of a selected downtown area and how it can be restored by re-establishing the vitality and economic health of the city. The design and planning for this project provides a mixed-use urban district that provides the relocation of a minor league baseball stadium, a seamless transition of residential housing to mixed-use developments, and a connection between downtown Colorado Springs to Old Colorado City. This project will serve as a catalyst for future mixed-use developments in the City of Colorado Springs.

Hypotheses

• The revitalization of this 45-acre site in downtown Colorado Springs, Colorado depends upon both revitalizing and preserving community assets within the inner core of the city.

• The design and planning of the area builds upon the present identity of the city and provide for a better sense of place.

• The design of a new baseball park with urban park space provides the community with more entertainment and recreational uses.

• The design of the mixed-use development becomes a catalyst for future developments in the downtown area.

• The design of this entertainment district provides economic benefits for the City of Colorado Springs through the revenues earned from the mixed-use developments and new baseball park.
Delimitations

- This study is limited to redeveloping the parcel of land in between Old Colorado City and downtown Colorado Springs, not suburban or neighborhood areas.

- This study does not consider research that deals specifically with redevelopment of single-use areas.

- This study does not include the use of public meetings and charrettes to build a vision for the community.

- The design does not look at the different types of mechanical and building systems within a mixed-use development.

- This revitalization project does not include sources of funding.

- This study does not deal with improvements to building façades.

Assumptions

- The design implemented provides a variety of uses on the site, such as residential, commercial, and entertainment.

- The design and planning of the urban park space provides users with recreational opportunities.

- The design and planning of the entertainment district reconnects residents to the heart of their community.

- The design and planning incorporates redeveloped parking uses for the community.

- The design revitalization for the downtown helps to reestablish the urban core of the city.

DESIGN PROCESS/METHODOLOGY

To further develop information for this comprehensive project, several design professionals in the Colorado Springs area were contacted and interviews were conducted with them, either by email or on the phone. Several design professionals have worked on projects that are located near this project site that have provided vital information on the history and land use of the project site. These professionals are from the companies N.E.S. Inc. and Aqua Engineering. After talking with these professionals, they provided a few more names of individuals who were able to offer more information about the area surrounding my project site. Furthermore, contact was made to the city planner and city landscape architect, and economic development commission. The reason for contacting these individuals was to gain more insight about the city’s needs, desires, and expectations for the redevelopment of this light industrial area. Further guidance was taken into consideration by having the possibility of interviewing additional firms or individuals that have developed the ball parks for Coors Field in Denver, Colorado, Victory Field in Indianapolis, Indiana, and also Harrison Square in Fort Wayne, Indiana. These firms or individuals become great sources due to their resources used on the design and planning of these ball parks.

Primary data was mostly used for this project. In meeting with the city planner and individual firms, multiple land use plans, existing site topography maps, etc. were retrieved to further develop a cohesive design plan for the city. The interviews or email correspondence is primary data. Personal site photographs, sketches, and other drawings are perceived to be primary data as well.

Also, through site visits and additional data from professional colleagues, data was analyzed for the Colorado Springs site, including the surrounding context, history of the area, building types, land use, activity surrounding the site, and connections between the downtown areas. Data such as utilizing site
photographs, graphics, shorthand notes and copied emails/interviews were documented for future use. This data collection helped to analyze a series of existing site overlays developed by myself that have shown building types, green space, locations of parking lots, key elements and landmarks, and alternatives for the various land uses.

**Location/ Vicinity Map/ Site Context**

The project site is located on the west side of I-25 and Pike’s Peak Greenway. It is located between Old Colorado City and Downtown Colorado Springs, which makes this a unique project site for an urban revitalization development. The selection of the site was due to its proximity to the two downtown districts and proximity to the surrounding community. The site is easily accessible from I-25 and the Pike’s Peak Greenway. From downtown Colorado Springs, the walking distance is roughly 1-mile in length and roughly a 15 minute walk. America the Beautiful Park is also located on the east side of I-25 and provides a great connection between the two sites along the Midland Trail.

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**Site Inventory**

The project site is 45 acres in size and is located on an underutilized piece of land that is centrally located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The existing land uses for the site consist of single-family residential, commercial, and light industrial which you will see on the land use plan to the right. The existing circulation through the site will be utilized with the redevelopment as well as the relocation of some streets or uses such as pedestrian only access. Most of the existing vegetation is densely populated on the southern end of the site where Fountain Creek is situated. There are also pockets of vegetation within the residential area. The existing hydrology within the site is Fountain Creek which consumes most if not all of the project site’s water run-off. The figure ground study shows the amount of underutilized land that will be taken into consideration. The idea is to increase the density to get the maximum allowance on land use out of this downtown area. The existing structures can be utilized when possible to keep some of the existing character of the site.

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*Fig. 1.1 - Vicinity Map

Fig. 1.2 - Figure Ground Study

Fig. 1.3 - Land Use Plan*
Site Analysis

The existing project site has great opportunities for connecting Old Colorado City and Downtown Colorado Springs together. The design of this urban revitalization district will promote a pedestrian-friendly environment through the design of mixed-use buildings and Baseball Park for entertainment purposes. The historic character of either downtown area can be implemented within the design of the buildings and also designing off of the existing grid that is established within the downtown area. There is a great opportunity for re-implementing the historic trolley route along Colorado Avenue. This trolley route will serve as a transportation alternative for visitors and residents to and from the three downtown districts. Also, providing a healthy lifestyle is always a plus when designing a new mixed-use development for the people of the community. Connecting and rerouting Midland Trail with America the Beautiful Park will help implement this healthy lifestyle and improve the walkability throughout the downtown.

On another note, there are some constraints within the design of this new mixed-use development district that may be of concern. First being I-25 which becomes a noise barrier and an eyesore for visitors to the site. I-25 can be great in many ways due to the fact of placing the Baseball Park near it to boost its marketability. But in most cases it becomes a noise barrier which could be reduced by increasing vegetation along the west side of the interstate. This would also decrease the visibility for visitors and provide them greater views of the mountains. Another concern would be Fountain Creek along the southern edge of the project site. Design and planning of the mixed-use development will have to be designed in a way as to not disturb the creek in any way such as soil erosion and water pollution. The site does slope towards Fountain Creek which is a great attribute for all of the site and building water-runoff. Lastly, the orientation of the Baseball Park will have to be taken into consideration due to the sun angles that lay upon the field during the day. The common rule for orientations of Baseball Parks is to orient the park so the sun sets over the third base line and shines into right field where most balls are not hit too.
Case Studies

Coors Field: Denver, Colorado

Coors Field is located in the lower downtown area of Denver, Colorado. It is located near an interstate that runs through Denver. The baseball park has a unique sculpture that is located at the entry of the park that sets the ball park apart from other fields. The design of the stadium utilizes hardscape materials that tie different baseball themes into the ball park. A unique design aspect that was implemented into the design of the baseball park aligns its entries to the existing street grids. Another great aspect of the ball park is it reflects the historic character of the surrounding downtown district.

Also, the stadium developed a strong axial promenade to lead pedestrian traffic towards the stadium and away from the highway. One of the most important key points to take away from this case study would be the use of site details to reflect the historical character of the surrounding downtown.

Camden Yards: Baltimore, Maryland

Located in downtown Baltimore near the Inner Harbor, the 85-acre site was planned to make strong connections to the existing city fabric. The character of the site makes a seamless transition from the urban character of Camden Street to the downtown at the north end. The ball park has traditional qualities of an urban ballpark, with building edges located parallel to existing streets. The exterior materials and details blend the ball park into its contextual surroundings. The outfield opens up to a grand entry from the street with a meticulously designed plaza that allows for an ample gathering space before and during game play.

Also, a unique warehouse was renovated for the Orioles office space and it serves as a dramatic signature backdrop for the outfield. One of the most important key points to take away from this case study is the use of a dramatic signature backdrop such as the mountains.
Santana Row: San Jose, California

Santana Row is a mixed-use development located within San Jose, California and comprises of 445,000 SF of main street retail and entertainment spaces. The project was a redevelopment of a shopping center which also created new street systems. One of the greatest aspects of this project was its emphasis on pedestrian-friendly retail streets as a fundamental organizing element. The parking garages located on-site utilized residential units on their higher floors or increasing the density of the development. One of the most important key points to take away from this case study is creating new street systems if necessary for better circulation through the mixed-use development and the use of shared use parking garages.

Silver Spring Redevelopment: Silver Spring, Maryland

Silver Spring Redevelopment is an arts and entertainment center located in the downtown area of Silver Spring, Maryland. The mixed-use development has 400,000 SF of retail space and over 1,200 residential units. The site also provides streetscape and transit developments with a pedestrian-friendly environment for its visitors and residents. The downtown development was also designated a State of Maryland Enterprise Zone. This downtown development signifies the revitalization of a downtown area to help revitalize their economic health. The project also provides ample plaza spaces for community gatherings, festivals, and farmer’s markets. One of the most important key points to take away from this case study is to provide a pedestrian-friendly environment throughout the whole project site for the community of Colorado Springs and its visitors.
Design Concepts

Design Concept 1: Palmer Springs District

The first design concept located the ball park in the south eastern end of the project site with the mixed-use development building off of the outfield line up to the north. The design implements the theme of the historic character of the surrounding downtown districts. It also develops a main entry into the ball park with a unique sculpture that sets the district apart from others. The development to the northwestern part of the site increases the density of the residential units. Midland Trail has been renovated to provide a new trail system route on the outer rim of the ball park outfield as well.

Design Concept 2: Palmer Springs District

The second design concept emphasizes the location of the baseball park in the northwestern part of the project site close to the intersection of Colorado Avenue and 8th Street. This location resembles such baseball parks as Victory Field in Indiana and Camden Yards in Baltimore. It also allows for great lawn seating in the outfield area. The concept concentrates the entry to the south end of the baseball park like most ball parks do, along with a sculpture or signature backdrop other than the mountains. The mixed-use development is concentrated to the east of the baseball park and provides pedestrian-friendly environments and walkability. The residential development is located on the southern end of the project site which allows for easier access to the adjacent America the Beautiful Park and Midland Trail.
Design Concept 3: Palmer Springs District

The third concept has a close resemblance of baseball parks being located within a densely populated downtown experience. The mixed-use developments are situated along the outer proximity of the baseball park allowing for retail/commercial on the first floor, office space on the second floor, and residential units on the third floor. This orientation would allow for great rooftop viewing areas for baseball games. The residential units on the northwestern part of the project site have been increased in density to allow for a more seamless transition from the surrounding developments. This design concept really emphasizes the pedestrian-friendly environment with encouraging walkability while also reducing the dependency of the automobile.

Master Plan: Palmer Springs District

The master plan emphasizes key elements and design from each of the previous design concepts. The master plan for the Palmer Springs District provides a seamless transition of development from single-family homes to townhomes on the western part of the project site to mixed-use development and baseball park towards the east. The layout and building structures resemble the historical character that is seen in Downtown Colorado Springs and in Old Colorado City.

The design plan has located the baseball park to the south eastern part of the project site to enable ample development of the mixed-uses and residential densities. It also enables a continuation or connection to the adjacent America the Beautiful Park on the eastern side of I-25. The baseball park is also below grade to allow for ample views along the pedestrian corridors and Midland Trail. Midland Trail has been routed to go along the southern eastern part of the project site along Fountain Creek. There are two main streets that bring residents and visitors into the site. The historic trolley route system has been incorporated into the design and planning of this urban revitalization project. The trolley route has access along both main street corridors and also along Colorado Avenue to the north side of the site.

There is also a grand entry into the baseball park from the outfield which resembles different hardscape materials and the historic urban fabric of the downtown. This gateway provides a multi-level gathering space with a water feature that is illuminated from above. The design of this urban revitalization project has the possibility of enhancing the downtown of Colorado Springs while also restoring the vitality and economic health of the city.
Fig. 3.4 - Preliminary Master Plan

Fig. 3.5 - Revised Preliminary Master Plan

Fig. 3.6 - Final Master Plan

NOT TO SCALE
7th Street Gateway

The 7th Street Gateway is the main entry into the Palmer Springs District and into the Sky Sox Stadium. 7th Street is a boulevarded street that provides smaller mixed-use buildings along the street. These buildings provide restaurants, office spaces, and residential lofts within.

The stadium entry features a multi-level gathering space that has a water feature and a sculpture garden at the edge of the outfield line. The sculpture along the outfield line represents abstracted baseball bats built out of natural stone, metal, and glass. The idea for the abstract baseball bats is to provide players’ names and years played for the Sky Sox. The gathering space has arched lighting that luminates the water feature and entertainment spaces along the edge of the mixed-use buildings. The gateway entry is also oriented at an angle to provide great views into the baseball stadium outfield.

Fig. 4.1 - 7th Street Gateway Section

Fig. 4.2 - 7th Street Gateway Plan
Midland Fountain Gateway

The Midland Fountain Gateway is located on the east side of the project site, directly parallel with I-25. The gateway serves as a hub or connection between America the Beautiful Park on the east side of I-25 and the extension and revitalization of Midland Trail. The Midland Trail connects to Pike’s Peak Greenway which serves as a green corridor/spine through the center of Colorado Springs in Colorado. The Midland Fountain Gateway provides ample lawn seating for great views of the Front Range Mountains and Pike’s Peak. It also serves as a green lawn space during baseball games when the Sky Sox play throughout the season and for other entertainment venues throughout the year. A water feature is located at the base of the green lawn that serves as a playful, yet safe atmosphere for children. The center piece for the water feature is an abstract baseball that is made out of metal and glass. This is a great gathering space throughout the year for residents and visitors to the Palmer Springs District.

Fig. 4.3 - Oufield Corridor Section

Fig. 4.4 - Midland Fountain Gateway Section

Fig. 4.5 - Midland Fountain Gateway Plan
Midland Regional Trail

The Midland Trail connects to Pike’s Peak Greenway which serves as a green corridor/spine through the center of Colorado Springs in Colorado. The trail also connects to America the Beautiful Park which is located on the east side of I-25. The design and routing of the trail system implemented a more naturalistic journey through natural microclimates through the highly densified vegetation and also along Fountain Creek. The trail would allow for two very different paths for pedestrians. One path would allow for access into the mixed-use urban district, where the other would allow for a more environmental friendly path through woodlands.
The perspective above demonstrates the relationship between the mixed-use developments along 7th Street. This street is utilized as one of two main streets entering/exiting the Palmer Springs District. The street also provides the revitalization of an old historic trolley route that once was a great transportation mode for residents and visitors in the downtown area of Colorado Springs. The street has been designed as a boulevard that also provides for great pedestrian connections throughout the site. The bottom perspective shows a stadium perspective of the baseball park outfield and the mountains in the background.
Construction Documents

Construction documents are an essential to the design and development of materials within projects. These are just a few of the many construction details that will help build this urban revitalization project for the City of Colorado Springs. The planter details help establish the guidelines for ample spacing for plantings. The concrete walks allow for precise design and building of sidewalks and trails. The baseball bat sculpture provides a variety of heights that display baseball players’ names and years played for the Sky Sox in Colorado Springs. The sculptures are built out of a variety of sandstone, metal, and other materials. The baseball sculpture that is located at the Midland Fountain Gateway is made out of glass and metal that reflects the historical character and surrounding textural features of the site.

Fig. 5.1 - Parking Lot Planter Detail

Fig. 5.2 - Typical Concrete Walk

Fig. 5.3 - Regional Trail Concrete Walk
Planting Plans

The 7th Street Planting Plan allows for ample shading with vibrant and meticulously planted planting beds. The planting beds underneath the Spring Snow Crabapples allow for low growing flowering perennials with a great contrast to the Crabapple Trees. The main planter bed in the center of the multi-level gathering space has a variety of coloring perennials and grasses ranging in a variety of sizes. The sculpture planting bed provides great colors that contrast well against the different stone and metal finishings on the baseball bat sculptures.

The Midland Fountain Gateway Planting Plan allows for vibrant colors that contrast against the variety of hardscape materials on the ground plane. Snow Spring Crabapples circle the outer rim of the green lawn space for ample shading and color. Throughout the whole project site is located a variety of Honeylocust and Autumn Blaze Maples. The use of color helps bring out the historical character and fabric of the buildings and the surrounding contexts.

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Fig. 5.6 - 7th Street Planting Plan

Fig. 5.7 - Midland Fountain Planting Plan
CLOSING REMARKS

With over 300 days of sunshine throughout the year, Colorado Springs, Colorado is home to more than 50 exciting and unique attractions and the Palmer Springs District adds another great attraction to the list. The Palmer Springs District urban revitalization design processes that were undergone will hopefully restore and re-establish the vitality and economic health of the city.

The design and planning for this project provides a mixed-use urban district that provides the relocation of a minor league baseball stadium, a seamless transition of residential housing to mixed-use developments, and a connection between downtown Colorado Springs to Old Colorado City. The baseball stadium is being relocated from the northeastern part of Colorado Springs to the center of the downtown district. Providing a more centralized baseball park will hopefully enhance the vitality of the downtown area and increase it’s economic health.

It also implements the historic trolley route back into the infrastructure of the city while also providing greater connections throughout the City of Colorado Springs. With this being accomplished, the hopes of the dependency of the automobile will decrease and there will be an increase in walkability and community interaction. Lastly, with the design of this urban mixed-use district, the hopes and dreams of the revitalized land will be able to serve as a catalyst for future mixed-use developments in the City of Colorado Springs.
APPENDIX A - DEFINITION OF TERMS

District:
- Medium to large sections of a community with a recognizable character of their own.

Urban Sprawl:
- Pattern of low-density development reaching into farms and open spaces at the edges of metropolitan areas.

Mixed-Use Development:
- Three or more significant revenue-producing uses (such as retail/entertainment, office, residential, hotel, and/or civic, cultural, recreation)

Urban Revitalization:
- Redevelopment or restoration of moderate to high-density buildings and urban land use in areas.

Community:
- Multi-cultural group of individuals interacting and living in a common location.

Identity:
- Physical patterns found through pedestrian’s experience in a given community.

Edges:
- Linear boundaries or breaks in the appearance of the community.

Nodes:
- Key places and strategic centers within the districts of the community, focal points of its activities.

Landmarks:
- Physical objects that provide external reference points.

Pedestrian Mall:
- An urban space which is confined between building facades and broken off from vehicular traffic.

Place-making:
- Creation of good public spaces that promote people’s health, happiness, and well-being.

Walkability:
- The extent to how friendly the built environment is to the presence of pedestrians.

Streetscape:
- Design elements at pedestrian scale along urban streets.
APPENDIX B – QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS/SURVEYS

City of Colorado Springs and/or Developers

- What do you think about proposing a new mixed-use development within this area of study as a catalyst for future mixed-use developments?

- Have there been studies in the past for other locations for the baseball park before the decision was made to develop the minor league baseball park where it is located currently?

- How have parks provided the city with a healthier lifestyle living for the resident’s of Colorado Springs?

- What is the current plan for mixed-use developments within the City of Colorado Springs?

- Does the city have any incentives to revitalizing the downtown area to renew the downtown lifestyle?

N.E.S. Inc. Design Team

- In your opinion, do you feel the revitalization of the area of study for a mixed-use development and entertainment venue (Baseball Park) will bring in more revenue for the city?

- What plans have been developed in this area in the past?

- Was there ever thought of revitalizing the regional trail that runs through the area of study?

- What makes an urban revitalization project work within an underutilized downtown district?

Questionnaire for Business Owners/Residents

- How long have you lived within this area of Colorado Springs?

- How has businesses developed over the years within this area?

- How often do you walk to Old Colorado City and Downtown Colorado Springs?

- How often do you utilize the regional trail that runs up into Manitou Springs?

- Do you feel the relocation of the Baseball Park to the downtown area would benefit the residents of Colorado Springs more?
APPENDIX C – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCERNS

Design Considerations

Drainage

- Enable drainage off site into Fountain Creek with sustainable design techniques for cleansing purposes to reduce soil erosion.

Homeless

- Design spaces for residents and visitors while taking into consideration the homeless population.

Building Scale

- Implement existing architectural materials into new mixed-use development structures and provide a standard for size and scale of building structures.

Creek

- Implement sustainable techniques as to not disrupt the existing flow of Fountain Creek.

Views

- Design with intention of providing miraculous views of the Front Range and Pike’s Peak.

Parking

- Provide easy access for residents and visitors into the site while decreasing the urban heat island effect.

Design Concerns

Wildlife

- Outdoor environments will be conserved and preserved as to not disrupt the daily activities of wildlife.

Location

- Area of study will hopefully be a prime location due to connections to surrounding features and will provide as a mixed-use development catalyst for future projects. Also be a place of refuge, a place of experience, and a place to meet.
REFERENCES (BIBLIOGRAPHY)


