

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: ENGAGING A COMMUNITY: A
RECREATION CENTER FOR BURRVILLE -
LINCOLN HEIGHTS, D.C.

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Masters of Architecture, 2005

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How can architecture foster relationships and create community among people who have been largely ignored by the design profession? How can architecture provide an alternative for neighborhoods dealing with violence, crime, poverty, drug dealing, and low attainment of education? The goal of this thesis is to create a recreation center that addresses the specific needs of the neighborhoods of Burrville and Lincoln Heights, located in North East, D.C., in order to provide a safe place for personal and interpersonal growth. The larger context of the site includes Watts Branch Park and Creek, which run North West and connect with the Anacostia River and park system. This location provides an opportunity to engage the landscape and highlight it as a strength of the neighborhoods. There is also the potential to make a larger connection between the neighborhoods and the city.

ENGAGING A COMMUNITY: A RECREATION CENTER FOR
BURRVILLE - LINCOLN HEIGHTS, D.C.

By

Traci Kiku Weems

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Architecture
2005

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Dedication

There are many people who have helped me through this long journey called thesis, I could not have completed the challenge without their support and encouragement. Thank you to my Lord and Savior for providing me with perseverance and strength and surrounding me with wonderful people along the way. Thank you to my friends and family who loved and supported me through the most stressful times and who never doubted that I would get it all done. Thank to my committee for challenging me and always asking the hard questions. Thank you to my fellow students who sacrificed their valuable time and energy at the end of the semester to help me with my final presentation.

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Introduction

‘Washington is, above all else, a city of neighborhoods, and the health of our neighborhoods is key to the future of our city’

Mayor Anthony Williams

Chapter 1: Theory

A Multitude of Grounds: Celebrating the Un-common Ground

Architecture has the ability to create possibility. It can provide opportunity where there once seemed to be no choice. Architecture empowers people by offering a place to belong, the idea of being a part of something larger than oneself. This thesis addresses the issue that there are many people who are being underserved by the design profession and questions how architecture can give a voice to those who currently have none. The proposed solution is to recognize these people and to bring positive attention to the places where they live and in the process make a connection between the people and the profession. The question is: ‘How can architecture be a catalyst for constructive action within a community? How can architecture:

Create **OPPORTUNITY**

Spark **PASSION**

Highlight **STRENGTH**

This thesis seeks to do so by creating an environment which encourages interactions by drawing people to a place which offers a multitude of grounds rather than a single ‘common ground’ on which to associate with one another. The choice of many grounds over a single ground has been made in response to the question of whose ground is it? Is a neutral ground (belonging to neither kind; not one thing or the other) the best solution for fostering relationships? Exposure to others and a growing understanding of their successes and failures are crucial to a society that values celebrating diversity as opposed to merely tolerating it. This thesis offers an alternative to the false sense of stability created by the compromising of individuality

for the sake of fitting into a single common ground. If there are different types of people there should be different types of ground. The goal of this thesis is to create an architectural composition of several different grounds which reflect the different layers of society and human interest and which acknowledges the fractured nature of the community as an opportunity to celebrate the non-uniformity of its parts. The visitor is initially drawn to and engaged on a particular ground, but is quickly introduced to other grounds. The multitude of grounds creates the opportunity to have many different passions being developed in the same place. By creating different grounds the user is moved to different orientations and presented with different perspectives – both experientially and figuratively.

This thesis seeks to create a building with enough flexibility to accommodate a variety of functions without being so general as to be inadequate for any function. The goal is to attract a person to one ground for a specific activity and introduce them to a range of other grounds and activities in order to expand their repertoire and enrich the collective population of the center. The placement of program is critical in order to allow for the expression of each element in its strongest position relative to the site, other program elements, and the experience of the visitor. An important question to answer is: ‘How can architecture encourage planned interactions between people engaging in the same activity as well as spontaneous interactions between different types of users?’

The form of the building will be the product of an exploration of all aspects of the project. It is not about a single organization but about the layering of several frameworks:

Community – age, gender, experience, ability, family, loyalties

Events – academic, athletic, creative, social, organized, spontaneous

Context – physical, social, economic, political, cultural

In order for architecture to be successful in fostering relationships it must communicate to the surrounding population that it is a ‘safe’ place. The term ‘safe’ refers to social openness, physical accessibility, freedom from bodily harm, and a steadiness in purpose. This thesis will explore how architectural expression can compete for the attention of community members, inform observers about the activities within, create visual connections between the different users and express a sense of stability while also allowing for future change and transformation. This thesis seeks to encourage the act of exploration and discovery through the designed environment. The aesthetic of the center will convey the worth of the residents and the representation of an uncovered identity.

The Value of the Everyday

Throughout the century our values and social order have changed, bringing more power to the ordinary people. A quietly growing movement in the design realm of the United States is the valuing of the everyday. Discussion of the relevancy of the everyday in literary and philosophical discourse can be traced back before Lefebvre to 1938 when sociologist Louis Wirth introduced the idea of human experience as the

defining element of urbanism (Chase 8). In 1961 Jane Jacobs offered a perspective that was different from those popular at the time in her book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities. Jacobs viewed the city from the position of the people, not the academic or political elite, whom she attacks for going ‘to great pains to learn what the saints and sages of modern orthodox planning have said about how cities ought to work and what ought to be good for people and businesses in them. They take this with such devotion that when contradictory reality intrudes, threatening to shatter their dearly won learning, they must shrug reality aside’ (8). Through her non-elitist prose she made the issues of the city available to the common person. In her descriptions of healthy cities she promoted their organic, sometimes messy, and spontaneous nature. A network of diversity which supports and strengthens each member within it is essential to a thriving neighborhood (Jacobs 14). In discussing the elements of the city Jacobs identifies streets and sidewalks as the backbones of urban space. She argues against people’s fear of streets and the tendency to label them as bad. Jacobs proposes that the street is not to blame in and of itself, but rather it is the ‘barbarism’ which has been allowed to overtake the street. She said that public peace is not maintained by the police, but primarily by ‘an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves’ (32). Her famous phrase ‘eyes upon the street’ describes the role of residents as wardens of their neighborhood (Jacobs 35). A decade later Henri Lefebvre brought significant attention to the value of the everyday environment with his book Everyday Life in the Modern World.

Although the everyday was being discussed in the realm of academia, practical application of these values by the design professions was not apparent.

In the past decade or so the fields of architecture and urbanism have begun to re-evaluate the value of the everyday. In his book Architecture of the Everyday Steve Harris explains,

‘The consideration of everyday life as a critical political construct represents an attempt to suggest an architecture resistant to this commodification/consumption paradigm, a paradigm that has come to dominate contemporary architectural practice. Neither sentimental nor nostalgic, this alternative to theories derived from structuralism and its descendants proposes reconsideration of ...the critique of everyday life’ (3).

Discussions of the everyday in architecture and in urbanism inevitably cross and intertwine. An evaluation of the everyday on an urban scale would focus on those areas of the city which have been forgotten and neglected and the people who live there. To relate Burnham’s metaphor, everyday urbanism seeks to heal those organs and parts which are ill or have been severed from the body of the city. However, unlike the urbanism of Burnham, everyday urbanism does not attempt to make grand gestures or provide overarching solutions. Instead there is an acknowledgement that fragmentation and incompleteness are inevitable conditions of postmodern life. As Margaret Crawford writes, ‘There is not universal everyday urbanism, only a multiplicity of responses to specific times and places. Our solutions are modest and small in scale – micro-utopias, perhaps, contained in a sidewalk, a bus bench, or a minipark’ (Chase 13). Throughout the 20th century urbanist theory has evolved from a comprehensive approach to more restrained methods which seek to act surgically in order to preserve the health of the existing fabric.

Most contemporary cities are no longer struggling with the chaos of rapid growth, but rather the effects of flight from the city. It seems as though the city is made of two opposing parts, the middle and upper class living in the chic redeveloped areas and the lower class living in the blighted areas. Everyday urbanism seeks to engage the latter, those who currently are ‘underserved’ as Bryan Bell calls them in his book Good Deeds, Good Design: Community Service through Architecture (13). Everyday design, which refers to both architecture and urbanism, is an attempt to bridge the gap between the fields of architecture and the general body of contemporary society. In serving the needs of the general population everyday urbanism seeks to raise the standard of the ordinary and to begin to reconcile the imbalance in the city between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’.

Anytime a member of an elite group offers assistance to a less fortunate group there is the danger of the act being interpreted as patronizing. Bell states that fundamentally the good deeds of design are not ‘patronizing gifts from architects to communities’, because there is a mutual exchange between the designer and the client, and ideally a mutual benefit for both. This mutual benefit can be attained through a participatory process which defines the benefits so that they are clearly understood by all and are collectively sought (Bell 12).

All people should have the opportunity and the means to be involved in the process of decision making which shapes their built environment and consequently their lives. The involvement of community members in the design process is the cornerstone of everyday design. Architects and urban planners who are committed to designing for the everyday must find ways to engage the people of the community in

order to uncover the critical factors within that specific community. It is also their responsibility to enable members of the community to participate in the strategizing of solutions. With the majority of the population (98%) not having access to architects it is apparent that the benefits of design are little known and out of reach for most (Bell 12).

Many of the voices in the discussion of everyday design agree that the role of the architect or planner must be reconsidered in order to allow design to be of more service to the general community. However, there are different opinions on what that role should be. Bell believes that, ‘architects must adopt an advocacy role – they must step outside their usual activity as architects and engage in political action’ (17). They can no longer sit behind their desks in their aesthetically pleasing offices and wait for design savvy clients to come to them. Architects and planners must seek out clients in order to diffuse their services and the benefits of design (Bell 23). The model for this method of designing can be witnessed in almost any graduate school of architecture in the form of a student thesis project. Thesis projects are essentially a project and a designer in need of a client.

The views of Jane Jacobs serve as bookends to this discussion, beginning in 1961 and continuing into the present. Jacobs continues to reject commonly accepted knowledge about cities and instead focuses on personal observations. She is not only continuing to write, but is also hosting conferences centered on the issues of urban reinvention. In 1998 for her Ideas that Matter Conference in her hometown of Toronto, Jacobs asked participants to ‘wander into intimate, instructive rooms of the city to understand it first-hand, empirically’. Ideas were presented in church

basements, cafes, community halls, food banks, and even canoes on the Humber River. Jacobs' quote, "If you see something wrong, you have to hop to and try to change it. Don't worry about the big abstract problems that no one, not even the government, can solve. Deal with problems close to home" says it all (Rochon, Ideas 27). Architects should be out in their local communities acting as stewards protecting what is good and bringing attention to what is not so good. They should be engaging their friends and neighbors in discussions about the city and how to make it better. They should be experts in the goings on of their 'backyard' so that they can effectively offer their expertise in the field of design.

Although Jacobs is a believer of acting within the smaller more intimate scale, she would probably disagree with Crawford about the scope of everyday urbanism and how it fits into the big picture of life. Rochon's recapitulation of a question posed to Jacobs and her answer explains why. Peter Gzowski asked, 'Who is Jane Jacobs and where does she fit into the world?' She replied by explaining that fractals make her curious. She went on to say, "Are they little things in a big thing, or is it a big thing in a little thing?' Fractals help her to explain her place in the world. 'Once you know about fractals, you know you live in all of them,' she finally answers. 'I live at 69 Albany Avenue in Toronto, but I also live in the universe. And I'm at home in both of them.'" (Rochon, Ideas 35). Everyday urbanism may seem like a small thing when viewed through the scope of the consumerism driven professional world, however when measured through the eyes of the many common people who live in the ordinary world it is a huge thing.

If Jane Jacobs is a proponent of observation – the *go and see* method, than Walter Hood is a believer in experience – the *go and live* method. He believes that in order to truly understand a community you must be a member of that community. This is reminiscent of Jacobs’ suggestion to start in your own backyard. However, Hood recognizes the tendency for those who have authority through expertise-professionals and scholars, to choose to live and usually work in areas of the city which are already vibrant areas, rather than those neighborhoods which are greatly in need of professional intervention due to their isolation and neglect. In her introduction to Hood’s book Leah Levy explains how he actively rejects this tendency and in order ‘to achieve familiarity, he puts himself *in* the community [of West Oakland, California] to see who the people are and his own connections to them, what they are doing, what their needs are, and what the flow of change discloses’ (Hood 4). The demolition of blighted, mixed-use neighborhoods in the name of urban renewal should no longer be an acceptable solution. Hoods points out that over the past twenty-five years many sites of past urban renewal have become public nuisances sponsoring illicit activity and attracting repeated vandalism (6). The existing methods of research and design for such areas were grossly inadequate due to the fact that designers were looking at the problem from the outside. They misinterpreted the place, the people or the problem, their scholarly lens was blinding them.

Hood introduces improvisation as an alternative design process to the widespread, but often unsuccessful quantitative approach to city planning. The process stems from the diversity of his personal background as an artist, architect, landscape architect, writer, and professor. As Hood explains, ‘Improvisation creates

a direct link between theoretical planning and real community issues. Acting as both commentary and research, the improvisation process expresses particular attitudes about place and culture from an insider's view'. Daily journal entries about Hood's experiences as a resident within the neighborhood 'allow social and cultural patterns to be transformed into physical form' (6). In a design environment dominated by consumerism and the rush to sell the next best thing, the recognition of existing social and cultural patterns almost seems revolutionary.

Although today's architecture and urban space is dominated by the expression of pure form and the selling of a theme, there are other voices in harmony with Hood's. In Everyday Urbanism Margaret Crawford expresses dissatisfaction with the pessimism of those in the design field who are sitting back and waiting in fear of the 'end of public space'. In response Crawford offers a more optimistic point of view which seeks to redefine public space and to highlight opportunities for the development of democracy (22). Crawford is continuing the dialogue begun by Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, and Michel de Certeau, about the vital role which ordinary urban spaces must play in modern society and the need to integrate theory and social practices. She points out that, 'While acknowledging the oppression of daily life each discovered its potential as a site of creative resistance and liberatory power' (9).

Walter Hood takes the discussion of oppression of the ordinary a step further in his evaluation of the urban minipark. The minipark is a remnant of the good intentions of the open space movement and its realistic collision with increasing land value. As Galen Cranz points out the consequence of this contradiction is the squeezing of public space into 'irregular, unusual, inexpensive sites that had been

rejected in prior areas' (qtd. in Hood 8). Hood identifies the familiarity of the urban minipark in most American cities and the consistency of its elements: an open green area with standardized elements – benches, tables, drinking fountains, and sometimes court areas for games. He makes the statement that 'Underlying these standard forms and programmatic elements are social reform tactics, allowing only normative or mainstream use of spaces and infrastructure' (8). Only a select group of individuals is served and only in a specific way. If a space serves only part of a community the remaining portion is left un-served and without a vested interest and may in fact develop negative feelings toward the place and those served. A public space should seek to bring a community together, not alienate certain members and consequently foster dissension. The carrying out of illicit behavior in such public spaces is a reaction by those who have been left out against the system which has deemed them 'unworthy'. Unfortunately, the designer is rarely a witness to these interactions because their time in the community is often limited to the site analysis and planning meetings. Their contact with the community is usually partial to those individuals who are somehow already a part of the system which is attempting to improve the area – concerned citizens, active representatives, and council members.

Unfortunately, the individuals whom designers really need to be communicating with would never set foot in a community planning meeting. They may not consciously realize the root of their actions and may simply describe such places as stupid or lame and of no interest to them. However, the presence of drug dealing and graffiti in parks and recreation centers speak for them, saying that they are obviously unhappy with the job these places are doing in serving their needs.

The key to successfully addressing the needs of the community is to first properly identify all members of the community and secondly to convince them that they are being heard and can be active and influential participants in the process. Hood warns his readers that they must have an open mind in order to understand the value of his journal entries. ‘A willingness to accept new and different information is key to creating new urban landscapes’. Hood’s primary concern is to serve the neighborhood as his client (9).

Due to the complexity of relationships and the multitude of opinions, designing for a community is not a small task. Listening to the opinion of every member and synthesizing their input is a lofty ideal, however it is rather unpractical and still does not address the issue that a major portion of the community will probably not cooperate with the process. Therefore, it may be more beneficial to identify what Thomas Angotti calls the community ‘myth’ which ‘evolves in the collective consciousness of its people’ (qtd. in Hood 9). In order to identify the subjective views which constitute the myth of West Oakland, Hood examined the objective history of the area over the last century to identify major events that affected everyday life, land use, demographics, and the urban form.

The value of Walter Hood’s work is not only in his intellectual writing, but also in his design application to an existing community. Although none of his proposals were actually built, there is tremendous value in the expression of his ideas through drawings, written description and models. Many of the voices of everyday design are just that – voices offering only words. Hood takes the next step beyond identifying the problem and philosophizing about ideal solutions. He puts pen to

paper and allows one to begin to imagine what such solutions could look like, as well as how they might function. Hood's proposals 'validate "familiar" activities, events, and patterns of life without applying moral judgments'. In his epilogue Hood quotes Kevin Lynch: "We should design for diversity, experiment with new types, open recreational choices, fit opportunities to the real diversity" (70).

Architecture and urbanism are fields which require a certain degree of experimentation. The question becomes where and with who does one experiment? Walter Hood seems to advocate researching and conducting trials with the neglected and the poor in order to make them and their problems visible to society, otherwise they will remain in the dark. Andres Duany is known for his belief that one should "experiment with the wealthy and use what you learn for the rest" (qtd. in Lerner 44). This statement could be construed several ways, however even taken in the most positive terms it still favors giving further attention to those who currently have attention focused on them. It supports the notion of giving more – time, money, attention, to those who are not in need and continuing to eschew those who are desperately in need.

The ideas of everyday architecture and urbanism are fundamental to this thesis project. The project proposes to test how discussions of everyday design can be directly and indirectly applied. The techniques of observation and study suggested by Jane Jacobs and Walter Hood coincide with the site analysis and research of the thesis process. However, there are limits to the level of interaction which I can have with the community of Burrville-Lincoln Heights based on the fact that I do not live in the community. My residency is not the major issue which may hinder interactions with

members of this community, which is predominantly African American and among the lower income levels. I agree with Walter Hood that the ideal would be to live in the community, but I feel that his main objective was to become a part of the life in the community. My involvement with the DayBreak ministry allows me to be a part of the weekly life of the children in the Burrville-Lincoln Heights community. However, my contact with them is limited to five hours a week during which a very specific schedule is followed. I hear stories about their daily lives, but I am not a witness to it. Although I recognize the limits of my interaction with the children I have become friends with a number of them, walked them to their homes and been invited inside. I have glimpsed parts of their lives which I would never see or imagine if I were purely in the role of objective observer. Following Hood's example of keeping journal entries about my interactions with the children will not only help explain the community to others, but will also hold me accountable to the subjective realities of life in Burrville-Lincoln Heights. The biggest danger that I face in designing a faith-based recreation center for this community is the tendency to consciously or unconsciously make moral judgments or attempt to reform people's actions based on ideals and values from outside of the community. However, I feel that this is a struggle which is relevant to the discussion, because aside from students another major group often concerned about the underserved community are faith-based organizations.

As stated earlier, designing for a community is not a small task because of the sensitivity of a multitude of issues: social, economic, and cultural. My goal is to tap into the collective consciousness of the community by being involved in whatever

capacity possible and by getting to know the people of Burrville-Lincoln Heights on a personal level. Involvement must flow both ways; therefore I must find ways to engage people in the process. The process itself will hopefully continue the dialogue of the value of the everyday.

Chapter 2: Contextual Background and History

D.C.'s Strategic Neighborhood Action Plan

In 2003 Mayor Anthony Williams and his administration created “Neighborhood 10”, a list of ten key strategies to encourage healthy and strong neighborhoods in D.C. The four guiding principles are: 1) to empower and engage citizens, 2) to align government action with citizen priorities, 3) to strategically invest scarce resources to demonstrate meaningful and visible impacts, and 4) to enhance unity, purpose and democracy (Williams).

Preceding that “Neighborhood Action” was developed in 2000 to empower residents by allowing them to participate in creating a vision for the revitalization of their neighborhoods. People expressed a desire for neighborhoods with easily accessible consumer goods, gathering places, and neighborhood amenities. They wanted to live in an environment that is safer, healthier, friendlier, more entertaining, more economical, and a better place to raise children. The mission of Neighborhood Action is to ‘empower citizens to improve their communities by mobilizing and coordinating the resources of government, businesses, nonprofits, the faith community, neighborhood leaders, and citizens themselves’ (Empowering Residents). This mission statement realizes that the government cannot solve all problems on its own and that the solution will be far richer with the involvement of outside resources.

The key to outside resources is that they share in the fundamental concern for the betterment of the neighborhood. The danger of outside involvement is the perception that it is an act of arrogant charity. Therefore, it is essential that the contributing organization have an established relationship with the people in the

neighborhood. A personal involvement with the community ensures an understanding of common goals and could also encourage greater contribution through deeper emotional and social investment.

The Community of Burrville and Lincoln Heights

The neighborhoods of Burrville and Lincoln Heights have a diversity of potential resources available to them through the government, local businesses, nonprofit organizations, the faith community, and their own residents. The key to transforming these potential resources into actual results is centering. A physical center for the neighborhoods needs to be established to reinforce the social core that already exists casually. A physical center will bring the residents as well as outside resources together so that they can work collectively toward the common goal of creating a healthy and strong community, Burrville-Lincoln Heights, made up of the two neighborhoods.

Who are the people of the Burrville-Lincoln Heights community? Although the information is only one dimensional, the following analysis of the statistics provided by the Information & Research Services in the U.S. Census Bureau of 2000 provides an objective answer to this question. In 2000 the population of Burrville and Lincoln Heights combined was 12,010 people. The majority of the population was African American (98%), while the remaining 2% was mainly people of two or more races. The community was made up of 4,372 households of which 65% (2,861) were families. The average family income level in 1999 was -\$39,791 and about half (46%) of the householders were the legal owners. A third of the population were

children age 18 and under, of which almost half (40%) were living under the poverty level. The unemployment rate was 17%, however only 38% of the population over the age of 16 was employed. This discrepancy may be a reflection of the fact that many mothers stay at home to take care of their children. Teenage pregnancy, 25% of births were to teen mothers, is not only a hindrance to job opportunity, but also to the value of education. In addition to teenage pregnancy, the need to work and drug involvement are contributing factors to the lack of value for education.

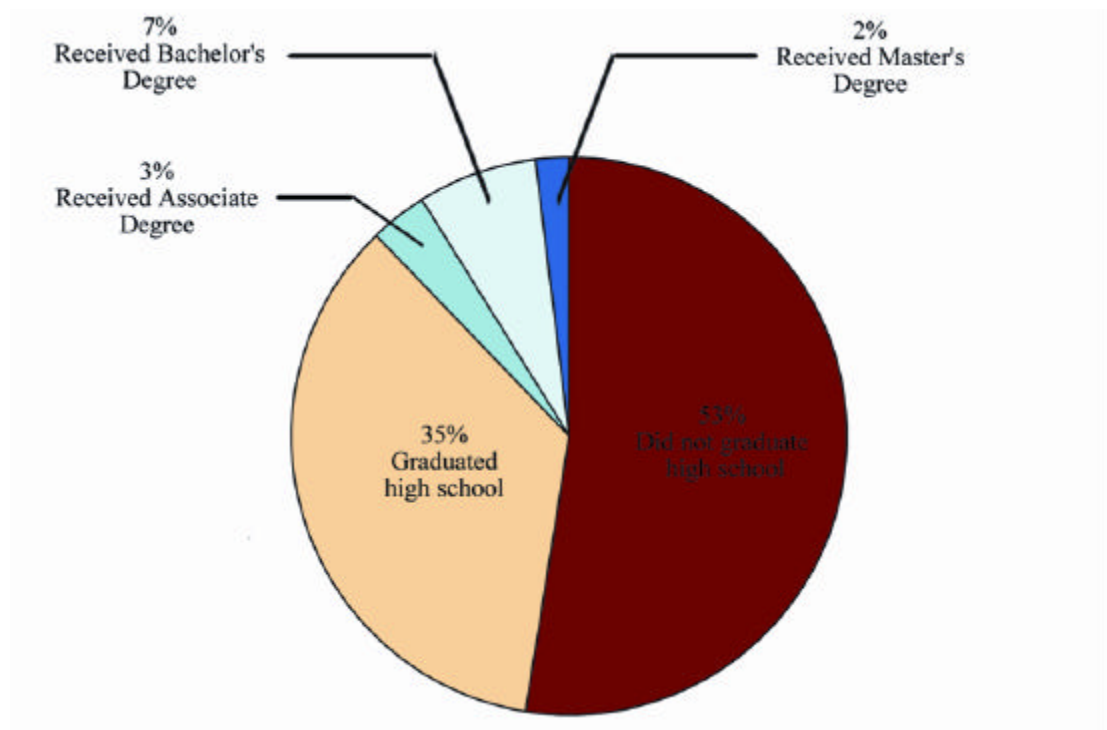


Figure 1: Highest level of education for the overall population age 25 and older

53% did not complete high school, 35% completed high school, 3% received an Associate Degree, 7% received a Bachelor's Degree, and 2% received a Master's or higher.
(Statistical information provided by Information & Research Services)

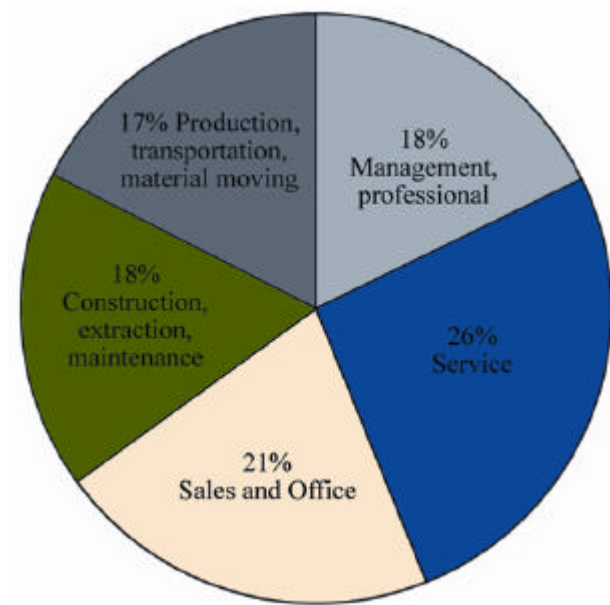


Figure 2: The distribution of workers according to occupation

(Statistical information provided by Information & Research Services)

The majority of employed residents (69%) worked within D.C. The mode of transportation used to get to work was fairly balanced between public transit and a personal vehicle, 58% of households owned a vehicle and about the same percent (54%) drove to work. The subway and bus were the main means of transit for 40% of workers, and the remaining 2% walked to work (Information & Research Services).

The DayBreak Ministry

DayBreak is a Christian outreach ministry working in the neighborhood of Lincoln Heights (figure 3). DayBreak is based out of McLean Bible Church, located in McLean, Virginia. The ministry was begun by Julia Harper in 2001 to ‘spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and disciple children and families in the inner-city so that they will continually seek the Lord when confronted with the challenges and conflicts of life’ (DayBreak Quarterly Newsletter 8).



Figure 3: Location of DayBreak within Lincoln Heights

The white circle in the center of the diagram highlights the DayBreak row house. The lightest gray area represents the immediate area which DayBreak serves, the Lincoln Heights housing project. The middle level of gray shows the municipal boundary for the entire neighborhood of Lincoln Heights.

The ministry started as a summer sports camp in the neighborhood. The camp's program mixed activities such as basketball, cheerleading and soccer with bible lessons, worship songs, and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The community welcomed DayBreak into their neighborhood as a permanent fixture by providing a row house which serves as their home base and is known locally as 'The Sanctuary'. The frequency of events and the number of children attending has continued to grow over the past three years. The ministry now offers a Saturday outreach twice a month, an after school program every weekday, and a mentoring program in addition to the summer sports camp.

The vision of DayBreak as stated in their quarterly newsletter is “to see the community of Lincoln Heights in Washington, DC, strengthened and restored for the sake of Jesus Christ and the glory of God. We desire to equip and empower people in the community to love the Lord their God with all their hearts, minds and souls, and to love their neighbors as themselves. We want to see Godly leaders rise up within the community to encourage and edify their families and neighbors to glorify the name of Jesus Christ above all other names” (8). The staff has grown from one person to nine people including a mother from the neighborhood. It is the goal of DayBreak to someday hand over the ministry to the local residents, so that it becomes a self-sustaining community program.

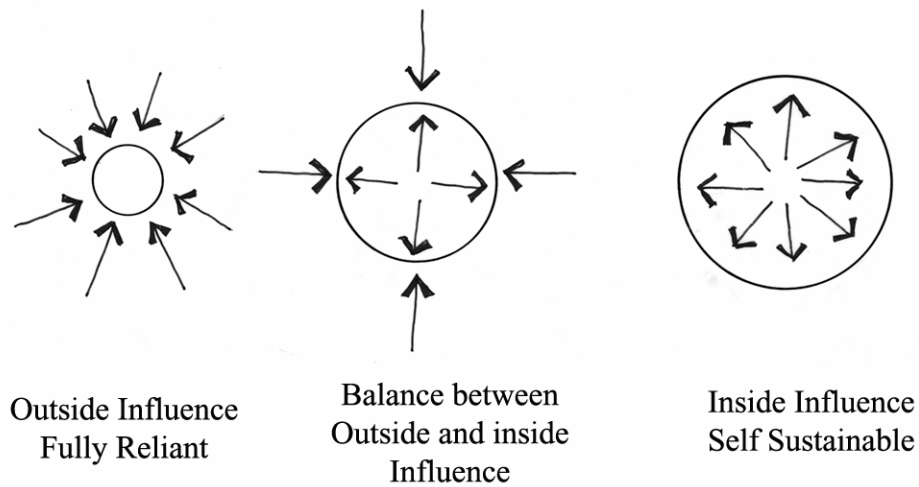


Figure 4: Ideal Evolution of DayBreak Program

The Children of Lincoln Heights

Through my personal involvement with the DayBreak after school program I have seen the struggles that children growing up in an inner city project face. I work with the children who are in the first through the third grade and range in age from

five years to eight years old. The amount of violence, sexual material, drug use, poverty, and hopelessness that these children are exposed to on a daily basis is frightening.

The environment in which inner-city children live often forces them to grow up far too quickly. Many children have learned through example that the only effective way to express anger is through physical and verbal violence.

Crime	Second District	Sixth District
Homicide	3	48
Sexual Assault	9	50
Robbery	169	473
Assault with a Deadly Wea	103	518
Burglary	477	379
Theft	1,475	337
Theft from Auto	739	654
Stolen Auto	262	1,801
Arson	1	3
Total	3,238	4,263

Figure 5: Table of Crime Statistics for the year thru November 2004

A comparison between the crime in the sixth district (which includes Burrville and Lincoln Heights) and the second district (which includes some of the wealthiest neighborhoods of D.C.) shows the amount of violence and crime which the children of Burrville-Lincoln Heights are surrounded by and points out the imbalance within the city.

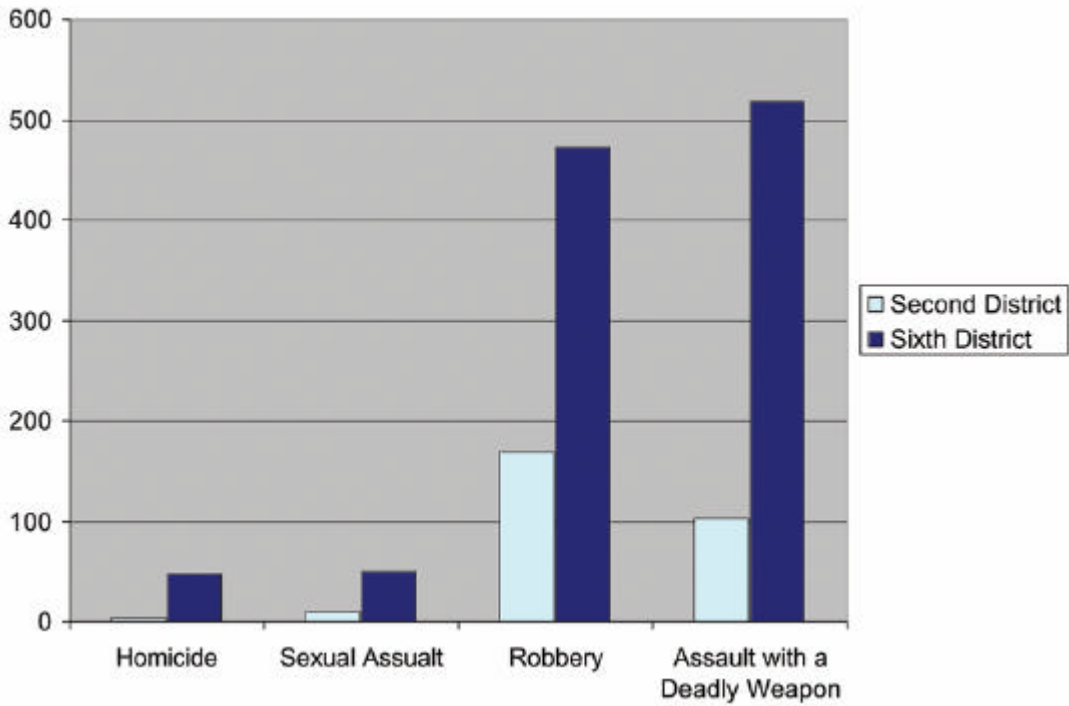
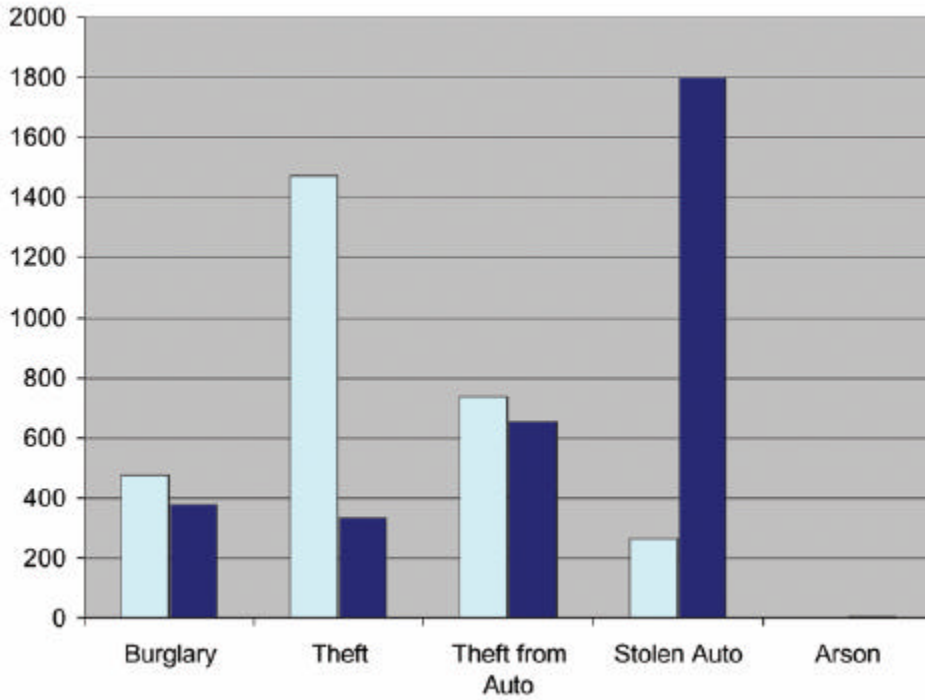


Figure 6: Property and Violent Crime Statistics for the year thru November 2004

In the second district more property crimes (top) are reported, most of which are probably not committed by individuals from within the community. The sixth district has a substantially higher reporting of violent crimes (bottom).

Five and six year old girls have already learned that the only way to get attention is to be “sexy”. Drug dealers dominate street corners and basketball courts making residents feel as though they are somehow the intruders. Kids are surrounded by situations that tell them that hard work gets you nowhere, while selling drugs can get the things you want.

Most of the children are never given the chance to better themselves through challenge, because it is assumed by others that they will fail. These children need to be challenged, but they also need someone to take the time to show them how to overcome their struggles.

Chapter 3: Site

Site Location

Washington, D.C. is a city of neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are incrementally grouped into political designations such as clusters and wards. The site for this thesis is located in North East Washington, D.C. in Ward Seven, cluster thirty-one, in the Burrville and Lincoln Heights neighborhoods (figures 7-11).

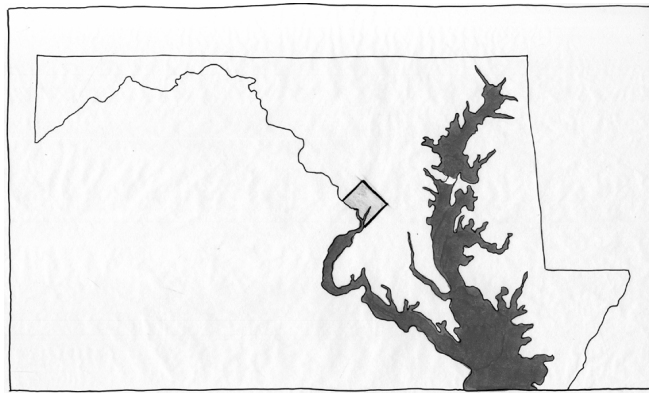


Figure 7: The State of Maryland with D.C. highlighted

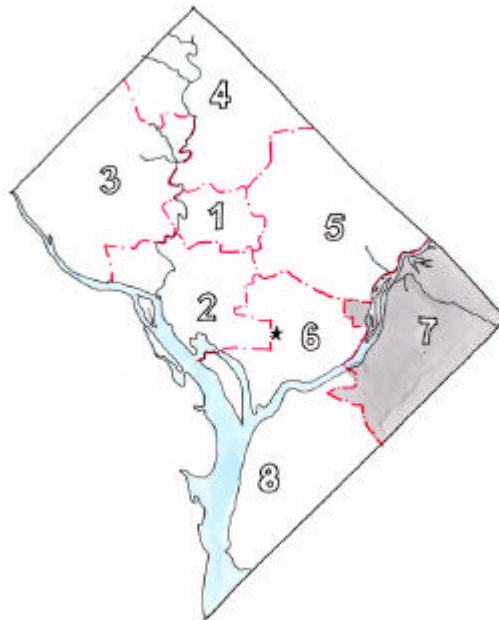


Figure 8: The Eight Wards of Washington, D.C.

The highlighted area is Ward Seven.



Figure 9: The Boundaries of Ward Seven

The ward is generally bounded by streets and is divided in half by East Capitol Street.

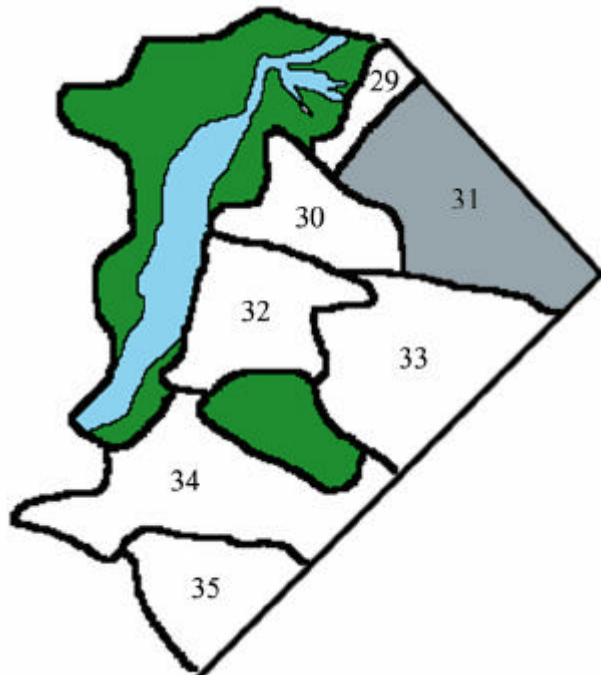


Figure 10: The Clusters of Ward Seven

Seven clusters make up Ward Seven. These seven clusters are made up of twenty-six neighborhoods. Cluster Thirty-one contains the neighborhoods of Burrville, Deanwood, Fairmont Heights, Grant Park, and Lincoln Heights. The green areas are national parks.

The neighborhoods of Burrville and Lincoln Heights are physically divided by two major streets, Burroughs Avenue and Division Avenue, but are socially connected through the everyday activities - shopping, waiting for the bus, eating, going to the park, which take place at the neighborhood shopping area located at the intersection of the streets.



Figure 11: Neighborhoods of Burrville and Lincoln Heights

Burrville is located above the municipal division line while Lincoln Heights is below it.

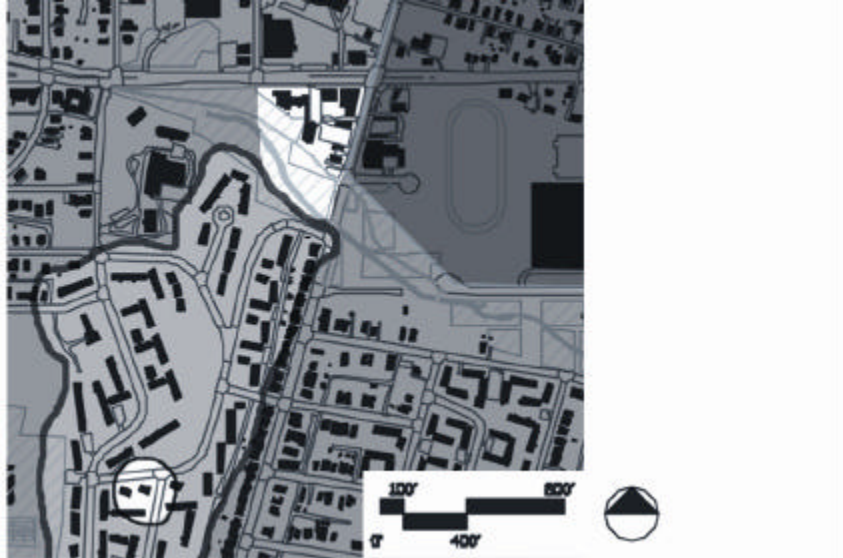


Figure 12: Relationship of Site to current DayBreak location

The chosen site is located at the border of Burrville and Lincoln Heights. The site is located in the southwest block of the intersection at Division Avenue and Burroughs Avenue (figures 13 and 14). Burroughs Avenue is spotted with retail and accommodates two way traffic, a center paved median as well as street parking on the southern edge. Division Avenue is also two lanes with parking on both sides, but has a more residential feel due to the concentrating of retail and the consistency of the fabric (figure 15).



Figure 13: Aerial Photo of Site Area

The site is highlighted in white and is composed of four different lots which combined make up an area of about 75,000sf.



Figure 14: Photograph of intersection at Burroughs and Division Avenues looking west.



Figure 15: Comparison of Streetscapes

From left to right: View of Burroughs Avenue looking west, and Division Avenue looking south.

Currently, the blocks of the intersection are occupied by a somewhat random conglomeration of buildings and uses. The ‘retail’ consists of two small grocery stores, a liquor store, two carry-out restaurants, a dry cleaners shop, a supply shop and a gas station (figures 16 and 17).

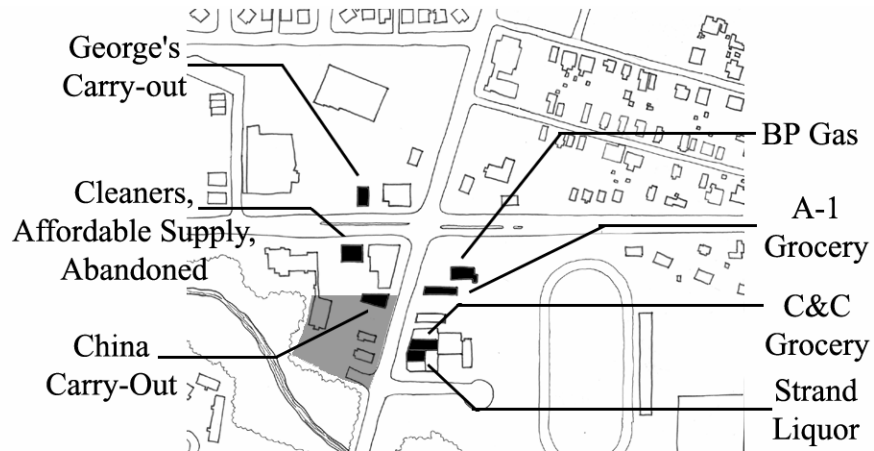


Figure 16: Plan of Retail at Intersection



Figure 17: Photographs of Retail Services

Clockwise from top: A-1 Grocery on the left and an abandoned building on right; Jerusalem Church of Christ on the left, C&C Grocery in the middle and Strand Liquor on the far right; China Café Carry-out; George's Carry-out; Cleaners, Affordable Supply, and abandoned shop; BP Gas Station.

These seem insufficient in providing shopping opportunities for the neighborhood. The closest large scale supermarket and drugstore is twelve miles away, hardly convenient for a largely pedestrian and public transit oriented population. Several retail buildings have been abandoned, some have been retrofitted

for other uses, while others stand desolate. One of the most popular alternative uses for these abandoned buildings is a church (figures 18 and 19).

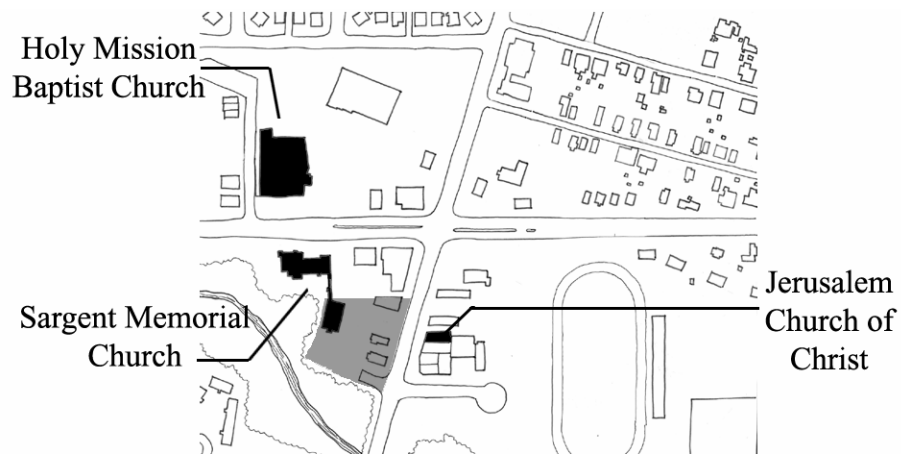


Figure 18: Plan of Churches



Figure 19: Photographs of churches

Clockwise from top: Holy Mission Baptist Church located in a retrofitted supermarket building; Jerusalem Church of Christ located in an old shop building; Sargent Memorial Church.

The corners of the intersection are very weakly held by an abandoned building, locally called the Strand building, a methadone clinic, a recently cleared residential lot, and the gas station (figures 20 and 21).

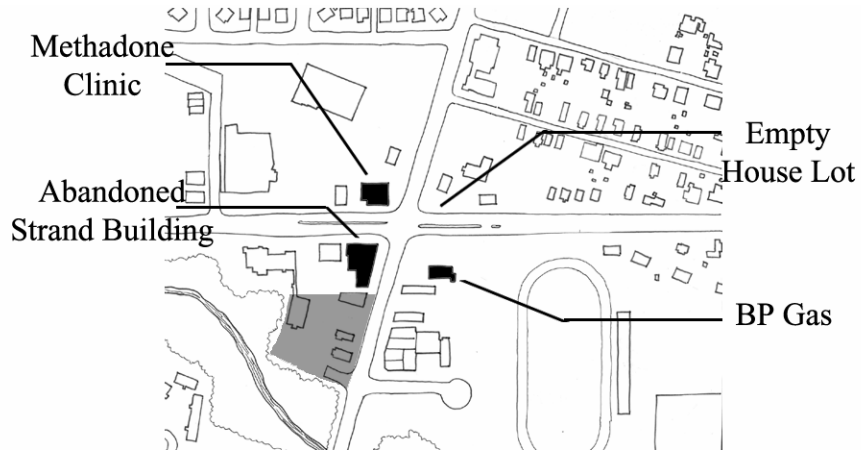


Figure 20: Plan of Buildings at the corners of the intersection.



Figure 21: Photographs of Corner Buildings

Clockwise from top: Methadone clinic front façade; empty house lot; the abandoned Strand building; BP Gas.

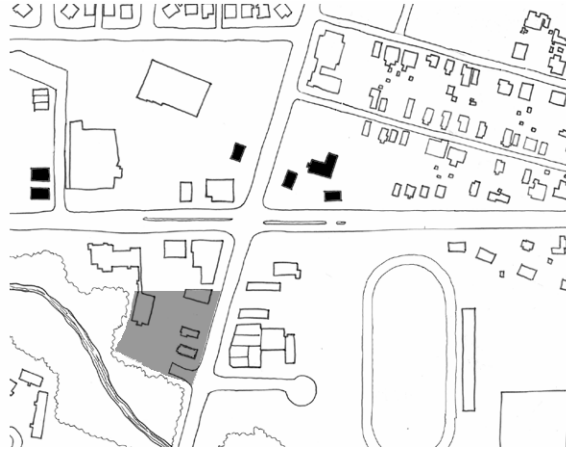


Figure 22: Plan of Residential Buildings



Figure 23: Photographs of Residential Buildings

There are five bus stops with a block or less of the site, making it accessible to those outside of a comfortable walking radius (figures 24 and 25).

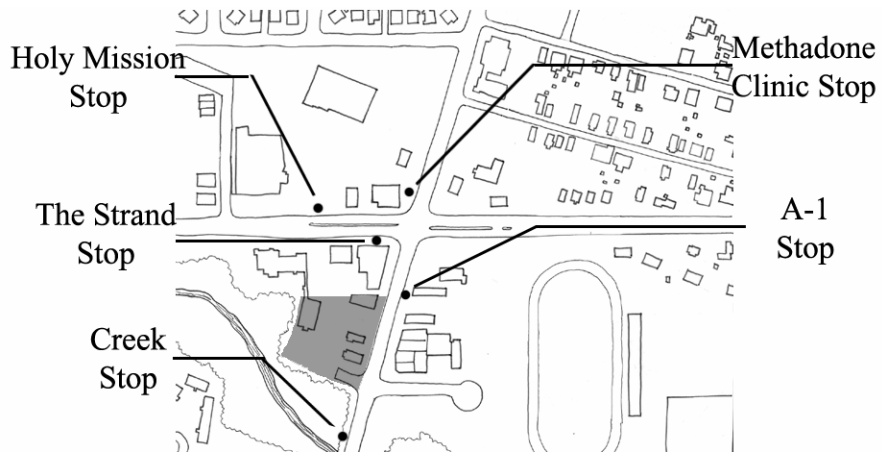


Figure 24: Plan showing Bus Stops



Figure 25: Photographs of Bus Stops

Clockwise from top – The Holy Mission stop, Strand Building stop, Methadone Clinic stop, and A-1 stop.

The stops along Burroughs Avenue at Holy Mission Baptist and the Strand Building are the two most popular stops. They are serviced by the U8 bus which runs east to the Capitol Heights Metro Station and west to the Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road Metro Stations. These bus stations are heavily used by people coming early to hanging out while they wait. They are prime locations for social interaction with people sitting on the bench, leaning against the frame, leaning against the walls and fences, and generally just standing around. The stops along Division are not as popular possibly because the W54 bus which services them only runs south to East Capitol Street and the Benning Road Metro Station, which is also covered by the U8 bus. These stops usually have one or two people standing at them and do not seem to serve any social function.

The site is located north of Watts Branch Park and its respective creek (figure 26). Watt Branch Park is the longest city park in Washington, D.C. (Hoyal). The Watts Branch trail is a heavily used pedestrian way that parallels Watts Branch Creek and acts as a neighborhood connector. The local park associated with Lincoln Heights is called Heritage Park, and is adjacent to the site (figure 27).



Figure 26: Watts Branch Park and creek



Figure 27: View looking south

Heritage Park is on the left, Division Avenue is running down the middle and Watts Branch Park is on the right.

The park's paved pad located under a shade of trees functions as a local gathering spot. Although Heritage Park and the trail are very well used, the creek and intermediate parkland are largely neglected. Most buildings place their backs to the creek which is located about ten feet below grade and "according to the Bureau of Watershed Protection Water Quality Report of 2001 is unsafe for recreational swimming 100% of the time, and unsafe for secondary recreational use 68.7% of the time due to surface fecal coliform" (Hoyal). Although the creek is highly polluted it is not littered with trash due to community efforts to clean it up.

Site History

According to the DC Office of Planning the earliest known inhabitants of the land which would become Ward 7 were the Nacotchtack Indians who in 1608 were living on the flat land next to the Anacostia for its agricultural benefits. In 1632 Charles I of England granted the land to George Calvert, thus it was initially part of Prince George's County, Maryland. The land was broken down into large tracts and granted to wealthy and influential Europeans who later subdivided the land even

further. As more Europeans began to settle in the area, the Indians disappeared from the shores of the Anacostia (Comprehensive Plan 4).

In 1790 the Residence Act set the location for the Nation's Capitol along the Potomac River. The ten mile square diamond shape cut into the territories of Maryland and Virginia. President George Washington commissioned Pierre L'Enfant to create the plan for the federal city.



Figure 28: L'Enfant's plan of 1791

(Image Source: National Capitol Planning Commission)

L'Enfant's famous plan displays a network of diagonal avenues superimposed over an orthogonal grid (History of Planning in Washington). It also shows the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers acting as natural barriers within the city. L'Enfant's plan only details the area between the two rivers and barely acknowledges the eastern and western borders of the city. This could be viewed as a forewarning to the future division of the city by the rivers as it developed outside of L'Enfant's plan. The city of Alexandria made up the majority of the Virginia side and in 1847 formally withdrew from the District and became a part of Virginia (Way 10).

According to the Anacostia Watershed Network during the 1800s the Eastern portion of D.C. continued to develop as an agricultural area. European farmers cleared the land to plant tobacco, corn and cotton and by 1860 most of the watershed had been cultivated (History and Culture of the Anacostia River Watershed). Many of these farms were maintained by enslaved African Americans. In the south east portion of the ward settlements developed around wagon repair and horse stables to meet the needs of passing travelers. During this time the strategic location of Civil War forts along the outer edge of the District of Columbia secured an abundance of land which now serves as open space and parks, such as Fort Dupont Park, Fort Mahan Park, and Fort Chaplin Park (Comprehensive Plan 5)

The Comprehensive Plan of Ward 7 traces the historical ties of the predominantly black Deanwood community to the white farmers who settled the area before the Civil War. One of the major farms in the ward was the Benning-Sherriff-Lowrie-Dean. The multiple names reflect the inheritance of the farm by Levi Sheriff's three daughters. When the Southern Maryland Railroad Company laid down tracks and built a station close to the farm in 1871, the daughters set up three subdivisions. The subdivisions were named Whittingham, Lincoln, and Burrville and 'were all loosely tied by the name Deanwood'. The Lincoln subdivision is now known as Lincoln Heights and was intended to be black owned from its inception (Comprehensive Plan 6).

In 1880 a few non-farmers lived in Deanwood, the population grew slowly and in 1909 the black community was large enough to require a public school, Deanwood Elementary School. This was also the year that Nannie Helen Burroughs

opened her school for girls in the Lincoln neighborhood. During this time, 'Deanwood had a stable nucleus of blue and white collar black families'. After World War I during the 1920s the land at the far south east of D.C. was developed. World War II and the increased number of government jobs attracted more people to the Deanwood area in the 1940s. Development of single family homes spread North West to Benning Heights.

A dramatic population shift during the late 1950s was the result of the 1948 Supreme Court ruling which prohibited restrictive housing covenants based on race. The initial sale of houses in Benning Heights were governed under such unconstitutional contracts, however 'by 1960 the neighborhood had become almost a totally black community' (Comprehensive Plan 5). A proposal for low-cost housing in the area was initially met with opposition, but in the end was approved and set the stage for future public-housing developments. Until the 1950s single family detached houses were the standard, however since then the area's residential development has primarily consisted of town houses, duplexes, triplexes, and garden apartments. The ward currently has ten public housing developments. These developments account for 'twenty-three (23%) of all the public and assisted housing in the city' (Comprehensive Plan 6-8)

A 1959 map of the site shows that the lots were very narrow at about 25' wide. The old Southern Maryland Railroad Company tracks ran in the place of Gay Street and Hayes Street. In general there were more alleys and streets that connected through. The Strand building and the building next to it were existing during this time. The Strand building has been a chameleon in regards to the variety of functions

it has held. Originally serving as a theater, it later housed retail such as a barber shop, dry cleaners, and take-out restaurant. The building has been empty for the last twenty years and has been confiscated by the city with liens.

Site Analysis

The following diagrams and accompanying text study the formal and behavioral characteristics of the site region. The diagrams focus on landscape as well as built elements in an effort to understand what their relationships are to the site and to each other.

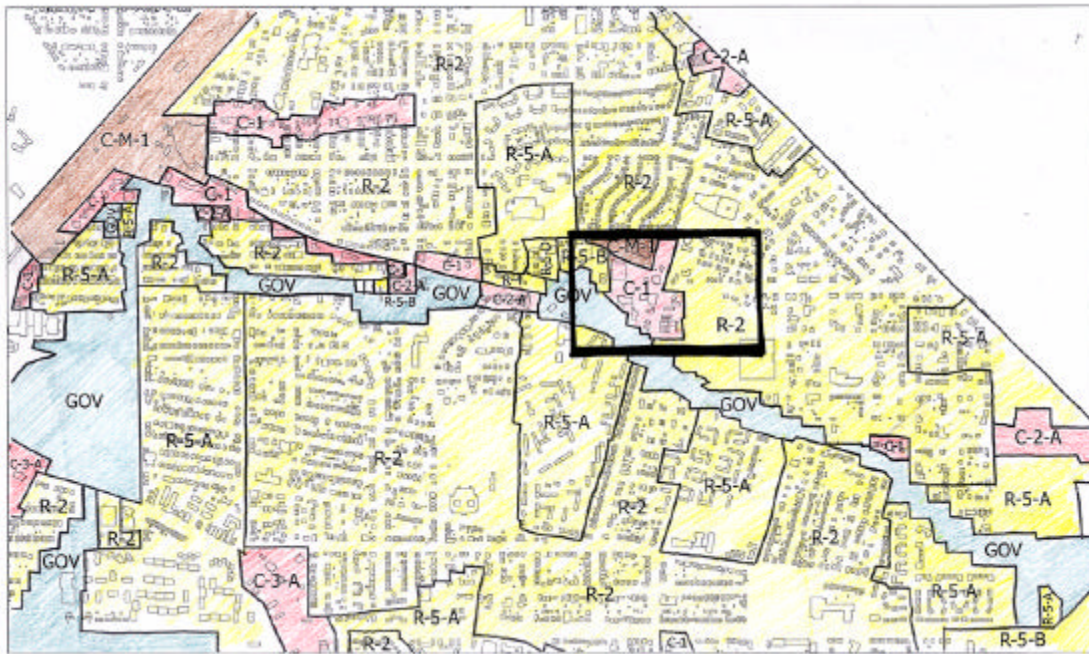


Figure 29: Zoning Districts

This diagram illustrates the mix of zoning designations.

C-1: (red) Permits matter-of-right neighborhood shopping and low density development to a maximum lot occupancy of 60% for residential use, a maximum FAR of 1.0, and a maximum height of three (3) stories/forty (40) feet.

C-M-1: (brown) Permits development of low bulk commercial and light manufacturing uses to a maximum FAR of 3.0, and a maximum height of three (3) stories/forty (40) feet with standards of external effects and new residential prohibited.

R-2: (yellow) Single-family residential uses for detached and semi-detached structures.

R-5-A: (yellow) Permits matter-of-right development of single-family residential uses for detached and semi-detached dwellings, and with the approval of the Board of Zoning Adjustment, new residential development of low density residential uses including row houses, flats, and apartments to a maximum lot occupancy of 40%, 60% for churches and public schools; a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.9, and a maximum height of three (3) stories/forty (40) feet. Conversion of existing buildings to Flat or Apartment use is permitted as a matter of right provided all other provisions of the zoning regulations are complied with

R-5-B: (yellow) Moderate development of general residential uses, including single-family dwellings, flats, and apartment buildings.

GOV: (green) D.C. Parkland

Information Source: Summary of Zoning Districts

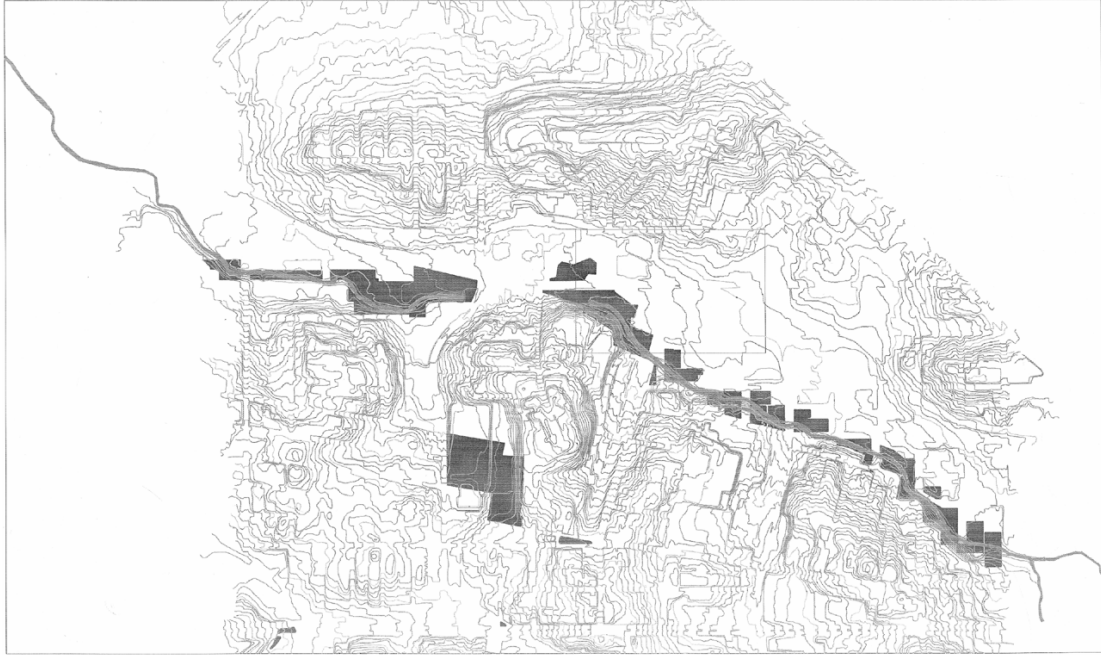


Figure 30: Topography of Region

The site is located in a valley with the topography rising to the north and south. The valley is occupied by Watts Branch Creek and parkland.



Figure 31: D.C. Parkland

This diagram shows the relationship of the site to Watts Branch Park, which begins at 63rd Street, NE and extends somewhat continuously 10 miles to the northwest until it is interrupted at 50th Street and Burroughs Avenue where the creek is forced underground. It resurfaces at 49th Street and Burroughs Avenue and continues with the park until the Baltimore-Washington Parkway cuts it off.

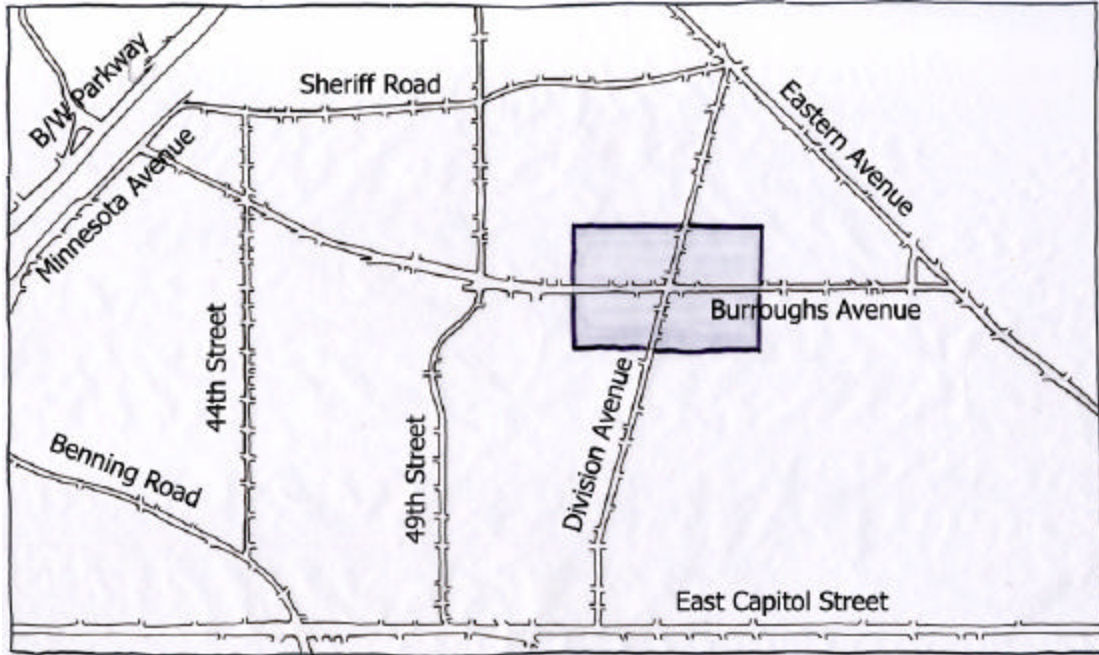


Figure 32: Major Streets

The heavily trafficked streets that create an edge around the region are the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, Kenilworth Avenue, and Minnesota Avenue to the west; Sheriff Road to the north; Eastern Avenue to the east; and East Capitol Street to the south. The other major streets create connections between the edge streets. The site is located at an important neighborhood intersection.



Figure 33: Building Fabric

The intermediary size of the buildings in the site illustrates the ambiguity of this area, which is not quite retail or civic and not residential, but an odd in-between. The amount of open space around the site reflects the location of parks and recreation areas.



Figure 34: Surrounding Schools

Schools are highlighted in black and surrounded by a quarter mile walking radius. All of the schools are located within the boundaries of the major edge streets.



Figure 35: Existing Recreation and Community Centers

This diagram shows the existing recreation facilities (with a quarter mile radius). The gap that the site will fill is illustrated with a quarter mile radius as well as a half mile radius. The only overlap occurs with the Evans Recreation Center which is located on the south side of the East-West Highway and is therefore not within a safe walking distance for children coming from the north side.



Figure 36: Existing Recreational Facilities



Figure 37: Existing Outdoor Pool Locations

Kenilworth-Parkside Community Center is located thirteen miles away on the other side of Rt. 201 – Kenilworth Avenue. Ridge Community Center is also located thirteen miles away on the other side of East-West Highway. Neither pool is within walking distance and are both blocked from the site by major roadways.

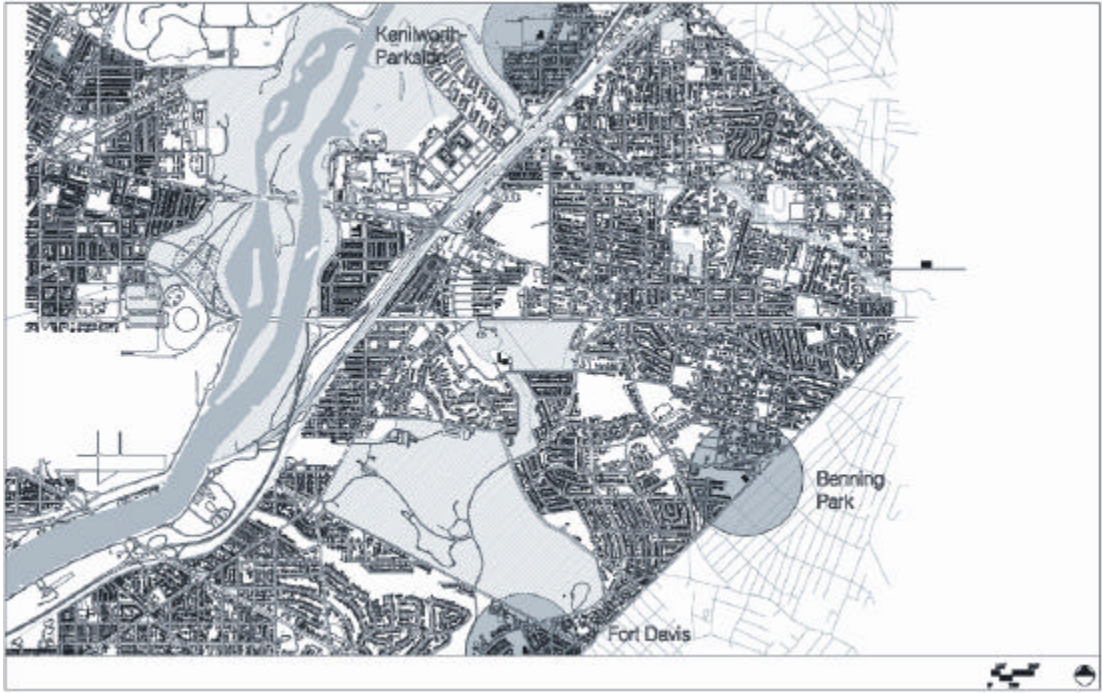


Figure 38: Existing Gym Locations

Benning Park Community Center is located ten miles away on the other side of East-West Highway. Fort Davis Community Center is even farther away at nineteen miles south of the site. Kenilworth-Parkside Community Center is on the other side of Rt. 201 – Kenilworth thirteen miles north of the site.

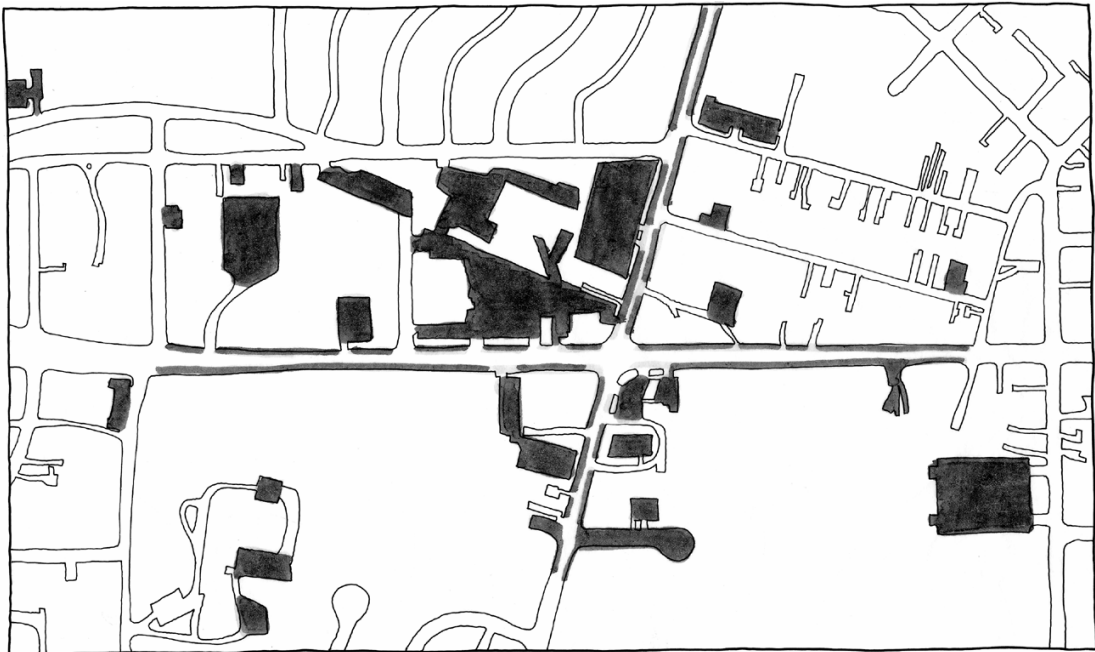


Figure 39: Parking

The placement of surface parking directly off of the street creates discontinuous block edges and takes up prime street front property.

Site Selection

The site is desirable for the design of a recreation center for many reasons, including: its establishment as a an informal community gathering point, the proximity to the Lincoln Heights neighborhood and the Sanctuary, the opportunity for urban renewal and the potential for economic redevelopment.

The neighborhood of Lincoln Heights is rich with people who care about the vitality of the area; however the interaction between different neighborhoods within the community seems limited. The community needs an enlivened core where people can come together to effect change, and can also see the results of that effort. The D.C. Office of Planning has identified the ‘spreading of limited resources too thinly, without critical mass to make a visible difference in any one place, is a recipe for failure’ (Investing in Strategic Areas). The site area is already established as an informal center to the surrounding neighborhoods. Children walk along the Watts Branch Trail on their way home from school in the afternoons. Large groups of people hang out at the bus stops along Burroughs Avenue. Heritage Park serves as an outdoor gathering spot for planned events like concerts and fairs, as well as informal socializing.

Since the recreation center is proposed as an outgrowth of the DayBreak ministry it is critical that its location be close to the children who are already involved with the program. The site is three miles from the Sanctuary and is easily accessible by way of a sidewalk running in front of the houses along Division Street (figure 12). There is also the opportunity of creating a link from the site to Lincoln Heights over Watts Branch Creek.

The zoning of the site area allows for the development of a community core which will provide the residents with shopping opportunities, social facilities, entertainment venues, and community services.

Chapter 4: Precedent Analysis

The analysis of precedents will take place on two main scales: the larger context of a waterway and its environs and the smaller context of a building.

Boulder Creek

Boulder, Colorado is known for its value of ecology and the natural environment. This environmental sensibility explains their tendency toward treating natural features as amenities to enhance with architecture, rather than to ignore or destroy it (Rosbie 46). Boulder Creek is a waterway which serves as a unifying element for a multitude of activities and users.



Figure 40: Diagram of Boulder Creek and its pathway

A variety of places highlight the creek: the Boulder Public Library, a municipal center, Boulder High School, University housing, a public parking lot, apartments, a research park, and a recreational park. Streets cross the creek, but do not interrupt it.

All of these buildings and spaces directly engage the creek by placing fronts to it, integrating the landscape, and accommodating users coming from the creek. Waterways and streets can often be conflicting due to the difficulty of crossings and accessibility. However, Boulder Creek and the treatment of its pathways and bridges allow drivers, bikers, pedestrians, and people engaged in activities in the creek to not only co-exist, but to share and collectively enhance the experience (Hill).

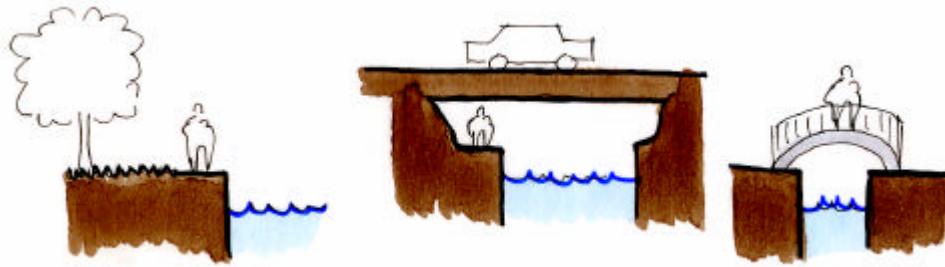


Figure 41: Sectional Conditions which occur along Boulder Creek

From left to right: The pedestrian path along the water's edge, the pedestrian path crossing under the vehicular bridge, and the pedestrian bridge crossing over the water.

Irvington Community Center

The Irvington Community Center is located in Fremont, California. The designers of the building, ELS/Elbasani & Logan Architects were concerned with finding appropriate ways of responding to the context of the neighborhood surrounding the community center. The selection of materials, the height and forms of the building were all influenced by the existing structure of the community (Linn 84). There are a few very simple, but effective strategies used in this building. In a building with a diversity of activities noise and the separation of users is an issue. The designers used this dilemma as an opportunity to be creative with the building forms and essentially created three separate volumes. The rectangular volume of the gymnasium is balanced by the narrow linear building which houses a series of small activity rooms. The shape of the entry mediates between the two.

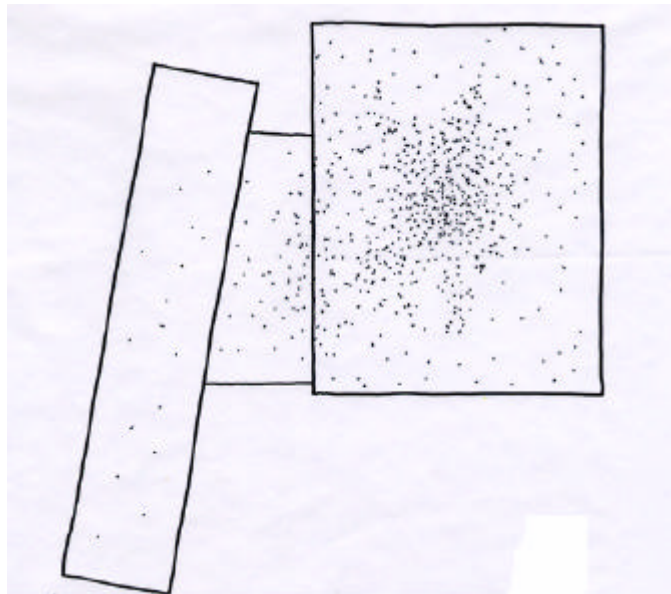


Figure 42: Separation of Program according to noise level

The Irvington Community Center can allow for both quiet and noisy functions by strategically placing the two on opposite sides of the building and using the lobby space as a buffer zone.

An aesthetically pleasing and functional building is only half of what it takes to assure a successful community center. The other half requires the effective management of resources, especially human resources.

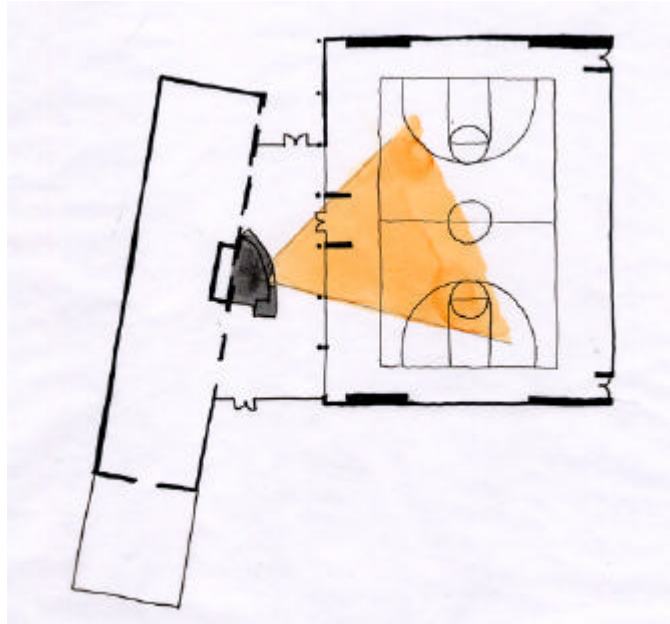


Figure 43: Visual Connection

The Irvington Community Center cuts down on trouble and required staff by creating a visual connection from the reception desk to the gymnasium through a glass wall, which allows the person sitting at the desk to keep an eye on the activity in the gymnasium without having to leave the desk.

It is about time for the design of gymnasiums to catch up with current technology and trends. There is no reason why gymnasiums must have completely solid walls and rely exclusively on fluorescent lights. The common experience of going into a gymnasium and feeling completely cut off from the rest of the world is no longer necessary. The design of the Irvington Community Center proves this by introducing operable steel barn doors and clerestory windows. The barn doors are inserted at either end of the gymnasium to allow for extra natural ventilation when needed (figure 49). However, these doors do more than simply let air pass through. They create a direct connection from the gymnasium to the environment beyond – not

only with what can be seen, but also with what can be heard, smelled, and felt. There is a wonderful interaction created by allowing parts of the outdoor environment to permeate through into the indoor gymnasium environment and vice versa.

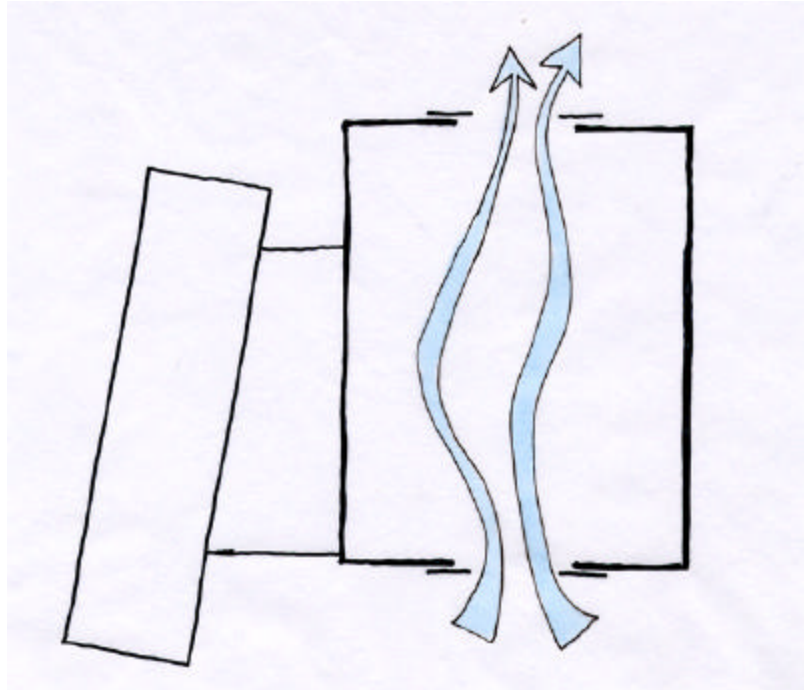


Figure 44: Cross Ventilation

The extreme heat within gymnasiums resulting from many active people can be handled sustainably by allowing for natural cross ventilation.

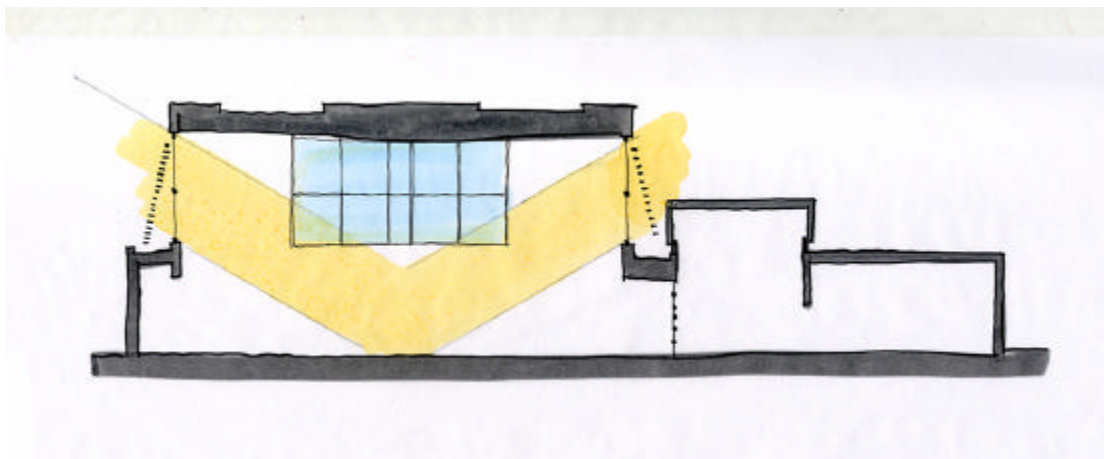


Figure 45: Natural Lighting in Gymnasium

Substantial day lighting in gymnasiums can be done without compromising the quality of visibility within the space as long as the light is controlled; here this is achieved with the use of aluminum louvers.

Chapter 5: Site Investigation

Site Design Concepts

This thesis will investigate the development of community on two different scales: a neighborhood center and a recreation center building. The intersection of Burroughs Avenue and Division Avenue will be developed as a neighborhood shopping and civic center. Residents in the surrounding neighborhoods will be able to walk down the street for daily needs instead of having to take a bus or drive. Their proximity to these local businesses will encourage more frequent patronage as well as a sense of community ownership and pride. A large scale grocery store will serve as the anchor for the shopping center attracting patrons for the adjacent small scale businesses such as a hardware store, laundromat, café, fast food restaurants, sit down restaurants, and a pharmacy.

Site Design Issues and Goals

The exploration of the soft site boundaries and the relationship of the specific site to the larger context of the city brought to light issues which need to be addressed as well as goals which seek to resolve them.

Figure 46: Table of Site Issue and Goals

The following lists the issues and goals relating to the site at the intersection of Burroughs Avenue and Division Avenue.

ISSUES	GOALS
Poor land use	Introduce a coherent mix of appropriate neighborhood uses
Neglect of Watts Branch Creek and Heritage Park	Celebrate natural amenities of the site by cleaning up the creek and using it to creating seams and edges
Lack of pedestrian connections to surrounding neighborhoods	Strengthen and extend Watts Branch Trail system
Decrepit and insignificant retail	Realize the zoning for neighborhood shopping
Neglect of youth	Create places focused on the needs of young people

Figure 47: Table of Urban Issues and Goals

The following lists the issues and goals relating to the larger context of the site within the surrounding area

ISSUES	GOALS
Lack of connection to amenities outside of immediate community	Create a connection to Kenilworth Park and the future re-development of the Anacostia River
Ambiguity of uses and building types along main streets	Create street edges with coherent uses
Lack of civic program	Introduce civic buildings as generators of economic and social revitalization
Watts Branch Creek treated as a barrier	Make Watts Branch Creek a unifier for the community
Separation and disconnect of city fabric along B/W Parkway created by elevated highway and railroad tracks	Connect fabric across transportation barriers

Site Interventions

The following set of diagrams isolate and illustrate a specific issue and then present a subsequent proposal.



Figure 48: Existing Street Grid

The existing condition of the street grid at the intersection of Burroughs and Division avenues is very haphazard and incoherent with different block sizes and orientations as well as abandoned and discontinuous streets. There is no hierarchy between Burroughs and Division even though Division is predominantly a small scale residential street. The organization of the Lincoln Heights project isolates it into a separate enclave.



Figure 49: Re-knitting the Residential Fabric

Recreation Center as a Linkage: This scheme proposes the widening of Burroughs Avenue to create a grand boulevard with a consistent width and accommodation for street parking. The reinstatement of an alley behind the buildings at the site intersection allows for rear service access. Reconnecting streets through to Division and Burroughs creates more access for vehicles and pedestrians and fewer places where troublesome activity can take place. Reorienting the layout of the Lincoln Heights grid creates more entry into the neighborhood and ties it into the community in a more harmonious way.

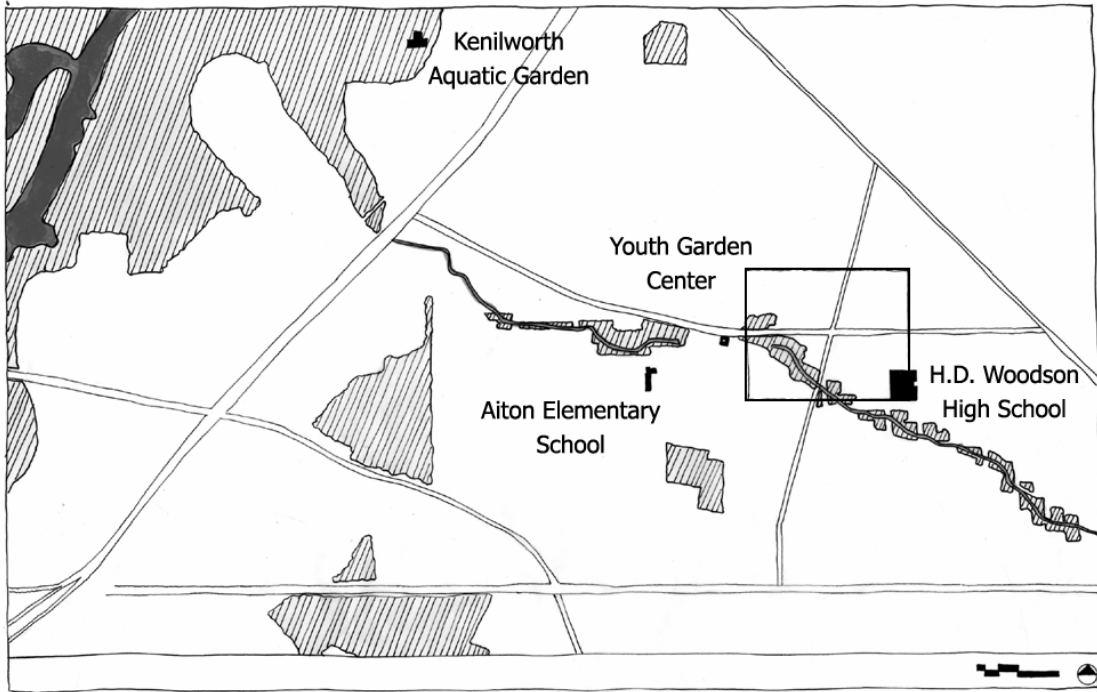


Figure 50: Existing Park System

Currently the Watts Branch park system is discontinuous and neglected with buildings turning their backs to it. Areas of parkland show up as disjointed fragments strung along Watts Branch Creek. It seems as though nature is secondary since the creek is forced underground in several places to accommodate for roadways and land use above. However, there are existing programs such as the Kenilworth Aquatic Center, Anacostia Environmental Education Center, and Youth Garden Center, which suggest that nature is valued.

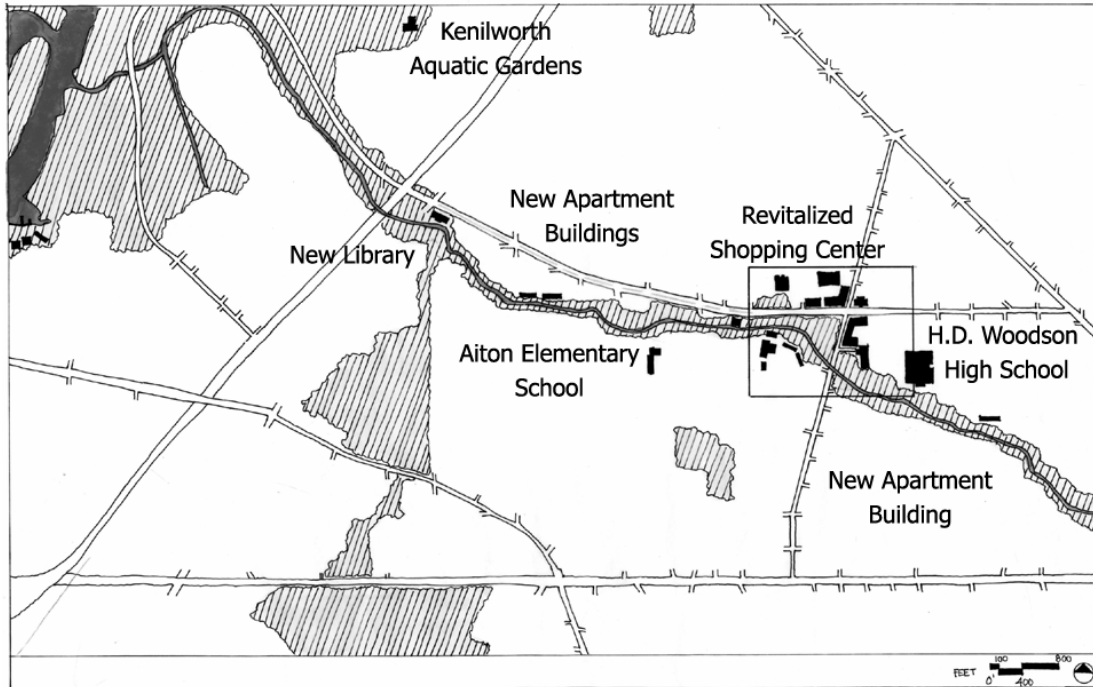


Figure 51: Strengthening the Park System

Center as a building in the Landscape: This intervention centers on cleaning up the water and watershed of Watts Branch Creek in order to make it a physical as well as an aesthetic amenity. A continuous park system is created running from 63rd Street and connecting to Kenilworth Park. A dialogue between the creek and the community will be started by introducing buildings that present a face to the creek. Potential functions include a library, apartment buildings, and a recreation center. These new functions will supplement and fill in between the existing environmental programs. Existing pedestrian pathways will be reinforced with a uniting paving material, benches, lighting and landscaping. Pedestrian bridges will be built at key junctions along the creek to activate the creek itself as well as the spaces running along it.

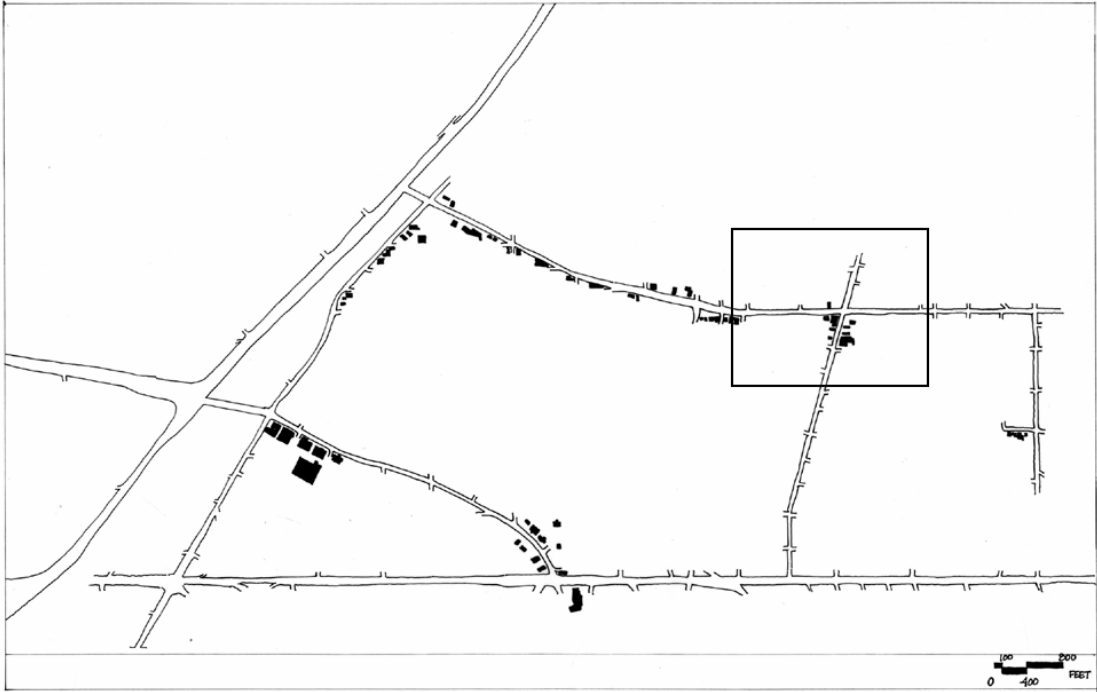


Figure 52: Existing Retail

The zoning along Burroughs Avenue allows for a mix of retail and residential use. The result of this zoning is the scattering of local shops among duplex housing units. The retail is often only on one side of the street and is set back to allow for parking. The result is neither a strong retail street nor a good residential street. This diagram highlights the discontinuity of retail buildings and the lack of anything substantial at either end of Burroughs Avenue. The following two interventions focus on different ways of clarifying the relationship between land uses; one by creating a retail street and the other by creating retail centers.

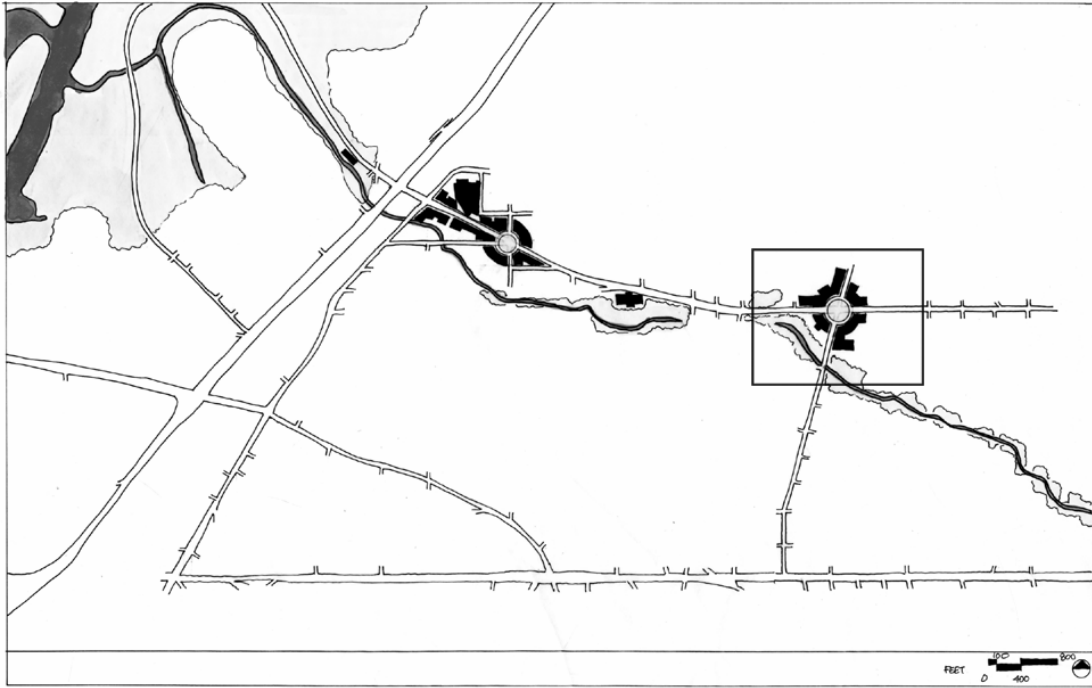


Figure 53: Anchoring Burroughs Avenue

Recreation Center as Civic Core: This intervention creates two nodes along Burroughs Avenue, one to the east at Minnesota Avenue and one to the west at Division Avenue. The purpose of these nodes is to allow for the strengthening of the axis which connects them. The zoning of the different components is interchangeable. One could imagine a residential street book ended by a retail hub and a civic center or a retail street anchored by a civic center and a residential area.

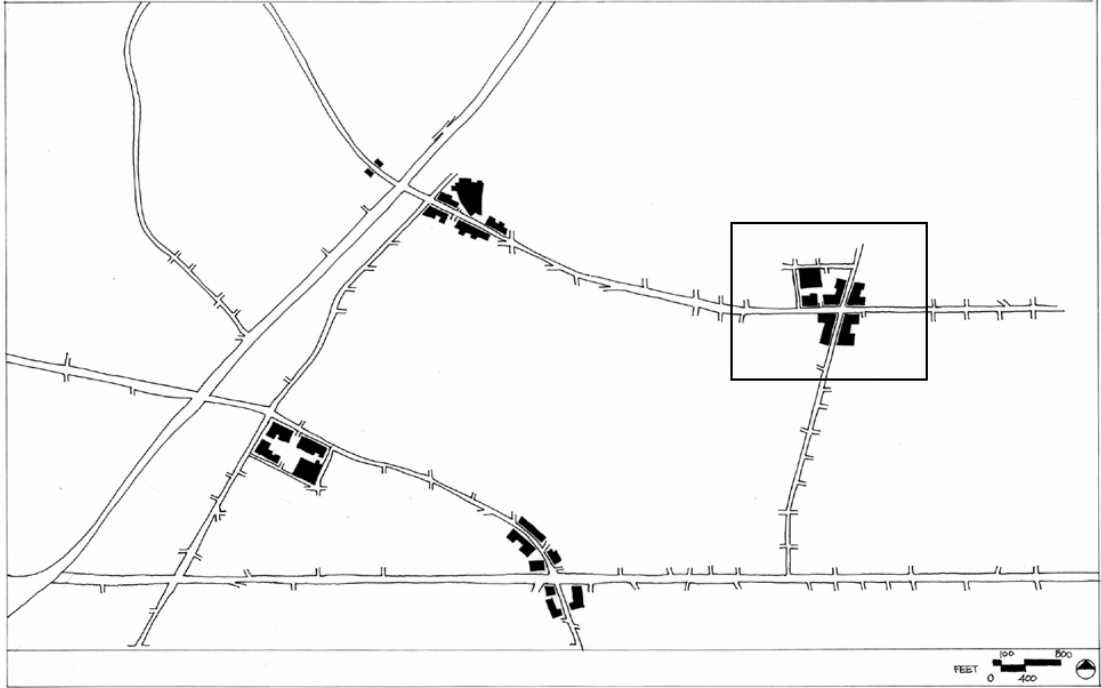


Figure 54: Concentrating Activity

Recreation Center as Piece of a Network: This intervention creates a network of activity centers with a mix of retail, civic, and office. Concentrating these functions at key intersections allows for more unified residential streets in between. The activity centers would each have their own character depending on the existing uses: civic center, cultural/entertainment hub, neighborhood shopping, retail center

Chapter 6: Design Goals and Issues

Transparency in Architecture

By nature public buildings are multifaceted and must deal with a variety of issues ranging from political to social to architectural. The multiplicity of this project will be examined through an exploration of phenomenal transparency and how one designs a project which celebrates the overlapping of various elements on several different levels - the community, the landscape, and the building. Colin Rowe and Robert Slutsky define phenomenal transparency as the opportunity for ‘continuous fluctuations of interpretation’ (Rowe, 51). In designing a faith-based recreation center for a nonprofit organization in an underserved African American community the clashing of objectives is inevitable. It is the goal of this thesis to take all of the potentially colliding elements and create an architectural composition which is made incredibly rich through the expression of each element in its strongest position.

On the community level Burrville and Lincoln Heights have several resources that are ineffective on their own and are in need of a core to tie them together. In his analysis of Le Corbusier’s Villa Stein Rowe says, ‘Each of these planes is incomplete in itself or perhaps even fragmentary; yet it is with these parallel planes as points of reference that the façade is organized’ (50). One can apply this architectural expression as an analogy to the community and how the recreation center can be the point of reference which organizes its positive development. Another way to think about the role of the recreation center is to compare it to the function of the ground plane in Cubist painting. Rowe describes the ground plane as ‘becoming a kind of tightly stretched membrane which acts upon the different elements it supports and in

turn is reacted upon by them' (296). The Lincoln Heights Recreation Center is going to put positive pressure on the community which will hopefully influence a change for the better. In turn the changed community will affect the recreation center, thus creating a positive reinforcement cycle.

In terms of the landscape the location of Watts Branch Park and Creek along the border of the site is an incredible opportunity to create a model for future developments which celebrate their proximity to this natural amenity. This thesis will bridge the gap between the urban condition to the north and the suburban condition of the park and creek to the south. Currently the landscape is treated as a secondary component which is intruding on the city. This thesis will equally engage the built and the natural environment. Through the interweaving and overlapping of landscaped and built forms an 'equivocal contradiction of spatial dimensions which are simultaneously apprehended' will be created (Rowe 291). The resulting juxtaposition will become an opportunity for multiple readings as to whether the building is an object in the landscape or the landscape is an extension of the building. Nature will no longer be viewed as the intruder, but as a mutual partner.

On the level of the building phenomenal transparency and overlapping will help to organize and relate the various functions and their respective participants. A good recreation center accommodates people with many different interests – athletic, creative, expressive, and intellectual. A great recreation center attracts a person for one activity and introduces them to a range of other activities, thus expanding the individual's repertoire as well as enriching the collective population of the center.

Special Considerations

The test of any building is how well it is used by its inhabitants. A common problem that recreation and community centers face is underutilization and the resulting lack of funding. In a society that is focused on being continuously entertained recreation centers have a lot of competition for the attention of children and teenagers from malls, movie theaters, and sports complexes. Recreation centers must compete not only with other entertainment/recreational venues, but also with television and the internet, since children do not even have to leave their homes to be entertained. This issue of competition raises several questions for the design of the building. How can the architecture and program of this recreation center effectively compete with all of the other options children have? What architectural expression is appropriate for informing residents about the diversity of activities within the center? How can the internal organization of the building work to display activities to visitors?

A second layer to the problem of competition is discovered when one considers the issue of government funding and which communities are receiving the money. It seems that all too often well off neighborhoods receive more government funding because they have louder voices arguing for them. An example of this scenario was the subject of a recent article in the Washington Post by Courtland Milloy which described the closing of the Orr Recreation Center in the District's poorest area, Ward 8 during the same week as the groundbreaking for a multimillion-dollar recreation center in the wealthiest area, Ward 3. The availability of monetary resources is not the only issue being overlooked in this case, since Ward 8 is home to

the most children in the District, while Ward 3 has the fewest children (Milloy). This is not only a social injustice, but also a tragedy for young people, since those living in lower income areas probably need the benefits and solace of a public recreation facility far more than those living in a more financially stable area. The community at Orr had a special need for staff to work with ‘boys and girls who have seen and experienced much too much, way too soon’ (Milloy).

The ability to accommodate and celebrate change is the key to prolonged success. A recreation center must be flexible in terms of the functions which can be accommodated. Athletic courts are for the most part consistent in their design and space requirements. The technology associated with creative expression is continually changing with computers, recording equipment, and art media. There is a delicate balance between being flexible enough to accommodate a variety of changing functions and being so general as to not adequately accommodate any function. How does one mediate between creating a sense of stability while also allowing for future change and transformation?

In a community that has been largely separated from the central city and treated as a secondary member, the issue of creating identity is a critical one. Giving the people of Burrville and Lincoln Heights a place to call their own and to take pride in is a goal of this thesis. It would be naive to assume that everyone will welcome the introduction of a new building into the community. There will undoubtedly be people who are complacent in the way things are currently and who will resist change. The issue of safety and security of the building and its patrons is a sensitive one. In today’s society where teenagers grow up being looked at with suspicion and the

assumption that they are up to no good, institutions can seem very intimidating (Russell, 136). How does one design a building that is open and inviting, while also discouraging to vandalism and violence? At the Red Hook Center in Brooklyn, New York a key factor in security was the presence of people. “An as yet skeletal program has invited vandals to prey on the building because it is so often empty” (Russell, 139). This introduces another issue related to identity and security, the issue of people both in terms of staff and patrons. A recreation center is only successful if there are people coming to use the facilities and taking part in the programs offered. Many of the programs require specialized staff, which add to the cost of maintaining the center once it has been built. Visual connections become important to allow for civilian policing of the recreation center.

Chapter 7: Program

The Burrville-Lincoln Heights Recreation Center will provide for a variety of activities: social, creative, academic as well as athletic. The gymnasium will serve as an area for sports such as basketball, volleyball, and other indoor games, with the flexibility to accommodate dramatic performances. A series of indeterminate rooms will be fitted for a range of activities such as arts and crafts, homework, reading, and social lounges. A computer lab and recording studio will provide kids with the equipment and opportunity to explore their technological interests and passions. Gallery spaces will showcase the diversity of interest and talents of the kids and also serve as advertisement of the center's activities to the community. An outdoor pool will provide the community with the opportunity for social gatherings and relief from the heat during summer months.

Program Defined

Recreation Center:

Entry Area.....	1,400 sf
Administrative Area.....	900 sf
Athletic Areas.....	11,800 sf
Social Activities.....	6,700 sf
Academic Activities.....	2,480 sf
Outdoor Pool.....	5,300 sf
Circulation.....	(@15% of total) 4,317 sf
Mechanical.....	(@12% of total) 3,453 sf
Maintenance.....	200 sf
TOTAL.....	36,550 sf

Program Description

ENTRY AREA **1,400 sf**

Lobby: **800sf**

The lobby’s primary function is to serve as the main public reception and information area. The secondary function of the lobby is to serve as the visual and social core of the recreation center. Visitors should receive a positive first impression of the activities and facilities that are available, however this area must also act as the main security point, beyond which members are not allowed.

Reception Desk: 100sf

The reception desk will provide visitors with information about membership, programs, and the facilities. It will also serve as the main supervision point for both entry and activities and therefore needs to have visual access to the main entrance as well as key activity areas.

Gallery/Display Space: 100sf

This space should be highly visible in order to showcase the creative work of members. It does not have to be only floor space and can be casing set into walls.

Public Restrooms: (2@ 200sf each) 400sf

ADMINISTRATIVE AREA 900sf

Director's Office: 250sf

The director is the chief administrator of the recreation center and oversees the operation of the center. The office should be located to provide views to the outside and easy access to the conference room and secretary.

Secretary: 150sf

The secretary works closely with the director and therefore the office needs to be close to the director's office, conference room and copy room.

Staff Open Office: 500sf

This area will accommodate the general workers of the center who range from administrative staff to activity specialists. Each person should have access to a desk and access to light and air.

ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES **11,800sf**

Gymnasium: **8,000sf**

The gymnasium will accommodate a variety of physical activities such as: basketball, volleyball, and indoor games. The gymnasium will be designed with the flexibility to allow for dramatic performances such as: plays, dance recitals, and talent shows. Spectators will be accommodated on bleachers along the walls or in movable seats, which can be set up for performances. Natural light and ventilation will be designed into the gymnasium with careful consideration of means of control. The gymnasium should be located near the locker room and have direct access to the stage and the gymnasium storage room.

Gymnasium Storage: **500sf**

Large equipment that will not fit at the equipment issue desk or which is not available without staff supervision will be stored here. This room should be secured and accessible only to staff members.

Stage: **1,000sf**

The stage should be located with direct access to the center axis of the gymnasium. It should be able to be closed off from the gymnasium. Direct access to its storage is necessary.

Stage Storage: **300sf**

Items related to performances such as: set pieces, costumes, and props will be stored here. It should be secured and only accessible by staff members.

Locker Rooms: (2@1,00sf each) 2,000sf

The locker rooms will contain lockers, showers, and restrooms. They should be closely located to the gymnasium and have direct access to the pool.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES **6,700sf**

Large Multi-purpose Room **4,000sf**

This room will serve as a meeting room, dining room, and flexible activity space. Large gatherings, such as religious services or meetings will be held in this area. This room needs to be directly accessible from the kitchen and storage room.

Multipurpose Room Storage **500sf**

This room will serve mainly as chair storage, but can also hold miscellaneous items related to activities held in the multi-purpose room.

Sanctuary **1,000sf**

This small chapel serves as a quiet place which is always open for prayer and reflection. It can also accommodate small religious services, however larger services will be held in the multi-purpose room.

Kitchen **600sf**

The kitchen should have ample counter space for the preparation of food for large groups of people. A double basin sink, two stoves, an industrial size refrigerator and freezer as well as pantry space will be required.

Social Lounges (2 @ 300sf each) 600sf

These rooms will provide a place for members to socialize freely and to play non-athletic games, such as: video games, board games, and card games. This room

will have couches, chairs, and carpeting to provide a comfortable place to hangout. One of the lounges will have a television and VCR set.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES **2,480sf**

Homework Rooms: **(3 @ 300sf each) 900sf**

These rooms will be furnished with tables or desks for members to do their homework and receive tutoring.

Recording Studio: **500sf**

This room will be equipped with a recording booth to allow members to participate as performer and producer.

Computer Lab: **400sf**

The computer lab will be equipped with individual computer work stations, a printer, and a scanner.

Arts Room: **300sf**

The Arts Room will be furnished with movable tables to provide large surface areas to work on, but to also allow flexibility in spatial layout to accommodate large scale art or easels. This room will also have a sink and counter space.

Arts Room Storage: **80sf**

This room will have shelving to allow for storage of art materials.

Reading Room: **300sf**

The Reading Room will have shelves for book storage, tables and chairs for reading as well as more casual seating such as sofas and arm chairs.

OUTDOOR POOL AREA **5,300sf**

Outdoor Pool: **4,000sf**

The pool will be 35' x 75' with a depth varying from 4.0' to 12.0'. The pool will have five 7' -6" wide racing lanes painted for competitive racing practice. The deep end of the pool will have two one-meter diving boards. There will be a total of two lifeguard stations, one at either end. There should be direct access to the locker room and pool storage.

Patio Area: **1,000sf**

The patio area will serve as a social gathering area with lounge chairs, benches, tables, chairs, and places to grill.

Pool Storage: **300sf**

The necessary equipment and supplies for maintaining the pool will be stored in this room. It should be secured and accessible to staff members only.

MAINTANENCE **200sf**

Janitor's Closet: **(2 @ 100sf each) 200sf**

SUBTOTAL **29,985sf**

SERVICE **8,040sf**

Circulation **(15% of total) 4,470sf**

Mechanical **(12% of total) 3,570sf**

GRAND TOTAL **36,550sf**

Since the recreation center is intended to serve as the generator of the neighborhood center it will not offer any services which will be in conflict with the surrounding businesses.

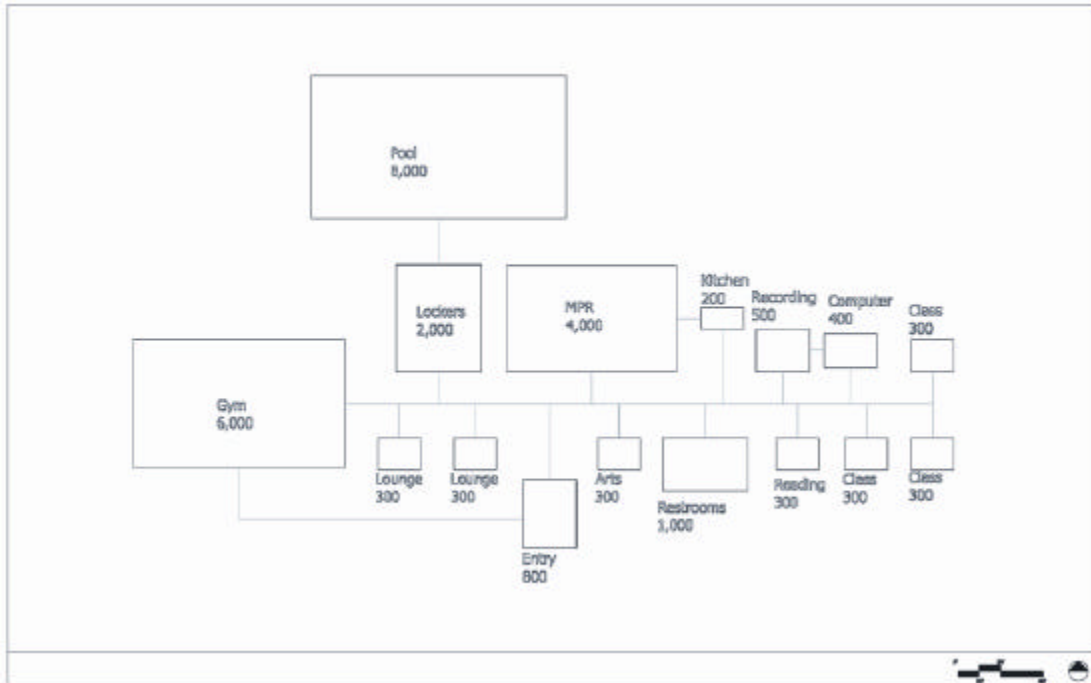


Figure 55: Program Diagram

This diagram illustrates the program relationships of relative size, adjacency, location, and connection. The pool should only be accessed through the locker rooms which also need to service the gymnasium. Quieter areas such as the classrooms, reading room, computer lab and recording room should be distanced from the gymnasium and pool. There should also be a visual connection from the entry to the gymnasium.

Chapter 8: Design

Preliminary Site Strategies

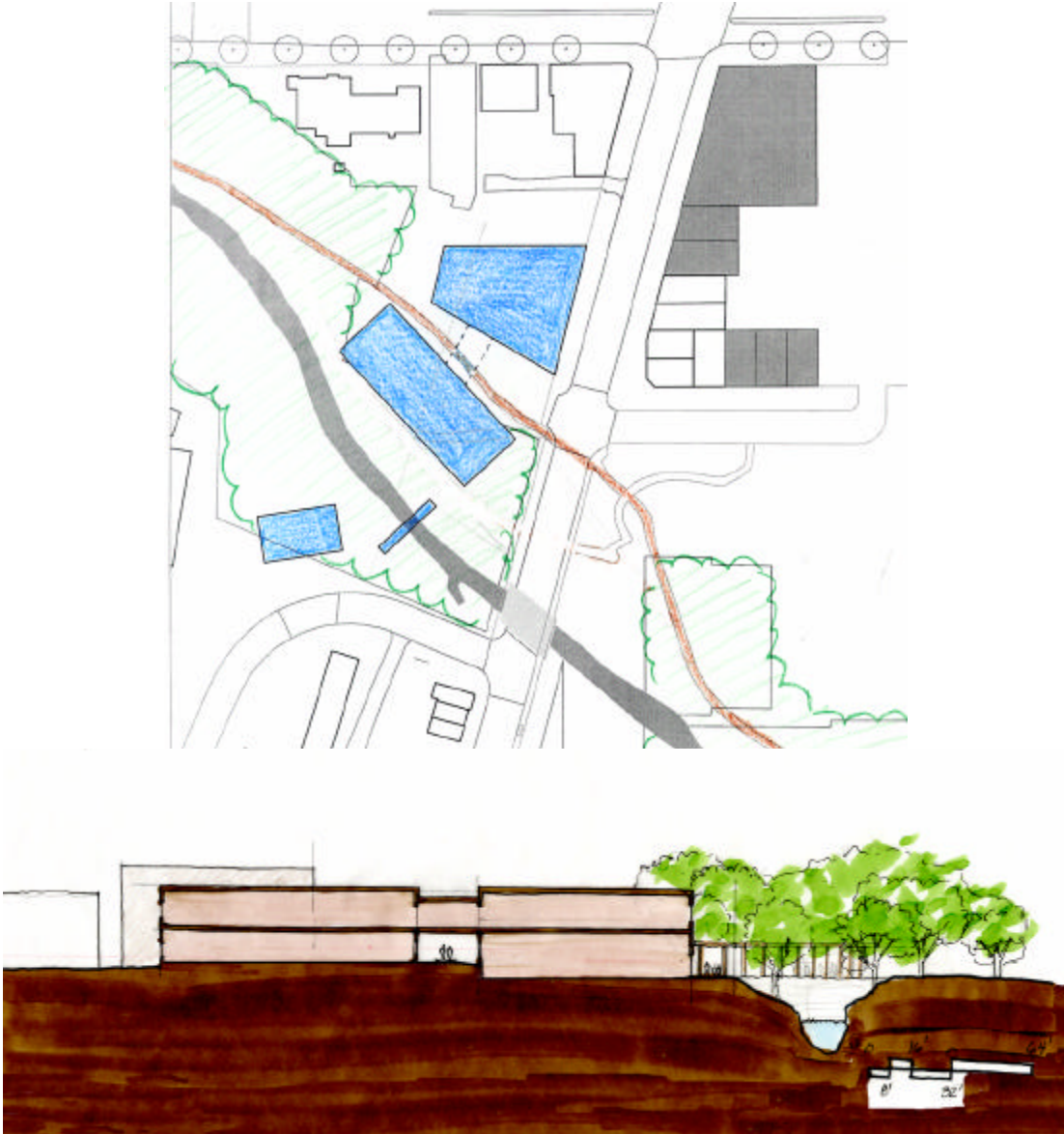


Figure 56: Scheme A: Bridging the Pathway

This scheme celebrates the existing pedestrian pathway and allowing it to continue through the site by dividing the building into two parts which bridge over it. The benefit and downfall of this scheme is the creation of two separate buildings. It would be nice to separate the functions and allow for one building to be open when the other is not. However, the creation of two buildings potentially requires twice the security, twice the staff, and a separation rather than a joining of community members.

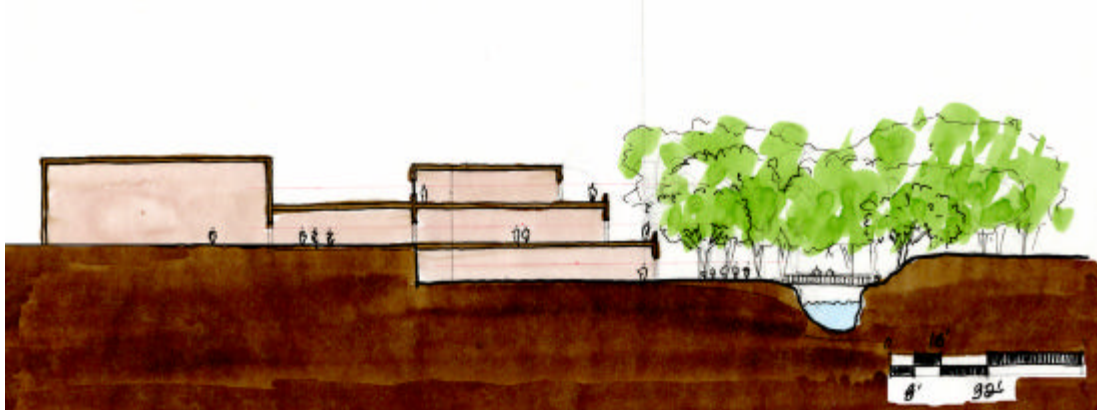
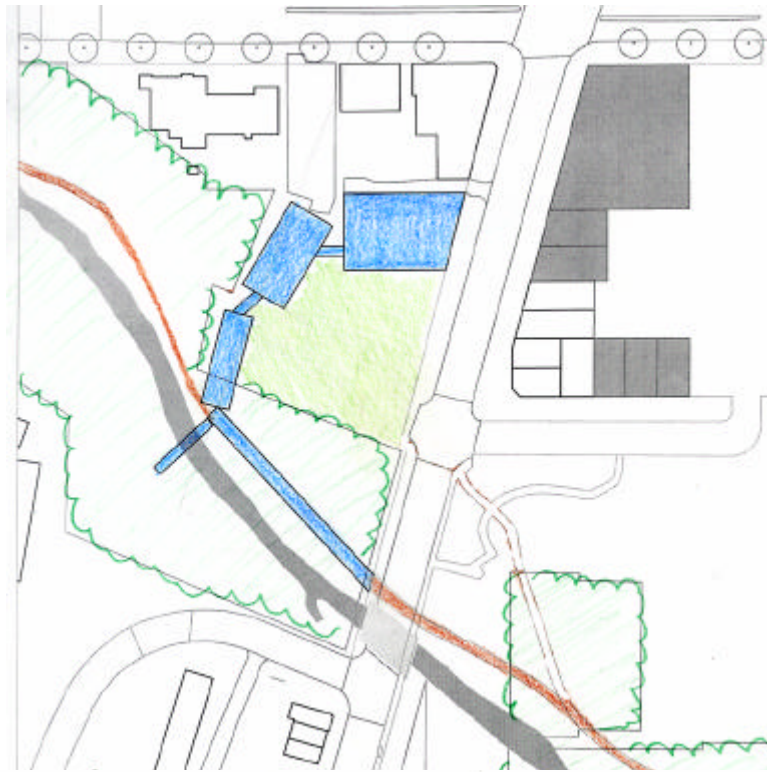


Figure 57: Scheme B: Enclosing Space

This scheme focuses on creating a secure outdoor space in which children can play by organizing the building linearly to act as an edge. Sectionally, this scheme begins to explore the topography down to Watts Branch Creek and what the potential is for the building to step back in order to create additional secured outdoor space in the form of patios or decks. The pedestrian pathway would be moved closer to the creek and act as an edge to the enclosed space of the building.

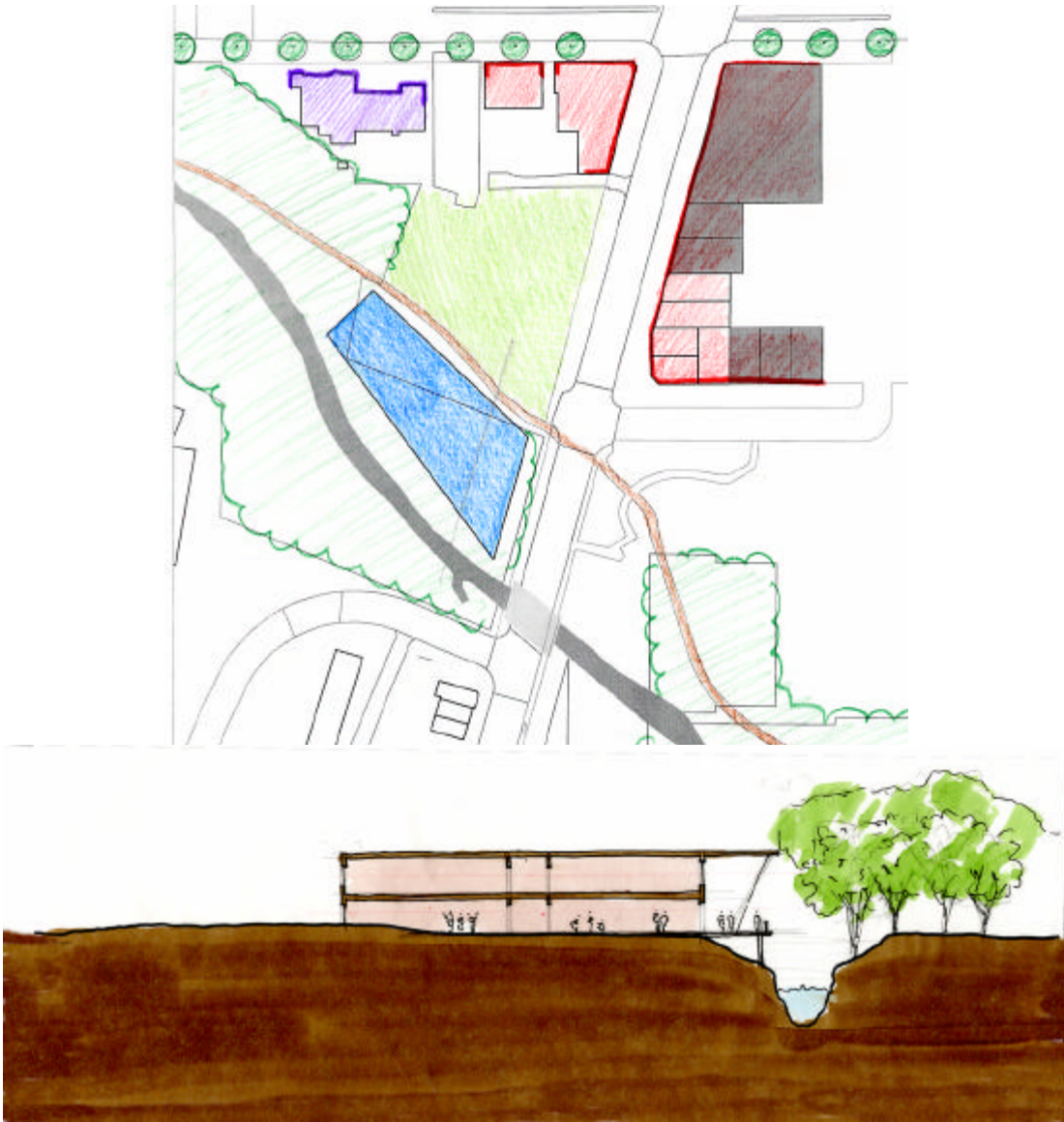


Figure 58: Scheme C: Filling the Gap

This scheme concentrates the program into a single mass which is nestled between Watts Branch Creek and the pedestrian pathway. The building is pulled back from the commercial intersection and acts as an edge to the pathway and the creek. The section explores the idea of the building extending out into the creek through a deck.

Design Process



Figure 59: Program Exploration Models

The inclusion as well as the arrangement of program elements is a critical decision in designing a community center. Abstract models were made in order to explore potential adjacencies, connections, and layerings.

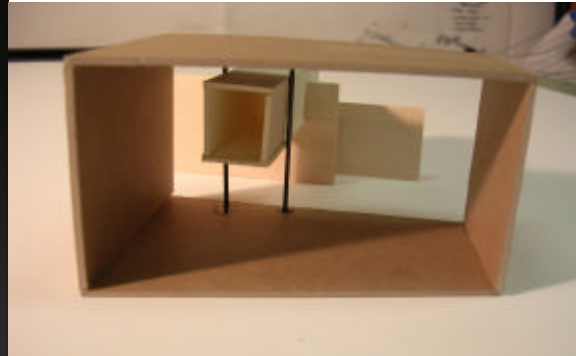
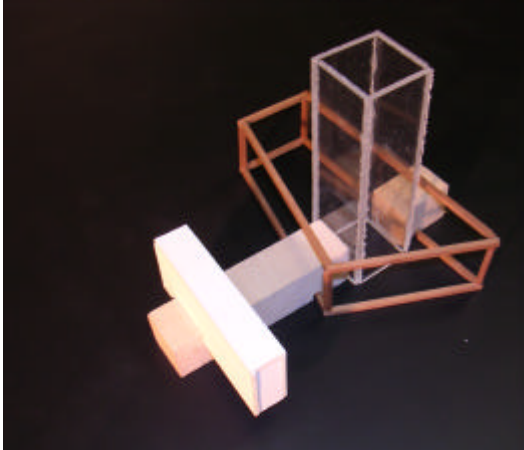
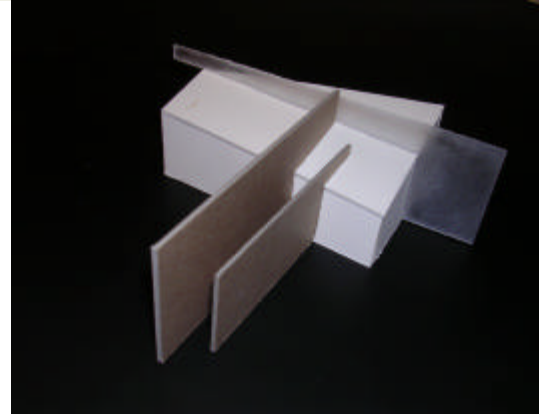
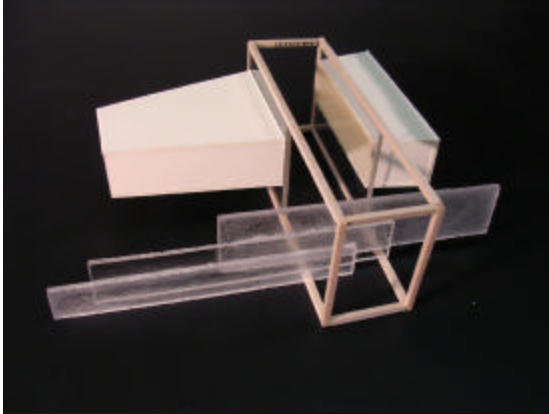
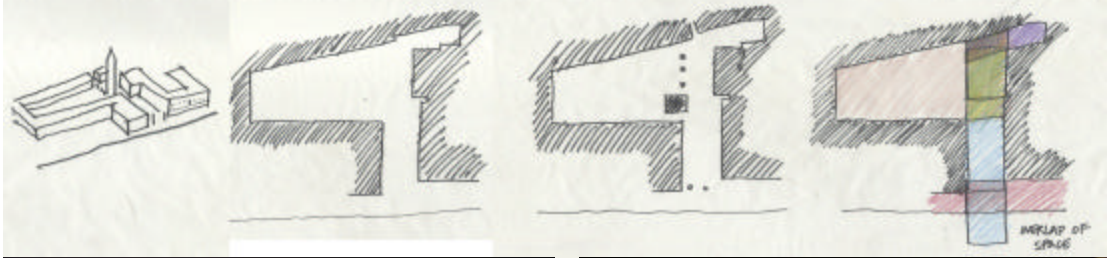


Figure 60: Piazza San Marco Precedent Study Models

A study of Piazza San Marco provided inspiration for possible strategies in dealing with a very irregular site with many different orientations.

Design Proposal

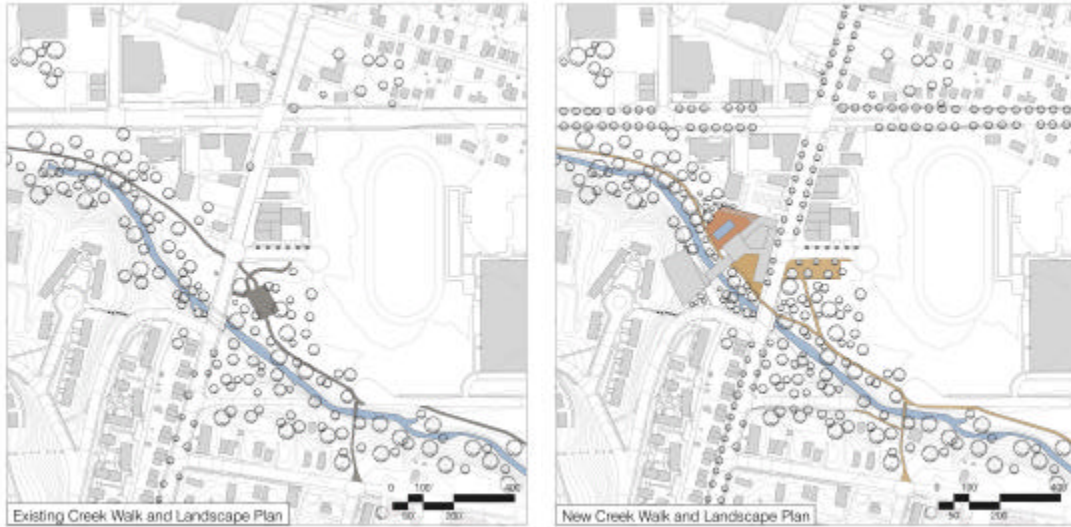


Figure 61: Existing and Proposed Creek Walk and Landscape Plan

The existing creek walk veers away from the creek and runs through an asphalt pad placed in the middle of Heritage Park. The proposed creek walk would continue alongside the creek's edge and act as the main east west path to the recreation center. In order to preserve Heritage Park as a park, the asphalt pad would be removed and replaced with a paved area extending the sidewalk along Foote Street, thus creating a clear delineation between paved and park areas.



Figure 62: Proposed Site Plan

The proposed site plan reflects the mediation of several orientations. The building's main orientation is in response to the direction of Watts Branch Creek. The secondary orientation relates to the continuation of the building edge along Division Avenue. The parking lot to the north of the recreation center is an expansion of the one currently owned by Sargent Memorial Church. Different peak days and hours as well as a large percentage of pedestrian patrons would allow the new extended parking to be shared by the two buildings.



Figure 63: Orientations Diagram

The irregular shape of the building is a result of the different orientations putting pressure on the site. The main orientation is created by the angle of Watts Branch Creek, while the secondary orientation is created by Division Avenue. The junction of these two angles creates an opportunity for a void which serves as a public plaza opening off of the creek walk.

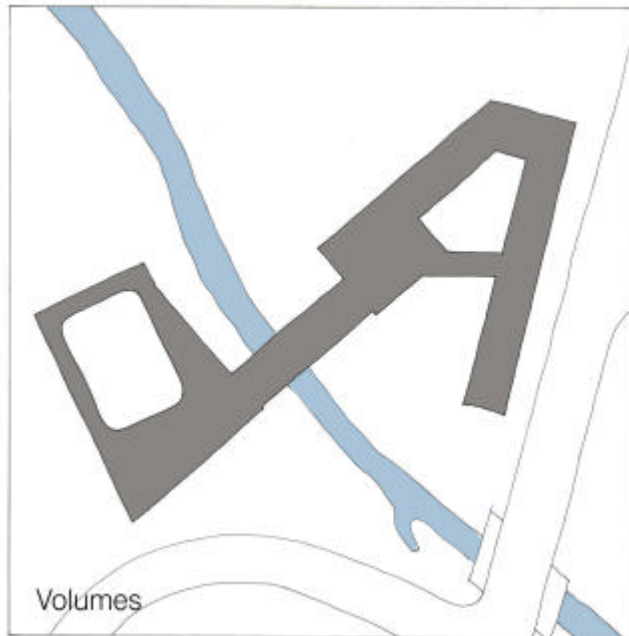


Figure 64: Volumes Diagram

The form of the building is created by surrounding the two main volumes: the gymnasium and the atrium, with the remaining program and circulation.

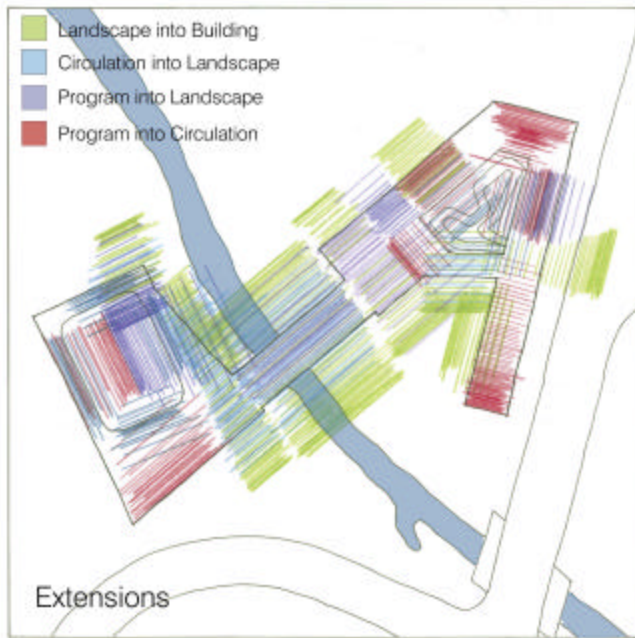


Figure 65: Extensions Diagram

The three main factors relating on the site are the landscape, the program and the circulation. This diagram shows the push and pull of each of these factors and the blurring of the lines between them.

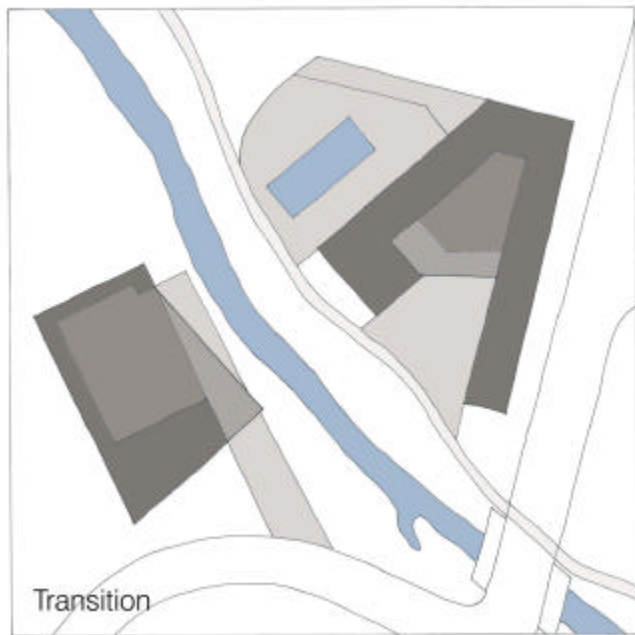


Figure 66: Transition Diagram

The transition from landscape to program areas is mediated by outdoor spaces, informal gathering areas, main volumes and circulation areas.

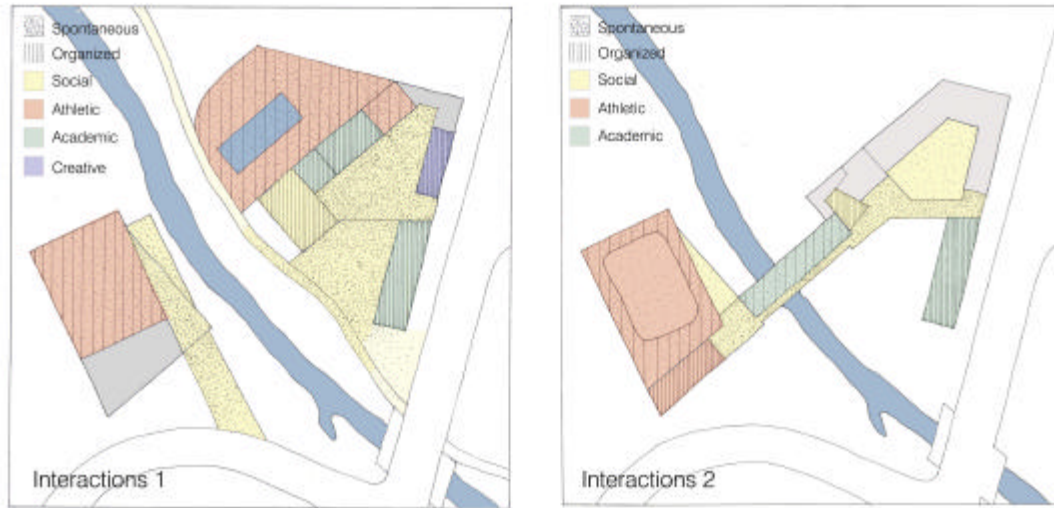


Figure 67: Interactions Diagram

The balance between organized and spontaneous interactions is critical to the growth of existing relationships as well as the development of new relationships. The majority of spontaneous interactions will take place en route to organized events; therefore circulation zones are just as important as program areas.



Figure 68: First Floor Plan

The first floor is divided into two buildings with separate entrances. The north building houses the academic and creative functions – daycare, double height artist studio, locker rooms, administration, café/kitchen, and multi-purpose room, while the south building contains the athletic functions – gymnasium, locker rooms, and team rooms. The gymnasium opens out the creek through a large lobby and onto a terrace above the creek.

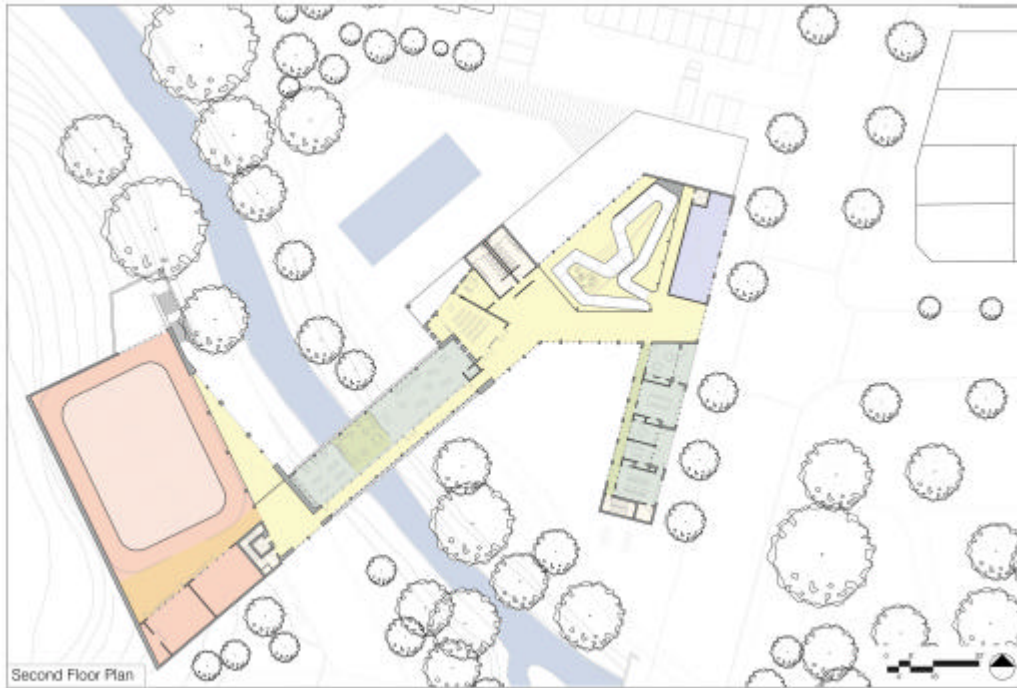


Figure 69: Second Floor Plan

The second floor of the two buildings is connected by a bridge which contains a children's and an adult library linked by a common reading room which sits above the creek. The elevation of the bridge allows the creek walk to continue on the ground level alongside the creek. The program in north building consists of classrooms along Division Avenue, and an interdenominational chapel. The south building contains a suspended ramp above the gymnasium as well as an aerobics and weight room. A terrace to the North West acts as a private outdoor area as well as a second means of egress and access to the terrace on the first level.



Figure 70: Ramp Model Photos

The main vertical circulation in the north building is a concrete serpentine ramp. The choice to use a ramp was made because of its universal nature as well as the ability to stop along the journey of the ramp and engage in spontaneous interactions. The turns of the ramp provide different views of the building and the landscape as well as sculpt spaces for informal gathering and plantings or water features.

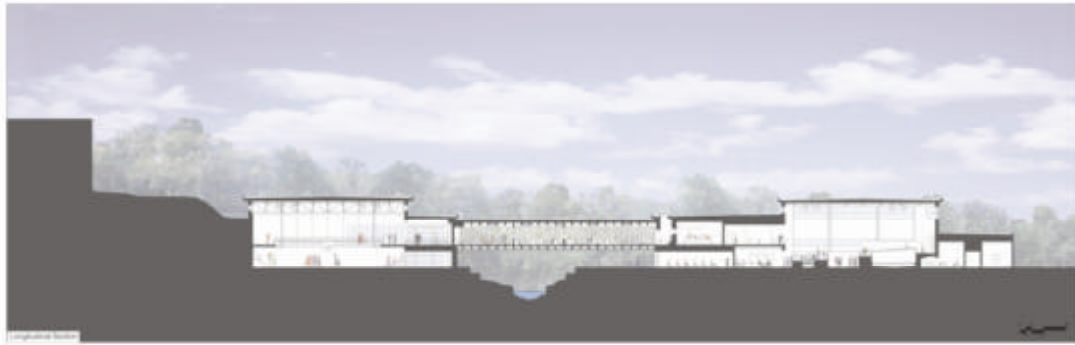


Figure 71: Longitudinal Section

The section through the buildings and the bridge shows the two main volumes and their delicate connection at the creek. The interactions visually and acoustically between spaces is also shown. The contrast between the solidity of the ramp and the voids it creates is also visible.



Figure 72: Creek Elevation – Atrium Section

The elevation along the creek expresses the relation of the two main volumes and their connection through the bridge and intermediate volumes. The different heights and volumes relate to the fragmented nature of the site as well as the program, while the common geometric language ties them all together.



Figure 73: Creek Elevation Perspective



Figure 74: Division Street Elevation

The elevation along Division Street is broken down into two parts: the artist studios with the atrium behind and the daycare with the classrooms above. The two parts are connected by the main entrance. The size of the openings relates to the program located behind the façade and expresses the needs of the different users in terms of amount of light and height of view.



Figure 75: Main Entry Perspective

The main entrance opens into a café seating area which mediates between the glass wall of the plaza (on the left) and the atrium with its ramp (on the right)



Figure 76: Atrium Perspective

The atrium would serve as a hub of activity with people circulating on the ramp, hanging out in the spaces of the ramp, sitting in the café, and gathering along the balcony of the second level.



Figure 77: Library Perspective



Figure 78: Bridge Detail Section

The bridge is made of glue laminated members which allow it to span the complete distance without vertical supports to enhance the ephemeral reading of the connection between the two brick buildings. Visual connections between the corridor and the reading room as well as through the entire bridge were important. The structure of the bridge as well as the mechanical work is exposed and painted to add visual interest.

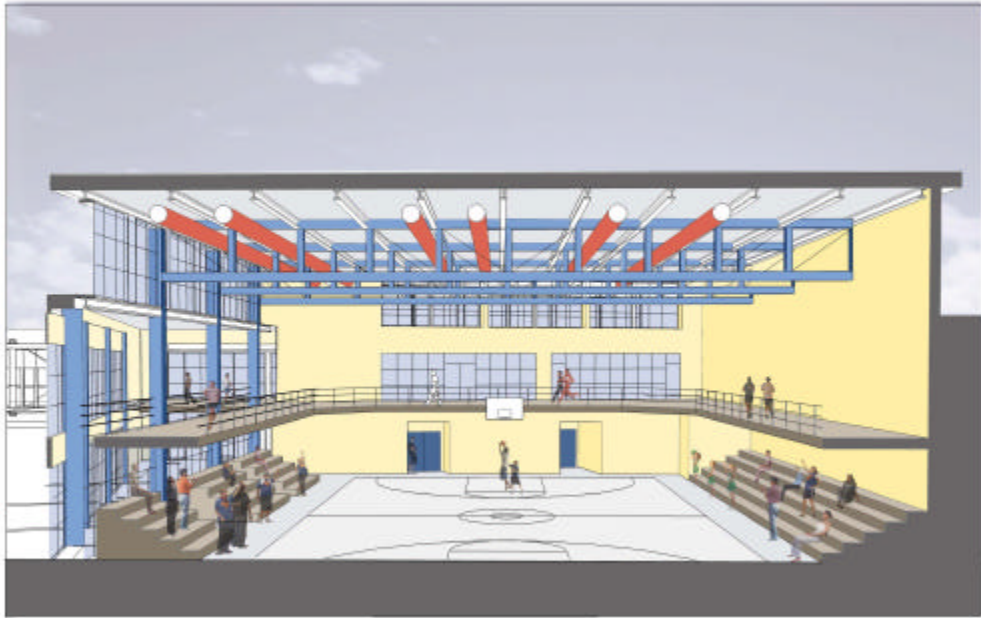


Figure 79: Gymnasium Section Perspective

The gymnasium is nestled into the hillside to the south, and opens up the creek on the north. Natural light is brought in through large clerestory windows as well as the glass wall on the north.



Figure 80: Site Context Model

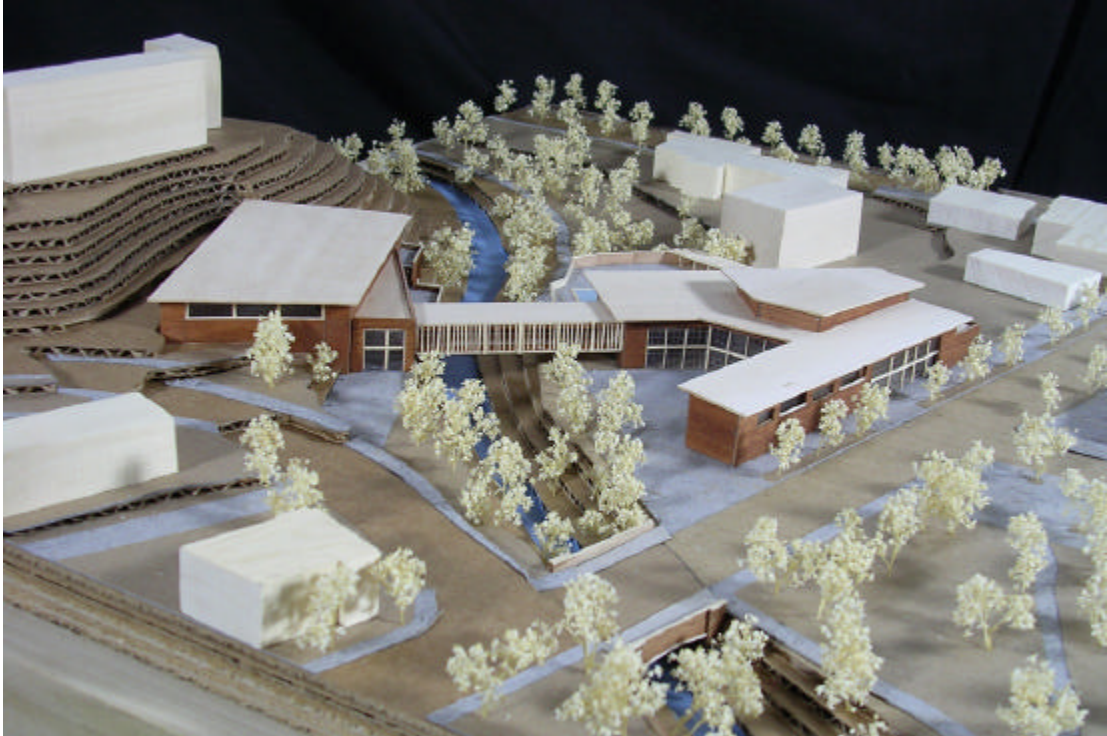


Figure 81: Site Model

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