Volpe Site - Site Design
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Principles (So Far)
Interlude – Urban vs. Suburban Strategies
Comparative Districts
Discussion

Three Potential Approaches to the site
Discussion
Volpe Site - Site Design

Recapitulation of principles (so far) for Open Space and Ground Level Life
Open Space: “Center of Gravity” for Kendall Square.

Volpe Working Group

Cambridge Community Development Department
Michael Dennis & Associates

Principles (so far)
Open Space: Connectivity

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Principles (so far)
Open Space: Comfort

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Ground Level Life/Community Space: Activation of Streetscape
Ground Level Life/Community Space: Civic Participation / Local Ownership
“Center of Gravity”

Activation of Streetscape

Connectivity

Attracting the Broader Community

Inclusiveness

Civic Participation / Local Ownership

Comfort

Principles (so far)
Urban and Suburban Spatial Strategies
In The Suburban Condition:

• Buildings are the primary focus of attention.

• Open space is residual, a field on which buildings are placed and a buffer between buildings.

• Privacy is achieved through distance and screening by landscape.

• Buildings are designed to be seen from all sides.

• Building masses sprawl into open space.

• Architecture often assertively emphasizes the uniqueness of the building’s program and/or identity.

• Densities are generally low. As density is increased, privacy tends to be lost.
In The Urban Condition:

- Space is the primary medium of design and focus of attention.
- Public open spaces – streets, squares, parks, and courtyards – are like rooms at the scale of the city.
- Open spaces constitute the Public Realm
- They connect disparate places, functions, individuals, programs, and meanings.
- The shared and interconnected spaces of the public realm enhance community.
- Building facades define public space.
- Architecture and landscape design work together to create the spaces of the public realm.
- Privacy is achieved by the demarcation of thresholds between spaces.
The Urban Condition

Space – room-like urban space, whether street, park, or square – is a vessel for experience, for memory and possibility, and for human connection.
The Past and Future of the City:

- Architectural and urban design since WW2 has generally avoided urban strategies and embraced suburban strategies.

- The low-density suburban paradigm is inherently less efficient in the use of land, energy, and resources.

- Even in higher density manifestations, the suburban paradigm’s de-emphasis on the public realm is at odds with a sense of community: it prioritizes private privilege over public engagement.
The Past and Future of the City:

- There is a growing realization that the city – the good and dense city of streets and squares and parks – will be instrumental in addressing the social and environmental issues of the 21st century.

- This will include adapting the design principles that made the traditional city a joy to be in to contemporary circumstances of scale and density.
Comparative Contemporary Urban Districts
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Cambridge Research Park – Cambridge
University Park – Cambridge
Assembly Row – Somerville
Seaport District – Boston
Comparative Contemporary Urban Districts

- What do you feel when you visit these districts?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- How do they relate to the principles we’ve developed so far?
- Do you feel invited to be in them?
- How do they connect with their surroundings?
- Will they attract diverse user groups and be active at different times of day?
- Do they provide a range of socially intimate spaces and/or space for community programming?
- How would you imagine using this place in your daily life?
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Site Design

Three potential arrangements of the site’s Public Spaces

- North/South Park along Fifth Street
- Park at Broadway and Third Street
- Central Park on Fifth Street, and Public Square on Broadway
Site Design  Intentions of the Three Approaches:

Public open space – room-like urban space: street, park, and square – is a *Vessel* for experience, for memory and possibility, and for connection.
Site Design

Intentions of the Three Approaches:

Ground Level Life – shopping, eating, playing, meeting, talking, demonstrating, exhibiting – is the glue.
Site Design  Intentions of the Three Approaches:

The site’s *Civic Structure* – the form and arrangement of its interconnected public open spaces: streets, parks, and squares – should be designed to make the Volpe site a good place to be, and an integral part of the city.
Three potential arrangements of the site’s Public Spaces

North/South Park along Fifth Street

Park at Broadway and Third Street

Central Park on Fifth Street, and Public Square on Broadway
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Park at Broadway and 3rd Street with Public Square on 5th Street
Public Square with Ground Floor Retail and Office and Residential on Upper Floors
What do the three approaches have in common?

• Public open space is primary.
• Public open spaces are coherent.
• Public open space is the forum for community.
• A variety of types and sizes of spaces provide “niches” for different kinds of uses.
• Ground level uses - retail and community - are the glue.
• Architecture defines public space.
• Landscape design reinforces the configuration and character of the spaces.
• The landscape of the new Volpe Building is integrated with the entire district.
Three potential arrangements of the site’s Public Spaces

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• What are the distinct benefits/drawbacks of each approach?

• How do the different approaches reflect the principles we’ve already discussed?

• What should be the priority outcomes for the site?