

Comprehensive Project Letters to Students

Vol. No. 1 - Nov. 1996

from Jerry

LA 490 Comp Prep
Nov. 96
Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: A. M.

Title: Park "Bosque de Macuto" Barquisimeto-Lara, Venezuela

Comments: A.

Thanks for doing such a good job of orienting me to Venezuela, Barquisimeto and the Park. One day I'd love to visit it, especially after you are successful at your very ambitious and admirable program. I hope you can succeed in improving the ecological health, recreational use and environmental understanding of this beautiful piece of land. I'm amazed at the richness of all the tropical species and sorry to say I know so little about most of them. Perhaps you can teach us all a little about the flora of your country.

Breaking the park down into the five parts and explaining a little about them was very helpful. More of this is necessary in order to accomplish your goals. For example, you talk about routing trails away from sensitive areas, but we have no map of sensitive areas. I can't tell yet what circulation systems presently connect to the park and might become an entrance to the research center or which paths exist that you might extend into a recreational path system. Will each of the five areas play its own special role in the park and require its own sub-plan?

You need to be more specific about a "multi-purpose recreational environment" in order to know how to site and built it. How big? For how many? What's in it? What will all the activities here require? You need to create a site program for your center and size it along with its various components. You need to identify and locate wildlife habitat areas in order to plan for them further.

If I can get you to be more specific about all the fine things you mention, I'm sure you will be able to show a tangible proposal of your vision for this place.

And I'm sure one day I'll fly in and there it will be.

More programmatic detail now please that helps you direct your action plans and programs for the park.

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Name: A. W.

Title: Haven's Beach Park

Comments: A:

This reads well, is clear and is a good summary of your work. You identify important issues and suggest some of the actions that need to be taken. The color prints are really beautiful and give a good sense of the place.

I kept turning back a few pages when reading your description of the Main St. to Haven's Beach Park connection, which means it would have been easier if the image had been closer to what you were saying. Also, I think it would be useful to have a bigger diagram of the parking/beach area. I had to look for a while before the tiny toilet building became obvious. I know this is all too familiar to you. An overlay which named the areas and the work needed in each would be useful. I wonder, for example when I look at your map, what area of the beach needs replanting, how far it extends, etc.? In looking at the way the storm outlet splits the site, I wonder if you'd considered moving it east as a part of the construction of the wetland area?

I like the way you've set this project up, made useful contacts, established a good relationship with a client committee and dug into your project's ecological content. The Moshomack Preserve is a good model of what the area once was that you can use to compare with your Haven's Beach situation, uses and choices.

For this report, I would prefer a more direct discussion of some of the ideas and possibilities you are considering for the place, such as the boardwalk, commemorative signs etc. and the way they try to answer some of the issues you've identified. The VP, which you are using well, was just meant to be an exercise to help you start to generate some tangible programmatic material. Try to write this narrative from the present looking forward (with the benefit of having visited the future for ideas).

I'm impressed with the way you're picking up and making good use of the new technology to package and present your work. This is an excellent project, well underway. Can you start to add in now a discussion of your project goals? (Goals say what you are going to do about those pesky issues.) Can you tell me what studies still need to be done and what products you intend to produce for your client? Expand your discussion a bit, add in more diagrams. Keep it going. Stay aggressive. It's going to be a winner.

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Name: B. B.

Title: A Rail-To-Trail Conversion Project between Boring and Estacada, Oregon

Comments: B:

You've picked a good project and are writing about it well. Your maps and diagrams that show the overall trail network and the larger Boring to Estacada section are excellent.

Since you start out page one with a system map, I think it would be good to comment on it at the beginning and maybe say a bit about Rail-To-Trail projects in general. Its also important to say what your project is, i.e., explain your title and then proceed into a Project Area Description. You assume the reader already knows what your working on, but you could use a few words and let him know that you're going to be working on the yellow green part and why its important.

It might also be useful to say that you will be working on the development of key trailhead proposals for the system, a series of reststops, bridge conditions, some suggestions for privacy and security for adjacent property owners and whatever else you think belongs on the list of project priorities. Then it makes sense to proceed to your map and discuss the places you've alphabetized. Would it be good to also flag a few of the security areas that need good design proposals in order to build support?

Since there are many Rail-To-Trail projects that have been done over the past ten years or so, can you use these as precedent studies and refer to their experience at solving some of the same problems you have to face? It's nice to be able to say at a meeting or presentation, "This is the way they solved a similar problem at..."

So, generally, I think you need to smooth out your narrative a bit, get it in a little better order, and probably bring in some more examples from other projects. Imagine yourself standing in front of your friends at the end of comp studio saying. "Cazadero Corridor is a Rail-To-Trail project 12 miles east of metropolitan Portland which would link the downtown to the Pacific Crest Trail. This 13.9 mile section of the old Portland Traction Company's rail line is typical of many such project's of recent years which have tried to take advantage of abandoned rail right-of-ways in order to....."

You get the idea. I'm confident that this will turn out very well.

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Name: C.B.

Title: The Bear Creek Greenway intersects with Medford's downtown urban edge.

Comments: C:

This is a good start and an interesting project. The overall section of the Greenway is well chosen and certainly needs improvement; the sub-parts you designate also seem like the right ones, smaller wholes with their own identity. It good that one of them has some positive qualities that can serve as a model for how other parts ought to be - or at least provide a standard of quality for the whole urban area. Sometimes it's a good strategy to fix the worst, because it's so obviously necessary, and also make the best a little better as a way of giving an example of what high quality really means.

In the intro I missed a short history of the Greenway project itself. You'll want to say a little bit about when it started, how far it's come, what its current status is and the work presently being done or waiting for funds.

Best I think to use the Fan as a guide but keep it more in the background. The categories just put people off and sound too abstract. Instead of saying aesthetic (which nobody understands), just talk about the experience of using the Greenway and what it's like to be there: much of it is rundown and unattractive, a place as you say to get through quickly. Too bad. For functional, say what the current system is and how it works. Describe the bikeway as an 8' asphalt path (or whatever it is) with no connections into town at key points and no relationships with the adjoining land uses and no places to stop to rest or talk or eat or watch wildlife or listen to the wind in the trees; and describe it as a storm sewer for adjoining property or urban watershed. Ecologically you can say that it presently serves as a connecting corridor....but is too thin in places, overrun with disturbed vegetation and has very questionable water quality and degraded habitat through town. You get the idea.

You've made an assessment of the overall area. Needed now is a more specific evaluation of the sub-areas from all the valuing perspectives, identifying the work that needs doing more specifically, setting goals and objectives for their improvement and selecting the parts of this you want to emphasize as highest priority recommendations for change in this "intersect." Since this as a large area, you can't do everything about everything, so you'll need a strategy.

I know I'll want to turn back again and look when you get through. Good use of the image maps. Nice work.

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Name: C. M.

Title: Astoria Riverfront Design Development Plan

Comments: C:

Thanks for making the setting and circumstance so clear. I appreciated your historical approach to “the problem,” and the way that you are prepared to see it complexly and from the Astorian point of view. Your writing, the site description and especially the conceptual map diagram are all excellent, and I was interested to know the present state of the pond site as well as some of the politics related to some possible futures. Perhaps extending your diagram west to the other things you mention, the Murase work, downtown Astoria etc., would be a way to widen the conceptual picture at this scale.

You are taking good advantage of the Fan strategy of looking at the many interests that have and that will continue to contribute to the forming out of... process. Your intent to get to know the place and the people better is admirable, certainly a key part of any really significant work. But I want to encourage you to plunge in to the “key parts,” four of them, three and a corridor as I understand it, and describe their structure, evaluate what you see and speculate about what needs to be done. I’m challenging you to write a program for at least one of these places this term and do a schematic plan.

I know you don’t feel ready, but do it anyway. Next term as you get to know more and more about the local circumstance, you can change your programs and your ideas from something you thought was terrific to (one always hopes) some better ones. It much easier to go from something to something better than from nothing to tadahhhh! in one step. I’m trying to get you all to jump start this inevitably developmental process and have an opinion, a point of view, and some ideas. It’s like going to a meeting with some things to discuss and talking about something or going to a meeting and talking about having something to talk about at the next meeting.

Evaluate your “parts,” and the role you think they should play in the larger system, make some assumptions and take a position about what needs to be done, give yourself a program, and then do a conceptual site plan this term and try to estimate the products this will require. Next term you can temper your thoughts and enthusiasm with some Astorian common sense and bring your project into harbor (so to speak).

You’re a very creative guy. Let’s have some very creative thoughts here!!!

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Name: E. O.

Title: Pontocho, Kyoto Japan

Comments: E:

Your letter is wonderful and serves as an excellent summary of your project. I'm impressed with the color prints and your diagrams. Can't locate the photos very well on the site analysis plan. It would be good to see more of what's around and connected to the space at this scale, especially the canal. Do you know who parks here now and where they might go? This was a big issue at the Knight Library as I struggled to get cars out of the old turn around area by the gate.

Could you draw an axon of the area showing the building elevations (simply, using your photographs) around the space? Given the scale here, it would be good to draw and diagram three dimensionally and later work in model form. Your site analysis is about half descriptive and half analytical and evaluative, although you are much clearer in your written account. You could say on your drawing, for example, "Toilet blocks the connection to the canal," as opposed to "toilet." (Which of these is only descriptive and which evaluative? You have 10 seconds.....) You could do another overlay and show in bubbles the areas and relations you think the site could provide. That's probably what you mean by "private space" on your drawing, but where does it start, extend to or become something else?

Your Journal Entry is excellent, evocative, well-written and works well for you. I had asked, however, that you not include it this time because I wanted you to try to write your report a little more directly as you did so well in your letter.

It would also have been a better "report" to not use the letter either as your explanation, but to draw the explanation out of it, include your nice summary of the site analysis and then talk about some of the possibilities you now have in mind because of your "visit," without letting anyone know that you do astral travel. The exercises are to give you the stuff you need to write the "story" of your project, what needs doing and some of the things you are considering and hope to accomplish. I'd use the letter and journal as attachments to the report and include them depending on who it was being sent to. I've already seen the earlier versions.

Does all this matter. Not really. You have a wonderful project and are doing a terrific job of working on it. In your next major rewrite for the final, see if you can draw a narrative from your other material this time. I can tell by the skillful way you write that this will be a piece of cake for you and a good guide later on when you present your work. A lot of students have found that they can fall back on this material when it's time to present at the end of term and are relieved they don't have to write something from scratch.

See if you can overcome the "thin skin" quality of the space by drawing some of the rooms beyond the facades. I imagine from your account that they are all small and that only makes this space feel even larger than it is. Is this true? I want to see doors and windows if possible to get a better sense of the visual connections and the multiple comings and goings?

Keep working aggressively on this and it will be a triumph.

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Name: J. A. N.

Title: River Front South: Returning the Life to the River

Comments: A:

This is a very clear, convincing and handsome report. It's graphically wonderful, i.e., nice to look at (aesthetically pleasing), but more to the point, it is very helpful at understanding the site, what it consists of and how it relates to the rest of the waterfront, neighboring uses and transportation systems. It reminds me of how far you've come since we first met and you were helping Michael. Nice going. OK, if I were forced to add a nit-pick I'd tell you to name the bridges, since they are such important place markers in Portland.

So what comes next? You set forth a good overall structure for the area, related some of its history, outlined a general intent, described the quality of the riverfront connection you want, conceived of a rich, multi-modal transportation system to serve and connect the area to the rest of the city. It is easy to imagine these becoming the backbone of your overall recommendations for River Front South (good choice of title).

But you haven't said yet how you will focus within this world, what parts you'll zoom in on as tangible expressions of this vision, what key places are emblematic of your hopes and point of view, what kinds of products or proposals you expect to produce. I can guess, but whole and parts is a good strategy to pursue at this point. I'd like you to figure out and say what you intend to do with all the parts. Leave the proposed park as a land use proposal? Do a conceptual design? Remodel the proposed gated development so that there is river access? etc.

So, here's the challenge: can you do as well at the next level down as you have in your overall conception? From what I've seen, I'd bet on it.

I'm impressed.

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Name: J. S.

Title: The Foster City Bay Marina

Comments: J:

It's good to have an opportunity to work on a place which really means something to you, and always frustrating to find not everyone already convinced that your vision is of course the correct one. Foster City, like most places, is experiencing development pressures which are not unique to the Bay area. I usually find I get farther, and don't get caught with my foot in my mouth quite so much, if I keep promoting a positive vision of what could happen, much as you do in your narrative, and spend less time being critical of particular individuals. A powerful vision will sweep them up in it or sweep them away.

Habitat for birds and boats sounds very appealing to me. I think you're right that people will see the marina as "the design," but I would hope that you would see it as the design of a new habitat and recreation area linked to the city with a marina/social center in it. Keep all your trains on track, so to speak. I like the way you write about the activities that can take place at the marina and the nautical qualities it should have.

You don't show me any of your larger scale map diagrams in this write-up? Why? It makes it hard to understand the extent of the area you hope to transform as habitat/openspace and also the connections between the waterfront and the town. What area gets replanted? Also the levee and other circulation systems existing or needed are not clear. Where do the paths need to go?

It's time to add some numbers to this. A marina for how many? to start with? in a desirable future as you see it? Your photographs are really terrific and really convey the existing character of the site. Imagine yourself down the road trying to explain Foster City to an audience. What will you need to show and tell what it was supposed to be, how you see it today, your critique of what needs to be done and your proposal to set things moving in a new direction?

You are using the fan well, not just stating the names of categories of concern but discussing what those interests are specific to your project. This is good work. Keep on it now and it will be terrific.

Jerry

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: K. D.

Title: A Natural Meeting Place: Oregon 4-H Conference & Education Center

Comments: K: I like the professional way you're going about your project for a master site plan for an Oregon 4H Center near Salem. Your report gave me the kind of background information and understanding of the present situation I needed. It is particularly helpful to know an organization's goals and priorities as clearly as you do and, as you say, have the opportunity to participate in the process underway. Your role is an important one.

In your Section 2, Site Criteria I'd make the following suggestions, since it is here that you are trying to summarize your work and itemize the things you'll concentrate on in the master site plan:

1. I'd call this your Site Planning Program, since criteria means "a standard, rule, or test on which a judgment or decision can be based." (AHD) These are the elements and systems to be emphasized in your new plan. Criteria, for example, would be those things that help you determine health or increased size of your wetlands.
2. I'd probably organize this as Site Land Use; Site Hydrology; Site Circulation and New Construction, Remodeling and Renovations and make a map or maps, if things get too confusing, of the existing conditions. The map at the end of your report doesn't tell me the current land use. I can see where the roads go and the existing facilities. What happened to the image/issue maps you did? Why not use them here?
3. The land uses you list seem OK, but I'd probably want to show existing forest or ag lands (or wilderness or whatever seems appropriate); open space and recreational areas, probably including the ponds; wetlands; and the various social centers and facilities that exist. Circulation would include roads; parking; paths; trails for people, bikes, horses etc. New construction areas would be shown as such with conceptual site plans, and remodeled areas and facilities designated. Site Hydrology is a system study that a consultant should help with, but you can make some overall and general observations and recommendations.

I assume you'll be making some contribution to the site development of some of the new facilities along with the master plan. Will you try suggesting the siting of the new buildings or leave it to the architect. How about taking a stab at it from your point of view as a landscape architect?

An expected project strategy for something like this is the one you appear to be following. Evaluate the existing plan elements as they relate to the client's program and your additional interests and concerns; identify the work needed in each area and show your proposals on a proposed new master plan; describe things in more detail in a report, and include examples and more detailed proposals of specific areas and items that are of the highest priority. (And this is important) Get re-hired to follow up on all the other projects you've identified as the client has the resources and need to develop the plan.

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Name: K.F.

Title: Tanner Creek...Revisited

Comments: K:

This is an especially well-conceived and elegantly presented project. I can hear in the tone of your writing that you are excited by it too and looking forward to working on it. You are smart to build on such an interesting and unique event already taking place in Portland. What designer wouldn't want to work on something like this?

The three places you emphasize all seem like good ones. Relating them to a whole system that people can be aware of, enjoy and learn from and also relating Tanner Creek to downtown Portland's existing system of places which give it's special identity seems just right to me. Stories, like the one of Goose Hollow, and history such as the Tannery and Chinese gardens bring the project and place to life and give it meaning.

I think you're also right to concentrate in three areas; 1. A unifying concept; 2. Special places, such as the industrial waterfront, river district, and civic stadium; and 3. Special historic places, buildings, gardens etc. which are an important part of the Tanner Creek story.

All that being said, you need to do more work in each part. Zoom into all the places and at least pick one for some more careful attention, diagnosis and evaluation. You can have ideas about them all, but just not to the same degree of resolution in the time we have. Some can be expected to remain quite conceptual. You have made a good start at outlining some goals and objectives for the unifying concept. See if you can apply some of our class discussion about intentional structure to what you've written. It's already good, but can be expanded, developed and connected directly to some of the physical proposals you're already considering and should lead you to the many that are just over the horizon.

Very impressive.

Jerry

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Name: K. H.

Title: Waipio Valley, Hawaii

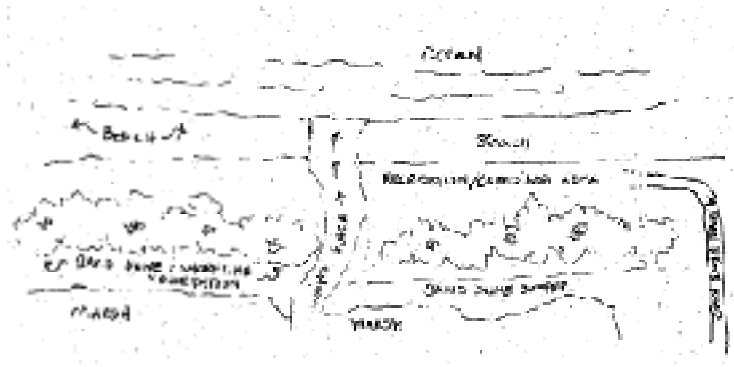
Comments: K.:

Sorry that it took me a while to find your project. You were the only one to turn it in electronically, and so I didn't expect it. But it's a great method, isn't it? You're using the technology well. You've included some wonderful images and are using your graphic design skills very effectively. I'm curious though as to why you're using PageMaker 5.0 when the lab has 6.0 which is a better program. It works the same but just does everything better. Maybe you didn't find it in the lab. It's under Adobe PageMaker. It changed owners between versions.

I like the way you've used maps, diagrams and photographs to show where the valley lies on the Big Island. Your image map diagram of the valley looks good in the way it show all the key parts, but it's a little low res. for me to read very well. I can't read the legend, so I can only guess what they are. This seems important to me since I think you will want to make proposals for actions that need to be taken in each of these areas as a part of your valley scale work.

The beach diagram is hard to read and needs its steep topography on both sides to be whole. The issues you list aren't: they are categories (except maybe littering) which contain issues. You say parking, but don't explain what the issue is: too much? in the wrong place/ etc. What's wrong with the current "genre" (def.: A category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, marked by a distinctive style, form, or content.) of planting and what do you mean by the term? What needs to be done about it? Why not make the diagram bigger, show more of the existing conditions (very simply) and indicate where in the beach area these issues take place. You need to say more about them in order for me to have a better idea about what needs doing. Could you spare a few more words here and let me know? In general, your report is long on very excellent images and short on a discussion of issues, your evaluation of what needs to be done, and the kind of proposals you expect to make in the various valley places and parts and at different spatial scales.

I'd also suggest you begin your report with a synopsis, a few paragraphs which summarize your project, set forth your purpose and your goals and that tell people what kinds of proposals you intend to make. Then when you describe the valley and its location it is already apparent why.



Your image of **Hiilawe Falls** raises some other questions for me about water in the valley. It looks as though the taro farmers below are using the water from the falls for irrigation. I wonder what the irrigation system in the valley looks like and how it works. Let's say we agree that the falls look bad with the right side shut down and your proposal to restore it. What effect will that have on the fields below? How much of this water do they depend on? Don't we need to know more about farming practices in the valley and the water system that supports it? I'm concerned that you don't have enough information about this agricultural land use to know whether wanting to restore the ancient beauty of the falls will cause other problems that need taking care of in the valley below. What do we learn from the other Taro farm examples? Other than the use of pesticides, is the farming in the valley sustainable now? Why not?

Your goals answer many of the issues you've identified. They might be better organized in relation to the different areas. For example the vegetation management and restoration program, the trails and the waterfall are all in the area of steep topography of the valley's walls. The beach has its own goals and objectives as does the valley agricultural floor.

Where are the historical sites? the existing trails? What kind of center are you planning? For how many? What are its needs? What kinds of facilities do campers and other recreational users need?

Your project still needs a lots of work, Kuzan, both in terms of editing and development. Let's move it along now. You don't have to print it out for me. I suggest you make a pdf file to display it when you're done. I'll show you how.

Jerry

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Name: K.K.

Title: M.L.K. Community Garden

Comments: K:

That's a great cover picture of the Harvest Fair and an effective opening paragraph. I was also struck by the personal measure you propose for a successful project because it seemed so appropriate: coming to the area the first time with all the feelings and fears of being in some jeopardy because of the climate of social deterioration compared to an experience of arriving at M.L.K. garden at another better time and feeling safe and proud of a neighborhood engaged in the healthy pursuit of urban agriculture.

In your second paragraph, you start to talk about finding a site etc. and while this is interesting biographical information I'd suggest you get to the point of your project and lay out your point of view, because this project is built on a deeply felt belief: "Community gardens and agriculture are an important way for communities to reclaim their neighborhoods...they...offer a way for people to convey their identity and connection to their place through the ownership of a cultivated plot." (your words need to be expanded to strengthen your point of view and will help explain many of your garden proposals which follow.)

The site is especially interesting and looks very promising. You discuss it usefully and well. I'd suggest that you consider ways that it could potentially tie the whole block together or at least influence all parts of it (in some way) in time. There looks like there might be interior block space that could be related to the garden or even be an expanded part of it in time??? Changes, such as street trees, could help create an improved public setting which would contribute to the change in climate you seek. Perhaps the garden can grow seedlings for the streets; be a home for orphaned plants.....

Inspirational stories like the one about Rosylln's garden are critical to this kind of project which must create hope and shrink social inertia if it's going to succeed. You need to be able to say and show how they did it in.... and in... Ann Spirn's lecture several years ago about her work in Philadelphia was an example. Karl Linn, before her and also in Philadelphia did inspiring work. Talk to Stan about SLUG in San Francisco and he'll put you on to more of the recent places that should both inspire you in your work and also give tangible testimony to the power of your ideas in action. Liked the historical material.

Yes, the ultimate success will lie with the people of the neighborhood, but in the shorter term everything depends on the stimulus of outside energy, imagination, vision and hope that sets things in motion. Very good start.

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Name: K. L.

Title: From Stumptown to Treetown: The Urban Forestry Interpretative Center and Native American Cultural Center at East Delta Park in North Portland

Comments: K:

This is a nicely written report and very thoughtful about the Urban Forestry Interpretative Center part of it. Why am I not surprised? It is however not very involved with the Native American Cultural Center at this point. The left lung is doing most of the breathing. One solution is to do what you are already doing and that is to place most of your emphasis on the Urban Forestry dimension and site plan things only at a very conceptual level for the Cultural Center, exploring the overlap mostly in the ways both can relate to the common ground of the slough, wetlands, entry circulation and..... Your report cover is a good indicator of where you really are.

I love the idea of story trees. And perhaps you have to cross over the slough to hear the authentic tale of the Western Red Cedar or experience the long perspective of planting an acorn. Given this point of view, where are the trees on the site? What kinds, how many and where? Where are the existing story tellers. What new kinds and collections/associations need to be added? And what is the connection of this place to Stumptown? Will you tell that story here? Will the green threads which travel through the tapestry hanging in the barn be connected back to green lines such as the Park Blocks in the city?

The other side of urban forestry, the far side of the forest?, is the side represented by all that equipment in the barn, the ongoing process of urban forest practices. This functional, operational program with its attendant spatial and organizational requirements is underrepresented at this time.

I also think it would be a good idea to know what the present status and intentions of Portland's urban forestry program are. Do they have an urban forester the way Eugene does? a staff? Are there city ordinances about urban forestry? Your center sits *by* the slough and *in* its institutional setting.

The diagrams you include are excellent, simple and eloquent. Although you know I know where this is, a simple location diagram would help put it in the city for other readers. I'd also put a 5¢ paragraph up front that provides an overall summary of what you're doing and then proceed with your discussion.

This is a terrific project and you have made a wonderful start. Now it is time, however, to move more directly into intentional mode and create the more specific program for this site that will guide your physical work. (Yes, unless you have a specific client you have to make it up!) If for example you think the barn should be used for the public meeting space, say so. If that means adding another structure, call for it, estimate its size and include it as a part of the reorganization of the site for urban forestry work. Will you have two overlapping circuits, one for the public and another for the people with pruning equipment?

You need to face the numbers. How many are you planning for? Next year? 5 years from now? Make some estimates to use to base meeting space sizes on etc. What kind(s) of meeting or educational spaces? How many? Trail system that takes you to special trees? Do a conceptual diagram of the "parts" and systems of your site. Get practical about this place while listening deep inside to the haunting, wonderful stories that will guide its spirit.

Put some time in on this now and it will be a triumph.

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Name: K.S.

Title: Rediscovering a Sense of Community in Affordable Housing

Comments:

K: This is a good start. The problem is a big one and you can chip away at it effectively I think at Yessler Terrace. Your project strategy (the clever way you intend to achieve your overall goal of “helping to facilitate a more usable and enjoyable neighborhood,” is to evaluate the existing open space conditions at Yessler Terrace (with respect to the issues you’ve outlined at the various spatial scales) and then make recommendations for their improvement. I hope the intentional exercise helps you write some more tangible goals and objectives to carry this further.

I think you’re right in recognizing that the open space and site design of this place is only one important component in building a sense of community, but that it is a good tangible place to stand and start from. By articulating two small futures, you also begin to link these physical places and relationships into actual lives. Perhaps that would also be a good way to pursue an evaluation of the existing place. Take a day in the life for some “typical” residents such as Linda and Mr. Johnson (who must be old because we call him Mr.) and see how the place works and feels to them through their experience. Perhaps that will set you up to convey your insights and proposed changes through some before and after stories and images down the line.

You have nine powerful categories which you imply can help make housing more than just shelter. Can you expand on this a little - give me more than one word concepts? Have you read Claire Cooper Marcus’ book, *Housing As If People Mattered*, or any of her other things which help evaluate housing projects? She’s a great resource.

This is the time to do some of your evaluation (not starting it out in studio), enough to get you far enough to make some schematic proposals this term. Try applying a few of the key issues you think affect more than one scale or look more deeply into one or more key places to see if you can provide a beginning sense of “what needs doing.” I wonder what you’d say to a client right now that had asked you to visit and right a short note of response saying what struck you immediately as needing some work? Doing something other than chain link probably, but after that, what.???..improving connections to the community space..????? What else?????

I appreciate the map diagrams you include to help portray the place, but none of them are interpreted. I can’t tell the major paths or connect the entry photo to the map. All seem empty and ungreen. I don’t know which of the spaces are what or if they add up to a “system”, or whether they work well now or..... They’ve slipped their “cog”, so to speak, and returned to the realm of mere graphics. Get more out of them.

In general, your thinking is clear and your report well organized, clear and pleasant to read, if perhaps a little stingy in developing some of your thoughts: you have a good project, an interesting place and a good beginning. Put some more quality time in on it now and it will turn out very well. Make friends, if you haven’t already with Claire, and she will help you all the way.

Sincerely,

Jerry

LA 490 Comp Prep
Nov. 96
Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: L. S.

Title: A Conceptual Plan for Housing in Dallas

Comments:

L: Good work. This is clearly written and covers all the right things. You put the project in its setting, point out some important thing about Dallas (Vice President who?), the park and open space you'd like to connect to, have learned what a PUD is in Dallas, and have a good beginning idea of what the client's and your interests are. You have a realistic handle on the numbers: a project for 500 homes after 5 years is a lot different than a place for 5 right now. I agree, you are lucky to have a good client who will help provide information, such as the wetland analysis, and advice as you go along and who really wants to do a good project. The manufactured housing part could be very interesting, but I'm confused about the density requirement. A minimum density of 5-6 du/acre? Max. du/acre? What are the minimum street requirements in Dallas for a PUD?

Looking ahead to the end of this term, I am going to be asking you very shortly to do a schematic layout based on your understanding of the program and place at this stage. In order to do that, to put in roads, paths, houses, manufactured homes, lots, wetlands etc., you are going to have to have some more information about the site and some typical models and arrangements of the various houses. So move on with at least a rough site analysis: slope, soils, existing vegetation and habitat at least. And start to collect some prototypes to inspire you. I like to cut standard (or better if you can find them) development patterns out of air photos and lay them on the site to get an idea of how much space this take, how big lots are, what a manufactured home park looks like...as a measure. See if you can put 500 homes on what you consider the buildable areas. How much is buildable? Highest or lowest priority?

I like the way you've used a color cut out of the site and explored possible phases and use changes through the black and whites photos over time. A sentence or two saying what changes you've noticed and what they mean to your work would be helpful. I would put a map or simple diagram up front in your narrative to look at while you're discussing where things are. You'll probably also want to use your color airphoto to show site context and connections as well. Include an overlay that shows the wetland, pond drainage system that you want to conserve and use as an important structure for the project. All in all: this is coming along well and I am expecting great things...

Jerry

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Nov. 96
Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: M. E.

Title: New Drainagesheds: Stormwater Management in an Urban Garden

Comments:

M

Again, as in your vivid presence, this report shows off your good mind and grasp of an important problem. You place it in its various contexts well: the ongoing Grassroots Garden Project; urban stormwater management; pilot projects (such as the "ditch" as both local experiments and demonstrations; and public participation as environmental education (which is what your VP, "The meeting of the minds," was about) . The combination of clear writing, useful maps and map diagrams, air photos, photo montage, water color and ditch sections etc. echo the richness of the subject that is available to those able to stare into a garden ditch and see the whole system, our evolving relationship with it, water and the world. OK, what more could an instructor want?

Lots. Water quality issues; Ditch considerations; and Connectivity all give me good models to think through about what's there and might be done. But I'm looking for indications from you which allow you take the next step to what you intend to do. Having made such an excellent descriptive start, you do need to become more intentional now in mind, body, spirit and report. The goal you wrote: To create a filtration and infiltration zone for the garden that utilizes....is exactly what I mean. This is the dimension - you setting our your work - which is largely missing from the report. When I finished it the first time through, I knew what some of the goals for the garden were but still wondered what you were going to do. I can guess, but I want you to tell me (and yourself, which is more to the point) more directly. I know you are not sure about everything. How could you be, but give me the current state of things. A good way to approach this is by writing a first paragraph now, a project abstract, that tries to say what your project is, what you intend to do and expect to produce. That is another reason for the strategy assignment and the request that you try to work backward from expected products.

A bone to pick dept. I don't think you get all the information and then start the design. I have been trying to convince you all that what we are doing is part of designing, that our interests and ideas and point of view are all intimately related to spatial possibilities and configurations and finding connections and integrative expressions of multiple intentions. An engineer might tell us that we need 4.2 areas of filtration for xxx cubic feet of storm water. As a designer I would use such information both backward and forward. First, since I knew I wanted to filter as much as possible on site (a goal) and have the filtration system visible for environmental education reasons (a goal) I would have tried to see how much I could put on site as a whole, in parts and perhaps integrated in places with other functions. When I had good numbers I could check my proposal to see how much of the needed job it was doing and perhaps claim that in this garden at present we were able to handle 95% of the problem or whatever. That might lead me to try to look for ways to do more of the needed work off site - Monroe school,???? Besides, I know that this is also a garden and not just an urban kidney so that filtration won't be an isolated consideration. The point is that information and intent is a dance, each influencing the other, and it is the designer's way to have ideas (intentions, hopes, goals...) and boldly enter into the process.

There are two other dimensions of this work that will enhance it, and I'm merely suggesting that you think about how they might be present in your project and presentation. The first is obvious and that is the way that urban storm water intersects with the idea and culture of community urban gardening itself. You're already into this, so maybe it's a matter of stepping outside a moment and commenting on and developing the obvious. The second is the miracle of water itself. Water the universal transporter, the universal solvent, is the protagonist of this play, deserves more attention, at least a better introduction and perhaps even star billing.

It's a pleasure to see you doing so well in your work.

Jerry

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Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: M. P.

Title: Adventure Playground

Comments:

M: This is an impressive project, well-conceived and well underway, nicely connected into a real community, and about an important and unfulfilled social need. You write about it clearly, present your information in an organized, easy to read manner, and you include a good mix of words, diagrams and images in your report. You've provided prototypes of two of the three main items on your first phase list. What more could anyone want?

After some mulling, and in the spirit of more, more, more...I find myself wanting to know a little more about the Adventure Playground idea, what others have done and how your group has interpreted the idea in this place. Is this kind of very rural seeming site the norm? I'm used to seeing photos of such places being very urban, fenced junk-city like places? Probably the version meant for younger kids? Anyway, this seems most like a rural park and rec. site. So how about bringing me/us up to date with the evolution of this idea. I know you'll want to do this when you present it later to the department.

Also, there is a need to talk more about your principal users, who they are and what they need here. You are a little stingy in your discussion about them, as though everyone already knew what was going on in mind and body during this wonderful/awful stage of the life cycle. I'm wondering how many you are expecting (a place for 10 is a lot different than a place for 100), the varying sizes of the groups you'll need to plan for and the kinds of activities you are trying to support - with a little more specifically beyond skateboarding. I'm wondering about times of use and whether this will be a hot place to go on Saturday night, what it's social programs and attitudes are, if lighting will be an important consideration, the degree to which the place needs to be "hardened" for heavy use, if it will need a great sound system, what you will do about noise and other neighborly problems. I'm wondering about staffing? on site living?

Can you elaborate on the multi-use facility (this term always reminds me of the "national general corporation") and say more about the patios and other relationships that are important in the first phase? How will you utilize the barn and other structure? What needs to be done to the site to make phase I work? More planting? Some screening? So, generally, I'm just urging you to add some texture and more depth to this in order to take it quickly to the next level. Nice work.

Jerry

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Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: M. R.

Title: Interpretive Programming for Urban Stormwater and Wetland Mitigation at Stewart Pond and The Lane County Fairgrounds - Eugene, Oregon

Comments:

M: Well, you certainly get the prize for longest project title, but I see what your getting at. I also agree personally with your approach: I'd prefer to not see signs all over Stewart Pond and the Fairgrounds does look like a good place to be more didactic, a place where we look at the best wetlands as well as the best cakes, pies and quilts. Will there be a first prize for rushes?

Interpretative programming is certainly a part of what you're doing. If I get what you're saying however, the main points are: that the interpretation should fit the place; that the places in the Amazon system are quite different; that to be really effective we also have to widen our understanding of how we "interpret" such things; and that the actual physical transformation "needed" for interpretation of each place should be expected to vary. Just walking through a wetland on a well-placed and appropriately constructed boardwalk is one way. Following a school map that tells you that now you are now on a path entering a wet woodland is another way etc.

I love your cognitive map of the Amazon. It makes its point with such ease. But why not complete the diagram with the upland conditions of Spencer on the one end and Fern Ridge on the other. You don't have to do projects in all the areas. I just think the wider range helps you make your point and underscores your point of view. It also keeps things watershed whole and not just mentally only in the downs, so to speak.

You're looking at good examples. The boardwalk at Cape Hatteras looks very promising. When I look at your Stewart Pond diagram which has a *Potential View Point, I imagine an addition to your earlier overall diagram which has its own stars, i.e., *Potential Point of View. Associated with that then is an assessment that tells us what tangible stuff and work is needed to put that "thought into work," in a way that is appropriately responsive to the role you've conceived for it in the overall system. System and role.

Now that you've caught the big one. See if you can talk it into the boat.

Very exciting.

Jerry

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Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: M. S.

Title: Kohala Mountain Reforestation Proposal

Comments:

M: I wish I'd seen the ancient forests of Kohala Mountain before Cook cooked its goose, turning a million people into thousands because of the stowaways that take no space. The historical briefing is useful and puts things into perspective. I like the idea of creating an action plan for the watershed and especially the riparian areas as the focus of your project.

The Vegetative Analysis has a lot of very good information, but here where you're talking about the Kohala area I think you need to show it, show where the ancient forests probably were and then let us see the present spatially while you discuss and evaluate it. Where are those remnants of koa 'ia in their ravines? For the future, it would be good to show some of the priority areas for revegetation you're going to focus on. The action plan can then go in to this in more detail. You do some of this in your maps at the end but they are hard for me to understand.

I think the Action Plan needs a goal statement setting out what it hopes to achieve. It probably needs to build on conservation measures already in place such as the preservation of the upland rain forest. It then needs a set of key strategies, the ways you're going to achieve your goals, some of which you've already identified: 1. it will have to be done in phases for obvious reasons. Why plant the uplands first as opposed to doing some beginning planting in each of the areas, or planting heavily in the uplands and starting some planting programs that are needed elsewhere? 2. resources for the planting program need to be located and a local nursery established. You call this the nursery, but I would focus on the larger strategy of gathering the materials needed and see the nursery, soil, irrigation, weed control etc. as all being a part of it 3. money and labor. 4. education & public relations. You have some ideas about this 5. research?

Perhaps this could become a useful experimental program and provide the kind of information and experience needed to guide an expansion of reforestation efforts. This is often the kind of proposal that often generates grant money. Maybe this should be A Pilot Reforestation Program. Are there any others? Have there been any other comparable efforts in Hawaii that you know about and could learn from? Elsewhere?

Having conceived this grand scheme, can we zoom in a bit now to the next scale and into the riparian parts you intend to work on? I'd like to see you be able to do a Phase one schematic this term. Good going (& good luck)!

Jerry

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Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: P. S.

Title: South Fork Canyon Concept Plan

Comments:

P: A very good start. I especially enjoyed seeing the rolls of hay that look as though they're almost as big as a barn.

The abstract is excellent. It explains your project and also the model you are using from within the USFS . Where you say, "All these recreational activities are" [I'd insert: are very heavily used, in need of upgrading and repair, and in some instances causing serious] "impacts on the... river corridor environment."

I think from your later list of "issues," which I think would be better labeled as a Proposed Canyon Improvement Program, that the two key issues you start with (upgrading and universal access) needs to be expanded, because you also mention creating new day use opportunities and relocating places that are too close to the road. Upgrading has a maintenance connotation and the later two things are actually involved with creating and switching areas.

Your Improvement Program, if we can call it that, is really a good one - very comprehensive, but also a little disorganized in terms of scale and activity. See if you can put all the Vegetation Management things under that heading and separate out the bigger area activities such as relocation and creation of new places from the smaller scaled things like improving bridges etc.

I'd put things such as your list of bird species at the end of your report in an appendix. It doesn't do anything where it is to help the flow of your narrative, which I think is very good.

So What's Your Strategy Page for working on this? I have a clear understanding of what you're trying to accomplish. Now how do you intend to go about it? Will you map all those areas that are too close to the road and then look for suitable new areas? Will you....? You get the idea. How about a methodology now that gets you further into this so that you are able to do a schematic proposal for an important part of it this term. I'll also be interested to hear what products you see coming out of your process in addition to and in support of your report.

Keep on this now and it will be an excellent comp. experience for you and also a piece of work you'll be proud to show a future employer.

Jerry

LA 490 Comp Prep
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Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: R. L.

Title: A Course of Action at Elija Bristow State Park

Comments:

R: This is clear, very well-written, about important matters, knowledgeable, and has a good project strategy which I recommend you follow. It is also too much work to do if you were to take the full range of issues you've usefully identified and carry them all into detailed proposals.

So should you throw any of them away? I don't think so.

Since the area already has a master plan, you wisely suggest that it be evaluated and updated. That has to be done in the context of changing times, new knowledge (about fish habitat for example) and in keeping with obvious present day problems in the park. So do it. A one level, you've made a good beginning by saying quite comprehensively what the park needs. You don't mention the relationship of your critique to the present plan, assuming I suppose that everyone knows what that is, but you can put your overall assessment in this context without too much trouble.

Your updating of the master plan is the framework for what needs doing that coordinates all the projects, programs and proposals for action that you've identified. A long list is good. Not differentiating in terms of priority probably isn't.

Being comprehensive will be good for the park. You can call for or suggest a program of controlled burning, for example, and explain its rationale without having to personally set it all up. The same is true for many of the other things you've noticed that need doing. Both time and priority strategies are important at this level of work. Politically its always useful to get started on some things that provide an immediate show for the money and solve obvious problems while setting in motion important things that will payoff much later on (in, say, improved habitat).

I'd suggest you then pick a handful of the priority projects, some short-term and some long-term, make conceptual proposals for all of them and some more careful physical suggestions for at least one that you care about most. If you pick this latter area now - camping? fish habitat? you can zoom into the place at a scale that allows you to do a more local diagnosis and evaluation now, which would be much earlier than later (if you get my meaning). Good work. Stay in aggressive mode for a while and it will be terrific.

Jerry

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: R. S.

Title: A Watermen's Village: Re-vitalizing Abundance on the Chesapeake Bay

Comments:

R: This is an elegantly written and conceived project. You describe the Bay, its present situation, the culture of "watermen," and the town circumstance in Crisfield very crisply and effectively. Your graphic materials are excellent from the Points of Intervention diagram, and Crisfield-out concept, to the maps, axon of the town and the color images. The Bay- Government Policy analogy sets up your Crisfield-out concept brilliantly. The tide has brought some needed new and powerful thinking into the Bay. (The policy goes in, the policy goes out?)

So What Needs Doing? Your questions are all good ones and you really set me up as I turned the page expectantly looking for your current, preliminary, even tentative answers..... Did I lose a page or two on my way home?

OK, then what would I conclude or take up as work based on your narrative? First that the situation is complex and there will need to be intervention at all three of the levels you describe because they are really just different points of view. When you get through, people will refer to this multi-faceted approach as the Crisfield Model, and your goal is to get other towns around the Bay to join in with their local version. Re: the Way of Life, you need to outline all the occasions, events, needed places (such as the festival ground), exhibits which teach and help remember (Have you seen the Watermen's Way Exhibit at the watermen's museum?).

Re: economic loss, say how you're (thinking about) proposing to add some or capture more additional tourist income in town. Make some short term suggestions and speculate about some longer term possibilities. Maybe you can make money off of a center for Bay restoration (i.e., turn the negative into a positive) and some model programs that other Bay communities can come to study. Maybe you can improve the waterfront environment for the people who move through it now, better supporting their needs. What might they be? What might you do in the waterfront area? Can you zoom in a bit here and do a diagnosis?

Ecologically there is an important difference between the scale where action occurs and the (Bay) scale where the effect is manifest. Since working on this problem is largely political? but I'm sure would also have local economic impact, would it make any sense for you to propose that Crisfield initiate new long term legislative or regulatory action? Do you know anything about the Bay's present environmental regulations? Are they working? How do they effect Crisfield?

Some of this is probably beyond the scope of your work except at a very conceptual level. I suggest, however, that you still offer your opinion about Bay management, propose programs for Crisfield that answer some of your questions, and make up a list of projects that would be desirable for the town that help move those programs along. Then take one, or two places at the most, that are good examples of part of what needs doing and work on those to show some tangible and physical progress in the Crisfield Model. The waterfront and the festival space sound like good prospects. Can you move ahead on these while refining your overall conceptual model?

This is a very exciting project, but it needs a clear project strategy because of its overall complexity.

Jerry

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Nov. 96
Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: S.T.

Title: Community Garden in Mendocino

Comments: S: I like the way this project is developing and your willingness to be flexible and responsive to the advice you're getting. If you can get one group committed and the project underway, some of the other things you care about can perhaps be added. I also like your trains: the people and the place (a very good chart), and your attention to real things such as the water connections to the garden area. When the parks people say Master Plan, the usually really mean master plan in the sense of getting the many unsettled matters (like parking) into a mutually agreeable pattern - a good guide that enough people support for the things that need to be done and especially as they relate to one another. There is a real difference between a good guide and a FIXED and finished forever plan. The latter is always thrown away the minute something changes. I usually avoid the term and say conceptual plan or something which seems like it is still flexible and adaptable in its particulars.

I'd like to see you add a more explicit site diagram, i.e., zoom in a bit and do a simple scaled diagram and talk more about specific aspects of the site. I can't make out the awkward Aikido buildings you mention in your narrative and show in the photo map.

I think you should do a sketch proposal which represents what the place could be like for your Nov. 26th meeting as the most effective way to get people involved. Our class just did that with the people of Harrisburg and it produced a useful and much more specific conversation about what was wanted and how people felt about things. Do it in color. Maybe as an axon to really impress them and draw them into a place that is easily recognizable. Show these drawings to Blanche Darnell (as a courtesy and also for political reasons and ask for her advice, even if you don't want it). Make her your ally (def.: one in helpful association with another) and supporter. She sounds as though she's in a position to bad mouth you and undermine your work if you are at odds.) This kind of interaction where someone is willing to say, here are some preliminary thoughts, usually generates a better sense of what a good next step should include.

After your meeting write up a short report about what you thought people decided at the meeting, include a revised small plan with your comments and send it to the various players for their response. This will keep people involved and your garden growing, so to speak.

"So I am driven to create community gardens not so much because I am crazy about vegetables but because I want to help create spaces that people really use and create seeds and ideas that can flourish into blooming communities," is a beautiful sentence and a wonderful overall goal for this project - if not a much larger guiding ideal.

Admirable work, well underway, being seriously and maturely pursued. Who could ask for more.

Jerry

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Nov. 96
Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: T. G.

Title: Main Street As A Neighborhood

Comments:

I : This is well-written. The project is clear; it is being built on a base of planning and accomplishment in Bellevue which is clearly not finished. The title, however, doesn't quite capture what I take to be your central concern: developing and connecting the pedestrian environment and especially the need to connect Main St. to Meydenbaur Bay. The two diagrams are very helpful in conveying the places you write about with all their important connections. You should label Meydenbaur Lane so that there is no question about where it is and goes.

The goal structure is a useful one to use and build off of as we have already discussed. You might try your hand at writing some of your own. I tried to give you an example in class about how to then make them more specific.

You clearly need a diagram at a larger scale that shows the Bay and connecting area. You never quite get to it in your report and haven't presented a specific enough diagnosis or evaluation of it. I know quite a bit about general issues related to Bellevue and nothing about (other than what you've told me) about those that are specific to the area where you intend to make some specific proposals.

Also, I wonder about the recently developed pedestrian promenade. Did they do a good job? Is it a piece of work you can (or have) learned from? How will it influence your work? In the other corridors and along Main St., which places are already in good shape (Bloomers?) to serve as examples of what needs to be done or extended? Are there other opportunities such as the passageways you mention? Are there places that are especially in need of attention? I'm just trying to get you to make your analysis more specific now instead of waiting until studio and then spending all your time doing site evaluations instead of developing proposals. Have you identified other places or projects that have done good work along these lines? You don't mention any good models or places you admire that might serve as inspirations for the work. What makes a good pedestrian street? or Bay connection? Designers often need to import this kind of information into the conversation with their clients.

This is a terrific project, but it needs a methodology and a clearer sense of what you expect to propose. More aggressive work NOW will pay off later this year.

Jerry

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Jerome Diethelm

Mid-term Notebook - A Project Critique

Name: Y. W.

Title: Taichung: Train Station Circus and the Green Canal

Comments:

I: I loved reading this, probably because it sounds so honest and because you obviously care so much. Your artist's eye sees deeply. I wish I could help you find the dumpling shop.

I think you describe the cultural, political, economic setting well. I understand the need to remake and remodel this center as one important step in the process of rediscovering an authentic Taiwanese identity for Taichung. Yes, there is much to say and it takes a long story to capture something as complex as an evolving identity, especially when it has been such a composite for so many years. Perhaps those memories must always play some role, even if it is a new one, in the redesigned place. Maybe Chaing Kai-shek's statue has to be put under water up to the nose in the Green Canal?

Having finally gotten to the central space where your project takes place, I find I want to know more about it. I can't tell from your smallest scale map where the night market is and what the character of each street is. Is the area all commercial or also residential? How does the traffic work? From the map it looks as though there are also very interesting internal alley-like ways. Are these pedestrian? Can you try to explain this place better graphically? Where's Chaing? We need a bigger plan and some overlays.

Is there any hope of getting the water quality improved in the Green Canal?

I wish you'd put on your very practical hat for a few minutes (I know you have one at home) and tell me very directly what needs to be done here from your point of view. Be direct: the place is dirty and needs to be cleaned up. Part of the square needs to be planted with trees and trees planted along the canal. Symbols of the old Chinese culture need to be taken down, turned upside down, made to wear funny hats.....Make a big list covering as much as you can. What are some of the main things. Be more specific. You can't cook a meal if you don't buy the food.

We can talk more about this when you're ready. Is this an important part of what you see becoming your life's work? If so, you don't have to do it all in one project. What physical changes in the area do you think would have the most impact as a beginning in the struggle for a new identity?

Jerry