I, Brian Szymanski, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Community Planning in Community Planning.

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Defining and Achieving Sense of Place in New Developments in Existing Urban Contexts

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Defining and Achieving Sense of Place in New Developments in Existing Urban Contexts

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Abstract

The term sense of place is frequently used by designers and developers of new urban spaces as a quality or characteristic instantly created through new construction. While critics frequently argue that many places today are being developed that lack a sense of place, much of the literature argues different definitions of the term making it difficult to determine how to address the problem. This thesis synthesizes various definitions and qualities of sense of place and questions whether sense of place can be created by a new design intervention in an existing urban context.

Through an analysis of literature on sense of place and the study of communities that can be said to have strong a sense of place, this thesis argues that sense of place involves three important elements. Strong places allow for a clear sense of the place, or a feeling of being in differentiated space and a feeling of spatial orientation and understanding. They also allow for a connection to and understanding of the spirit of the place, the unique qualities that make up the soul of the place or its genius loci. Furthermore, sense of place involves an attachment to the place, or a subjective perception of and personal connection to a place based on personal experiences in the place. This sense of place framework is used to analyze Worcester, Massachusetts as part of the expanded design process for a new development in the city’s downtown. The current proposal for development in the city will be analyzed based on its potential to facilitate sense of place. By understanding what sense of place is and the factors that contribute to it, it is possible to suggest ways in which designers can facilitate a stronger sense of place in the design of newly established urban settings.
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I. Introduction to Issues of Place

In the last few decades we have seen developers market projects as creating a sense of place without fully understanding the meaning and complexity of the term. All too often, it is thought that the physical creation of space, with particular aesthetics or spatial qualities will immediately create the feeling of a sense of place. In many instances, the term “sense of place” is...touted to flaunt the cosmetic charms of a new development slapped up with an instant picturesqueness of pasteled and plastered sheet rock” (Fleming 2007, 14). According to www.creekbridgehomes.com at St. Charles Place, a newly constructed community in California, “you will discover a neighborhood with a sense of place” simply due to its “old-fashioned” architecture and planning. (Figure I.1) At www.visitwindemere.com, one learns that “distinctive pedestrian portals, sitting areas and entry monuments contribute to sense of place” in the newly constructed Windemere in San Ramone, California. (Figure I.2) Yet it takes much more than a bench and a statue to truly develop a unique place that is meaningful to the people who use it. These types of developments that attempt to create a sense of place solely through physical design elements often relate little to their physical or historical context, and the needs and wants of the community in which they are located.

Growing movements such as The New Urbanism stress the importance of community and a sense of place. Yet projects created under the name of New Urbanism are often criticized for focusing only on the aesthetic and formal characteristics of a place and resorting to historic architecture styles that create seemingly inauthentic places. The suggestions of New Urbanists are not unique, but are consistent with other authors who discuss the physical form of cities such as Jacobs and Appleyard (1987), Lynch (1958, 1960), Bacon (1967), Alexander (1978), Calthorpe (1955), Gordon Cullen (1967) and countless other urban designers and architects writing on the subject of urban form and the impact of physical design on human behavior. These authors do not insist that physical design is the only factor that contributes to a sense of place, but do argue that physical design has an effect on our perception of space and place and can have an impact on the way people interact with, think about, and use spaces. Unfortunately, many designers overemphasize the importance of

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Fig. I.1 - St. Charles Place

[http://creekbridgehomes.com]

Fig. I.2 - Windemere, CA

[www.visitwindemere.com]
physical design and the suggestions of the aforementioned authors. “There is a clear view that genius loci and character can be created through appropriate design and planning” (Jiven and Larkham 2003, 74). Though Cresswell explains that “places are not like shoes or automobiles – they do not come out of a factory as finished products” (2004, 82).

Other authors, typically writing from less strictly physical professions such as planning, sociology, and geography try and downplay the physical aspect of places. Aseem Inam argues that “urban design is superficial because it is obsessed with impressions and aesthetics of physical form; and it is practiced as an extension of architecture, which often implies an exaggerated emphasis on the end project” (2002, 35). He continues to state that many architects:

Tend to approach the urban problematic primarily from an aesthetic perspective, focusing on striking impressions and images of cities. Their misplaced, and primarily architectural, obsession with form tends to gloss over the complex (e.g. political) and multiple (e.g. economic) factors which actually shape a city and make it an enriching (e.g. social) experience. (Ibid., 36)

J.B. Jackson shares a similar sentiment when he rejects the notion that “a sense of place comes from being in an unusual composition of spaces and forms - natural or man-made” (1994, 151). These authors try to move the focus of place away from the physical. Arefi and Triantafillou state that “place is not… confined to spatial, physical, and visual attributes alone…[but include] values and social and cultural meaning. Place is at times unpredictable and can be understood through engagement, not through detached observation” (2005, 76). These authors also criticize the typical methods of analyzing and understanding the city and places. “Conventional urban design techniques (i.e., the imageability analysis, figure-ground studies, models, and photomontages) rarely help capture the holistic nature of place” (Arefi and Triantafillou 2005, 67). They argue that place is a “comprehensive concept, which transcends the visual and physical aspects of planning and urban design. (Ibid., 77) Rossi and Eisenman explain that the sum of people’s experiences constitutes the city, which “presupposes a type of analysis far more profound than the simplistic sort offered by certain psychological interpretations that rely only on the legibility of form” (1984, 29).

Authors that downplay a strictly physical analysis of places also stress the importance of a process of developing a place rather than the design of a place at one moment. “The product-oriented approach focuses on tangible aspects of place, shorter rather than longer time spans, and a specific clientele rather than the entire communities input.” (Arefi and Triantafillou 2005, 80) Rather than focusing on picturesque or image studies, in the context of Anne Vernez Moudon’s A Catholic Approach to Organizing What Urban Designers Should Know (1992), authors such as Inam feel that other concentrations such as place or material culture studies need to be further addressed in the discussion of developing places.

Authors who argue against the purely physical creation of sense of place stress the human

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element of place and explain that sense of place “emerge[s] from individual and community perception, values and experience” (Jiven and Larkham 2003, 74). They say that placemaking occurs every day as people transform geometric space into lived space. (Tuan 1977) “A sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing history within its confines.” (Rydon from Art of Geography) “A sense of place is something that we ourselves create in the course of time. It is the result of habit or custom” (Jackson 1994, 151).

These authors suggest that sense of place is more of a personal feeling than a quality that a place can have, and therefore people need to be involved in placemaking. “The expert appropriation of placemaking denies the potential for people to take control over events and circumstances that take place in their lives” (Schneekloth and Shibley 2000, 130). These authors criticize the fact that designs are often imposed upon a community by an “expert” professional who “knows what is best” for the community. These professionals ignore any local knowledge held by a community and insist that they can design for the place even without fully understanding the place. (Arefi, 2009) They look to formulas like the suggestions proposed by the Congress for the New Urbanism, which leads to a recycling of solutions throughout completely different locations. Yet Lee Sobel contends that “projects succeed when they answer the needs of the community, rather than imposing a formula” (2002, 31). Schneekloth and Shibley propose “that we, as individual architects and as a practice... place architecture beyond expert culture into the practice of placemaking [in] an attempt to make the profession and discipline a more relevant, responsible, complex and contradictory practice” (2000, 130-1) They explain that “one aspect of this relocation is the requirement of more open and collaborative processes that can create profound opportunities for democratic action and the celebration of everyday life” (Ibid., 130). Through collaboration with the community, the people are able to develop an attachment to the project before it is ever built.

Other authors such as Christian Norberg-Schulz provide a different focus on what makes place. He argues that, “In modern society… attention has almost exclusively been concentrated on the ‘practical’ function of orientation, whereas identification has been left to chance. As a result true dwelling, in a psychological sense, has been substituted by alienation” (1976, 21). Norberg-Schulz discusses the many factors that make up the genius loci or soul of a place and what makes a place unique when compared to other places. Rather than focusing only on the designed physical form of places, or the ways individual people feel about a place, he focuses on the less tangible qualities of place such as phenomenological qualities, the concept of character and atmosphere, sensual experiences with place, and meaning; all difficult concepts to quantify and describe.

Much of the literature on the subject of place deals mostly with understanding what place is and how to understand the character and sense of place of existing areas. There is far less written

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on how to best utilize this information when designing new projects. Most of the discussion on the subject comes in the form of physical suggestions in relation to the arrangement of buildings and the development of spatial qualities, clarity, and differentiation, like suggestions from New Urbanist designers. Critical Regionalists discuss ways in which contemporary architecture can greater relate and connect to its regional context without resorting to mimicry, perhaps connecting to the genius loci of a place or region. Far less is written about how designers can help allow people to develop attachment to the places in which they live and relate to and address to the more immaterial elements of places. This perhaps explains why there is a seemingly overemphasis on physical design in placemaking that is criticized by authors like Inam (2002) and Arefi and Triantafillou (2005).

J.B. Jackson explains that “‘Sense of place’ is a much used expression, chiefly by architects but taken over by urban planners and interior decorators and the promoters of condominiums, so that now it means very little” (1994, 157). Within the literature on sense of place, varying authors provide completely different definitions of the term making it difficult to compare suggestions or discussion since they are talking about completely different characteristics of places. Other authors neglect to clarify their definition of sense of place all together, assuming that the reader knows the definition of such a complex term and knows how to create it. An example of this can be found in an AIA guide on how designers can make communities more livable. They recommend creating a sense of place in order to give “neighborhoods a unique character, [enhance] the walking environment, and [create] pride in the community” (The American Institute of Architects 2005, 10). This suggestion is typical in that it fails to define what sense of place is or give insight on how it can be obtained. Sense of place is instead treated as an element that can simply be applied to places. The fact that many authors define the term sense of place differently may suggest why authors seem to criticize the suggestions and works of other authors and practitioners since they are not actually trying to solve the same problems. Since there is no agreed upon definition for the term, it is not surprising that there has been little written on how to facilitate sense of place that addresses all of the diverse concerns of the many authors on the subject.

It is clear that sense of place is a very broad and often misunderstood term that can be defined in a variety of ways. It is also influenced by a wide range of physical and spatial characteristics, as well as immaterial, personal, and subjective elements that may be beyond the control of the designer. Relph states that, “there are two major reasons for attempting to understand the phenomenon of place. First, it is interesting in its own right as a fundamental expression of man’s involvement in the world; and second, improved knowledge of the nature of place can contribute to the maintenance and manipulation of existing places and the creation of new place” (1976, 44). Although interested in the former, this thesis focuses primarily on the latter of Relph’s reasons. Through an analysis of the wide range of literature on sense of place and the study of existing communities and developments,
this thesis will attempt to clarify the ways sense of place can be defined and the many factors that contribute to a sense of place. This exploration will provide insight into how designers can help facilitate a sense of place to emerge in new developments in existing cities.
II. Research Question

This thesis will address new large scale developments that are built within existing urban contexts. These projects are quite different from new developments that are built on greenfield sites in which the project being built has little connection to an existing community, history, or people. These projects involve a completely different set of issues and will not be addressed in this thesis. The projects that this thesis discusses often come as a result of developing long vacant or underutilized land, or when a large parcel of land becomes available after the demolition of existing structures. These redevelopment projects often occur in an already established community. It can be argued that it is easier to develop or sustain sense of place through incremental or “piecemeal” growth. Nevertheless, it is common to see large scale new developments being built at one time in existing urban contexts. The fact cannot be ignored that these projects are going to be designed and constructed. How then can a designer or planner facilitate sense of place and allow it to emerge in newly created urban developments? It is necessary to first ask what sense of place is and what are the factors that contribute to it? After defining and understanding what sense of place is, it is possible to study and suggest ways in which sense of place can be developed in new construction. This analysis can then clarify whether sense of place is something that can be created through a design intervention. Fully understanding and addressing the elements that contribute to sense of place can improve a designer and planner’s ability to cultivate a legible, successful and unique place in which a community and region develop a meaningful attachment.
III. Methodology

Research on the topic of sense of place will begin with an in depth analysis on the literature concerning the issue of place. Through a study of the existing theories of place and a study of ways in which authors have defined sense of place in the past, it will be possible to develop a more comprehensive analysis of the term and a discussion of the elements that contribute to a sense of place. Once the many factors that contribute to sense of place have been understood, it is possible to begin to research ways in which sense of place can be developed in new developments in existing cities. Literary research along with personal reflection will begin to reveal ways that the elements that make up a sense of place can be understood and incorporated into the design process of a new development. Furthermore, extensive analysis of case studies of existing places will not only help illuminate the many elements that make a place so unique and meaningful, but can also help us understand the processes that went into making that place the way it is today.

In order to further understand the processes of developing sense of place in a new development in an existing urban context, the early stages of a design process for a new mixed use development will be considered in the downtown of Worcester, Massachusetts on a newly acquired piece of land made available after the demolition of a large vacant shopping mall. This will help illuminate some of the processes necessary to undertake when designing with a consideration to the development of a sense of place. It will also help to connect the theoretical discussion to practical application. The research on what makes sense of place strong in an area will help shed light on what to study in Worcester.

Research of the city of Worcester will involve a deep understanding of the history of the city along with an understanding of the struggles that the people of Worcester have gone through in order to mold their downtown into a successful and meaningful place. It will also be necessary to catalogue and analyze the many physical characteristics and assets of Worcester, as well as an understanding of its weaknesses and threats. Furthermore it is important to understand the natural characteristics of the city, from topography to climate. In addition to the physical and spatial characteristics of the city, an overview of the socioeconomic characteristics must be understood as well. While it is important to draw upon personal experiences from growing up in this area, it is also necessary to study published surveys, newspaper and magazine articles, studies, reports, blog postings and other means to determine people’s memories, thoughts, concerns, and goals regarding the city. Furthermore, much can be learned from personal encounters and interviews with people from Worcester and the region.

While it will not be possible to involve direct community collaboration in the process, or perform charrettes or design reviews, issues that will be discussed later in the thesis, published research on the wants and needs of the people of Worcester can help shed light on information lost from a
lack of actual community collaboration. This analysis should help illuminate some of the issues that would need to be considered when actually designing a development with the intention of addressing the three elements of sense of place described in this thesis.
1. What is Sense of Place?

In Tim Cresswell’s Place: A Short Introduction, he explains that “place…is both simple…and complicated” (2004, 1). He tells us that “it is a word wrapped in common sense. As we already think we know what it means it is hard to get beyond that common-sense level in order to understand it in a more developed way.” (Ibid.) Fritz Steele (1981) states:

‘Place’ may be one of the most frequently used words in the English language. It is used variously as a physical location (what places did you visit?), a psychological state (I’m not in a very good place right now), social status (people should know their place), the location of something in one’s mind (I can’t quite place it), a standard for evaluation (there’s a time and a place for everything), and on and on. (5)

Place therefore is difficult to dissect, especially since it means so many different things not only to scholars on the subject, but everyone who uses the term place.

Since many authors who discuss sense of place define the terms differently, it is quite difficult to compare their discussion on sense of place when they are referring to different characteristics and qualities of places. Often authors assume that the reader knows what sense of place is and neglect to define their own usage of the term. By studying and characterizing the varying ways authors discuss and define sense of place, it is possible to gain an understanding of the wide range of elements that contribute to sense of place. Discussion on sense of place typically falls into three different definitions that were developed for this research that will guide the following discussion on sense of place. A sense of place can be defined in the following ways:

**Sense of the place**, or a feeling of being in differentiated space and a feeling of spatial orientation and understanding.

**Spirit of the place**, or a connection to and understanding of the unique qualities of a place or its genius loci.

**Attachment to the place**, or a subjective perception of and personal connection to a place based on personal experiences.

These elements are all impacted in varying degrees by both physical and spatial elements, as well as immaterial, personal, and subjective elements that may be beyond the control of the designer. (Figure 1.4) For example, developing a sense of the place and creating differentiated space is more influenced by physical characteristics and therefore is easier to control than attachment to the place, which is far more difficult to address and involves many more non physical influences such as time, social, political, and process related characteristics. Attachment to the place is something that is different for everyone, and is a far more subjective quality than elements of the spirit of the place, which is a far more universally understood and objective quality. (Steele 1981, 9)
Places can be said to have a sense of place if they exhibit positive qualities or characteristics in relation to one or more of these definitions. (Figure 1.5) Somebody who has never been to Venice, Italy can comment on the unique genius loci of the place and say that it has a sense of place, though they have no spatial knowledge or *sense of the place*, and it may have no personal meaning to them. Furthermore, a child’s tire swing can be said to exhibit a sense of place for the child because they have grown personally attached to it, although the swing exhibits no unique qualities or spatial characteristics. We can also consider a home town shopping mall to a teenager. The teenager probably has a strong *sense of the place* and knows the mall by heart. It is also very meaningful to them because it is where they socialize with their friends and have developed many fond memories. Yet that mall may have no unique qualities with the same stores as hundreds of other malls around the country. It is still possible to say that this place has a strong sense of place to that person.

The previously mentioned examples can be said to exhibit a sense of place when analyzed through the varying definitions of the term, be it a state of mind, a quality of the place, or a feeling held by a person. People connect to varying characteristics of place stronger in some ways than others. Norberg-Shulz states that “it is evidently possible to orientate oneself without true identification; one gets along without feeling ‘at home’. And it is possible to feel at home without being well acquainted with the spatial structure of the place, that is, the place is only experienced as a gratifying general character. True belonging however presupposes that [all] psychological functions are fully developed” (1979, 20). Norberg-Shulz explains that “a place is…a qualitative, ‘total’ phenomenon, which we cannot reduce to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of sight” (Ibid., 6-7). Although many authors place emphasis on only one of the aforementioned

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definitions of sense of place, all of the characteristics that contribute to sense of place must be taken into account if a designer wants to cultivate a clear and unique place in which a community and region develop a meaningful attachment.

The elements that relate to these three definitions of sense of place will be discussed in greater detail. The discussion will include ways that these characteristics of sense of place can be developed in a new project through both physical and non-physical interventions as well as elements that are beyond the control of the designer.

Fig. 1.5 - Sense of Place Diagram

What is Sense of Place?
2. Sense of the Place: A feeling of being in differentiated space and a feeling of spatial orientation and understanding

A sense of the place refers to the feeling of being in differentiated space and relates to an unspoken understanding and clarity of the organizing and spatial principles of a place. Kevin Lynch explains that:

In order to feel at home and to function easily we must be able to read the environment… It should be possible to relate one part to another and to ourselves, to locate these parts in time and space, and to understand their function, the activities they contain, and the social position of their users. When the parts of the city lack visible relation to one another, their incoherence can contribute to a sense of alienation. (1965 from Lynch 1995, 90).

With this definition, sense of place is a state of mind that one has in relation to their knowledge of the place. Much of the writings and works of the New Urbanists, and other architects writing on the subject of urban form, discuss the development of sense of place primarily in relation to this definition.

It is important to clarify that the term sense of the place is being used differently in this thesis than the term sense of place, as sense of the place is one of three elements or definitions that make up the broader term sense of place. This definition of sense of place can further be broken down into elements that relate to spatial definition and differentiation, orientation and wayfinding in a place, and personal experience and perceptions skills. (Figure 2.1)
2.1. Spatial Definition & Differentiation

Yi-Fu Tuan explains that “space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning” (1977, 136). While the ways in which space can develop meaning will be discussed later, it is apparent that one of the fundamental characteristics of a place is the fact that it can be differentiated from limitless space or distinguishable from surrounding space. One knows when they are within a place, and when they are looking upon it. They are also clear when they are entering a place or leaving a place.

Still today, many English parishes still observe the ancient custom of “beating the bounds,” in which the community would walk the boundaries of their parish to share and celebrate the knowledge of where they lived and the extent of their place. (Figure 2.2) This ceremony would include prayers for protection and blessings for the land, along with the singing of songs and hymns. (Beating the Bounds) It is clear that feeling that you are in differentiated space relates to a comfort in a place and allows people to connect the unique qualities or experiences, that will be discussed later, with a specific location within the larger extent of the world. They can also differentiate these qualities and experiences with other places they have been to.

Spatial differentiation is also important in combating sprawl, or the unbounded and undifferentiated spread of development. “We appear to be forsaking nodal points for a thinly spread coast-to-coast continuity of people, food, power, and entertainment; a universal wasteland… a chromium-plated chaos” (Gordon Cullen 1971, 59 from Relph 1976, 79). By developing clearly differentiated space, with defined edges, it is possible to slow the effects or sprawl or decrease its negative effects on our perception of space.

In order to develop a feeling of spatial differentiation, a designer must consider edge and boundary, enclosure, entrances and exits, and naming. (Figure 2.1)

2.1.1. Edge and Boundary

Spatial differentiation involves a clear sense of the edges and boundaries of a place. As a designer, edges can be created through a variety a means, including edges formed from buildings, physical elements such as highways or train tracks, or a natural boundary such as an ocean or a river, a forest, a field, or wetlands. Preservation policy is often necessary to ensure that boundaries are

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maintained from further development.

The Back Bay Neighborhood in Boston, Massachusetts is a good example of a neighborhood with recognizable edges and boundaries. (Figure 2.3) The Charles River and Storough Drive act as an edge to the north of the neighborhood, while the Boston Common and the more densely developed Boylston Street act as edges to the east and south respectively.

Boundaries and edges can also be differentiated with something as simple as a change in paving material of a sidewalk, indicating that you have entered a different place. (Schwanke 2003) In addition, it is easier to comprehend the boundaries of a place if it is of a manageable size. For example, Robert Steuteville and Philip Langdon recommend that a neighborhood’s size should be within the distance that a person can walk in five minutes from the center to its edge, which is typically a quarter mile. (New Urban News)

2.1.2. Entrances and Exits

Developing clearly discernable entrances and exits is important to create a feeling of spatial differentiation as it allows the user to understand when they have entered or left the physical place. These entrances and exits should be clearly visible and easily accessible to facilitate movement amongst the place. They should also connect with the greater circulation patterns of the area. Creating prominent entry points, either through building form, or interesting physical elements such as signage, archways, or interesting landscaping or artwork can add the excitement of entering into the place, and clarify that an element is in fact an entrance or exit to the place.

One excellent example can be seen in the Campidoglio in Rome, Italy designed by Michelangelo. (Figure 2.5) Excitement builds as the user walks up the entry ramp and the buildings are slowly revealed. Two large statues mark the entry point to the space. There is a clear feeling of arrival when the user reaches the top of the ramp and passes the two large statues that mark the entry.
Another example of a project that develops a strong sense of the place, is Stratford Heights, a simple collection of student housing units for the University of Cincinnati. (Figures 2.5-6) The project is certainly not an architectural wonder, but an excellent example of how to develop spatial differentiation and understanding. Stratford Heights has strongly defined edges and a well enclosed linear open space around which, the dormitory buildings are organized. The project also has very clear entry points for both vehicles and pedestrians that are marked by similar attractive sign wall that displays the name of the project. There is a clear sense of when you are entering, leaving, or looking upon the distinct space of Stratford Heights. The project also benefits from a direct visual and physical connection to the campus to the east which results in a clear image and simple wayfinding, topics that will be discussed later.

2.1.3. Enclosure

Developing a feeling of enclosure when within a place is important to a feeling of being in differentiated space as opposed to sprawling and limitless space such as a field or parking lot. A feeling of enclosure can be similar to developing edges and boundaries to a place, but also takes into account enclosure from above. Norberg-Schulz explains:

The distinctive quality of any man-made place is enclosure, and its character and spatial properties are determined by how it is enclosed. Enclosure, thus, may be more or less complete, openings and implied directions may be present, and the capacity of the place varies accordingly. Enclosure primarily means a distinct area which is separated from the surroundings by means of a built boundary. It may also be manifest in less strict form as a dense cluster of elements, where a continuous boundary is inferred rather than positively present. (1976, 58)

An important aspect of a feeling of enclosure in an uncovered exterior space is the ratio of width to height of a space. Paul Sprieregen (1965) explains that when this ratio is 1:1 in its smaller dimension, a person experiences full enclosure. The limit to a feeling of enclosure comes when the
width of a space is twice the height of the space. Beyond this ratio, a feeling of enclosure is lost.

The height of a space refers to the bounding elements of the space such as buildings heights or a tree line. A feeling of enclosure can be influenced from above by elements such as trees, or canopies, awnings, or building overhangs. At Belmar, a mixed use development on the site of a previously abandoned mall in Lakewood, Colorado, designers developed a sense of enclosure by developing streets and spaces that fall within this ratio of 1:2. (Figure 2.7) This is also accomplished often throughout Europe, which often has tall buildings on dense blocks directly fronting narrow streets or public spaces. An excellent Example is Piazza Navona in Rome, Italy. (Figure 2.8)

People can also derive meaning from the form of enclosed space. A clearly defined geometric quadrangle can remind people of French classical landscapes or remind us of a town square or a university quad. It gives people a feeling of order, balance, and control. More organic enclosed space may make someone think of Italian piazzas or English landscapes. These spaces can either make us think that the place is less designed and more haphazard, has developed and changed over time, or perhaps it is more contemporary and dynamic. Both geometric and more organic spaces can be developed to create a sense of enclosure and contribute to spatial differentiation and a sense of the place. It is difficult to argue whether geometric spaces are preferable to more organic spaces. While geometric spaces tend to allow for a clearer image of the place which may develop a clearer sense of the place, organic spaces may develop greater visual delight, which can contribute to a richer spirit of the place. These topics will be discussed further in later sections.
2.1.4. Naming

Even the simple act of naming a place can help separate a place from a larger undifferentiated space. (Cresswell 2004, 9) “Names…are important in crystallizing identity” as the name of the place often symbolizes all that occurs within a place. (Lynch 1960, 108) When somebody says the name of a place it immediately creates an image of the differentiated space.

Furthermore, the name of a place is often connected with unique characteristics of the site such as a historic person or building, or perhaps a natural feature such as a waterfront or valley like at Rowes Wharf in Boston or River Center in San Antonio. (Schwanke 2003) (Figure 2.10) Lynch explains that “naming systems (as in the alphabetizing of a street series), will also facilitate the structuring of elements” (1960, 108). In addition, “they occasionally give locational clues (North Station)” (Ibid.). The name of a project is often instrumental in marketing the project as well. (Schwanke 2003)

2.2. Orientation & Wayfinding

A sense of the place also relates to an understanding of how to move through a place, how it is organized, and how a place relates to the greater context in which it is found. A tacit understanding of these characteristics equates to knowledge of the place. Tuan explains that “walking is a skill, but if I can “see” myself walking and if I can hold that picture in mind so that I can analyze how I move and what path I am following, then I also have knowledge” (1977, 68). When a person has a clear mental image of a place, they are comfortable in a space and can travel about it without conscious consideration of their actions. “We do many things efficiently but unthinkingly out of habit. It is uncanny to watch people acting with skill and apparent purpose and yet know they perform unconsciously, much as our physiological processes adjust to changes in the environment without our conscious control” (Ibid., 69).

On the other hand, when a person is
disoriented; unclear of where they are and where to go, the result is a feeling of discomfort, which will result in negative place experiences. (Lynch 1960) (Figure 2.11) Similarly to the knowledge of the extents of a place is clarity of how a place relates to places around it. Knowledge of a place can equate to knowledge of the greater region in which the city is found.

In order to facilitate orientation and wayfinding within a place, a designer must consider image clarity, physical and visual connections, hierarchy, and signage. (Figure 2.1)

2.2.1. Image Clarity

The term image in relation to orientation and wayfinding refers to the images that a person envisions when thinking about the city. This concept was first described by Kevin Lynch (1960) in *The Image of the City*. Lynch relates the images people have of the city to the successes and failures of a city’s urban form. A clear and legible image of the city is the result of a successful urban environment, while confusion and disorientation in a place are a result of poor urban form. Lynch explains that strong image of the city results in a feeling of clarity within one’s surroundings, as well as comfort and “emotional security” (Ibid., 4). “Where the system is weak, the image-making becomes difficult, and man feels ‘lost’. The terror of being lost comes from the necessity that a mobile organism be oriented in its surroundings” (Ibid., 125).

In his research, Lynch determined people’s images of the city by speaking with random citizens of three cities and asking them to draw maps, sketches and diagrams of the cities. (Figure 2.12) He also asked people for directions and studied how the people suggested moving around the city and how they verbally described their surroundings.

In these studies, Lynch was able to determine the mental picture or image that people had of the different cities. He realized that people understood their surroundings by forming mental maps consisting of “paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks.” He discovered that many people had similar images of the city, by citing similar streets, neighborhoods, and landmarks. He also noticed that many people’s mental images of the city did not match actual
conditions, or ignored entire pieces of cities. Lynch attributes these issues to poor urban clarity and form. By contributing to a clear mental image, a place can contribute to a greater understanding of the city as a whole, and how the various parts relate to a place. The place itself can tie together the rest of the city. (Ibid.)

An example of a place that clarifies the image of its surroundings is Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston, Massachusetts. Its central location among the complicated urban form of Boston helps connect people to the North End to the north, Haymarket to the northwest, Government Center to the west, the Financial District to the south, and the waterfront to the east. (Figure 2.13) People can understand how the many districts of the city relate with each other through how they connect and interact with the marketplace.

As designers of places, it is possible to consider differentiated places as districts. Designers must therefore consider how the districts relate to other districts through nodes, edges, paths, and landmarks and must seek to clarify the form of the city so people can gain a clear understanding of the place. People's image of the place may also be clarified if they can recognize a central node within the district that represents the centroid of the differentiated space. Designers must attempt to understand the existing image of the place through personal reflection and by asking others to describe or draw their image of the city. It is then possible to consider ways to facilitate “the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment” (Ibid., 9). Lynch warns however that there are:

Dangers in a highly specialized visible form; there is a need for a certain plasticity in the perceptual environment. If there is only one dominant path to a destination, a few sacred focal points, or an ironclad set of rigidly separated regions, then there is only one way to image the city without considerable strain. This one may suit neither the needs of all people, nor even the needs of one person as they vary from time to time. (Ibid., 111).

2.2.2. Physical Connections

The development of clear physical connections is one of the most important elements of simple wayfinding and a feeling of orientation. These physical connections come in the form of streets or pedestrian paths. People should be able to easily access where they want to go whether in a car, bike, or on foot, and should also have a clear understanding of how to get there. This can be facilitated by urban form that creates direct pathways between important nodes or districts of a city.

An example can be seen in Rome, Italy, where the Via del Corso, Via Del Ripetta, and Vial Del Babuino converge on the Piazza del Popolo and directly connect to other important nodes in the city like the monument to Vittorio Emanuele II. (Figure 2.14) These streets and nodes help clarify the image
of Rome even though it has a dense and complicated street network. At Belmar, designers developed the street pattern of the project by extending many of the existing streets that connected to the site. (Figure 2.15) This ensured direct physical connections to and through the project.

Lynch suggests that “the line of motion should have clarity of direction” (1960, 96). He explains that “the human computer is disturbed by long successions of turnings or by gradual, ambiguous curves which in the end produce major directional shifts. A straight path has clear direction, of course, but so does one with a few well-defined turns close to 90 degrees, or another of many slight turns which yet never loses its basic direction” (Ibid.). Edmund Bacon suggests that form should emerge “naturally from the movement systems so that the step of creating capricious shapes doesn’t exist in the design process. A key test of design is whether the shapes are arbitrary or are derived from movement systems” (1967, 41).

2.2.3. Visual Connections

Spatial orientation and wayfinding are also facilitated through visual connections. These connections can come in the form of views to nodes or landmarks. In many places in Washington D.C. a person can look to the Washington Monument and quickly understand which direction they are traveling. (Figure 2.16) If somebody is traveling down a street, and they can easily see their destination ahead, they will feel much more comfortable in their ability to make it to where they would like to go. Views to natural elements can also help orient people. On Manhattan Island, visual connections to the East or Hudson rivers can help to orient a traveler. Visual connections reduce the feeling of being lost, a situation that causes great discomfort and a negative place experience.
2.2.4. Hierarchy

Hierarchy can refer both to a hierarchy of buildings, and a street hierarchy. Important landmark buildings should receive a hierarchal placement within a place. This not only reinforces that symbolic importance of the institution within the community, but facilitates orientation and wayfinding when these landmarks are given highly visible locations. People often perceive the location of other buildings in relation to important landmarks. Norberg-Schulz explains that “it is… not only important that our environment has a spatial structure which facilitates orientation, but that it consists of concrete objects of identification” (1976, 21).

In addition, street hierarchy can also help with wayfinding by placing prominence on key streets that link important areas within a city. It should be evident which streets involve direct connections amongst districts, which streets are for movement within a district, and which are simply for servicing areas in a place. Through the development of a variety of streets, movement throughout a city by both car and on foot can be made easier, as vehicles can choose to avoid slower more pedestrian oriented streets when attempting to travel greater distances. Lynch recommends that “the key lines should have some singular quality which marks them off from the surrounding channels” (1960, 96).

Lynch uses Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, Massachusetts as an example of a visually prominent street for the way it includes a tree lined parkway at its center. (Figure 2.17) This central spine in the Back Bay Neighborhood of Boston, helps clarify the image of the neighborhood and orient users within the place. (Figure 2.18) Commonwealth Avenue connects Boston Common and Kenmore Square at the edges of the neighborhood. Its cross streets utilize an alphabetical naming system further clarifying a person’s east-west location along the street.
with Arlington Street crossing at the far east, followed by Berkeley Street, Clarendon Street, and so on as one travels west away from Boston Common on the Avenue.

### 2.2.5. Signage

Signage needs to be considered both on the scale of the vehicle and pedestrian. It should help clarify circulation amongst a place, but can also contribute to the visual character in the place. Placement, lighting, and scale of the sign should relate to who will be using the sign and why. The signage should be integrated with the overall landscape design of the project. Signage may be uniform throughout a place, or may help clarify different zones in a project or accentuate different streets or uses, contributing to spatial differentiation. Although it is important for signs to be clear, the task will be made easier if the layout of the development itself has a clear structure. (Schwanke 2003) Signage also relates to visual character and visual delight, concepts that will be discussed later.

At Stratford Heights, a collection of student housing units for the University of Cincinnati, there is a very consistent strategy toward the signage that is integrated with the rest of the site furnishings of the project. (Figures 2.20-21) The signs, benches, trashcans, street lamps bike racks, and other furnishings are all painted the same green color, creating a cohesive look that contributes to the projects differentiation from the surrounding area. The signs also include the name of the project which reinforces its spatial differentiation. The signs help users find individual buildings, but the project’s clear organization makes moving about the project so easy that the signage does not need to be relied upon.

![Fig. 2.20 - Stratford Heights Cincinnati, OH](image)

![Fig. 2.21 - Stratford Heights](image)

[photos by author]

### 2.3. Experience & Perception Skills

Each of the three definitions of sense of place discussed in this thesis is affected by physical and non physical characteristics. In comparison to the other two definitions of sense of place, a sense of the place is most easily controlled by a designer and through physical interventions since it is mostly
impacted and controlled by physical and spatial design. Yet as Fritz Steele explains that “the sense of place is an experience created by the setting combined with what a person brings to it” (1981, 9). Therefore physical design can strongly impact a person’s sense of the place, but this can matter little if a person has poor perception skills.

Perception skills can refer to a person’s general sense of direction or perhaps attention that is paid to one’s experiences in a place. Some people naturally make mental notes about their surroundings, while others travel about seemingly oblivious to what is occurring around them. As a result, some people are better than others at finding their way around a place or explaining how to move through a place. “People who are good at finding their way in the city may be poor at giving directions to the lost, and hopeless in their attempt to draw maps. They have difficulty envisaging their course of action and the spatial characteristics of the environment in which it takes place” (Tuan 1977, 68).

Sometimes people gain knowledge of a place simply through a “continual succession of movements rather than a spatial configuration or map” (Ibid., 70). Even the most complicated places can eventually be understood as repetitive use in a place develops place knowledge. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in the DAAP building at the University of Cincinnati designed by Peter Eisenman. (Figure 2.22) The highly complex circulation systems of the building can cause great confusion and anxiety to inexperienced users of the building. Though with time and experience, users develop knowledge of the building and are able to navigate the building with unconscious though. This experience in a place and familiarity with a place is of utmost importance to a positive place experience. Tuan explains that “When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place” (Ibid., 73).

2.4. Summary

Sense of the place refers to a feeling of being in differentiated space and a feeling of spatial orientation and understanding. Spatial definition and differentiation involves clarity of edge and boundary, clear entrances and exits, strong enclosure, and a distinct name of the place in question. Orientation and wayfinding is influenced by clarity of image, strong physical and visual connections, hierarchy, and clear signage. Finally, spatial understanding can be influenced by our time in a place as well as our perception skills.
3. Spirit of the place: A connection to and understanding of the unique qualities of a place or its genius loci.

Fig. 3.1 - Spirit of the Place Elements
[Image by author]

Christian Norberg Schulz explains that “Genius Loci is a Roman concept. According to ancient Roman belief every ‘independent’ being has its genius, its guardian spirit. This spirit gives life to people and places, accompanies them from birth to death, and determines their character or essence…The genius thus denotes what a thing is, or what it ‘wants to be’” (1979, 18). This concept of genius loci can be used to describe places and can be understood as the spirit of the place or the soul of the place. The characteristics that make up the spirit of a place have less to do with one’s personal experiences in the place but can be noticed and experienced by everyone as it “will tend to have a similar impact on many different people” (Steele 1981, 9). Jackle argues that the best person to experience and express the genius loci is not the resident but the tourist, for tourism “involves the deliberate searching out of place experience” (1987, 8 from Jiven and Larkham 2003, 69). A strong spirit of the place is extremely important for the development of a positive short term place experience, while the development of an attachment to the place is important for a positive long term place experience.

The genius loci or spirit of the place is what makes the place memorable, unique, and unable to

**Spirit of the Place**

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J.B. Jackson explains that, “certain localities have an attraction which gives us a certain indefinable sense of well being and which we want to return to, time and again.” (1994, 158) While in the past, the genius loci was often heavily impacted by vernacular buildings created out of necessity, in modern times “the question of regional character has become a question of choice and, therefore, of design rather than of necessity.” (Hough 1990, 2 from Watson and Bentley 2007, 1) Too frequently, designers choose current universal design trends and aesthetics rather than architecture rooted in its context. This is in addition to buildings that are intended to be duplicated in a variety of regions with little adjustment to the structure itself.

The term placeless is often used in regards to settings with no distinguishable genius loci that could be found anywhere and have no relationship to their location. (Figures 3.3, 3.5) These types of places are often said to have no sense of place as they exhibit “sameness” to places around the world. (Garnham 1985) As a result, “the homogenous and undifferentiated character of modern cities kills all variety of life styles and arrests the growth of individual character” (Alexander 1978, 43). In contemporary society, “the expansion of the virtual, globally connected world... renders specific places increasingly appealing and thus important” (Zardini 2005, 24). “Differences between places are being wiped out, and these are what we miss” (Clay 1980, 14).

Settings can also be considered placeless when their visual character appears to be inauthentic or fake. (Relph 1976) Christian Norberg-Schulz (1969) calls these inauthentic places “flatscape[s], lacking intentional depth and providing possibilities only for commonplace and mediocre experiences” (from Relph 1976, 79). He explains that “the cultural importance of defining an area which is qualitatively different from the surroundings, cannot be overestimated” (from Relph 1976, 58).
Although it is often a goal to develop a place that is completely unique in every way, this is almost impossible to achieve. Many of the cultural or sensorial characteristics of one place can be quite similar to a nearby city in the same region. It is therefore not a problem if a New England city is similar to many other New England cities. This is probably a positive situation because it is connecting to the unique qualities of the larger region. Yet when a city in New England is indistinguishable from a city in Texas and California, there becomes a greater problem of placelessness. It is important that people in the place can connect to and understand the important elements that do make up the genius loci of the place even if it is similar to other places. Individual places should seek to determine the few elements that are unique and celebrate them, and further seek to develop additional unique qualities, rituals, and experiences.

When studying the genius loci of a place, it is necessary to understand the aspects of the natural environment, the cultural expressions of the place, and the sensory experiences within a place. (Garnham 1985) (Figure 3.1)

### 3.1. Natural Elements

The elements of the natural environment have a profound effect on the genius loci or spirit of a place, as the natural environment in certain places is often ever present in our reading of our surroundings. It is the element that can most easily differentiate places from each other, and the reaction to the natural environment is what often shapes the character and even cultures of places. For example, Fritz Steele argues that “the only thing that keeps parts of Seattle, Washington from looking exactly like Route 1 in Saugus, Massachusetts is the looming presence of Mount Rainier, which developers have not yet figured out how to standardize or obliterate” (1972, 8).
Christian Norberg-Schulz discusses the phenomena of natural place and differentiates it from manmade place, but suggests that a study of man-made place...ought to have a natural basis: it should take the relationship to the natural environment as its point of departure” (1979, 50). He describes five categories or “modes of natural understanding” that sum up man’s understanding of nature. (Ibid., 28) He describes things, cosmic order, natural character, light, and time. When discussing things, he discusses physical elements such as mountains, rocks, rivers, trees. Even elements such as the topography, or earth, and sky makes up the physical “things” of a natural place, and make a place meaningful or “sacred.” (Ibid., 27)

Next Norberg-Schulz discusses the cosmic order of natural place. This involves recognition of the course of the sun through the sky or a connection to the cardinal points. He discusses how cultures such as the Egyptians are deeply connected to the cosmic order of elements such as the sun, while Nordic countries connect to cosmic elements like the stars. Similarly to cosmic order, the character of physical place often has particular meaning to different cultures. For instance the different characters of craggily, menacing rocks in comparison to a place where the rock forms seem to offer protection.

Light has always played in important role in man’s understanding of the natural world. Light is seen as a symbol of knowledge, love, of divinity. Furthermore, light conditions are quite different in different places. For example, the light in Cuzco, Peru is quite different from light in Seattle, Washington, and these differences can easily be recognized and contribute to the visual character and image of the place. (Figures 3.6-7) Light also connects us with time, as light is constantly changing throughout the day, similarly to the way seasons change in a year. Man notices these changes and is emotionally impacted by them. (Ibid., 27-32)

In the discussion of the natural environment, one cannot forget climatic features of place that have a profound effect on the genius loci of a place. The climate may even be one of the first things a
visitor notices when visiting a place. Anybody who has ever walked off a plane on a Caribbean island or Minnesota in winter can recognize this fact.

In order to encourage people to connect to and understand the natural characteristics of a place, a designer must consider physical and visual connections to the natural landscape, and climatic connection and celebration. (Figure 3.1)

### 3.1.1. Landscape Connection

When designing new places, it is necessary to connect the setting to the natural elements of the place both physically and visually. Physical connections can be made when a person is able to make contact with the natural environment. This can be accomplished by allowing somebody to access a riverfront or oceanfront, or perhaps enabling them to enter into a forest that acts as an edge to a place. (Figure 3.8) Physical connection to the landscape is often difficult since private entities often own prime waterfront property or are located on the edge of a field or forest to capture ideal views to nature. Furthermore, natural regions are often cut off to pedestrians by highways railways, or mega-structures. Yet designers should enable the public to have access to natural elements that should be shared by all regardless of a person’s ability to own property in these areas. In addition, extremely dense places often struggle to allow direct light to its users. By creating open space and through policy restricting building shadow coverage, people can be connected to the natural light qualities of a place, and recognize how these qualities change throughout the day and year.

In addition to physical connections, visual connections should be developed by a designer. In many places such as mountainous regions, this is luckily unavoidable. Though in other situations, orienting streets to provide views to a waterfront, or locating public spaces at the sites of strong view corridors can not only help in user orientation and way finding, but will reinforce people’s

**Fig. 3.8 - Georgetown Waterfront**
Washington D.C.  
[http://z.about.com]

**Fig. 3.9 - Street View to Ocean**
[www.150forestave.com]
linkage to their surroundings and embed a place within its unique natural location. (Figure 3.9) Ryan explains that “enhancing the visibility of parks from nearby homes and streets helps establish visual connection to the larger public realm. People who rarely venture into a park may nevertheless develop a sense of attachment to it” (2006, 67).

Natural elements should also be protected through management and policy. In addition, certain natural areas can be restored or developed to increase physical and visual connections with the natural environment. This may come in the form of redeveloping wetlands, or developing new manmade lakes or ponds, wetlands, aquifers, or forests. Even developing simple landscaped parks or gardens will increase connection to the natural environment.

In addition to landscape elements like oceans, rivers, and forests, connections should be made to local species of plants and animals. This may involve planting native plant life or attracting and protecting wildlife either in conservation areas or by simply installing bird feeders. Sometimes these elements are celebrated, like the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington D.C., or the celebration of the arrival of the migrating monarch butterfly in Angangueo, Mexico. (Figure 3.10)

3.1.2. Climatic Connection

In our current age, the power of heating and air conditioning has enabled us to seek shelter from the extremes of the climate. Though Mirko Zardini explains that:

Forgetting the climate, ignoring it, or trying to eliminate it from urban reality and our imagination not only deprives us of the pleasure of different seasons, which foster agreeable as well as disagreeable situations and conditions, but inevitably leads to unexpected confrontations with the more dramatic consequences of weather…It is almost as if we would like to eliminate the winter and the summer, except as purely aesthetic experiences, stripped of all repercussions on our day-to-day lives. In spite of our obsession with up-to-the-minute weather forecasts supplied by the internet, television, and newspapers, we still live with the myth of a weatherless society. (2005, 104-5)

Yet the climate is often one of the few elements that make a setting unique in comparison to other places throughout the world. Norman Pressman explains in his essay The Idea of Winterness: Embracing Ice and Snow, that “even if our technology permits us to disregard climate, we northerners must attempt to achieve a harmony with the natural elements if our environment is to have meaning
and if we are to develop a sense of climatic place, to know where we are” (from Zardini 2005, 133).

Designers should therefore not attempt to subvert climate, but connect people to it and find ways to “celebrate the season” (Pressman from Zardini 2005, 133). In winter months, people can enjoy the cold climate by participating in snowman or snow fort construction, or enjoying an outdoor ice rink. Celebrations can also take on a larger scale such as the construction of ice palaces, or the celebration of snow festivals or carnivals. In 1955, Quebec City began its first Winter Carnival that has since become an annual event. (figure 3.11-2) In 1996, the first ice hotel opened in Jukkasjarvi, Sweden. (Ibid.) (Figure 3.13) Similarly, in summer months or in hot climates, extreme temperatures may encourage children to play in public fountains or pools in local parks. (Figure 3.14) Similar to winter celebrations, festivals or carnivals that celebrate the summer can help transform the heat from a negative quality into an important cultural ritual in the place. These celebrations also connect people with time, as different seasons relate to different activities and events.

3.2. Cultural Expressions

The expressed culture of the people that inhabit a place contributes greatly to the genius loci of the place and can make it unique from other places throughout the world. Lynch suggests that a “settlement is good which enhances the continuity of a culture and the survival of its people, increases a sense of connection in time and space, and permits or spurs individual growth” (1981, 116-117). By studying the existing soul and the many existing assets of the place, professionals can build upon what already exists in a place and strengthen the unique qualities of a place. (Areﬁ 2009) It is also important to understand the

**Fig. 3.11 - Winter Carnival - Quebec**

[http://www.2camels.com]

**Fig. 3.12 - Winter Carnival - Quebec**

[http://travelingmamas.com]

**Fig. 3.13 - Ice Hotel - Jukkasjarvi, Sweden**

[http://www.studyinsweden.se]

**Fig. 3.14 - Fountain at Millenium Park - Chicago, IL**

[http://blog.pps.org]
cultural expressions that exist on the site, from the built form itself to the uses of the place, to the lives of the people who live there. A “planner must first sum up the personality of a place,” and direct change to protect the unique qualities of the place. (Sharp, 1946, 11 from Jiven and Larkham 2003, 72, Garnham 1985). This can be accomplished through visual analysis of the place, research into the history of the place, and cultural immersion among the place. It is also important to study the people through interviews, surveys, charrettes, and meetings in order to greater understand what they value, and what they feel to be the unique aspects and genius loci of the place.

The culture of the people can be expressed in the built form of the city, creating a distinct visual character. Culture is also manifested in the activities that people engage in and the uses found within a place. Furthermore, designers must understand the broad symbolism and meaning of a place, and the way it has developed throughout history for a better understanding of the cultural expressions of the place. (Figure 3.1)

3.2.1. Visual Character

Visual character is impacted by the natural landscape, but is highly impacted by manmade physical elements like the built form of a place. “Character is determined by how things are, and gives our investigation a basis in the concrete phenomena of our everyday life-world” (Norberg-Schulz 1979, 10-11). Character moves beyond simple spatial relationships that influence spatial understanding and knowledge and involves a detailed look at the concrete elements of the place. Norberg Schulz explains that, “similar spatial organizations may possess very different characters according to the concrete treatment of the space-defining elements (the boundary). In history the basic spatial forms have been given ever new characterizing interpretations” (Ibid., 11) “‘Character’ is at the same time a more general and a more concrete concept than ‘space’. On the one hand it denotes a general comprehensive atmosphere, and on the other the concrete form and substance of the space-defining elements” (Ibid., 10).

One of the most influential factors to visual character is the architectural style of the buildings, which can give two identical spatial arrangements completely different characters. The scale and form of buildings have an impact on visual character, as well as building materials. A glass and steel building will exhibit a different visual character than a concrete or brick masonry building. In addition, the way buildings are detailed and articulated impacts the overall visual character of a place, along with site furnishings, signage, lighting, and landscaping.

Different communities or institutions have varying goals for the visual characters of their places, and direct design to reinforce these goals. A designer should work with the local community
to help understand their vision for the place in order to understand how the visual character can support the place. At the University of Cincinnati, the school attempted to create a visual character of innovation. (Figure 3.15) A wide range of contemporary buildings designed by signature architects such as Frank Gehry, Peter Eisenman, and Thom Mayne, helped create this innovative character. Physical elements such as landscaping, signage, and lighting support this goal as well.

Some places hope to create a cohesive visual character that is rooted in the history or tradition of the place. At the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland, the original buildings were designed in a Georgian architectural style and were built in red brick with white colonnaded porticos with triangular pediments fronting each building. In order to preserve the traditional unified character created by these buildings, new buildings on the campus were required to be built in red brick. Many of the buildings were also built in the Georgian architectural style with white colonnaded porticos with triangular pediments. (Figure 3.16)

This approach is often criticized for creating inauthentic or fake environments. Jiven and Larkham criticize the “tendency of practical planning and design to work towards “creating” a sense of place through using elements of historical forms” (2003, 78). It is important to celebrate and display the history of the place as it evolved through time, but this does not necessarily mean copying the styles or forms of the past. Nader Tehrani explains that:

If a building is allowed to have its own voice, it can only enhance buildings around it. When you resort to this pastiche and mimicry [of historical style] you destroy the meaning of the real historical fabric around you. [A city must] acknowledge new methods of construction and design. Doing this will reinforce a larger sense of history by reflecting the city’s many distinct eras and styles, instead of just one monolithic idea of the past. (2007)

This implies that a building should represent the time period in which it was designed and constructed which in essence fixes that cultural expression in a particular point in time that can be read in the future, and compared and contrasted to other time periods in the history of the city. Jiven and Larkham argue that “the impact of much conservation activity is to constrain, and usually to minimize, physical
change. But communities change; values and aspirations change, and individuals change, whether by ageing or by moving. Thus we would expect genius loci to change” (2003, 75). Peter Calthorpe discusses a similar sentiment when he explains that:

There is a fine but important difference between tradition and nostalgia. Traditions are rooted in timeless impulses while being constantly modified by circumstance. Tradition evolves with time and place while holding strong to certain formal, cultural, and personal principles. Nostalgia seeks the security of past forms without the inherent principles. The current interest in the traditional American town can tilt to profound and meaningful principles or merely color suburbia with an old-time style. The difference is in the quality and skill of adaptation. (1995, 23)

Even if places have a diverse range of architectural styles from varying time periods, and are constructed of a variety of materials, a unified and cohesive visual character can be achieved. A street lined by street trees, with similar site furnishings, lighting schemes, and signage, will still exhibit a unified, pedestrian oriented character regardless of the appearance of the buildings. In addition, the place will probably have a much more interesting visual character due to the diversity of its architecture than it would if all of the buildings were of the same style and built in the same timeframe. Yet if all of the buildings are indeed built at the same time, architectural diversity can be a difficult task to achieve. It can be argued that variety in architecture can come by encouraging a number of architects to design buildings even when a single designer determines the overall urban design plan for the place. This will ensure that a variety and flexibility of built form can found in the place while still achieving the overall goals of the designer of the place. Peter Calthorpe argues that:

Urban design – the public quality of buildings and their interrelationships – must be clarified before an architecture can function. It is my belief that the architecture of these places is not as important as the urban order and the quality of their public spaces. Put simply, buildings can be ordinary if they are part of a beautiful street or square and in fact it may be important for more buildings to be “ordinary.” In the American town, architecture is eclectic and of an uneven quality – and I hope it will remain so. This eclecticism can be chaotic if built without a sound urban framework or it can be delightful when placed within a strong system of legible and memorable public places. (1995, 11)

Malcolm Moore and Jon Rowland ask, “should the plan be a broad framework flexible enough to accommodate many styles of built contributions or be a bold vision for how every part of a district should be built” (2005, 12)? If a community values architectural diversity and adaptation with time, then the plan should indeed be flexible enough for individual architects to design unique architectural expressions while still conforming to and fulfilling the urban design framework.

Although architectural variety in relation to style may be desirable, there is a risk that utilizing contemporary design trends will only result in a number of different places throughout the world looking the same since they all have similar looking buildings. With easy access to building materials,
systems, products, and laborers from around the world, and through the circulation of innovative buildings from around the world in design publications, it is easy to see how architects can create buildings that have more connection to global architecture trends than the place in which they are constructed. This was the case with the International Style of architecture which became popular in the early and mid 20th Century, and resulted in similarly designed buildings in many different places throughout the world. (Figure 3.17) In response to this problem, supporters of “critical regionalism” seek to develop architecture that encourages a “resistant, identity-giving culture while at the same time having discreet recourse to universal technique. (Frampton 1983, 20). They seek a more critical connection to local and regional “topography, context, climate, light, and tectonic form” (Ibid, 26). By designing with local building materials, and by utilizing vernacular design strategies, the buildings of a place can remain rooted in the region, differentiating them from buildings in other places. Again, this does not involve resorting to “simple minded attempts to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular,” but adapting, local materials and strategies such as passive heating and cooling methods, or site strategies to today’s construction and design methodologies. (Ibid, 21) Notable examples include the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in Nouméa, New Caledonia designed by Renzo Piano, which draws upon ancient building customs without copying vernacular styles, and the Ballard Library in Seattle, Washington by Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, whose roof form and materiality references the region's history of shipbuilding. (Figures 3.18,19)

An extreme example of working with local building materials to encourage a unique visual character that is rooted in its context can be seen in Jerusalem, Israel. In the city of Jerusalem it is required that all “buildings in the city… be faced in stone - including public lavatories and gas stations” (Jewish Virtual Library). (Figures 3.20,1,2) While this does create a particular visual character that is unique to the city, it also illuminates how architects can still develop a wide range of architectural styles

**Fig. 3.17 - International Style Buildings** - Toronto, Canada

**Fig. 3.18 - Tjibaou Cultural Centre** - New Caledonia

**Fig. 3.19 - Ballard Library** - Seattle, WA

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and applications that celebrate the traditions and techniques at the time of the buildings construction, while using a material that was utilized in the construction of the city’s ancient temples.

A similar problem of utilizing contemporary design trends in relation to urban design solutions can also produce many places that look the same and fail to develop unique visual character. Malcolm Moore and Jon Rowland warn that:

While many urban areas suffer from similar problems, solutions based on a too literal interpretation of the urban design toolkit could perversely produce places that work well but look remarkably similar. The law of unintended consequences could result in regenerated towns having a common, but rather too tasteful, look. Making distinctive places that people will want to live in because they feel they belong and will want to visit to experience their specialness may entail designers taking risks. They may have to force themselves not to play safe. The too familiar low-fat design solution may need to be beefed up with something to give it more bite; an injections of protein to grow character. (2005, 15)

Moore and Rowland suggest that functional design is often not good enough to produce truly unique and special places. This trend is seen today by designers who follow simple and often successful urban design strategies like those described by the Congress for the New Urbanism as outlined in their charter, only to develop a place that looks and feels similar to many other places designed using the same strategies. Many designers working under the name of New Urbanism do not actually follow all of the points outlined in the Charter of the New Urbanism, but instead focus on the creation of a legible urban form, a defined and aesthetically attractive public realm, and the mixing of uses to promote walkability and activity. They unfortunately often misinterpret discussion about traditional neighborhood development to include traditional architectural styles, resulting in an inauthentic visual character of pastiche that is often criticized.

It would be unfair to claim that the charter fails completely to include suggestions on how to work with the spirit of the place, and develop attachment to place. For example, the charter states that “The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents, and
boundaries” (Congress of the New Urbanism 2006). The charter continues to state that “Architecture and landscape design should grow from local climate, topography, history, and building practice,” and “Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style” (Ibid.). In relation to attachment to place, they discuss some of the issues that will be covered later including community involvement in the form of charrettes, the development of communal spaces to facilitate community interaction, and a range of housing types to “bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community” (Ibid.). Yet many of these suggestions are often overlooked and ignored by designers who develop projects in the name of New Urbanism resulting in a number of projects with the same visual character and little relation to the existing place and people.

The Congress of the New Urbanism needs to further stress and expand upon their suggestions that address the spirit of the place and include more ways to promote an attachment to place that look beyond urban form. While they struggle simply to convince designers and developers to avoid the sprawling suburban development patterns that have caused so many problems in our country, they must continue to push for higher standards of place specific and meaningful design and community development. In addition, designers need to understand that these strategies are only a basic framework for effective physical design that need to be supplemented with additional and sometimes risky design decisions appropriate for the people and location in which the place is being designed. This will help designers avoid “homogenized ‘efficient’ settings that have no variety, surprise, or traces of their own history and development” (Steele 1981, 8).

3.2.2. Cultural Activities & Uses

Much of what makes a place unique are the cultural activities that the people engage in within the place. As an individual travels the world, they can see the differences in these cultural activities and their connection to the spirit of the place. (Figures 3.20-3.22) What do the people of a place like to do for fun, and what types of rituals or events do they partake in? These activities can refer to events such as parades or festivals, or something as simple as watching a football game in a bar, walking a dog in a park, or having a cookout with friends and family. A designer must also understand what types of rituals or beliefs are important to the people and what institutions they value? Maybe the people of a place value sustainability, or have a shared interest in the arts.

When a designer determines some of the cultural activities that are important to the people they are designing for, they then must consider ways to accommodate for these activities. While it is not possible to predict all of the cultural activities of a community especially since the people of a place do not all share the same culture, by developing flexible and adaptable indoor and outdoor

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spaces, it is possible to accommodate a variety of uses. It is also important to find ways to encourage cultural activities and uses in order to strengthen peoples connection to a particular part of their culture or place. This may be out of the hands of the designer but can be achieved through management and policy that develops cultural events and festivals. Programming decisions can also help include institutions and uses that match the interests and values of the people. People therefore should be included in the making of these decisions through inclusionary techniques that will be discussed later.

3.2.3. Symbolism and Meaning

Beyond cultural activities and uses, many places have specific deep meanings or inherent symbolisms that impact the spirit of the place. For example, Washington D.C as a whole can be seen as the center of government to our country while New York City is the financial center. (Figures 3.28-9)

**Figs. 3.23-27 - Cultural Activities**

![Portland](www.flickr.com), ![Cultural Activities](www.trojanwire.com), ![Cultural Activities](http://ngishili.com), ![Cultural Activities](www.news-journal.com), ![Cultural Activities](www.dallasnews.com)

Cities like Portland are a symbol for smart growth and sustainability.

Though not every city has such a distinct and unique meaning, and many of the meanings related to places are personal and different for everyone, it is valuable for a designer to try and understand what the city represents or is trying to become and attempt to fulfill these goals. Perhaps a place’s meaning is related to memories of the past or goals of future growth of a struggling area, or maybe it is about equity and diversity. A designer can only ascertain these meanings through working with the community via inclusionary techniques that will be discussed later. But it must be understood that places mean a number of different things to their citizens, and those meanings are constantly changing.

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changing. “The designer needs to leave pegs for the imagination to hang on so that each generation can regenerate and reinterpret the meaning for their own time” (Fleming 2007, 17).

3.2.4. History and Development

“In the course of time the landscape … acquires its specific genius loci, its culture and history conditioned character which commonly reflects not only the work and aspirations of the society at present in occupancy but also that of its precursors in the area” (Conzen 1966, 56-57). Many places are unique due to the rich history of its precursors. Much of a place’s history is expressed through its development and the changes that occurred throughout the development of a place. Most sites within existing communities have a heritage, and history that should be understood and perhaps celebrated. Before a designer makes an intervention on a site, it is important that they research the history of the site and the surrounding area. What were the previous uses of the site? What were some of the major events that occurred or some of the major changes that took place in the area?

After thorough research and analysis, the designer must then decide whether any of the information can help inform decisions in the new design. The more difficult question is how to utilize historic information to inform design decisions. Ronald Flemming argues that “place is not merely what was there, but also the interaction of what is there and what happened there” (2007, 14). The designer may choose to restore a historic structure or place its ruins on display. They could also reuse a structure or repurpose it for a different use. A designer could recreate a historic street pattern, or indicate where historic structures or streets used to be through something as simple as a ground treatment indicating the old footprint of a building or extents of a street or railway. There may be a way to celebrate historic people, groups, or events that occurred in the place, through monuments, educational installments or institutions,
reenactments, or through something as simple as the name of the project or a project element. Perhaps key landmarks or locations can be given hierarchy by allowing views to them, creating public spaces in particular areas, or organizing the development around a particular location. “It would be disastrous if, in our zeal for improvement, we ignored the essential character conferred upon our [city] by the past” (Spalding 1945, 3 from Jiven and Larkham 2003, 72). Celebrating and incorporating historical elements of a place into a new project is an opportunity to add an additional layer of interest and meaning to a newly created development. Fritz Steele explains that “traces of history are not essential to a strong spirit of place. A totally new city such as Brasilia has a strong identity, but it does not spark the fantasies about life in past eras that a mixed-period city does” (1981, 158).

If a place is able to incorporate buildings from a range of time periods rather than only including new buildings, it can reinforce a greater understanding of time and development in an area. It gives people “a sense of time” and turns the place into a museum of its own history through the visual evidence of the development that took place. (Jackson 1994) This process of change can represent the struggles and aspirations of the people, and can be celebrated through the preservation of urban artifacts. People may not have personally experienced the history of the place, and it may mean nothing to them, but learning about it and showing history adds to the richness and changing soul of a place as it triggers “fantasies [of] what life would have been like” in the place. (Steele 1981, 131)

3.3. Sensory Experiences

In recent years, human and social sciences have shifted in order to further study sensory experiences and their impact on human perception and behavior. (Zardini 2005) “Much of contemporary architecture shares this renewed interest in a sensorial experience extending beyond the purely visual realm” (Ibid., 22). It has been understood that character “embraces all the various sensory

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experiences that one can have in a place” (Ibid., 23). Juhani Pallasmaa states that “I experience myself in the city and the city exists through my embodied experience. The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me” (1995, 40). Pallasmaa is referring to a complete sensorial connection to the city. Sensory experiences are tied to place in that they are often connected to elements such as the natural surroundings and climate, as well as cultural expressions.

Dolores Hayden suggests that “if place does provide an overload of possible meanings for the researcher, it is place’s very same assault on all ways of knowing (sight, sound, smell touch and taste) that makes it powerful as a source of memory, as a weave where one strand ties in another” (1995, 18). It is possible to think to our own experiences of eating foods in a particular place, whether it is lobster in Maine, pizza in Brooklyn, or pasta in Rome. In other instances, eating lobster somewhere else can immediately conjure memories of our experience in Maine. Similarly, one can remember the smell of the North End in Boston or China Town in San Francisco, as these are all important elements of experiencing that place. In addition, the street jazz of New Orleans is important part of its identity and genius loci, as the cold touch of snow in Minnesota and the sunshine on our skin in Miami similarly embed us in the place. While unique sensory experiences contribute to a unique and identifiable genius loci, it is not necessary that these experiences be completely unique to a place. Providing rich sensory experiences, unique or not, will lead to a more positive place experience, and positive image of the place. It is important to consider all senses when designing new places and architectural interventions, so people can recognize unique qualities of a place, or simply enjoy a deeper and richer bodily connection and experience with the place.

3.3.1. Taste & Smell

Taste and smell are two senses that are often connected, as the taste of something is highly impacted by its aroma. Designers of places must consider ways to connect to these senses, and attempt to include them in their designs. Much of this is accomplished through the program of the elements of a place and the management of events and programs, rather than physical design. It is obvious to think that including dining uses will connect to our senses of taste and smell through the foods and drinks that are served. A deeper connection to the genius loci of the place will result if the food and drink is in some way unique, or is rooted in the place. This can be accomplished through the use of local and seasonal ingredients, or the development of a signature dish to the area, similar to Cincinnati chili, New England clam chowder, or Chicago deep dish pizza. (Figures 3.33-4) Perhaps the food in the area is a result of the local demographics of a place, which can be accomplished by facilitating local restaurant ownership.

Allowing food vendors on the streets or establishing open air markets can also develop taste experience...
and smell experiences. Urban gardens can further connect people to their food source as well as fostering community and a feeling of responsibility for the success of a place. Local food can further be celebrated in food festivals, events that showcase local restaurants, or cook-offs of a local signature dish. One example is the annual Newport, Rhode Island Great Chowder Cook Off. (Figure 3.35) Our sense of smell can also be pleasantly impacted through natural smells from flowers or other landscaping elements.

At Quincy Market, also known as the Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston, Massachusetts, visitors enjoy a variety of enticing aromas and can sample a number of local foods that people often associate with Boston and New England such as raw oysters, clams, lobster rolls, fish, and clam chowder. (Figure 3.36) Yet over the years, the market has included more fast food chains, diminishing the unique sensorial experiences in the place which have a negative impact on the market’s genius loci. Perhaps a better example is Findlay Market in the Over-the-Rhine Neighborhood in Cincinnati, Ohio, which provides a wide variety of locally foods, owned by local vendors rather than fast food establishments. (Figure 3.37) Like Quincy Market, the Findlay market has a rich variety of taste and smell sensations that help make visiting the market a memorable and pleasant experience.

3.3.2. Hearing

In an urban context, people are often unaware of the diversity of sounds that occur all around us, much in the form of general noise. Murray Schaefer (1993) explains that “noise is unwanted sound… Noise is any undesired sound. Noise is the wrong sound in the wrong place” (from Zirdini 2005 163). But this noise combined with other more accepted and pleasant sounds combine to form what Schaefer (1993) calls soundmarks. “Like landmarks, they define its essential character rendering it unique” (Ibid.). These soundmarks are impacted by a number of factors,
including ambient noise of traffic, wind, and the sound of human activity, elements that are often similar in many busy cities. Much of the role of the designer in dealing with sound should be in the control of this ambient noise. Specifically in the design of open space or parks where people often seek a refuge from intense urban activity, it is beneficial to control ambient noise such as traffic noise. This can be accomplished by distancing open space from traffic or buffering it through elements like trees or other dividers. Water features, street musicians, or even children playing on playgrounds will provide more pleasant sounds that can overpower the often unpleasant street noise. (Whyte 1980) In Paley Park in New York City, a waterfall feature helps create a pleasant sound for the small urban park, and buffer users from street noise. (Figure 3.38)

One way soundscapes are made unique through sounds from nature, like local birds and other wildlife. By including natural areas to attract wildlife, a designer can further impact these unique sounds. Soundscapes are also impacted by our contact with the ground. The sound of our feet on snow or dry leaves produces a very distinct sound that won’t be heard where these elements are not present. Another obvious connection to our sense of hearing is through music. Local music “scenes” or homebred bands are often key contributors to the character and identity of a place. The presence of music through outdoor performances, street performers, performances within restaurants and bars, or larger scale performances in theatres can contribute to a richer place experience. (Figure 3.39) One example is the Power Plant Live in Baltimore, Maryland, which attracts crowds for both indoor and outdoor music performances. (Figure 3.40) The entertainment district is also supported with restaurants and bars. Similarly, in summer months in Copley Square in Boston, Massachusetts, free concerts are held on a temporary stage. (Figure 3.41) By designing and programming places for music performances, and through management and policy that facilitates performance events and allows for the presence of street musicians, it is possible to develop richer soundmarks in a place.

**Fig. 3.38 - Paley Park - New York City**

![Fig. 3.38 - Paley Park - New York City](www.nybeyondsght.org)

**Fig. 3.39 - New Orleans Street Musicians**

![Fig. 3.39 - New Orleans Street Musicians](http://images.lightstalkers.org)

**Fig. 3.40 - Power Plant Live - Baltimore, MD**

![Fig. 3.40 - Power Plant Live - Baltimore, MD](www.image3.examiner.com)

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3.3.3. Touch

Much of a person’s connection to a sense of touch in the city relates to his or her interaction with natural conditions such as heat, cold, wind, and precipitation. The importance of connecting people to the unique climatic conditions of the place has already been discussed, but it is also necessary to develop spaces that provide comfort in relation to natural climatic conditions, which will be discussed in a later section. Yet our sensorial connection to touch also comes from the interaction between our bodies and the physical elements of a place. Designers must consider the ways people’s bodies interact with buildings, from tactile experiences of touching a door handle or handrail, to our interaction with the ground level surface of a building. Designers can enhance this experience through our consideration of material and texture where the body comes into contact with a building. This interaction should be pleasant and at the scale of the individual. Walking along a massive, cold, blank concrete wall, for example, would not provide a pleasant connection of the body to the building.

Designers must also consider our interaction with other physical elements in a place. Site accommodations such as benches, enable tired bodies to rest. These elements should be pleasant to the touch through materials and ergonomic design. This is seen at the Harvard University Graduate Student Housing designed by Machado and Silvetti, who developed a variety of wooden ergonomically configured seating options that seem to fold up out of the ground. (Figure 3.42) A person can also feel pleasant tactile experience by simply dipping his or her foot into a pool of water, sitting on grass, or walking across gravel. These small details may seem trivial, but play an important role in the connection and experience between our bodies and a place.

Fig. 3.41 - Copley Square - Boston, MA

Fig. 3.42 - Harvard student housing benches

Fig. 3.43 - Benches at the High Line

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3.3.4. Visual Delight

Much of our sensorial experiences in the city are dominated by the visual. Although designers are often criticized for only considering the picturesque qualities of places, there is no question that they have an important impact on our experiences within a place by stimulating our intellect and emotions. Visual delight can come from interesting and innovative built form, or from picturesque urban scenes or views. Gordon Cullen (1961) explains the concept of closure, which provides visual interest through our movement and progression amongst space. He explains that “closure is the cutting up of the linear town system (streets, passages, etc.) into visually digestible and coherent amounts whilst retaining the sense of progression” (106). He explains that “closure is not intended to mean the closing of a vista…for here the sense of progression and continuity is lacking whilst closure is rather the articulation of movement” (Ibid.). Developing closure encourages movement throughout a space by encouraging the observer to wonder what views await around the corner. This movement throughout a space provides ever changing visual experiences and articulations of space.

One can also become visually stimulated through activities, performances and displays such as street performances or exhibits. (Figures 3.44-5) Designers must include pleasant and functional places for these activities to occur, but it is necessary that management policies encourage and allow for these activities. Designers should also consider art installations, interesting site furnishings, and signage, in addition to landscaping treatments. (Figure 3.46) Providing visual delight is the realm that designers are most comfortable with as they are constantly thinking of new ways to develop picturesque visual environments. These visual scenes become imprinted in our minds and are integral to our image of the place and our memories of our experiences in the place.

Fig. 3.44 - Street performer at Faneuil Hall

[http://cache.boston.com]

Fig. 3.45 - Hollywood Walk of Fame

[www.medibistro.com]

Fig. 3.46 - Wall Mural - Cincinnati, OH

[http://urban-out.com]
3.4. Summary

*Spirit of the place* refers to a connection to and understanding of the unique qualities of a place or its genius loci. The unique characteristics of a place can be made up of its natural elements and enhanced by a connection to its landscape and climate. The unique characteristics of a place can be its cultural expressions through its visual character, cultural activities and uses, symbolism and meaning, and its history and development. Finally the sensorial experiences such as tastes and smells, hearing, touch, and visual delight within a place can make it unique.
Although the development of unique, discernable, and legible settings is important to the development of a sense of place, it is ultimately a personal attachment to a place and a subjective perception of the place that makes people connect to it in a meaningful way. Although designers strive to create new developments that are instantly meaningful to the people who experience the place, it is necessary to understand that attachment and personal connections cannot happen instantly but rather take time to develop. Designers must also understand that their physical interventions are only a factor in the development of personal attachment to a place, and much is out of the realm of the designer and beyond their control.

Personal attachment cannot be created by the physical setting itself, but comes from a person’s interaction with the place. (Steele 1981) This is why people feel such attachment to places such as their childhood town, house, or bedroom, or perhaps a vacation spot that brought so many positive memories. There probably is not anything particularly special about the design of these places, but “no place is unimportant to the people who’s memories dwell there” (Fleming 2007, 16). J.B. Jackson
states that “A sense of place is something that we ourselves create in the course of time. It is the result of habit or custom” (1994, 15). Jackson further elaborates when he says:

Ask the average American of the older generation what he or she most clearly remembers and cherishes about the home town and its events and the answer will rarely be the public square, the monuments, the patriotic celebrations. What come to mind are such nonpolitical, nonarchitectural places and events as commencement, a revival service in a tent, a traditional football rivalry game, a country fair, and certain family celebrations. For all of these have those qualities I associate with a sense of place: a lively awareness of the familiar environment, a ritual repetition, a sense of fellowship based on a shared experience. (Ibid., 158-9)

Jackson’s statement should not be understood as a justification for neglecting the development of the spirit of the place as it is important to the development of positive short term place experiences, and can contribute greatly to a person’s long term attachment to a place. Yet a strong spirit of place is not completely necessary for a person to develop an attachment to a place. Furthermore, Jackson’s statements suggest that a strong place attachment is the most important element of a positive long term place experience within a place.

Perception of a place and attachment to place is different for every person who experiences a setting, and is impacted heavily by time, memory, and experience, making personal attachment to a place an ever changing feeling. “Shamai (1991) proposed a 7-point ordinal scale of place attachment extending from obliviousness (no sense of place), through knowledge of being in a place, belonging to a place, attachment to a place, identifying with goals of the place, involvement in a place, to willingness to make sacrifices for a place” (Semken and Freeman 2008, 1047). (Figure 4.2) While a person, like a tourist who visits a place for a day, can and will gain meaning and develop a perception of a place from a singular experience there, somebody who has lived in a place their entire life will develop a stronger attachment to the place.

Our perception of a place, and the development of personal attachment to a place is positively impacted through personal satisfaction with a place, social satisfaction with a place, and a positive mental image and feeling of comfort with the place. (Figure 4.1)
4.1. Personal Satisfaction

In order to develop a positive perception and personal attachment to a place, a person must feel personally satisfied with his or her position in a place. There are many factors that contribute to personal satisfaction with a place, including a feeling of personal identity, positive memories, a feeling of control and power, growth, and intellectual stimulation. (Figure 4.1) Although designers cannot alone create these feelings, they must consider how they can contribute to the development of these feelings.

4.1.1. Personal Identity

In the previous discussion of the genius loci, the many attributes that contribute to the character or identity of a place were discussed. Yet “it is not just the identity of a place that is important, but also the identity that a person or group has with that place” (Relph 1976 45). “There are as many identities of place as there are people, for identity is in the experience, eye, mind, and intention of the beholder as much as in the physical appearance of the city or landscape.” (Nairn 1965, 78 from Relph 1976, 45). Donald Appleyard suggests that “physical planners and designers should be much more aware of the fact that the need for identity is a basic human need which has a necessary outlet for expression in the physical environment. The sense of self in a place is more important than simply a sense of place” (1979, 152).

A feeling of personal identity involves feeling that a place represents you and your culture, ideas, and beliefs. The place itself can reflect into somebody’s personal identity and manifest through pride in the place. This is seen when somebody proudly wears a local baseball team’s hat to show others where his or her loyalties lie. (Figure 4.3) Erik Erikson explains that “the term identity…connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself…and a persistent sharing of some kind of characteristic with others” (1959, 102 from Relph 1976, 45). For example, somebody’s personal identity can be reflected onto a place, as is seen when somebody paints graffiti on a wall with their name or through the clothes a person wears.

While much of a feeling of identity is personal and expressed in non physical ways, designers can enable people to express their identity by allowing them to personalize a place. This can be as simple allowing somebody to plant flowers on his or her

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balcony, to permitting teenagers to graffiti an area of the setting. “Alterations are discouraged in
some cases because they can be a sign of nonconformity and social unrest” (Moudon 1986, 36).
While people often perceive graffiti as a negative occurrence in a place, Cresswell argues, “this is their
place too,” and they should have an opportunity to express themselves and create their own place.
(2004, 7)

Personal identity also comes from a feeling that a place matches and serves a person’s interests.
This can be facilitated through the development of adaptable spaces that can adjust to suit the needs
of a diverse group of people. A place should be adjustable in both use and form. Public open
space in particular should not be over programmed or limiting to activity if it is to serve a wide range
of uses. While the Campus Green at the University of Cincinnati, designed by Hargreaves Associates, is
quite beautiful, and can be used for strolling and quiet sitting, its design limits the types of activities it can
be used for. (Figure 4.4) The Wyly theatre, designed by Rex/OMA was designed so its ground floor could
easily accommodate a number of different uses and configurations, including both indoor and outdoor
performances and exhibitions, with proscenium, thrust and flat floor configurations. (Figures 4.5,
4.6)

People will also develop personal identity if they feel they have a place to be themselves. This
can be facilitated by providing a diversity of uses for a wide range of people. Although people should
not be stereotyped into different interest groups, by providing more uses there is a greater probability that
people will find a place where they feel they can be themselves and can relate to the people and activities
in a place. Clubs and associations are important as well, allowing people to connect with others who
share their interests and beliefs, even if a majority of people in a place have different beliefs and
interests. Providing personal space such as housing will provide places for people to be themselves in
the privacy of their own home.

In London, England, many of the areas youth find that the Southbank Skate Park connects with their identity. (Figure 4.7) The skate park is a place where they can be themselves with people who share their interests. Users of the park are able to adjust it to suit their needs and even project their own identity onto the place through graffiti on the walls and surfaces of the park. The park is located on the London riverfront adjacent to a variety of other uses such as cafes and performance space. Onlookers are able to observe the activity in the park without feeling like they are intruding. When the city threatened to close the park, people from the area banded together to fight to save the place that they have grown so attached to, and is an important part of their identity.

A place’s personal meaning is typically beyond the control of the designer. Somebody who is temporarily in a place for work reasons may have hostile feelings about a place, making a feeling of identity with the place nearly impossible. Somebody who calls the place home will have a much easier time developing identity with the place. A teenager who feels trapped in a place will feel that he or she cannot identify with a place even if they have lived there for their entire life. (Steele 1981)

4.1.2. Memory

Much of our personal attachment to a place comes from our memories of experiences within a place. Jackson states that “I’m inclined to believe that the average American still associates a sense of place not so much with architecture or a monument or a designed space as with some event, some daily or weekly or seasonal occurrence which we look forward to or remember and which we share with others, and as a result the event becomes more significant than the place itself” (1994, 161). Places will become more meaningful to people as they develop additional memories with a place with the passing of time. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that “sense of place is rarely acquired in passing. To know a place well requires long residence and deep involvement” (Tuan 1975, 65). He explains that while “it is possible to appreciate the visual qualities of a place with a short visit,” in order to know a place one must know the “city’s past” and “one’s own past” in the city. (Ibid.) This suggests that a place should include owner-occupied housing rather than only providing rental units in order to encourage longer periods of involvement in a place. “The setting grows richer with successive layers of memories, so that it evokes many more feelings and associations than could an objectively “richer”
setting with which one had only a short history” (Steele 1981, 116). Yet how long does it take to develop a strong attachment to a place? According to a study by Sharon Harlan et al., “attachment to neighborhood is well established by the fourth year of residence” (1995, 10). The authors clarify by explaining that “residents who have lived in the area longer feel more attached and would be more likely to miss their neighborhoods. Sentiment increases with time, but people start becoming attached to their neighborhoods almost immediately and the curve is steepest in the first 4 years” (Ibid., 8).

A place must also be economically sustainable, for a failed place will not provide long term opportunities for memories to occur. People will also develop positive memories through social interaction with people in a place as well as through the activities and uses that occur in a place. These concepts will be discussed in greater detail in a later section.

Places can also trigger a positive memory experienced in the setting before it was redeveloped. There is a fine line between memories that are held by the people who interacted with a place in their past, and the history and development of a place that was discussed previously. While many people may not have experienced events of a places history that occurred before a person's birth, those moments represent the symbolic shared memory of the place and should be respected. Even if there is a painful element in a places history, it should not be completely destroyed or erased, but should manifest in some way in order to remind current and future residents of the memories of the people who came before and to develop a reading of the historical progression of the city without any gaps in continuity. Cresswell explains that:

> Place and memory are... inevitably intertwined. Memory appears to be a personal thing – we remember some things and forget others. But memory is also social. Some memories are allowed to fade – are not given any kind of support. Other memories are promoted as standing for this and that. One of the primary ways in which memories are constituted is through the production of places...The very materiality of a place means that memory is not abandoned to the vagaries of mental processes and is instead inscribed in the landscape – as public memory. (2004, 85)

As a result, it is important for a designer to understand what the personal and shared memories of the community may be through inclusionary techniques that will be discussed later. Even by hearing a singular narrative or memory that is unique to an individual can help illuminate a design idea that may not have been considered, while a bad memory can be addressed in the new design. Enough people should be studied so the memories and values of one individual are not mistakenly taken as representing the values of the entire community.

As a result of this analysis, a designer may choose to address a particular artifact or event in the many ways that were discussed in relation to history and development. As a number of people interact with a shared element of their past, they will be reminded of their individual unique memories.
of past experiences in the place. Important uses or events in a place that provide memories for people can be continued or subsidized through management and policy measures. Memories can also become the inspiration for an art installation. Fleming explains that “recovering… memories, and recharging them in the imagination, can combine the energies of the artist and the historian, the folklorist and the artisan, the poet and the storyteller. “

In the American Tobacco Campus in Durham, North Carolina, history and memory are addressed in a number of different ways. In the center of a communal open space, a water feature acts as a metaphor for train tracks that existed years prior. (Figure 4.8) The movement of the water can be seen as a symbol of the movement of goods along the train tracks at the previous tobacco factory. In addition, the mixed use development relates to the memory of the site by restoring and reusing old warehouse buildings for retail space, and repurposing an old water tower landmark as a stage and sitting area. (Figure 4.9) The project also preserved an old smokestack that acts as a landmark to the area. (Figure 4.10)

Fritz Steele explains that places can also trigger positive memories had in another place as a result of the “qualities of a setting” (1981, 130). Steele explains that “our currently experienced settings can be enhanced by cues that trigger memories and associations of past feelings, thoughts, and images. The addition of past memories increases the complexity and enjoyment of presently perceived settings” (Ibid., 131). People are often reminded of pleasurable moments of their past either through sensory experiences like food or certain smells, or through activities performed at another time in a person’s life. These memories “expand the world beyond a single point, allowing us to experience images and feelings in new and varied combinations” (Ibid.). Connecting a person to memories of different places they have experienced in their past is for the most part, beyond the control of the designer unless the designer is attempting to connect the user to a particular place. This is often seen in Las Vegas where attempts are made to evoke images of places like Paris or Venice. These attempts may result in positive
experiences and memories, but reduce the uniqueness and authenticity of the spirit of the place.

4.1.3. Control & Power

An important factor towards personal satisfaction with a place is a feeling of control and power. Schneekloth and Shibley explain that “placemaking is the way all of us as human beings transform the places in which we find ourselves into places in which we live. It includes building and tearing buildings down, cultivating the land and planting gardens, cleaning the kitchen and rearranging the office, making neighborhoods and mowing lawns, taking over buildings and understanding cities” (2000, 132). Henri Lefebvre explains that “humans as social beings are said to produce their own life, their own consciousness, their own world” (1991, 68). Similarly, Lynch explains that “for his satisfaction and growth an individual needs opportunities to engage in active interchange with his environment, to use it, change it, organize it, and even destroy it” (1965 from Lynch 1995, 90. While people often have control to transform space into place on the smallest scale, such as a student pinning up a poster in his or her dorm room, people should be able to participate in the making of place on the larger urban scale, giving them a feeling of control and power. (Cresswell 2004)

People will feel that they have control and power if they feel that they had a part in the creation of the place. This can be facilitated with community involvement in the design process. In addition to giving the people a feeling of control and power to shape their place, they will develop pride and attachment to the place before it is even built, rather than resenting the project as a result of being excluded from decisions related to its formation. Donald Appleyard explains that “the significance of citizen participation in environmental decisions is critically important, because this is the way in which people can become identified with a new environmental action, the way in which they can possess and feel responsible for it. It reduces their alienation” (1982 152). In addition, including people in the design process will make the approval process smoother since the project will have increased public
Some methods designers can utilize to facilitate an inclusionary design process include design and vision charrettes, surveys and questionnaires, interviews, meetings, design reviews and committees, and even online blogs where people can have their opinions heard. (Figures 4.11-12) Traditionally, the public is often only allowed to participate in public meetings. Yet “people are frustrated when they are given only three minutes in a public meeting in which to voice their opinions” (Lennertz and Lutzenhiser 2006, x). Though with any inclusionary process, “community members can feel alienated or apathetic if their input has no visible impact” (Ibid.). Conversely, if a person is able to identify an element in the plan that relates to previously voiced concerns, the community will develop trust and empowerment, even if the designer would have included the element without any interaction with the community.

Members of the community can also become empowered through actually participating in the construction of elements of a project. They can build something small such as a community playground, or in extreme case an entire structure. In British Columbia, Canada, members of the Seabird Island Indian Band constructed the Seabird Island School designed by Patkau Architects. “The Patkaus built a model showing every joint so local people could do the construction themselves” (Freedman 2001, 78). In Portland Oregon, a group of skateboarders came together to construct their own skate park beneath the Burnside Bridge. (Figure 4.13A, B, C) They slowly added to the park as money and concrete became available and developed a strong feeling of control and power through the adaptation of their place. These projects, performed without the help of trained designers or even the permission of the city, often result in greater feelings of control and power than officially sanctioned and professionally designed projects. Schneekloth and Shibley suggest that designers should “care as much about the process by which places are made (the means) as they do about the product that emerges as a result of the collaboration (the ends)”

Fig. 4.13A,B,C - Burnside Skate Park - Portland, OR

[www.burnsideproject.com]
Yet how much power should he people have, and how does a designer deal with a community with varying opinions as to the ideal vision of the place? “Each participant will approach the project with a different background: a different set of personal experiences, attitudes, and memories; a different individual focus and each will have a different reaction to their immediate sensation of the town” (Garnham 1985, 8). First the design team members must assimilate with the people and the place. Garnham (1985) explains that people can develop behavioral, empathetic, and cognitive assimilation with a place, but explains that they should strive for empathetic assimilation. He says that “it is mandatory… that project participants strive to understand the importance of walking the fine line between the dispassionate observer and becoming so involved that comprehensive perspective is lost. The creation of group consensus, therefore, is critical to project success, and requires that all participants approach the project with a common point of reference.” (1985, 8).

Garnham makes it clear that a designer does not necessarily need to have lived in an area to design in the place and actually suggests that this can be problematic since that person’s emotions and attachment to the place may create a barrier to a comprehensive perspective. The design team must synthesize the diverse ideals of the community into a community consensus that can help design decisions. Although the design team is indeed serving the community, they should not be expected to give the people precisely what they ask for. “You would never, for example, let people make decisions that would harm them” (Schneekloth and Shibley 2000, 137). Community input should be focused on more phenomenological qualities of the place such as character, values, image, and feelings within a place. They should suggest programmatic elements of the place but should be discouraged from proscribing material, formal, stylistic, or other aesthetic suggestions. Moor and Rowland warn that “we have to be careful that urban design does not follow town planning into the process driven netherworld that led to its disengagement from the design process” (2005, 15). Designers should be able to use their experience and expertise to physically shape the environment in a way that is consistent with the community’s vision of the place, while attempting to uncover the potential of the place and creating opportunities for the community that they may have never thought possible.

In addition to shaping the place, people will develop a feeling of power and control if they feel that they can effect change in a place. The ability to effect change is often increased through the establishment of neighborhood or community groups and advisory committees that have the power to influence new projects, or prohibit projects that are deemed hazardous to the vision of the community. When a development is constructed, the designers should not assume that they have created a finished product. As time passes and as people change in a place, the place should be able to adjust to changing needs of the community. Changes should also be made to address design inadequacies that are only recognized with time. “If residents are allowed to tinker, designers can

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make mistakes without irreversible consequences” (Moudon 1986, 35). The people in the place should have power to guide changes, not only private entities that do not always make decisions in the interest of the local community.

Examples of community groups that intervened in the development process to stop destructive development and changes to a place include the Park Plaza Advisory Council’s intervention to the Heritage on the Garden project, and the PruPAC’s intervention to changes to the Prudential Center, both in Boston, Massachusetts. (Figures 4.14-5) In Fruitvale Village in Oakland, California, the Unity Council CDC was able to halt unfavorable development and assisted in the design and funding of a new mixed use development that has had positive results for the community. (Figure 4.16)

People will feel that they have control and power in a place if they feel that they have a stake in the place’s success. This can be achieved through the facilitation of local property ownership and local businesses. In addition, community and cooperative uses give people responsibility for the success of the project. When a place is primarily made up of large scale national business, local people feel that the success of the place is beyond their control and out of their hands. They therefore are less likely to work hard to ensure its success. In addition, Ryan explains that “participation in volunteer activities, particularly in environmental stewardship programs, promotes a sense of attachment and increased appreciation for urban natural areas” (2006, 70).

A feeling of ownership of a place facilitates feelings of control and power. While this is obviously accomplished through property ownership, renters can be given similar feelings if they have personal spaces that can be personalized like patios or gardens. (Figure 4.17) This will also increase a feeling of belonging in a place or what Relph calls, “insideness” (1976, 49). A feeling of belonging increase with time spent in a place, but is
also influenced by social connection and interaction, and a feeling of safety in a place, both issues that will be expanded upon in later sections.

Control and power are also increased through an understanding of what occurs in a place. Designers can develop this feeling by increasing the visibility of public space through what Jane Jacobs (1961) refers to as “eyes on the street.” Information postings can also encourage an understanding of the activities that occur in a place. At the Hisman Hin-Nu Terrace in Oakland, California, residential units are organized around communal spaces, enabling people to oversee the activities that occur around their homes. These shared spaces also facilitate a sense of belonging for those who live in the community as residents are encouraged to use these spaces. (Figure 4.18-9)

4.1.4. Growth

Like memory, which involves positive experiences that have happened in the past, growth refers to positive experiences that an individual believes are likely to occur in a place. (Milligan 1998) People will develop personal satisfaction with a place if they feel that they can grow and improve, which will be encouraged if a place provides opportunities. This can be accomplished more through program, management, and policy, than physical design, but is also depends much on personal abilities and work ethics of the people. People will be able to grow in a place if they have access to jobs and education, or if they can make investments in a place like from the ownership of property or businesses.

People also need supportive conditions, resources, and people. These can come in a variety of forms including, spaces for personal business, banks, professional services, and job training and education. Economic development policy can also assist in personal and professional growth. People can also be supported by local people either through personal relationships or others interested in the

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success of the place, which is typically beyond the control of the designer. By providing a range of housing options and jobs, people will feel that they can move up and improve their current situation without having to leave the place that they have developed an attachment with.

People will also benefit from a clear understanding of opportunities and experiences in a place. This can be accomplished through information postings, newsletters, or websites that describe local services, job opportunities, or events that can be taken advantage of. Placing information posting in central locations can also reinforce the central and communal character of the space, and will ensure that the postings are viewed by the most amount of people.

At the Hisman Hin-Nu Terrace a number of design decisions were made in order to allow locals and residents to grow. The designers included a flea market space and small outdoor vending spaces for locals and residents to sell goods. (Figure 4.20) The designers also included a job training center and a day care center to help residents and locals grow within the place. Many of these elements were included after discussions with the local community and future residents of the community. Similarly, in Findlay Market, in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, space is provided so locals can sell a variety of items at a lower cost than opening a store. (Figure 4.21) Faneuil Hall Marketplace, in Boston has similar spaces for small vending carts.

The Hudson River Valley Housing project proposes a number of services and opportunities for growth for its residents including affordable housing, rent cooperatives, and student housing. (Figure 4.22-3) It also includes local retail spaces, a farmers’ market, cooperative businesses, as well as social services, and arts and culture support. Similar to a feeling of control and power, when people feel that they can grow in a place, they are more likely to contribute and fight for the place’s success.

4.1.5. Intellectual Stimulation

People will feel personal satisfaction in a place if they are intellectually stimulated, which can be influenced in a number of ways. They can be stimulated visually through thought-provoking built form, art installations and site features, as well as picturesque views. (Figure 4.24) They can also be stimulated through activities, and...
institutions such as performances, lectures, or museums. Other people can provide intellectual stimulation, either in formal classroom settings or through conversation with friends or impromptu interactions with people we meet that could induce a random conversation. In many parks such as Washington Square Park in New York City, it is popular to play or watch others play a game of chess or other intellectually challenging games. (Figure 4.25)

In addition, people can become intellectually stimulated through education about the place, which can come in the form of information displays, lectures, exhibits about the place, or tours of the place. (Figure 4.26) When people learn about their places, they develop a greater appreciation for it. In the Humane Metropolis, Robert Ryan describes a study that reveals “the more that people knew about the benefits of native plants and ecosystems, the stronger their appreciation for native plantings versus ornamental plantings, a significant finding for park planners and managers seeking to enhance the biodiversity in urban parks” (2006, 65). In the city of Boston, people can learn about the historic places and events of the city’s history, particularly in relation to the American Revolution, by following the Freedom Trail, a path throughout the city that is demarcated by a painted red or brick line on the ground. (Figure 4.27) The Freedom trail also increases spatial knowledge of the city by increasing orientation and facilitating way finding.

In some instances people can develop an attachment to a place they have never been to as a result of personal study and research on a place. A place may be important to a particular educational discourse, and as a result important to the people who study it. For example, a city that somebody studies for a master’s thesis will always be meaningful to that person, even if they have never visited the place.
4.2. Social Satisfaction

In addition to personal satisfaction with a place, people gain attachment to a place and develop a positive perception of a place through social satisfaction. This refers to a satisfaction a person feels with respect to his or her relationship and interaction with other people in a place. While social satisfaction will cause a person to feel personally satisfied, the topics discussed under this section relate more to a person's relationship to other people as opposed to their relationship with themselves or individual elements in a place that could occur without the inclusion of other individuals. Topics that will be discussed in relation to social satisfaction include community interaction as well as equity and diversity within a place. (Figure 4.1)

4.2.1. Community Interaction

For most people, it is probably not the architecture that turns a physical locale into a well-loved place; it is more often the remembrance of human interaction that helps us to claim it. Of course, a good physical design should aid that interaction, but, ultimately it is the recollection of patterns of life lived in a particular building or space that creates the “cornerstones” of mental association and gives such places the patina of affection. (Fleming 2007, 14)

Community interaction can influence a feeling of belonging in a place. Yet is it possible for a designer to influence human behavior and encourage community interaction simply through the design of the environment? Herber Gans’ (1968) essay Urban Vitality and the Fallacy of Physical Determinism rejects this notion as “he strongly criticized physical planners for entertaining the idea that place shapes people’s behaviors. (Arefi and Triantafillou 2005, 76) Peter Calthorpe responds to this notion by stating that:

This praise of the status quo is reinforced by the belief that design can’t change human behavior. Simply stated, building walkable neighborhoods may not get people out of their cars and building front porches and neighborhood parks may not create more integrated, convivial communities. To this I can only assert that people should be given the choice and that, neither black nor white; the result will probably be mixed - and that is OK. (1995, 12)

The physical design of environments will not necessarily impact everyone and alter behavior, but designers must still take steps to design public space in an attempt to facilitate human interactions
It is important to develop human scaled spaces that are easily accessible. They should be adaptable to allow for a variety of social activities, and should allow for a variety of scales of interaction from a one on one conversation to a large social gathering. Public spaces should also be comfortable and accommodating, and supported by uses that encourage active spaces such as restaurants. Further discussion of how to develop active spaces, and comfortable spaces will occur in a later section.

In order for designers to adequately consider how people will socially interact in designed space, Clare Cooper-Marcus recommends in her essay Design as if People Mattered that designers “make lots of little, if not micro-scale, plans. Project yourself into your drawings and ask repeatedly: ‘How would it really be to move from A to B, or to sit at C?’ Beautifully rendered drawings are not enough” (from Van der Ryn and Calthorpe 1988, 121). She explains that, “I was concerned about the enormous gap between the scale at which people draw plans, make models, and think a place is going to work, and the real experience of place, which is at the scale of the front porch, where the children play, and can be seen from the window by their parents. Few people experience the environment on the scale of the grand plan or the birds-eye view model” (Ibid.). All too often designers focus on formal plans that may be visually interesting. Yet “a plan may have a small bearing on the final quality of a space, and an interesting plan pattern may have dreary results” (Lynch 1953, from Lynch 1995, 144).

The Hisman Hin-Nu Terrace in Oakland, California, contains different spaces that facilitate social interaction on a variety of scales. (Figure 4.29) The street front of the development is activated by a flea market and vendor stalls, encouraging social interaction at the scale of the neighborhood. As one enters the development, a central communal space encourages interaction at the scale of the development itself. It is defined by surrounding residential uses and features playgrounds, seating, and landscaping. In addition, there are smaller scaled courtyards that facilitate social interaction at the scale of a cluster of housing units within the development. Although these spaces do not guarantee that people will socialize with their neighbors, it provides them with a comfortable setting to do so and increases the number of human interactions that occur.

In addition to socializing with others in public spaces, people will feel social satisfaction if they feel that there are other people like them in a place. These similarities can be in race or ethnicity but also age or interests. This is typically beyond the control of the designer but is often
unfortunately influenced by outside factors such as poverty, or discrimination and segregation. Sometimes similar people congregate due to local schools or available jobs. In other instances people are able to make a personal choice to live in an area because they feel there are other people like them in the area. This is often influenced by shared interests in the uses and activities in the area, as seen in the many trendy districts of New York City. People will gain social satisfaction by living near their friends. Although it is difficult to influence whether somebody lives near an existing friend, designers can hope that people will develop new friendships with people in the place through social interactions that can be encouraged by the design of the public realm.

Furthermore, people will gain social satisfaction by knowing their neighbors. In addition to socializing with neighbors within public spaces that encourages interaction, people will get to know their neighbors by working with them in an inclusionary design process, or in a neighborhood or community organization. (Figure 4.30) They will be able to relate to their neighbors through a shared vision for the place. People will also gain satisfaction through the celebration of shared goals, values, and meanings with others in a place. This can manifest physically through murals, monuments, or other art installations. In Glen Innes, New Zealand, local values were shared and celebrated through the communal selection of mosaics located throughout the community. (Wong and Burt 2001) (Figure 4.31) The celebration of shared values can also manifest in program and activities such as institutions, speakers, and performances. Community interests can also be shared through community gardens, farmers’ markets or other community activities and programs.

Developing places where people are similar can run contrary to goals of diversity in a place that will be discussed in the following section. There are benefits to both a feeling of sameness and a feeling of diversity within a place. Christopher Alexander suggests that “in the heterogeneous city, people are mixed together irrespective of their life style of culture. This seems rich. Actually it dampens all significant variety, arrests most of the possibilities for differentiation, and encourages conformity. It tends to reduce all life styles to a common denominator. What appears heterogeneous turns out to be homogenous and dull” (1978, 43).

In places like Chinatown in Boston, Massachusetts, there is a shared culture and ethnicity in

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the place. (Figure 4.31) Many people know their neighbors and live near their friends. Diversity in Chinatown is fulfilled by allowing a range of income levels, but there is little diversity in the form of race or culture. It can be argued that this sameness is what makes Chinatown such an interesting place as the culture of the people contributes to its clearly discernable genius loci.

4.2.2. Equity and Diversity

When designing new places it is necessary to design equitably and to design for a diversity of people and a diversity of uses. When people are exposed to a diverse body of people, they can benefit from learning about new cultures, and gain access to different opportunities than they might with little diversity. Diversity and equity can also help break down social barriers, and stereotypes that people might have regarding people who are different.

A diversity of people can refer to diversity of race and socioeconomic class, age, and interests. This can be influenced by including a range of housing types and affordability by including affordable owner-occupied and rental units along with market rate units, which may require the subsidizing of housing to enable people to afford certain units. Strong measures must also be taken to avoid housing discriminations. Providing a diversity of uses will help serve different age groups and interests.

In Cincinnati Ohio, a newly constructed mixed use development called City West was built on the site of two previously underused 1940s housing projects. (Figure 4.32) The project included a mix of 686 subsidized and market rate rental units and 211 subsidized and market rate for-sale homes. The housing subsidies were made possible by two Hope VI grants. The project has succeeded in attracting “a mix of low, middle, and high-income residents living in the development” (Demeropolis 2008). The neighborhood has fortunately seen a reduction in crime since the construction of the project, though it unclear if this is directly as a result of the project. (Ibid.)
In order to design equitably, designers should also accommodate a variety of lifestyles. Universal design techniques should be utilized to ensure that people with disabilities are able to enjoy a place as much as anybody else. Designers should accommodate people without cars by creating dense mixed use areas with walkable streets. Providing public transportation options, or bicycle infrastructure is important as well. (Figure 4.33) Calthorpe adds that “our investments in transit must be supported by land use patterns which put riders and jobs within an easy walk of stations. Our investments in affordable housing should place families in neighborhoods where they can save dollars by using their autos less” (1995, 17).

4.3. Comfort & Image

Much of a person’s perception of a place is impacted by his or her mental image of a place and a feeling of comfort in the place. Grady Clay explains that “a city is not as we perceive it to be by vision alone, but by insight, memory, movement, emotion and language. A city is also what we call it and becomes as we describe it” (1980, 17). These opinions are developed from the first experience a person has with a place and continue with time. A person’s image of the place can unfortunately be irrevocably damaged by one negative experience in a place, which is often beyond the control of the designer. Yet actions can be taken to influence a positive mental image of the place and feeling of comfort. In order to develop a positive perception of the place, designers must consider how to influence economic success and activity of a place, as well as issues of safety, a feeling of care for a place, and the design of comfortable spaces. (Figure 4.1)

4.3.1. Economic Success & Activity

People will develop a positive perception and image of a place if it is economically successful and visually displays activity and vibrancy. According to a study on neighborhood attachment, Sharon Harlow et al. explain that one of the most important factors that provides people with a feeling of neighborhood attachment “is whether they feel they live in a valuable place: the housing market has
assigned an acceptable monetary value to their home, and living there is an affirming experience that they would recommend to others they care about” (2005, 8). In addition, permanence and economic success is perhaps one of the most important characteristics a place can possess, for if the place is not sustainable, people will be unable to develop a long term attachment that is necessary for a the development of a truly strong sense of place. Places that fail for economic reasons run the risk of being destroyed and rebuilt for other purposes, which often results in a loss of all traces of past uses of the place and a negative image of the place. When a place proves it can withstand the test of time, it will develop an importance and meaning to people, who will in turn develop a willingness to support and protect it regardless if it is a historical site or a bowling alley.

While historical significance of a place and a physical durability are important for the long term sustainability of a place, the most important factor is probably the economic success of the place. While this thesis will not address the complex issues regarding the development, financing, marketing, and managing of places, there are some important elements to note. First, adequate market research must be performed to determine the appropriate uses and quantities of uses within a development. This analysis should also involve an understanding of the wants and needs of the people who will use the development. Dilemmas can occur when the wants of the local community clash with ideas for increased economic success of a project. For example, a community may desire to include only small scale locally owned retail uses that will encourage the growth of the community and its unique characteristics. They may also fear that a project will attract too many outside visitors to their community. Conversely, a developer may recognize a market for larger scale national retail chains that can be supported by the region and can secure larger profits. At times, profits may need to suffer if goals of attachment to place and spirit of the place are to be adequately addressed. In addition, it must also be understood that certain decisions may need to be made at the expense of the desires of the local community if economic success and the sustainability of the project is to be ensured. It is important that a balance is reached that ensures that uses within a project are economically successful
while still contributing to an enhanced spirit of the place and attachment to place.

The development must also exhibit an ability to adapt to suit changing needs of its users, as markets change with time. Proper management of the project is necessary to facilitate changes in the place to ensure that it remains up to date with current trends. While decisions about uses within a project are not always the decision of the designer, it is important that the development exhibit an attractive and functional design that complements the uses to increase the likelihood of economic success and sustainability. The project must often rely on support from adjacent uses which have a large impact on the economic success or failure of the development. Financing of the project is also an important factor that often involves a mix of public and private investments. A financing plan must be developed that is in the best interest of all involved to ensure that the project is completed and managed properly. (Schwanke 2003)

Regardless of whether a place is actually economically successful or not, people will develop a positive image of a place if they develop a feeling that a place is successful or improving from its previous condition. This is most effectively accomplished through a feeling of vibrancy and activity within the place. Although activity in a place often results in the economic success of a place, previously successful places will experience greater success if a feeling of vibrancy is enhanced, giving potential users a feeling that the project is the “place to be.” The effect of visual vibrancy and activity can be enhanced by designers by concentrating activity into particular areas within a project such as open space or particular streets. A concentration of people can be enhanced and encouraged through the inclusion of activities that bring them together, such as performances, parades, festivals, and other cultural activities that were discussed previously. People also need to develop a feeling that there is a lot of different things to do in a place. This can be accomplished through a mixing of uses and the inclusion of a number of entertainment uses. Concentrating entertainment uses can also aid in developing a concentration of people.

Vibrancy and activity will be enhanced if people are given a reason to already be in a place. For example, including residential, office, or educational uses within a development will force an influx of people to a place.

![Fig. 4.36 - Santana Row - San Jose, CA](http://img.slate.com)

![Fig. 4.37 - Downtown Silver Spring, MD](cache.virtualtourist.com)
who may have otherwise never visited. These uses in combination will also encourage around the clock activity that may not occur if a project features only singular uses such as, residences, office space, or entertainment uses alone. In addition access, connections and circulation to and within a project are important to the development of activity and vibrancy. The project should be easy to get to and be supported by parking and public transportation systems. If people outside the project are able to see activity within the project, increased concentration of activity will occur.

An example of a place that has proven to be economically sustainable and consistently active and vibrant is Campo dei Fiori in Rome, Italy. This piazza is an extreme example of a place that has withstood the test of time as it has been an active place for hundreds of years. Yet it is clear that the Campo's ability to adapt to the changes within the city and its people is an important aspect of why it remains successful today. Although the place is rich with history, it remains successful and active today as a result of its adaptable uses throughout the day that creates nearly around the clock activity. Each morning, a market exists in the Campo that attracts people buying fresh meat fish and produce. (Figure 4.38) After the market closes children use the Campo to play soccer, while in the evening people sit at tables in the Campo while eating dinner. At night the Campo dei Fiori is a center for entertainment uses such as bars, and a social space for young locals and tourists alike. (Figures 4.39-40) The well designed space helps make it adaptable throughout the day because it is a comfortable space that is not over designed to the point of limiting uses. One of the most important factors of the Campo’s success is the fact that there are so many residences within walking distance of the space. This places enough people in the area to keep it active without having to rely on visitors to the place from other areas within the city, although visitors do indeed come making the place even more vibrant.
The Campo dei Fiori is a strong example of an active place that has exhibited economic sustainability and permanence, which contribute greatly to people’s positive image of the place and attachment to it. Yet it is also a strong example of a place that has a rich genius loci and a place in which people have developed a clear sense of the place and attachment to the place by addressing most of the elements discussed in this thesis. These characteristics also contribute to its economic success and vibrancy, which shows that the development of an economically successful and active place cannot be considered in isolation from the other elements that contribute to strong places.

4.3.2. Safety

A person’s perception of a place and feeling of comfort is heavily impacted by their feeling of safety within a place. It is very unfortunate that one criminal act in a place has the ability to forever alter people’s perception of safety within a place. People are not only impacted when they visually see or experience a criminal act, but are affected when they hear news about criminal activity. Of course, the presence of police within a place will help deter criminal activity, though this is beyond the control of a designer. Criminal activity will also be deterred through human presence and activity, another benefit from developing a project with around the clock activity.

Criminal activity will also be deterred through the design of secured space. Spaces can be secured by orienting activity within buildings towards the street and public spaces in order to place more “eyes upon the street” (Jacobs 1961, 276). This allows people to personally police public spaces from their own homes and businesses. Spaces can also be further secured by utilizing enclosure devises such as gates, and including adequate lighting and surveillance equipment. Yet William H. Whyte (1980) warns us that over securing spaces with surveillance and gates sometimes has the undesired result of keeping everybody out, and creating a space that nobody feels comfortable in, or cannot access. He explains that “the best way to handle the problem of undesirables is to make a place attractive to everyone else” (Whyte 1980, 63).

Greater feelings of safety will also develop when people know their neighbors and those within their community, and develop a trust in them. This can occur when people live in a place for longer periods of time, but is enhanced through human interactions that allow people to get to know their neighbors. When people know their neighbors and trust them, they are more likely to help them when they are in need, and are better able to recognize when an outsider is trespassing in their community.

Within the Hismen Hin-Nu Terrace in Oakland, California, a feeling of safety is reinforced by a decorative “sun gate” at the entrance of the community. (Figure 4.41) This gate provides

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comfort to residents that their space is secure, while also contributing to spatial differentiation that impacts a sense of the place, and visual character that impacts the spirit of the place. In addition, the residences are oriented around a series of communal spaces which increases feelings of safety and discourages criminal activity.

While criminal activity has a profound impact on feelings of safety, physical safety can also be protected through the development of safe traffic patterns. Traffic patterns will be safer for pedestrians when traffic is slowed. This can be accomplished by establishing speed limits, developing narrow streets, and through human activity that forces drivers to remain alert. According to the Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center, there are also a number of traffic calming devices that can slow traffic including speed bumps, curves, chicanees, curb extensions, traffic circles, and cul-de-sacs. In The Netherlands, the establishment of woonerfs helps calm traffic by purposefully disrupting traffic flow to force the attention and awareness of drivers. (Figure 4.42-3) In woonerfs, traffic can be disrupted in a number of ways such as placing trees, planters, playgrounds, and parking spaces directly in the center of streets. Woonerfs allow for a sharing of the street for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. It is also important to include ample crosswalks, streetlights, and traffic signals to protect pedestrians from traffic.

4.3.3. Care

People will develop a positive image of a place and a greater feeling of comfort if they have a sense that the place is cared for. Anne Vernez Moudon explains that:
“Good planning and design are not enough to insure good residential environments. Caring for places after they are built is essential for success. The care includes day-to-day and seasonal chores of cleaning and repairing. Over the long term, caring for our surroundings involves altering the environment to respond to changing need. (1987, 36-7)

As Moudon explains, people will perceive that a place is cared for if there is no litter, disrepair, vandalism, and few vacancies. (Figures 4.44-6) This requires adequate management to tend to repairs, upkeep, and strong efforts to reduce vacancies. It is necessary to limit litter by providing ample trash receptacles. Vandalism is a form of criminal activity that can be limited using the same strategies previously discussed to avoid other criminal activities.

Appleyard suggests that “sociologists and social planners should begin to appreciate that aspects of the physical environment play a significant role in the social lives of citizens” (1979, 152). While it is important for management to tend to the upkeep of a place, if people develop a feeling of control and power over their spaces, they will be more likely to care for their spaces, help reduce signs of blight and disrepair, and become advocates for them in the political arena. (Ryan 2006) Conversely, “urban parks that do not have a cadre of local residents who have “adopted” them are subject to vandalism, neglect, and even destruction”

Fig. 4.44-6 - Lack of Care

4.3.4. Comfortable Spaces

Edmund Bacon suggests that “the role of design in the city should be to create a harmonious environment for each individual who resides in it from the moment he rises in the morning until he retires at night” (1967, 34). A harmonious experience in the city and a positive image is greatly impacted by a feeling of comfort in the city through the design of comfortable spaces. A feeling of comfort in an urban public space is impacted by a number of factors. Besides feelings of safety and care, comfort is encouraged through the design of human scaled and proportioned spaces. Human scaled spaces often involve a feeling of physical enclosure that was previously addressed in the discussion of spatial differentiation. In particular

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enclosure from above created by street trees, awnings, canopies, and overhangs reinforce human scaled spaces.

The massing of buildings along with their detail and articulation also impact feelings of human scale. Shorter buildings inherently reinforce a human scale greater than tall buildings, but tall buildings can still create a human scale through the treatment of its lowest floors. Developing setbacks for taller buildings can create the illusion of a much shorter building to a person interacting with the building from the street. Breaking down the massing of the building into smaller pieces can additionally help to minimize the feeling of a large building both in height and length. Details that allow a person to visualize the scale of a building in relation to the human body, and that engage the pedestrian particularly on the ground floor are important in the creation of human scaled architecture. This could include smaller scaled fenestration, or engaging elements such as storefronts, intricate details, and signage on the ground floor of a building. Large blank walls should be avoided when trying to develop human scaled spaces.

Comfortable public spaces should also be accommodating to the user. They should be served by uses or vendors that can provide food and beverages, and should provide furnishings such as seating, trash receptacles, and lighting. William H. Whyte observed that people prefer moveable chairs that they can adjust to their liking. In his observations, they were rarely taken or vandalized. (Whyte 1980) Other sensory experiences that were previously discussed will contribute to comfort within a space such as street performances. Public spaces should also provide a variety of spaces so users with different needs can be comfortable. This includes more intimate or private spaces, as well as larger spaces for bigger events or gatherings. Providing buffers from street traffic will also increase comfort for people walking along a sidewalk. This can be accomplished through the inclusion of parallel parking along streets, along with landscaping elements. Excellent examples include M Street in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington D.C., which buffers 4 lanes of traffic with parallel parking and street trees, and

![Fig. 4.47 - M Street - Georgetown, Wash. D.C.](www.flickr.com)

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Streets in Bethesda Row, in Bethesda Maryland. (Figures 4.47-8)

When designing spaces for comfort, it is necessary to consider comfort from natural elements. Shading elements may be necessary to provide comfort in extreme heat, along with water elements. Shade can also be provided from buildings adjacent to public spaces. Yet direct sunlight should also be allowed to provide comfort from cold. Direct sunlight can also create desirable light qualities if glare is controlled. Heaters can also be utilized to curb cold temperatures during the night or in spring and fall seasons. Proper placement of trees or buildings can also help provide comfort from wind. In addition, placing public buildings along open spaces can allow users to temporarily escape extreme weather. Public spaces should also address unwanted noise, as was discussed previously. (Whyte 1980) Lynch adds that “we will want to go further than suppression, to consider the possibilities for diversity and a stimulating rhythm of change. (1965 from Lynch 1995, 91). He continues to explain that in relation to excessive noise or natural discomfort, “a universal hush or eternally mild sunny weather would be equally deadening” (Ibid.).

Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston, Massachusetts is an excellent example of a development that includes comfortable outdoor spaces. (Figures 4.49-50) It creates well proportioned enclosed spaces defined by the hard building edges of the market buildings while trees provide enclosure from above. (Figure 4.51) It establishes a human scale through the one story massing of the central market building along with building details and window proportions. The buildings are also very engaging to the pedestrian by including interesting storefronts and vending carts. Canopies, awnings, signage, and banners add human scaled detail and contribute to enclosure.

The market is also very accommodating, as it includes numerous places to purchase food and

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beverages, and ample seating. It also includes attractive lighting, trash receptacles, and landscaping elements. Numerous street performers also accommodate the user. The project also provides comfort from natural elements. Buildings and trees block wind in cold months, and provide shade in warmer months. There are also a number of umbrellas in dining areas to provide shade, while portable heaters add warmth in colder periods. The open and accessible nature of the market buildings also allows relief for outdoor shoppers from hot and cold weather. The market is also separated from the noise and danger of the adjacent streets.

4.4. Summary

Attachment to the place refers to a subjective perception of and personal connection to a place based on personal experiences. We can develop attachment to a place as a result of our personal satisfaction with a place though a feeling that a place relates to your personal identity, influences positive memories, gives us a feeling of control and power, growth, and intellectual stimulation. We can also develop attachment to a place as a result of social satisfaction from community interaction and feelings of equity and diversity. Finally our perception of a place is influenced by our image of the place and feelings of comfort within the place. Comfort and image are influenced by activity and economic success of the place, feelings of safety, a perception that the place is cared for, and whether the spaces within the place are physically comfortable.
V. Process

There is a great need for designers to integrate the three elements of sense of place previously discussed into their design process if the development of sense of place is a goal. Since designers are trained in the physical development of space, they typically only address the physical and spatial issues related to sense of the place. Some research into the unique characteristics of the site may be undertook, but this often does not influence design decisions. Issues of attachment to place are rarely addressed. Most design processes are undertook with no community involvement, and programs are often proscribed by developers. Yet if these issues are addressed early in the design process there is greater potential for elements of the program to be adjusted to match the needs and desires of the community, and for the community to develop attachment to the project before it is even built. If a designer has a better understanding of the issues that need to be addressed in order to develop sense of place early there is a greater likelihood of facilitating spirit of the place and attachment to the place instead of only addressing sense of the place.

It is difficult and probably counterproductive toward the development of unique place specific responses to attempt to develop a strictly defined manifesto for facilitating sense of place in new developments. There is certainly no one way to ensure that sense of place will emerge in a new

**Fig. 5.1 - Design Starting Points**

![Design Starting Points Diagram](image by author)
development. Furthermore, decisions made in one place may not be appropriate for another. People will continue to discover new ways of addressing the elements discussed in this thesis that may have never been considered previously. It is important for designers and the many stakeholders in the creation of a new development in an existing city to work together to consider ways to address sense of the place, spirit of the place, and attachment to the place that are appropriate for the city and the needs of its people. In addition, the place must constantly be adjusted to further address these three goals.

Rather than attempting to address the three elements of sense of place separately, designers should address all three areas relating to sense of place equally in an attempt to develop a balance of these elements, ultimately leading to the strongest place. (Figure 5.1) A seven stage process will assist designers in developing a project that addresses the three elements of sense of place that have been described. (Figure 5.2) This process is intended to be a loose framework to situate a designer in order to address the elements of sense of place in a way that is appropriate for the setting and its people.

The first stage of the design process is the research phase. This phase involves site analysis, which primarily addresses the sense of the place, site research which primarily addresses the spirit of the place, and community research which primarily addresses attachment to the place. Through site analysis, a designer can start to address the sense of the place by studying and diagramming the physical characteristics of the site with a focus on positive and negative characteristics of the urban form, especially in relation to image, circulation, and organizational principles. With site research that focuses on the spirit of the place, the designer should begin by studying the existing unique qualities of the site, through visual site analysis and synthesis, cultural immersion, and historical research. Designers should work with the people of the community to determine what qualities of the place they find unique and value. Attention should be paid to the natural elements, cultural expressions, and sensorial experiences that were discussed previously. Finally, before the designer can attempt to situate the new place in order to facilitate personal attachment to the place for the people that will

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use it, they need to fully understand the people and utilize their local knowledge of the place through community research. Moor and Rowland suggest that “urban design should encourage a wider and more representative cross-section of society to participate. There is a tendency for the views of white, middle-ages and middle-class men too prevail as these groups predominate in the active ranks of the design professionals” (2005 13). Through an inclusionary design process, the designer will know more about who they are designing for, and what they value. The designer should understand the demographics of the community, and recognize that those who participate in inclusionary processes may not necessarily represent an accurate cross section of the community. Design charrettes are perhaps the best method to include members in the community in the design process and learn from their experiences and concerns.

The next stage involves the gathering of ideas and conjectures for how to address the goals of the project as a result of the research phase. This can include ideas on program, qualities of the project, site responses and site features, ways to address history, memory, meaning, and how to enhance feelings of community. These conjectures should be analyzed for how they contribute to the many elements of sense of place that have been discussed in this thesis. If elements have not been addressed, than additional ideas should be explored. This stage should attempt to explore as many potential ideas as possible, and ideas should not yet be considered unacceptable or impractical. These
ideas do not necessarily need to be spatially located on the site at this point. If physical structuring is done too early than certain ideas that could have been accommodated for may be difficult to include in the design.

The third phase is the initial structuring phase. This is the designer’s first attempt to physically structure the ideas and conjectures on the actual site. Although all three elements of sense of place are considered at this stage, decisions that impact the sense of the place are considered most at this early stage. (Figure 5.4) Therefore great thought to elements such as image clarity, physical and visual connections, and spatial differentiation must be considered here. Issues of circulation, massing, orientation, spatial design and program location are considered at this stage as well.

It must be understood that many design decisions do not simply contribute to only one of the elements that have been discussed thus far, but can contribute to a sense of place in a number of ways. For example, the inclusion of well designed open communal space can contribute to sense of the place by facilitating clarity of image, visual connections throughout the place, and hierarchy within the place. It can also enhance the genius loci of the place by connecting people to natural elements and can include uses that provide a connection to the climatic conditions of the place. It can also contribute

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to the visual character of the place and accommodate for cultural activities while impacting all of our senses. The open space can additionally contribute to a personal attachment to the place through its contribution to personal identity, memory, intellectual stimulation, and community interaction. If designed well, people will feel safe and comfortable in the place, and it will be active, cared for, and contribute to the economic success of the development. If designers consider all of these possibilities, they will be better situated to design open spaces that will address and develop qualities that contribute to sense of place.

After the project has been structured without too much development of the details, it should be reviewed with the community. This is a good opportunity to rethink some of the initial conjectures and even develop new ideas. Questions should be asked about what is successful and whether the 3 elements of sense of place are being addressed.

Moving forward, the refinement stage involves iterations of non place specific conjectures, structuring of ideas, and reviews with the community. This cyclical approach should begin to narrow down many of the elements of the project. This refinement stage will begin to focus less on issues of sense of the place, and more so on spirit of the place and attachment to place as elements of detailing, materiality, landscaping, and even consideration of activities and events to be held are considered. The overall organizational principles that are important to spatial differentiation and orientation and wayfinding should already be in place.

Next the plan is finalized along with recommendations for future management and development. This will often include suggestions for how to phase construction to ensure the project addresses the elements of sense of place even if the whole project is not complete, a task that is often difficult to achieve. If certain streets or buildings aren’t built, it can be quite problematic to the development of sense of the place. The lack of other project elements can be quite detrimental to the soul of the place and attachment to the place. Issues of economic success of the project must be considered heavily in these decisions to ensure that what is built will be sustainable in order to allow for the final completion of the project.

The last phase takes place after the designer has left the project and involves the upkeep, alteration and adjustment of the place in order to further address the three elements of sense of place and react to unforeseen forces. Places are dynamic and will constantly change both by large scale alterations down to the way an individual interacts with a place every day.
VI. Process Application - Worcester, Massachusetts

The following section will apply portions of the design process previously discussed in the city of Worcester, Massachusetts. It will focus on the research phase of the design process which includes site analysis, site research, and community research. These processes help catalogue existing conditions related to the three elements of sense of place, and prepare a designer to make decisions in order to address the three elements of sense of place in a new mixed use development in the city’s downtown. Furthermore, analysis of the current proposal for development will be undertook in order to determine whether it might facilitate sense of place. The site for the new mixed use development will come available as a result of the demolition of a vacant shopping mall on a 20 acre site immediately adjacent to the original Worcester Common park and City Hall. Discussion on the city of Worcester, Massachusetts, will begin with a description of site research which primarily situates a designer to address the spirit of the place.

Fig. 6.1 - Worcester, Massachusetts
1. Site Research

Worcester, Massachusetts, is located approximately 40 miles to the west of Boston. (Figure 6.2) According to the 2000 Census, the population of the city was 172,648 making it the second largest city in New England just ahead of Providence, Rhode Island. The natural characteristics of the city are similar to those throughout New England in that it is built upon forested land of oak, maple, pine, and hemlock, with rocky soil consisting of quartzite field stones on 7 rolling hills. (Worcester Historical Museum) The city also encompasses 10 different watersheds and contains a number of lakes including the large 772 acre Lake Quinsigamond that often hosts crew meets and regattas. (Figure 6.3) Downtown Worcester is set in a valley, and is surrounded by hills that slope up from the downtown. This topographic condition had a strong impact of the urban form of the city that will be discussed later in greater detail.

The climatic characteristics of Worcester feature cold autumns, winters and springs, with 6979 heating degree days annually compared to only 333 cooling degree days. It features 142 days annually in which the minimum temperature is below freezing and only 3 days where the maximum temperature is above 90 degrees. It also features approximately 67 inches of snowfall and 48 inches of precipitation annually. Because of these conditions, a psychrometric chart of the weather conditions explains that only 2.9% of hours are in a comfortable range. Recommendations from the chart include, wind protection, humidification, and passive solar direct gain. Conventional heating is necessary to combat extreme colds. Wind in Worcester typically flows from the west at an average speed of 10 mph. The atmospheric conditions vary with 90 clear days, 107 partly cloudy days, and 168 cloudy days per year.

Research into the cultural expressions of the city begins with a look at the interesting history of
the city. Downtown Worcester, Massachusetts is in an urban context that has been developing since 200 settlers established Worcester as a town in 1713. This establishment came after two failed attempts to establish a settlement that began in 1673, and again in 1684, both being thwarted by Native American hostility. Worcester was later established as a city in 1848. The city grew around Worcester Common, which at the time was “an unsightly mix of gravestones, school buildings, rubbish piles, peddler stalls and the tracks of the Norwich and Worcester railroad” (Southwick 1998, 9). The common was bounded by Main Street, Front Street, South (now Franklin) Street, and Church Street. Spreading out from this center was Summer, Central, School, Mechanic, Green, Water, Grafton, Shrewsbury, West Boylston, Millbrook, and Pleasant streets. The surrounding land of Worcester consisted of fields, woods, and pastures connected by dirt roads and cow paths. The city was known as “Railroad City” with connections to Boston, Albany, Norwich, and Providence. (Southwick 1998)

During the Industrial Revolution, Worcester was thriving, and growing as immigrants flooded the city. In 1848 the population of 16,000 was mostly English or Irish. By 1898 over the population had grown to 100,000 people, mostly Irish, Swedish, and Canadian but plenty of Armenians, Poles, Lithuanians, Syrians, Finns, Norwegians, Assyrians, Germans, Danes, Russians, Ukrainians, and Jews. While there had only been one church for the first 63 years, there were now churches, and synagogues for a wide variety of religious groups. In 1849 Holy Cross College graduated its first class, and the first gas lit streets arose. In the 1850s, Worcester’s industries were extremely successful, and employed the
many incoming immigrants. Luther Freeland & Co. featured the largest number of employers with 300, 250 of whom were women. At the time there were arguments over temperance, as drunkenness was often blamed on the many Irish immigrants who came as a result of the famine in Ireland. Women's rights were also a hot topic as the first woman's rights convention was held in Worcester in 1850. The first woman would be elected to public office in Worcester in 1960. Abolition was also a common topic, especially when Abraham Lincoln spoke in the city in 1848. The first of many acts of demolition in Worcester came when city hall was built in 1897 after the first parish church on the common was torn down in 1887. Worcester’s semi centennial was celebrated on June 22 with parades on Main Street. (Ibid.)

The late 1800s and early 1900s featured more industrial success. The Royal Worcester Corset Company employed over 100 women, more than any other Worcester industry. They were the leading manufacturers of corsets in the country. Washburn and Moen was the largest wire factory in the world and invented barbed wire. Worcester also featured the largest loom works (Crompton & Knowles), the largest envelope factory (US Envelope Co.), and the largest grinding firm in the country (Norton Grinding Co.). Graton & Knight would be one of the largest leather belt manufacturers, and Winslow Skate Co. one of largest roller skate manufacturers. Clark University, the oldest graduate institution in New England and the second oldest in the nation was established in 1887. Clark has played a distinguished role in the development of psychology and geography as distinguished academic disciplines in the US. The city featured 55 miles cobblestone streets, 90 miles of asphalt sidewalks, 2,600 gas and electric lights, and 367 acres of parks, a high pressure water system, and an electric streetcar system. The many immigrant workers were housed in what was known as triple-decker houses, which featured three units stacked in one structure. (Ibid.) (Figure 6.10) “Thanks to its triple-deckers, Worcester was able to avoid the acres of fetid slums that blighted so many booming factory
tours of the time. Despite the occasional outbreaks of cholera, tuberculosis, diphtheria and pneumonia, Worcester seems to have missed the kind of epidemics that devastated some densely populated cities” (Ibid., 52). Industry in Worcester was again boosted during World War I and II.

Downtown Worcester’s peak was during the 1950s when the population reached over 200,000. The downtown was vibrant and bustling with retail shopping anchored by four local department stores and many small independent stores. There were a variety of theatres, and five high schools. Unfortunately manufacturing industries began to decline in Worcester greatly hindering the local economy. Suburbanization led to a decrease in population in Worcester and the downtown began to decline. (Worcester Regional Research Bureau 2008)

In 1957, Route 290 was built through downtown Worcester. In order to build the highway many buildings and city blocks were destroyed. (Figure 6.11) “That list included the Lithuanian Naturalization and Social Club, the Polish Naturalization Club, three synagogues, the Ledge and Providence Street schools and the Posner Square fire station. The old Worcester State Hospital on Summer Street would come down, as would the clock tower from the old Union Station, for more than 65 years the most prominent structure in the city” (Warshaw 2002 from www.worcestermag.com). Further downtown demolition came in the 1960s when:

“The area south of Franklin St between Portland St and McGrath Blvd was taken by eminent domain as an urban renewal area. The entire area was bulldozed. Torn down were (9) single families, (22) two unit, (26) 3-4 unit, (11) 5-8 unit, (8) buildings with over 8 units, (24) rooming houses, a school, and a firehouse. 1200 people were evicted and 534 units of housing were lost. Five whole streets were taken off the map. Again, most of the buildings were brick and brownstone with street level retail. In addition, most buildings in the canal district and elsewhere were reduced from 4-6 stories down to 1-2 stories, or demolished altogether. This was because the old system of taxation was based on square footage, not value. As the population declined in the 50s and 60s the building owners found many upstairs apartments vacant, but were still
This urban renewal was performed simply to rid the downtown of deteriorating buildings in hopes that the land would be attractive for new development. Yet redevelopment was slow due to contamination of the land from existing factories.

This urban renewal was followed by the construction of the Worcester Galleria mall in 1971. (Figure 6.12) In order to build the mall, the city demolished many city blocks and buildings deemed as blighted. This included 6 theatres and 6 hotels. (Ibid.) The new galleria featured a central circulation space with an arched glass roof 475 feet long and 60 feet high, modeled after the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, Italy. (Figure 6.13) The 1,000,000 square foot mall featured a 4,300 space parking garage which was the largest parking structure in the world at the time. Mall owners hoped that the structure would revitalize the city and draw visitors all across New England. In The New Downtowns, published in 1976 it was prematurely written that “Worcester, Massachusetts …provides a good example of how urban renewal can be accomplished successfully by the drastic removal of blighted structures by their replacement not only with new buildings but also with a new concept in urban living, designed to bring new life to the city” (86). Unfortunately, the mall became vacant by the late 1980s. It was reopened again in 1994 as the Worcester Common Fashion Outlets and experienced brief success followed by a steady decline until it again was sold and close in 2004. Currently the mall is planned to be demolished to make room for a mixed use development known as City Square.

“Contrary to expectations that the mall would revitalize the downtown area, the Galleria proved to have a devastating impact on downtown retail; the enclosed mall sucked the life out of pedestrian traffic from stores on Main Street. The big department stores were
unable to compete with the mall, and closed. In time, after a decade of success, the mall itself was unable to compete with the newer suburban malls, which were bigger and more accessible to the growing suburban population, and offered free outdoor parking.” (Worcester Regional Research Bureau 2008, 3)

New schools were also built outside of downtown which led to the closing of the downtown schools. Many of the large businesses such as State Mutual Insurance Company moved out of downtown and regional banks declined after mergers and acquisitions and service companies such as accounting firms, law firms, and banks closed due to a decline in manufacturing.

While the downtown continues to struggle, large amounts of resources have been put into its revitalization and growth. While manufacturing no longer dominates the economy, biotechnology and health service industries are growing. The largest employer by far is the UMASS Medical School and teaching hospital, with more than 6,000 in payroll. After the medical city complex was completed over 15000 people working in healthcare. (Southwick 1998, 77) In the city as a whole, over $2.2 billion has been invested in projects planned, underway, or recently created. Projects include the restoration of Union Station, Worcester Trial Court, Hilton Garden Inn hotel, the Route 146 Connector road, The College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Hanover Theatre, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute's Life Science and Bioengineering Center with classrooms and “incubator” laboratory space leased to
small life-science companies.  (Worcester Regional Research) (Figure 6.14)

This visual character of Worcester can be understood as fairly eclectic, but typical of many New England cities. The history of the city can be read through the visual character of its architecture. It colonial heritage can be seen in the many colonial churches in the city, and the many colonial revival houses in the area, and the Worcester Commons, still in its original 18th century location. A small graveyard with colonial gravestones still exists in the center of the park. The city also contains a number of 19th century classical revival and Victorian revival structures that still remain, including Mechanics Hall, City Hall, and Union Station. The impacts of the Industrial Revolution are seen in the many brick warehouses and factories found throughout the city. The large influxes of immigrant workers are remembered by the triple-decker housing structures that cover the city’s hills. The character of the city is also impacted by the many visually diverse residential neighborhoods in the city. Traces of the historic town can still be felt on Main Streets and its adjacent streets that represent the original street grid of the city. Evidence of modernism is seen in the concrete brutalist police station and the few glass skyscrapers. The mega structure of the abandoned mall exists as a reminder of the effects of urban renewal to a city’s historic fabric. Even more contemporary stylings can be seen in the library and convention center that seem to represent attempts to bring the city into the 21st Century.
The cultural activities of the city add another layer of interest. The downtown area enjoys a number of institutions such as the Worcester Public Library, City Hall on Worcester Common, Mechanics hall, Hanover Theatre, and the Worcester Art Museum which has an extensive collection of colonial American art. (Figure 6.14) Worcester is also home to a science museum and zoo called the EcoTarium, a national library called the American Antiquarian Society and the Higgins Armory Museum, the only museum in the western hemisphere devoted to medieval arms and armor. Worcester is also a “college town”, with approximately 37,000 students in 15 institutions of higher learning including, Holy Cross, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Clark University, Assumption College, the University of Massachusetts Memorial University Hospital, and the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in the city’s downtown. The school of Pharmacy, located next to St. Vincent Hospital downtown, in addition to the UMASS Memorial University Hospital reinforces the strong medical sector of the once strong manufacturing city. The city contains a number of hospitals, research institutions, and biomedical companies within the city.

Sports are also very important to the people of Worcester. Apart from the typical New England obsessions, (New England Patriots and Revolution, and the Boston Red Sox, Celtics and Bruins) the city hosts the Worcester Sharks hockey team from the American Hockey league and minor league team to the San Jose Sharks who play in the downtown DCU center, and the Worcester Tornados minor league baseball team who play at Holy Cross College. (Figures 8.17-8) People also avidly follow the football, baseball, and basketball teams of the 7 public high schools along with a number of private high schools. The city also has an active skateboarding community, though there are little places for the people to skate beyond the city’s streets. Like most New England residents, skiing and snowboarding is a popular activity as well. The city also has two private country clubs and a municipal golf course at Green Hill, the city’s largest park on one of its 7 hills.

Within the city there are a number of important yearly cultural events. Each year the city hosts the New England Summer Nationals, a 3 day car show that attracts visitors throughout New England. (Fig. 8.18) During the day, visitors view hundreds of classic and antique cars, while in the evening,
spectators watch live music performances and car burnout and flame shows that take place on Main Street downtown. Another important cultural event occurs on New Year’s Eve where the city celebrates First Night with live music and fireworks in the downtown of the city. According to worcesterMA.gov, Worcester First Night is the second oldest New Year’s Eve celebration in the world. The city also celebrates stART, a large street art festival held each September. (Figure 6.19) There are also a number of ethnic pride celebrations such as the yearly Latin American and Asian Festivals to celebrate the city’s diverse demographics.

The sensory characteristics within the city also contribute to Worcester’s genius loci. (Figure 6.20) In particular, music is very important to the city of Worcester. The Worcester Palladium attracts a number of national music attractions to the city. The city has a strong jazz music interest with a successful jazz radio station and a number of talented local musicians, along a strong interest in hardcore rock and hip-hop music. Since 1999, the city has hosted the New England Metal and Hardcore Festival in April at the Palladium, and Rock and Shock, a horror convention held at the DCU Center coupled with a heavy metal concert at the Palladium. The DCU Center, located downtown, attracts even larger musical acts along with other events such as monster trucks, motocross, and rodeos. The city will also be holding its 150th Worcester Music Festival at Mechanics Hall, which according to musicworcester.org, “is the oldest Music Festival in the United States.”

In relations to our senses of taste and smell, the food within the city is representative of its diverse demographics. One can find many different styles of food within the city including Puerto
Rican, Vietnamese, and Italian. Like most New Englanders, seafood is a much loved menu item. The city hosts a yearly Taste of The Nation event where locals sample food from the city’s restaurants to raise money for Worcester charities. There is also a smaller Taste of Shrewsbury Street that celebrates the many restaurants along Shrewsbury Street an active commercial corridor that connects to downtown.

The many natural characteristics that have been discussed also connect to the sensory experiences in the city. The vibrant autumn foliage delights the eye. The cold and wet feel of falling snow on the face, the crunch and smell of dried leaves or snow under one’s feet, and the sound of a woodpecker or chickadee are important to the genius loci of Worcester as well as New England. Many of these elements that contribute to the genius loci of Worcester and its downtown can be connected to, clarified, or enhanced within the design of a new project for the city.

2. Site Analysis

As mentioned previously, the morphology of the downtown Worcester originally developed in relation to the topography of the area. Downtown lies within a valley with hills sloping up to the west, northeast, and southeast. Main Street, one of Worcester’s earliest streets and the first to be paved, follows the valley in the north-south direction. Shrewsbury Street and the railroad tracks to Boston and Providence follow the valley moving to the east. As the terrain slopes away from the heavily commercial downtown, residential neighborhoods flow up the hillsides and look down to the downtown. (Figure 6.21)

When Route 290 was built in 1957, it too followed the topography of the valley. Route 290 is a highway that leads to the Massachusetts turnpike which connects the city to Boston to the east, and New York to the West. It also connects to Route 495 which travels north into New Hampshire, or south towards Cape Cod. This highway, along with its railroad system that allows thousands of residents to commute to Boston daily, and an airport, connects Worcester with the region. The train to Boston begins at the historic Union Station, which can also be accessed by downtown as it is an approximately five minute walk from Worcester Common. Route 290 runs adjacent to downtown and views of the downtown are provided from the

![Fig. 6.21 - Downtown Topography](image)

[Sasaki 2004, 14]
highway. (Figure 6.22) This highway is the primary way that visitors who do not live in the immediate area access the downtown. The Rt. 290 Highway had the negative effect of splitting the downtown away from successful areas to the east and south.

The downtown of Worcester is in zoning district BG-6 or Business General 1-6 FAR. (Figure 6.23) This area is also in a mixed use zoning overlay district. From downtown, it is possible to access many other portions of the city. Shrewsbury Street, which runs west of downtown, is an active commercial corridor at the center of a residential district. Currently, the Route 290 highway overpass, Washington Square rotary, railroad bridge, and mall parking garage represent physical and visual barriers of activity and movement between downtown and the Shrewsbury Street district. (Figure 6.24) Green Street, which also terminates in downtown flows in the south east direction, and leads to the Canal District, another commercial corridor which features small scale restaurants and bars, along with loft style housing. The Canal District is named after the Blackstone Canal, built in 1828 and closed in 1848, which used to allow for the transport of goods from Worcester to Providence. The approach to downtown from Green Street is hindered by the unpleasant tunnel beneath the railroad tracks that divide the two districts. (Figure 6.25) The connection between the canal district and downtown is also hindered by the abandoned mall that acts as a physical and visual barrier for movement and activity between the two districts. (Figure 6.26) There is a strong opportunity for a new project on the site of the abandoned mall to increase the connection between downtown, the Canal District, and Shrewsbury Street District,
which would clarify the image of the city and facilitate the movement of activity amongst these areas.

To the Western edge of downtown runs Main Street which connects downtown to the Main South area of the city which features many ethnically rich neighborhoods and Clark University to the south. (Figure 6.27) Main North includes additional commercial uses. Main Street features many historic buildings and an attractive streetscape that makes approaching downtown quite pleasant. Main street passes the beautiful Mechanics Hall, which was built in 1856, and leads to the Town Hall which sits to the west side of the Worcester Commons. The Town Hall, built in 1897 replaced the original Town Hall built in 1829. There is a strong disconnect from the downtown surrounding Main Street and the areas to the east that are separated by the highway and elevated railroad tracks. Much of the historic fabric featuring small scaled walkable streets remains

**Fig. 6.27 - The Image of Worcester**

![Image of Worcester](image by author)
intact to the west, yet it begins to break down around the superblock containing the vacant mall, and the highway and railroad area. (Figure 6.28-9) Worcester Commons, immediately to the east of the mall is beautifully landscaped, with a rich history and a number of interesting monuments, statues, and a colonial cemetery. Unfortunately it is underused except by homeless individuals. It does experience some lunch time activity from the nearby offices. A new project on the site of the abandoned mall could contribute to an increase in activity to this important piece of the city.

3. Community Research

According to the 2000 Census, of the 172,648 Worcester residents, approximately 71% were white, 15% were Hispanic or Latino including 10% Mexican, and 8% were African America. The remaining residents consisted of a wide range of races including 5% from various Asian countries including 3% Vietnamese. Of the citizens of Worcester 15% of the population were foreign born. In the city, 43% of the occupied housing units were owner occupied, with 56% renter occupied. Furthermore, 58% of the households were family households, such as married couples without children, married couples with children, or single parents with children. 42% were nonfamily households such as a householder living alone. 42% of the population 15 years and over are currently married.

Of the population 25 years and older, 47% are high school graduates, 20% have attained bachelors or Associate degrees, and 10% have graduate or professional degrees. 23% have not graduated high school. The median household income in Worcester was $35,623, while the median family income was $42,988. Yet 29,115 individuals were below the poverty level including almost 10,000 people under the age of 18. (US Census 2000) In 2004, the city had an ACCRA Cost of Living Index of 114.6 while the US average is 100.0. This is brought up by the high cost of housing, with
the average house price being $372,500. (City-data.com)

Among those in the labor force in the Worcester Metropolitan area, the largest sector of employment is in educational and health sectors, which employ almost 20% of the regional labor force in 2004 and 27% of the residents of Worcester in 2000. (City-data.com, US Census 2000) Trade, transportation, and utilities, and government jobs also make up a number of jobs employing 19% and 14% respectively. The largest employers in the region were EMC Corporation, UMass Memorial Hospital, and the UMass Medical School. (Figure 6.30) While manufacturing once dominated the economy, in 2004 it made up 12% of the jobs in the area. (City-data.com.) The health sector of the city of Worcester continues to grow.

Worcester’s downtown, and the city as a whole, struggles with a negative image and “a lack of identity” (Worcester Municipal Research Bureau 1999, 12). “The flourishing of downtown Worcester in the 1950s engendered a sense of civic pride. By contrast, empty storefronts, makeshift signs…and a lack of cleanliness give the impression of civic apathy, that no one cares” (The Research Bureau 2008B, 4). Although the downtown of Worcester was once thriving, today it has struggled to live up to the standards of the city’s residents. According to an online survey by the Worcester Research Bureau in 2006, the top concerns Worcester residents had with their downtown were safety, poorly maintained property, a perception that there is nothing to do downtown, empty storefronts and vacancies, a dissatisfaction with the number and type of retail establishments, lack of people, lack of police presence, and burglary and theft. (The Research Bureau 2008, 2) It is clear that the negative image, and lack of comfort in and care for the downtown, makes it difficult for the people of Worcester to increase their attachment to their downtown.

In discussing why the Worcester Common Fashion Outlets failed, one resident explains that, “downtown Worcester is not the cleanest area, people didn’t exactly feel safe, nor was there anything of interest there” (Mike R 2005, comment from www.urbanplannet.org). In discussion about the future of downtown, there are many concerns about whether a new project can overcome this negative image. On www.wstr.org, a resident comments that “maybe nobody will come downtown even if they are giving away beer because of the ‘stigma’ it has. (Painfully likely)” (Chris K 2007). Another commenter remarks that “growing up in Worcester normally prepares you for a life of cynicism, but things like this mall confirm it” (anonymous 2007 from www.labelscar.com) He continues to explain his doubt on whether new tenants would move to downtown when he says, “30+ years
of failure’s a tough sell for anyone” (Ibid.). As a result, “if the city is going to be welcoming to the 30 thousand or so college students... as well as the growing number of people coming into the city for business and pleasure, one of the first things it has to do is offer a sense of familiarity, make people comfortable” (Paxton 2007 from www.wstr.org).

Many people in the city also have very negative opinions towards the vacant Worcester Common Fashion Outlets Mall. One commenter exclaims, “I can’t wait to see the wrecking ball!” (Oliver 2006 comment from www.urbanplanet.com) Another says, “Whatever happens there, the mall has to go” (Anonymous 2006 comment from www.urbanplanet.com). A commenter known as JR Moreau explains that, “I’d love to get down there, 1989 Berlin Wall style, with a sledgehammer and get me a piece of that monstrosity to put on my Wall” (2009 comment from www.worcesteria.wordpress.com)

Other’s look at the mall in fondness as it reminds them of the many positive experiences had within its concrete walls. John Griffin discusses his feelings about the abandoned building in *Mall Rat Memories*, a collection of stories and memories from Worcester residents who grew up wandering the mall:

> It was where I started to grow up and where I met so many of the people who I still know today. In fact, one of them was the best man at my wedding. It was a lot of fun, but those days are gone. I doubt that whatever they build in its place will hold as many memories for so many people as this mall has, no matter how tacky or how much of an eyesore it is. (from Goslow 2004)

Griffin later describes the dynamic of the mall:

> Before I met up with everyone in the middle '80s, I used to just walk around the mall and listen to my headphones, people-watching. Eventually, I started to meet some of the kids I’d see walking by and make some friends; in fact, prior to hanging around downtown, I really didn't know anyone. It was a whole crew of punks and skaters and weirdos of all types and somehow, the numbers just grew. It was like every kid who was into that sort of thing from all...
of the small towns around Worcester knew that there were other people just like you hanging out at the Galleria. (Ibid)

These memories illuminate the fact that the mall was a place for children to go and be themselves. They identify with the place because they can safely wander the mall unsupervised and interact with others like them. (Figures 6.33-4) When the mall is torn down, consideration must be paid to determining where children can interact in a similar manner.

An even older generation has similar memories of a time before the mall. Clayton Gleason remembers time spent in Front Street, one of Worcester’s original streets that was destroyed in order to build the mall:

I remember Front Street well. As a kid I (sic.) spent a lot of time on the common behind City Hall and at the Theaters there. Family, Warner, Capital, Royal, Plymouth. Front street was the hub of the city. My parents took my baby pics near the Tulip beds at the common. Homers Hot dogs was a popular place and the bay State [restaurant]. Also the lunch counter at Union Station. The 2 bus terminals at each end of Salem street were popular for a lunch or coffee. I am 61 now and remember it all like it was yesterday. Worcester was a good place to grow up. I have so many memories of it all. (2007 from www.worcestermass.com)

Joe Morin shares similar memories:

Ah Front St, where on a Saturday am or pm myself and my buddies would take off toward the Family Theater and watch the Three Stooges et al. . The noise, the pandemonium (sic.) that took place when they came on was out of (sic.)this world! I remember times when we had to “double up” in our seats to make room for an overflow crowd, imagine that? I remember going to the 5 and 10 and buying those huge bags of popcorn for 10 cents and trying to sneak it in the Family theater. I remember the head usher, in a white jacket and cap, an elderly gentleman who tried to get us, but we outfoxed him, ha! Good memories, good times. (2007 from www:}

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Some look back upon their memories with sadness like a commenter named Michael who explains that, “I was born and bred (sic.) in worc. In 1949… I was fortunate enough to see a bit of its colorful past before the city fathers in their wisdom destroyed the downtown area with its working class character and turn of the century architecture and replaced it with the galleria mall…. It breaks my heart. My city is gone” (2009, from www.worcestermass.com).

Yet while many recognize Worcester’s struggles, they have hope for its future and a strong desire to see it improve. “Worcester’s downtown is a jewel in the rough, just waiting to be rediscovered. A few blocks of revitalization is, at the very least, a beginning” (tombarnes 2007 from www.urbanplanet.org). Much of the optimism regarding Worcester’s future is coupled with a desire to participate in its change. “Let’s demand control over what is built, [and] accountability from those in charge (anonymous 2005 from worcester.indymedia.org). Jared Olen proclaims, “let us now go ahead wisely and create the change we want to see in Worcester” (2007 from worcester.indymedia.org). Another commenter argues, “If we don’t take responsibility then we are forced to take responsibility for whatever…we’re handed” (Paxton 2007, from http://wstr.org).

The residents of Worcester have many desires in the redevelopment of the downtown of Worcester. One priority is more activity downtown. “They would like to see downtown Worcester remain busy for 18 hours a day” (The Research Bureau 2008B, 4). They feel to make downtown more active, it needs to be more easily accessible by further integrating the surrounding areas with downtown. One man complains that, “that mall is just plain in the way of logical traffic flow, and is a physical barrier against linking what assets the city does have in and around the downtown” (Chris K 2007, from http://wstr.org). Another resident shares a similar thought by saying, “the mall is in the
way to connect downtown to all the nice upcoming areas - Shrewsbury Street, Canal district, Union Station. So in my opinion, what has to be done first is tear the mall down and reopen Front Street. What they are going to build there instead is secondary” (Oliver 2006, from www.urbanplanet.org).

They also argue that downtown needs more uses to encourage activity. One resident argues that “what is completely missing are bookstores, nice coffee houses, alternative theaters / movie theaters, any kind of nightlife if you are above 25, nice places that offer outside seating, shopping, any kind of attractive pedestrian area” (Oliver 2007, from www.urbanplanet.org) Another explains that, “We really need to clean up Main Street, get a nightlife area around there. Pedestrian area too. Most people, even those under 25, avoid Worcester like the plague and head for Boston or PVD. You got to be pretty broke, desperate, or high school to be clubbing or barhopping in Worcester” (Lowerdeck 2007, from www.urbanplanet.org). Additionally, a commenter referred to as cloudship explains that “alternative movie theaters are a must for every city…The closing of Bijous [Theatre] was a big loss for Worcester” (2007 www.urbanplanet.org).

Many also have a desire for locally owned businesses that will result in a “better connection to and amplification of already existing culture, not more corporate driven monoculture,” and more local jobs. (Worcester’s Future 2005, from http://worcester.indymedia.org) This poster further suggests, “let’s be intentional about which stores we let in. As important or more important than economic and environmental sustainability is cultural sustainability” (Ibid.). People also argue that high end retailers cannot be supported in Worcester’s downtown. “High-end stores and expensive restaurants are out of reach to most of Worcester’s people. We cannot cater to the rich and expect them to support our city when they haven’t in the past” (Ibid.) A poster named Mike adds, “you can change the landscape, but you can’t change the people” (2008, from www.labelscar.com).

There is also hope that with redevelopment of downtown will come “a greater variety as well as volume of artistic and cultural attractions” (The Research Bureau 2008B, 4). Environmental responsibility is also important to many in the city. “We need sustainable green building initiatives citywide. [New downtown development] seems like a fine place to start” (Worcester’s Future 2005, from http://worcester.indymedia.org).

The people of Worcester have a desire to include housing downtown. Paulie explains, “how delightful it would be to actually say I live in a neighborhood…these are not neighborhoods within most of the urban core” (2008 from http://worcesteria.wordpress.com). Yet many people have desires not only for high end condominiums, but rental units. In addition “We as a people need affordable housing” something that the city is lacking. (Worcester’s Future 2005, from http://worcester.indymedia.org) This also necessitates elements to service the residents such as groceries, day care centers, and health clubs.
It is also suggested that the “Worcester Consortium… with Anna Maria College and Clark University (which offer Master of Public Administration programs) and any other interested college… establish a regional center downtown for training current and future public employees for local and state government in Central Massachusetts” (The Research Bureau 2008B, 1). These higher learning centers, along with other job training centers would help contribute to the 18 hour activity that is desired by city residents. (Worcester Municipal Research Bureau 1998)

On February 6 and 7, 2004, the city of Worcester, in association with Sasaki Associates, held the Worcester Economic Development Action Agenda Charrette, in order to discuss ideas and concerns for downtown Worcester with community members. (Figures 8.38-40) Of primary focus in the charrette was discussion on redevelopment possibilities of the Worcester Common Fashion Outlet mall site. Questions and considerations included, “what should we keep, potential streets, connections, and views, where is the center, what is the character, and what are some project priorities?” Worcester Economic Development Action Agenda 2004, 3) The findings were summarized into a short list:

- Downtown residential neighborhood
- 18-hour mixed use activity – connectivity
- Nexus for the universities
- Pedestrian friendly active streets
- Wayfinding: site lines and gateways
- Preserve the best historic buildings and ensure the quality of new architecture. (Ibid. 104).

This list was supplemented with a number of sketches of varying degrees of detail by participating groups that focused primarily on the location of streets and some placement of program. Most sketches suggested developing connections to existing nodal intersections. All suggested a connection of Front Street to Washington Square. Notations on the drawings often stressed walkability and sometimes made comparisons to places like Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston in reference to character. It can be argued that the summary did not accurately address the more complex desires of those participating. Perhaps participants struggled to express their desires through the exercise of drawing potential ideas, considering they have little to no training working with this method. Perhaps summaries of the findings were purposely kept vague. Perhaps if additional techniques were utilized, the charrette may have gathered more useful information. Nevertheless a proposal for the mall site was later developed. It is unclear whether information learned from the charrette informed any design decisions, but additional community involvement was limited to those who spoke up at future review meetings.

The proposal, named City Square, is a public-private partnership between the City and Berkeley Investments:

Planning began in 2004 when Berkeley Investments bought the former Outlet mall for $30
million from Cigna Corporation...[to develop an] ‘urban village,’ consisting of 2.2 million square feet of medical and professional [office] space, market rate condos, retail shops, a hotel, movie theater, and park-type open space... Of the total $563 million involved in this project, about $93 million is public money. With $7 mill in Fed funding, 25 million from the commonwealth and $61 million from the city from a “district improvement financing “fund, or “DIF”- a 30-year bond issuance to be paid back by tax receipts from a designated district surrounding the new development. With the DIF, the city will be borrowing against

**Recurring Suggestions:**
- Physical connection to Shrewsbury Street from Front Street Extension
- Physical connection to Canal District via Green Street
- Direct link from Green Street to Worcester Center Boulevard
- Re-think Washington Square
- Preserve existing parking garage adjacent to DCU Center
- Pedestrian oriented, walkable streets
- Housing, and mixed use buildings

**Images:**
- [Image by author, Sasaki 2004, 106-115]
- [Sasaki 2004, 104]
- [Sasaki 2004, 104]
property tax revenues it anticipates that the new development will generate in order to finance infrastructure improvements around it. (The Research Bureau 2008B, 11)

The project has yet to be built, for a number of reasons. A primary reason for the project’s delay has been as a result of the developer’s inability to secure enough leases for office space, which could be a result of a currently poor economy. As the project continues to be delayed, residents grow more and more frustrated and doubt whether the project will ever actually happen. People have also had an opportunity to discuss their opinions of the project which vary greatly.

Many citizens are thrilled with the plan and are excited to see it get built:

The plan is a marvelous, it will increase the tax base, encourage (sic.) other developers to look at the city for their investments, bring some vitality back to downtown after 5 p.m., help to reduce commuting (cleaner air) and a great deal more. Is the city spending alot (sic.) of money on this project? Yes they are. Are investor (sic.) banging down the city’s door to spend this kind of money? No they are not, so we must begin somewhere and here we are. In the future we should be more frugal with our tax dollars but for now we need to invest in ourselves because no one else will. (Tivnan 2006 from www.urbanplanet.org)

Most people seem to appreciate the urban form of the project, and the fact that it would increase the connectivity of the downtown with other regions in the city. One citizen comments that, “the best effect of City Square will be in the facilitation of traffic flow through downtown, benefitting the Main St. businesses. Given the state of the mall, at least they cannot shit up the space any further” (Paolo 2007, from http://wstr.org). Another explains that “North Main Street / Commons and new City Square could be one nice walkable downtown area with short walking distance to Shrewsbury Street with its many restaurants and Canal District with loft housing units, restaurants and bars” (Oliver 2005, from www.urbanplanet.org).

Many people are anxious to see the project go through so they can get some tax revenue from the underutilized land and hopefully spur continual redevelopment of the city. Jared Olen asks “can we afford not to go ahead with this development” (2007, from www.urbanplanet.org)? Another commenter says, “it would be a shame if this did
not happen. A project of that scale would completely change the core of Worcester, and that would generally be a good” (The Voice of Reason 2008, from www.urbanplanet.org).

Yet others look more critically past the fact that the project would remove the vacant underused mall, and bring activity to downtown. One resident argues that:

The plan for City Square is a cookie-cutter plan, one that does not seem to take into consideration the people who actually live in Worcester and the culture that exists here. The few local businesses (sic.) that currently exist in the development zones I assume will be demolished…) to make room for Barnes and Noble, Banana Republic, and other large chain businesses (sic.) who have no interest in local development. How is this development any different from the mall when it was first built in the 60s? And later when it was re-developed in the 90s as a discount mall? Will this be a third failure? The city has hopes of attracting more middle and upper class residents to shop at these future stores-- an increase in condominiums and constant decrease in support of social services for the CURRENT residents of Worcester seem to point at this. I highly doubt that the planned housing in City Square will be affordable housing. (Carolyn 2007, from http://wstr.org)

Similar sentiments are felt by another resident:

Most agree that this project simply doesn’t fit the needs of the people of Worcester and that alone could make it dead on arrival. My point is this, City Square may be more damaging
than stimulating in the long run. Our city is pushing for an arts district and a “creative city initiative”, but there’s little creative or artistic about the development before us. In fact, the development could be considered boring. (Worcester's Future 2005, from http://worcester.indymedia.org)

It seems that most people are happy with the fact that something may indeed be happening in a long underutilized site that may reverse some of the damages the failed mall had on the connectivity and walkability of the city, and hopefully spur some activity, investment, and life into the downtown of the city. Yet those who critically look at the City Square project wonder if these same goals could be accomplished while still relating more to the needs of the community and further connecting to and establishing the unique characteristics of the city. They are worried that the stores and restaurants in the project will be national chains that relate little to the region and its citizens, and would prefer more locally owned businesses that cater more to the true desires of the people of Worcester.

As a result, the project will probably provide people with a sense of the place, while falling short on positively addressing spirit of the place and attachment to the place. Nevertheless, it will probably develop a positive image and produce feeling of comfort which is important to developing attachment to the place. Furthermore, if the project is economically successful, many people will develop memories in the place and will still become attached to it with time. Yet this process will probably occur slower and for fewer citizens than if people felt that they had more control over what went into the project and if it connected to their needs in a stronger way. Many people are clearly upset with the process of developing the project and wished that they had more influence into its development. If it had a stronger spirit of the place, it would be more memorable and enjoyable for short term and long term users, and further enhance the unique characteristics of the city as a whole. Had the project been designed with a more inclusive process and with more consideration to the unique characteristics of Worcester and its citizens, there would be a greater chance that it would succeed in facilitating a strong spirit of the place and attachment to the place.
VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, people develop the strongest place experiences when they develop a clear understanding or *sense of the place*, can connect to and recognize the unique qualities of the place that make up its genius loci, and when they develop a strong *attachment to the place* as a result of their experiences in the place. (Figure 7.1) These qualities can be impacted as a result of physical design decisions, but are dependent on a number of additional factors including, program and use, managements and policy, time and history, and personal factors that are beyond anybody’s control.

Fig. 7.1 - Sense of Place Diagram

Fig. 7.2 - Elements of Sense of Place

[images by author]
It can be argued that the best places are strong in all of the elements of sense of place that have been discussed. (Figure 7.2) Yet all of the components that have been discussed that can contribute to spirit of the place do not need to exist in order for a place to be considered unique. Similarly, all of the elements of attachment to place do not necessarily have to exist for somebody to become attached to a place. Somebody who has a single positive memory in a place can become attached to it even if it is dangerous, or provides no opportunities for growth for its residents. Yet in order to increase the chances of influencing attachment for as many of the diverse users of a place as possible, stakeholders should strive to create as many opportunities and conditions that could influence attachment as possible. Similarly with spirit of the place, the genius loci can always be enhanced and influenced by more elements to further strengthen its impact and increase its legibility and differentiation amongst other places people might experience.

When analyzing the three elements that contribute to a sense of place, it is clear that a designer can have the biggest impact in influencing somebody’s sense of the place by developing clearly differentiated space and clear organizational principles. (Figure 7.3) While physical design impacts the recognition of the spirit of the place and a person’s attachment to place, these qualities are impacted by many additional factors that are beyond the control of the designer. They are therefore much

![Fig. 7.3 - Contributors to Sense of Place](image by author)

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

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more difficult to obtain and control. It is clear that designers alone cannot control and manipulate all elements that impact sense of place and it is beneficial to designers to recognize their limitations. They are then more likely to work with other stakeholders in order to greater effect sense of the place, spirit of the place, and attachment to place.

It is necessary to revisit the initial question in this thesis investigation, and ask whether sense of place is something that can be created. Analysis of the term sense of place has made it evident that this cannot simply be answered since sense of place is a complex term that can represent a variety of different meanings. It is therefore necessary to ask the question about the individual elements of sense of place that have been discussed.

Can sense of the place be created? Before the construction of the development, there is little to no sense of the place because it does not yet exist. (Figure 7.4) Since the development of a sense of the place through spatial differentiation and clear organizational and way finding principles is effected primarily by physical design decisions, this characteristic of the place will be strongly defined at the point of construction. It will only increase slightly with time as people develop experience moving about the place. As a result, it can be argued that this element of sense of place can in fact be created.

Can spirit of the place be created? I believe that it cannot be created since the spirit of the place already exists in a place through the natural characteristics of the place and cultural expressions and sensorial experiences of the surrounding area. (Figure 7.5) After construction, the place can either experience a strengthening of the genius loci, or a decrease in the unique qualities of the place depending on the quality of design and the activities and uses that are included in the development. This quality is constantly fluctuating as changes are made to the

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**Fig. 7.4 - Sense of the Place over Time**

![Graph showing the increase in sense of place over time](images by author)

**Fig. 7.5 - Spirit of the Place over Time**

![Graph showing the decrease in spirit of the place over time](images by author)

**Fig. 7.6 - Attachment to Place over Time**

![Graph showing the increase in attachment to the place over time](images by author)

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place. “Town character is often irretrievably altered by major growth and change as well as minor daily decisions. The loss of essential town character, however, is often not noticed by local populations until it has occurred, and until the impact of their daily decisions are compounded to forever change the very nature of the town they inhabit” (Garnham 1985, 9). I do believe that the spirit of the place can be strengthened and made more evident and legible to people by design interventions that enhance existing unique natural, cultural, and sensory characteristics of the place. In addition, new unique elements can be introduced to a place that will alter the existing spirit of the place in a positive way. Genius Loci will also adjust on its own through a variety of unforeseen forces. Yet it can’t be said that the genius loci can be created, because every place will inherently have an existing spirit.

Can attachment to place be created? It is impossible to predict how our design decisions are going to impact all of the people who experience a project. As was discussed previously, attachment to place is impacted by a huge amount of factors beyond the physical decisions of designers, including personal aspects that are beyond the control of anybody. Personal attachment to a place may already exist, especially to people who have lived in the area and have high hopes for the new development and its impact on the region. (Figure 7.6) By participating in the design of the place they will develop additional attachment to the place. Yet once the development is constructed, the personal attachment to the place is likely to grow with time as memories are created and positive experiences occur in the place. This adjustment in attachment will be different for everyone and could also involve a decrease in attachment to a place if people are unsatisfied with the current state of the place, especially in comparison to a previous period. I do believe that the actions of a designer can create opportunities and conditions that facilitate place attachment to occur, but it can’t be said that the actions of a designer will guarantee the creation of place attachment for all of its users. It is beneficial for designers to admit their limitations and strive simply to create opportunities and conditions for strong place attachment by addressing the issues previously discussed.

Since the three elements of sense of

Fig. 7.7 - Sense of Place change over Time

Fig. 7.8 - Sense of Place change over Time

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place progress at different rates, through considerate design, at the completion of construction a development can expect to be strong in the areas of spatial differentiation, orientation, and way finding. People may also have some connection and understanding of the genius loci, but have not yet developed a deep attachment to the newly created project. With the passage of time, a designer can hope that attachment to the place will grow and a greater connection to the genius loci will be experienced, along with an increased knowledge of the place through greater experience moving about the setting and the surrounding areas. (Figures 7.7-8)

A designer therefore cannot expect to create a development that instantly can be said to have a truly strong sense of place. But with an expanded process that strives to develop more than an economically successful development with strong spatial qualities, we will benefit from more places that are enjoyable to be in while still enhancing the characteristics of its location and being appropriate for its users. This process must involve a greater understanding of the characteristics that make a place unique and how people become attached to their places. After understanding these characteristics, we must continually determine new ways to address them in our built interventions. Designers need a greater understanding of the unique natural, cultural, and sensory characteristics of the site and must consider new and innovative ways to connect to them through the built environment. Similarly, places will benefit from continuing to develop inclusionary design processes in order to allow attachment to a place to develop early, and to learn from the people who will use the place. This will make it easier to design a place that people can develop an attachment to with time.

If the designer has considered ways to develop the elements that contribute to a sense of place, as the place evolves with time, it can eventually become a clear and discernable space with a recognizable genius loci in which many people develop a strong personal attachment. Regardless of how they define the term, people who experience these characteristics can say that it has a sense of place.

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