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Spring 2009

Constructing A Living Surface: City Hall as Connective Tissue

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Constructing a Living Surface
City Hall as Connective Tissue

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ARC 505 Thesis Prep
Thesis submitted toward completion of a Master of Architecture degree

Spring 2009
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Contents

Constructing a Living Surface

The composition of our cities, even those suffering from decline, is consistently characterized by a matrix of private properties, public streets, and buildings. An early twentieth century concern with urban form is characterized by the work of Frederick Law Olmsted, who used bucolic nature as a highly constructed urban landscape in which nature and infrastructure are put to the service of making places for people to be.

Just as Olmsted's projects addressed the unhealthy urban conditions of his era, our modern cities need an updated understanding of *healthy urban space*. This term does not merely describe a physical state, but a condition of belonging and an understanding of the urban landscape as a surface for living. The constructed environment of buildings and surfaces can define a 21st century attitude toward healthy in the urban context by rethinking the bounderies imposed by building, linking a fragmented public realm through an activated, rather than "built upon", urban surface.

Infrastructural space offers a model for architecture which is not closed and self-contained, but expansive, continuous, and referential beyond itself. A healthy urban landscape can be produced by buildings that serve to construct sites which expand into the city, giving expression to the role of the urban surface.

The potential and significant field of action today is less the design of monuments and master plans than the careful modification and articulation of the urban surface. [1]

Alex Wall
Programming the Urban Surface

1. Alex Wall, "Programming the Urban Surface," in *Recovering Landscape: Essays in contemporary Landscape Architecture*, ed. James Corner. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), p. 233.

Priority should now be accorded to landscape rather than free-standing built form in the making of cities.[1]

- Kenneth Framption

Familiar urban typologies of square, park, district, and so on are lof less use and significance than are infrastructures, network flows, ambiguous spaces, and other polymorphorous conditions that constitute the contemporary metrolpolis.[2]

- Alex Wall

1Kenneth Frampton, "Towards and Urban Landscape," Columbia Documents no. 4 (1994): 90.
2 Alex Wall, "Programming the Urban Surface, 234.

The Promise of Infrastructural Space

My approach can be characterized by an infrastructural outlook. A series of infrastructural projects provide useful examples of the creation of public space and the rejection of the traditional monument. This is precisely because they do not preference built objects as primary in the design. Rather, buildings become an integral component in designs which incorporate landscape, infrastructure & ecology. Projects of this category typically reject iconography or complete understanding within a single image because of the multiple understandings offered by the interaction of systems within them.

Infrastructure thusfar has been a dominant element in the definition of the urban landscape. Streets and highways become the vocabulary of the urban landscape in the american city. Public space, especially in the example of Fall River, Massachusetts, becomes a term reserved for parks. This park/street dichotomy as the articulation of public and the urban landscape is something that needs to be radically reconceived.

The potentials for landscape to operate as an ordering device with which buildings collectively participate greatly expands the range of constructed environments. For example in Weiss/Manfredi's Olympic Sculpture Park, the landscape gesture becomes primary element in design. The presence of a public surface dominates the conception of building rather than being relegated to residual or marginal territories.

I am proposing a hybird conception of the mentioned public spaces of street and park in which the expansive and connective web or tissue is not conceded to the automobile. Buildings can become participants in, rather than objects on, the landscape. This does not have to occur through massive masterplanning, but through a consistent architectural articulation of built moments in the city.

Olympic Sculpture Park
Weiss/Manfredi
Seattle Washington
2007

The Olympic Sculpture Park embodies the infrastructural mental-
ity that I feel is essential to projects looking to transform the ur-
ban landscape. It simultaneously provides a contained setting, lo-
cal links, and urban links all within a rather small site. The project
exists at the intersection of landscape, infrastructure, museum,
building, and topography.

The project is able to overstep the obstacles presented by infra-
structural spaces of both the roadway and the railway, while still
demonstrating an embrace for their presence. There exists a lay-
ering or knitting together or infrastructural systems, dramatic to-
pography, continuous path, and building all of which are integral
to the overall composition. If there is anything monumental about
the project, it is the linking landscape gesture itself.

There is still a lingering attempt at a picturesque episodic experi-
ence present in the different spatial zones the architects attempt
to create. The public space in this case is restricted to the path way.
While ideally the project demonstrates the an understanding of
the urban codependence of systems of a design, it fails to meet
my criteria for a healthy space, precisely because of the territorial
restrictions it imposes on the inhabitant, making them a visitor or
outsider on a path. However it still provides a prime example of the
interaction of layered urban systems for the creation of a public
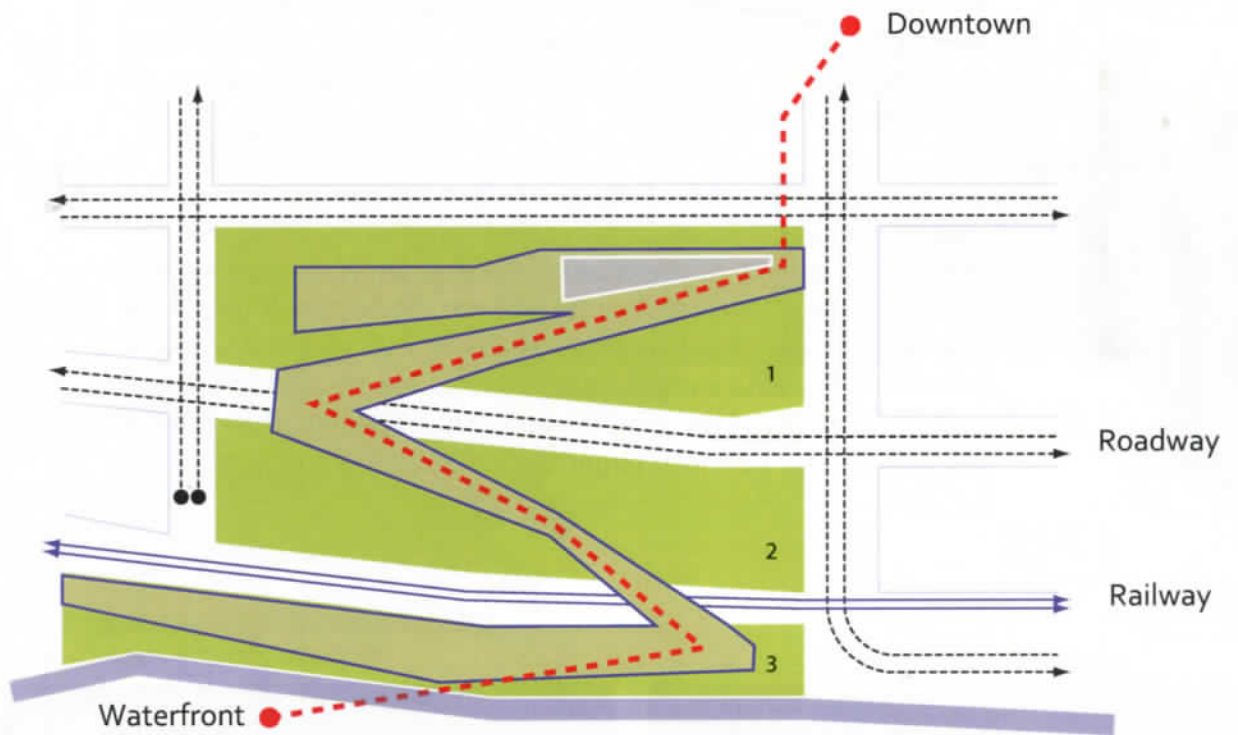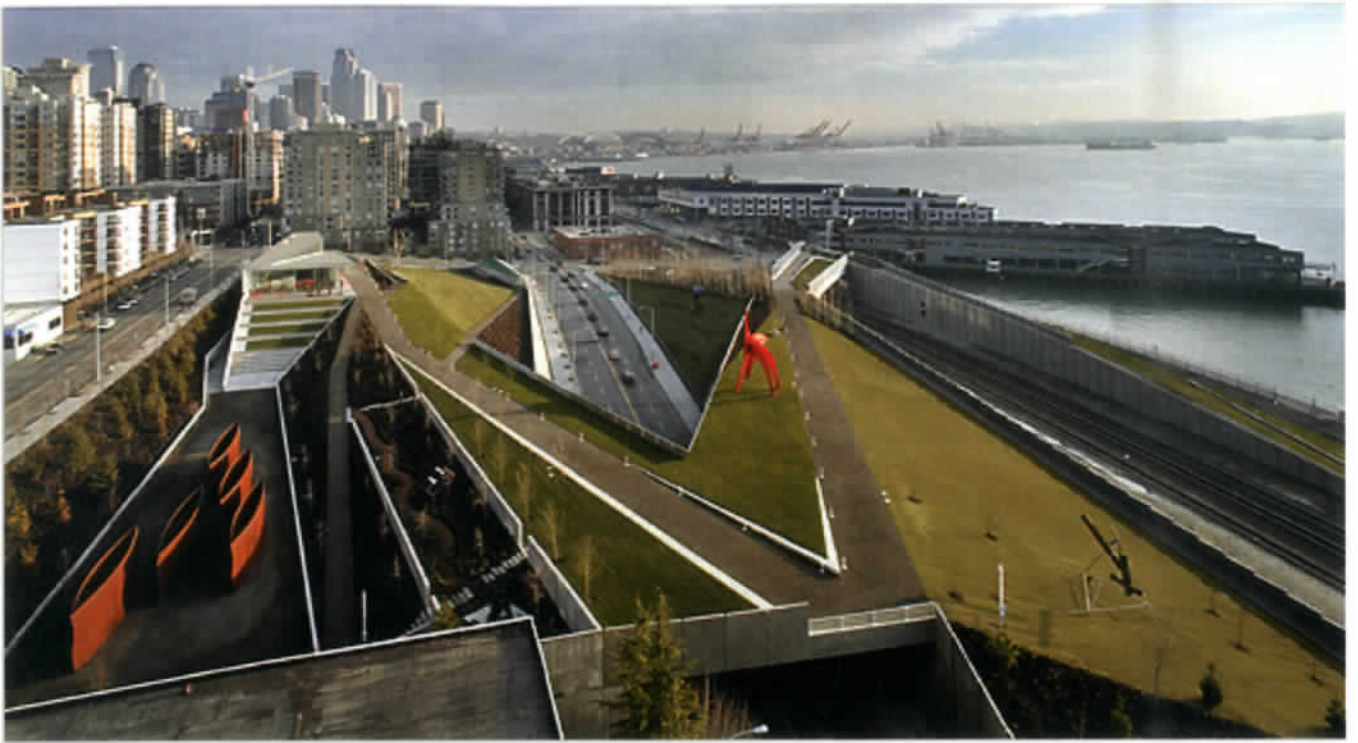environment.
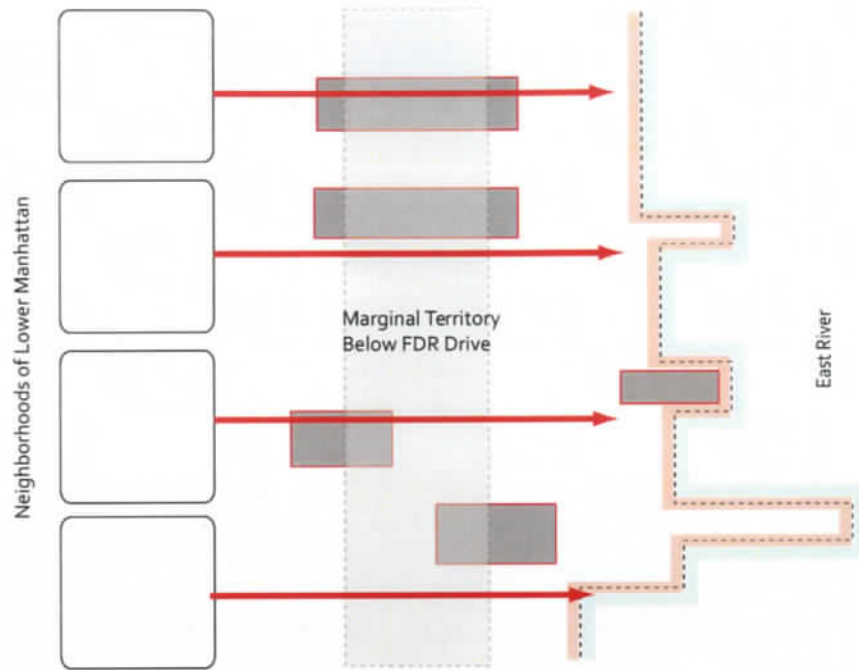
Diagram of Figural Landscape as Connective Surface

Diagrams of Hardscape Paths and Landscaping by Weiss/Manfredi Architects

SHoP Architects
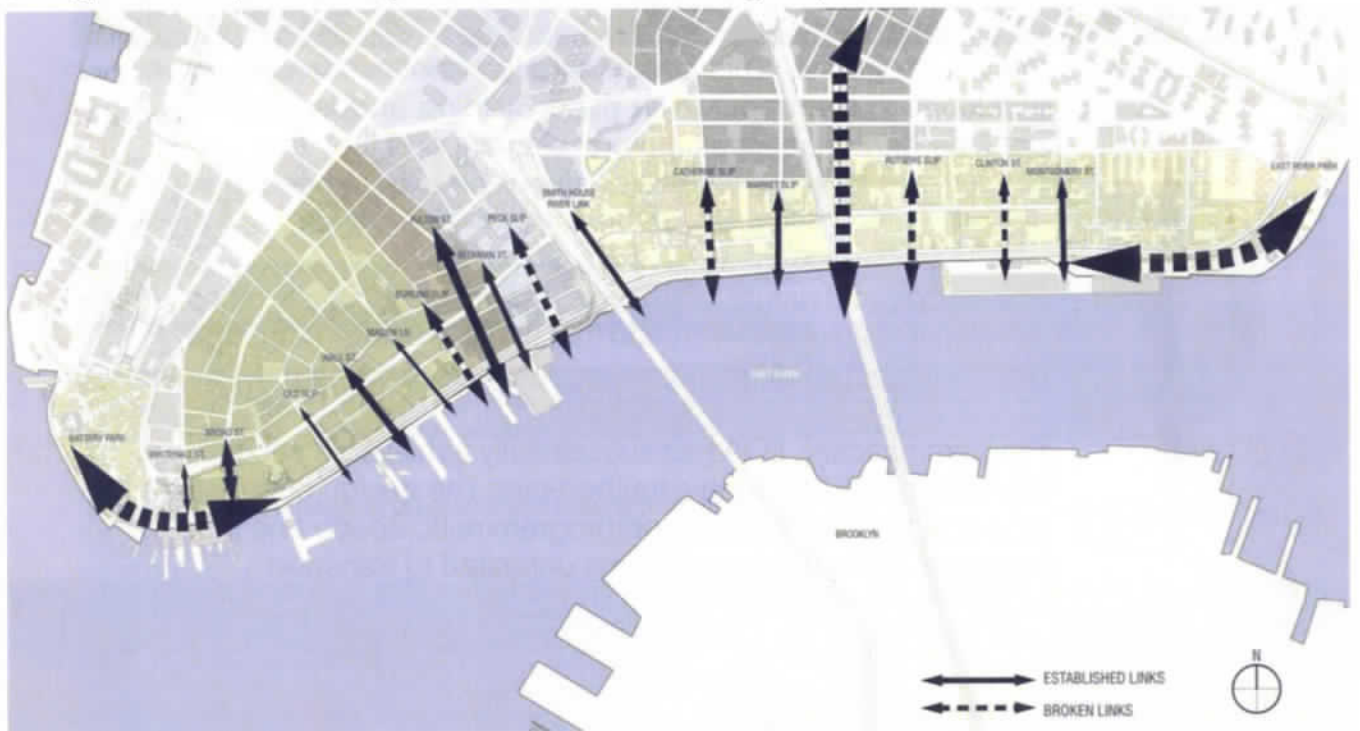East River Waterfront Project
New York, New York
2005

The East River Waterfront project addresses Lower Manhattan's eastern residential areas, which have been severed from the waterfront by both the elevated FDR drive, and the unused piers and waterfront industrial area. SHoP's agenda is articulating an area for community activity to link the residential neighborhoods to a shared waterfront.

The project proposes a strategy of continuous urban links. Effectively it takes an infrastructural strategy to overcome the presence of a difficult infrastructural element, the highway. This approach promises activity that occurs across and through the site(s) rather than merely at a site.

While technically the project is a 7 million square foot project, the vast majority of the project is in defining and articulating the conditions and activity of the urban surface. A series of smaller pavilion, shops, and small scale interventions on piers and under the highway occupy what had previously been marginalized, unoccupied zone. Because surface and landscape are treated as primary ordering devices of the project, rather than building, the effect of the project can be much larger than that of the buildings themselves.

Strategy for the occupation of Marginalized Zones under the highway

Marginal Territory
Below FDR Drive

East River

Neighborhoods of Lower Manhattan

ESTABLISHED LINKS

BROKEN LINKS

Masterplan of nieghborhood connections.

Easr River Waterfront Pavilion   image by SHoP

Waterfront Pavilion   Image by SHoP

Foreign Office Architects
Yokohama International Port Terminal
Yokohama, Japan
2002

This project takes the concept of landscape, building, and infrastructure, and fuses them in a single structure which through modulated surface and sectional gradation stacks the three volumes which begin to flow and interpenetrate.

Rather than placing an object on a pier, the project challenges the notion of the pier and looks to make it an extension of the urban ground. This occurs through continuous circulation loops and a upper level park. Building and landscape become part of an infrastructural element and they can participate in a total experience of site or be experienced individually.

The topological nature of the project demands that surfaces develop into volumes. A crafted material and spatial language negotiates between interior volumes and exterior spaces.

Programmatically, FOA has successfully achieved a secondary functioning of a simple trasport pier. The design operates as a tool to make a mundane programmatic space one that becomes activated by programs unrelated to transport.

Aeiral Photo: Yokohama Terminal Main Entry from Land

PUBLIC PARK/EXTENDED GROUND

TRANSPORTAION SPACE & PUBLIC UTILITIES
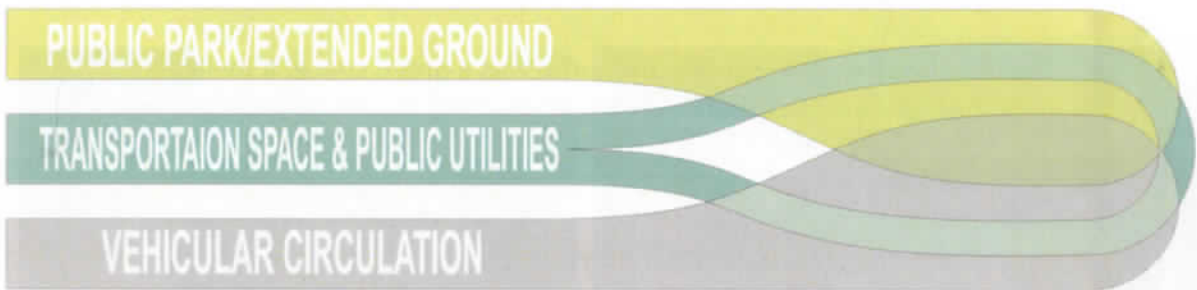
VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

Diagram of the overlapping programmatic circuits through the pier

CA/ T Tunnel: Big DIg
Boston Massachusetts

On a purely superficial level, the project appears as if to offer a complete rejection of the promise of infrastructural space, as it rejects the highway as an urban element by burying it.

However the subsequent green ribbon it creates is completely informed by the strategy of infrastructural space. It creates a space of movement and connection more open to public inhabitation. It operates in a similar plane to Olmsted's Emerald Necklace as it puts infrastructure and nature to the use of making places for people to be in the city.

In choosing to articulate the surface as a green space, it invites a host of new uses, from walking, to resting, to natural wildlife use. in another way it uses the model of linking infrastructural space to create a more specific articulation of linking parkspace

It also has the effect of serving to link severed communities not through a constructed pavilions or any specific programmatic associations, but through the articulation of a open surface intended for human use.

It is a healthy urban space in how it provides a sense of relief from the matrix of built form and automotive spaces to open an area to the public.
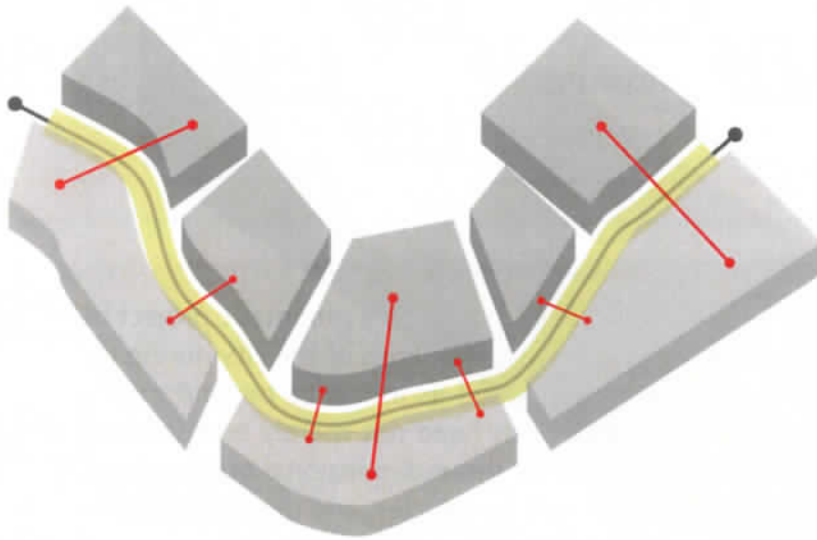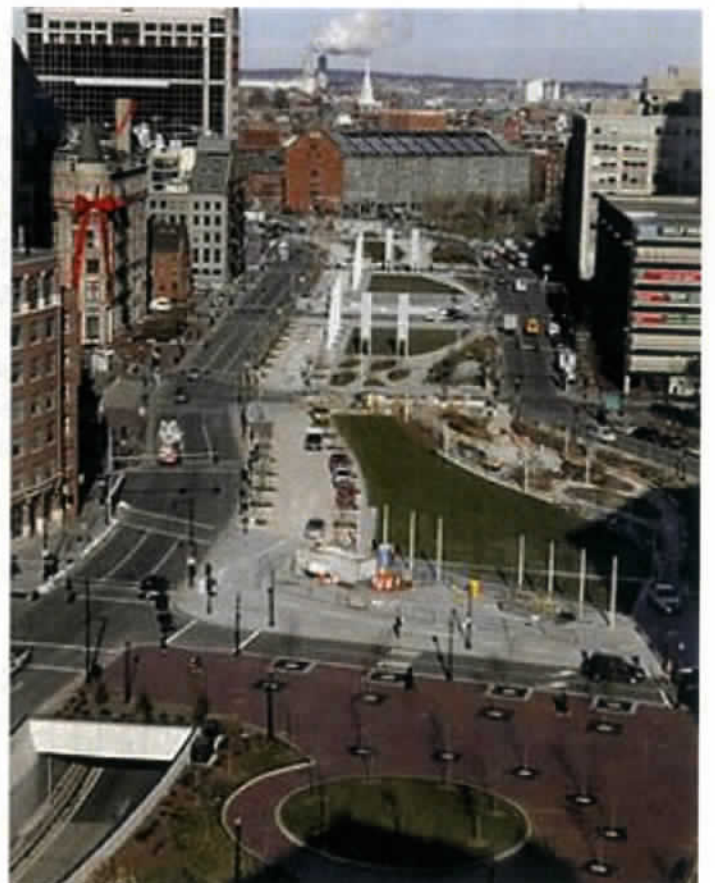
Diagram of neighborhood stitcing through the continuous beltway of the Big DIg project
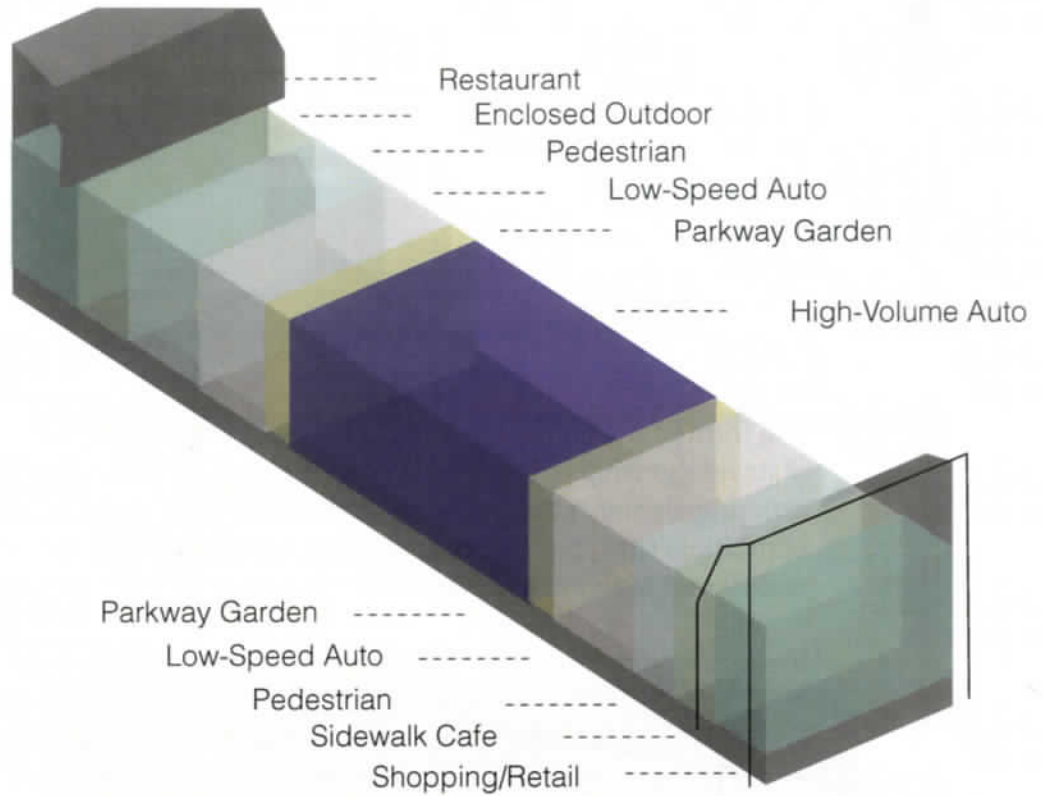

Before and after images of the beltway.

Parisian Boulevards
Baron Georges Haussmann
Paris, France
1851-1875

The Parisian Boulevards may appear to be a pragmatic project intended to update the roadways and utilities of the city during the nineteenth century, but it extended its influence beyond merely the groundscape. The boulevards need not merely be conceived as swaths of the ground, but as three-dimensional public places, which serve pedestrians as well as vehicles, and develop areas for leisure activity and commerce.

The spaces are invested with the see and be seen culture of Haussmann's Paris. Therefore the streetscape became a new type of social space for the city. This space has a specific character of movement and activity, rather than passive presence. It is a space to meet, greet, walk, and shop. A very active public space.

The influence of the landscape is imprinted on the facades of the surrounding structures which were reorganized to create and order and beautified public streetscape, even if in many instances it came at the expense of an evicted lower class. The system created local experiences which presented a clearer understanding of the city as a whole, not merely though the physical and visual links that it created, but also through the system of spaces and roadways which became embedded within the fabric of the city. Here the creation of an infrastructural landscape serves the creation of a public arena.

Restaurant
Enclosed Outdoor
Pedestrian
Low-Speed Auto
Parkway Garden

High-Volume Auto

Parkway Garden
Low-Speed Auto
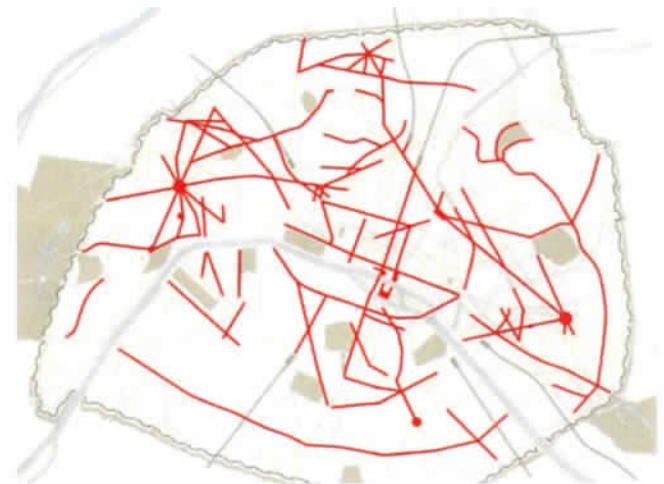Pedestrian
Sidewalk Cafe
Shopping/Retail

Above: 3D extrusion of diverse social spaces

Right: Photo of Social Space of Sidewalk

Below Right: Map of Boulevard Interventions

Below: Diagram of property reorganization for
boulevard construction

East River Corridor
Reiser + Umemoto
New York, New York
1998

The form of the highway is the backbone of the project, because of its relationship to the waters edge. Because of these two main ordering elements the project is conceived not as an amalgation of multiple sites, but rather as one vast continuous site consisting of different scales of intervention.

It offers for simultaneous understanding of connections occuring between sites, neighborhoods, and entire boroughs of the city. An infrastructural mentality like the highway may be used locally or globally, both encompassing the large scale of highway movement while simultaneously developing the neighborhoods which it passes through.[1]

The project offer an example of a traditional ground element, the roadway, being given strong figural articulation. The project expands out of this figure as both built interventions and structured landscape elements.

1East River Corridor Project, <<http://ww.resier+umemoto.com>>

East River as Central Park
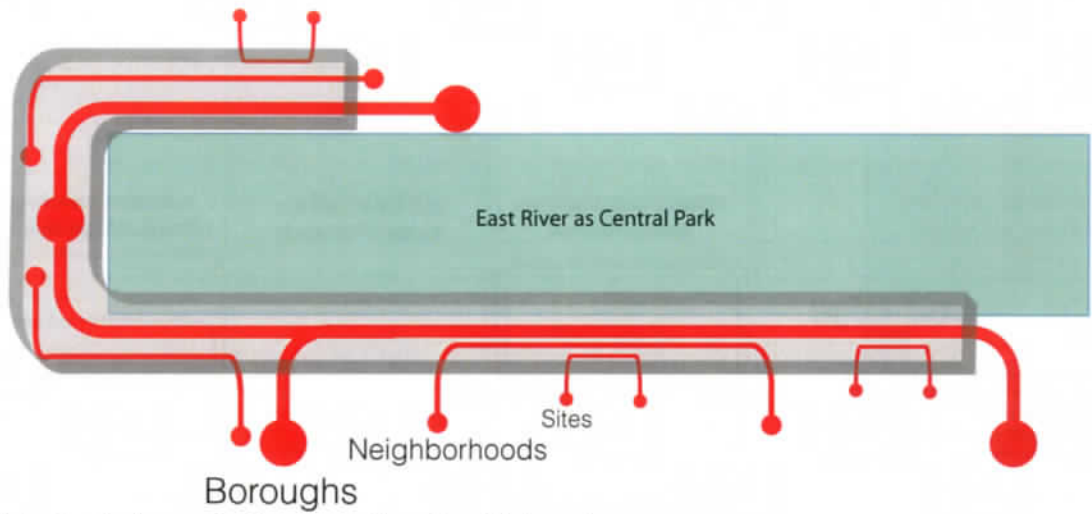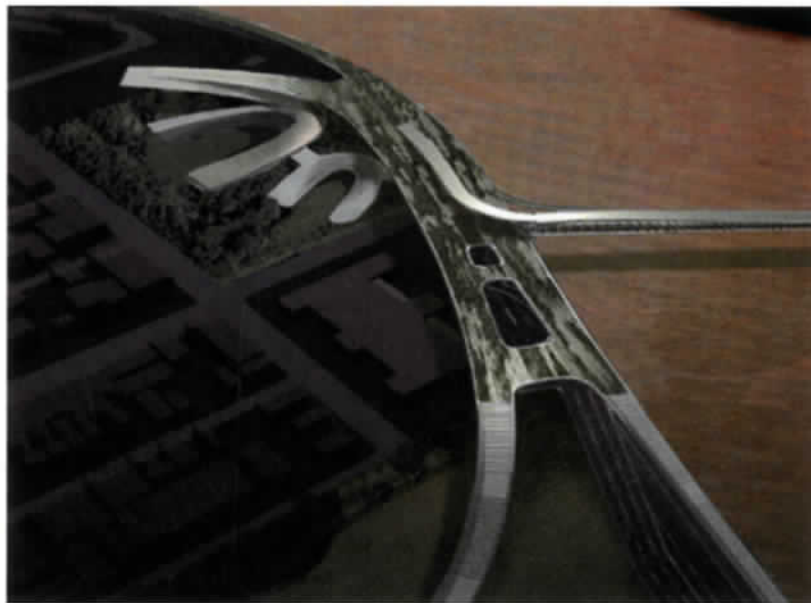
Sites

Neighborhoods

Boroughs

Diagram of single site demonstrating connection at multiple scales

Rendering of East River Corridor Segment, by Reiser + Umemoto
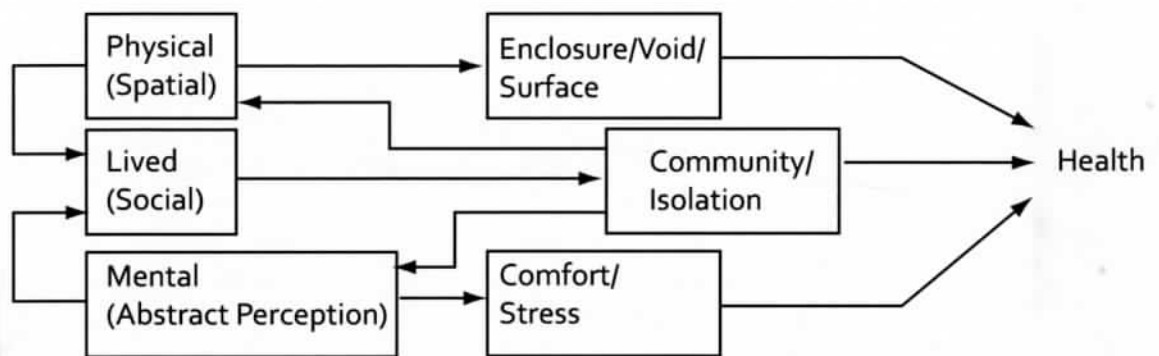

Map of interventions, from Reiser + Umemoto

	Olympic Sculpture Park Weiss/Manfredi	East River Corridor Reiser + Umemoto	East River Waterfront SHoP Architects	Emerald Necklace Frederick Law Olmstead
Building as Soft Edge A soft edge emerges in these projects, the building does not pose an imposing facade or volume but rather one that appears to breath in same gesture and agenda as landscape project itself	*[illegible] Park as Protagonist* / *Building Frames Passage*		*Smaller pavilions [illegible] space but do not [illegible] [illegible]*	
Integrated Elements Integration of landscape, architecture, and infrastructure, or some pairing of the two is a significant approach in these projects. Conception of the project appears not based in single category but necessarily all components	*Building, Landscape and infrastructure as part of the same urban gesture building = folded landscape*	*Urban Infrastructure / Linear Park / Commercial Spaces / Public Program*		*Infrastructure / Buildings / [illegible] landscape / Recreational Landscape*
Multiple Continuities The presence of overlapping layer and ideas about continuity and continuous experiences and participants are essential in these projects	*Pedestrian Path / Multi-Block Institution / City Traffic Below / Railway Below*		*Layer Public and Auto [illegible] / Continuous Public Realm / And Waterfront [illegible]*	
Re-creating "Public" These projects and characteristics establish new forms and new roles for parkspace and public space within the contexts.	*Museum Park / Urban Passageway* / *Provides public access where there was [illegible]*		*An almost [illegible] activated space below the FDR Drive*	*Public space as a system [illegible] operates at multiple [illegible] through the city rather than a single location or area*
Linking Agenda These characteristics demonstrate an agenda of linking disparate or fractured neighborhoods through site or the agenda of the project	*[illegible]*	*A continuous ribbon of large [illegible] neighborhoods and [illegible]*	*[illegible] connection to [illegible] / A common public [illegible] and the water front*	*Multiple Parks create a continuous chain of green space and public amenities, links [illegible] to neighborhoods, [illegible] to Historic Center* / *[illegible] not only by [illegible] but also the intention or integration of [illegible]*

Matrix of Precedent Project Strategies and their potential site application

Yokohama Port Terminal FOA	Paseo Atlantico Manuel da Sola Morales	CA/T: Big Dig Boston	Haussmann's BLVDs Paris	Fall River, Massachusetts Healthy city Hall Project

Healthy as Urban Design Project

```
┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────┐
│ Physical     │─────────▶│ Enclosure/Void/│──────┐
│ (Spatial)    │          │ Surface      │       │
└──────────────┘◀───┐     └──────────────┘       ▼
   ▲         │      │     ┌──────────────┐
┌──────────────┐    │     │ Community/   │─────▶ Health
│ Lived        │────┼────▶│ Isolation    │
│ (Social)     │    │     └──────────────┘       ▲
└──────────────┘    │     ┌──────────────┐       │
   ▲                └────▶│ Comfort/     │───────┘
┌──────────────┐   ◀──────│ Stress       │
│ Mental       │─────────▶│              │
│ (Abstract Perception)│  └──────────────┘
└──────────────┘
```

The concept of healthy urban space as a driving force of a projects has un-
dergone a significant series of reconceptions in the last century. The projects
of Frederick Law Olmsted, Daniel Burnham, and Kevin Lynch offer three
distinct interpretations of how we may understand the city to be a healthy or
unhealthy environment.

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1 Information used to construct this diagram learned from
Alexis Kane Speer, An Exploration of Pathways Between Public Space and Health, Graduate
Thesis Project in Geography and Planning,University of Toronto, 2008.

Healty as Rural Picturesque

The bucolic nature of Olmsted's aesthetic [is] a highly constructed urban landscape in which nature and infrastructure are put to the service fo making places for people to be.[1]

- Jacqueline Tatum

Healthy Space: City which incorporates the natural landscape into its boundaries both for the physical health of its inhabitants and for the conditions of the space in which they live.

Olmsted's work, most legibly in the example of the Back Bay Fens in the Emerald Necklace, incorporates ideas of nature, infrastructure, as well as health, recreation, and scenery. It focuses on a tangible understanding of healthy which addresses the physical conditions of water management, fresh air, and sunlight.[2]

The era of Olmsted saw the urbanization of what was a primarily rural country. To that end, conceptions about landscape and city appear polarized. Olmsted's designs look to provide immersive natural environments suggesting an inherent incongruency between healthy and city.

These projects, even in there most integrated form, still require large tracts of unbridled green landscape.

1 Jacqueline Tatum, "Urban Highways and the Reluctant Public Realm," in The Landscape Urbanism Reader, ed. Charles Waldheim. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005): 182.
2 Tatum, "Urban Highways and the Reluctant Public Realm," 184.

Photo: Boston Skyline seen from the Emerald Necklace.
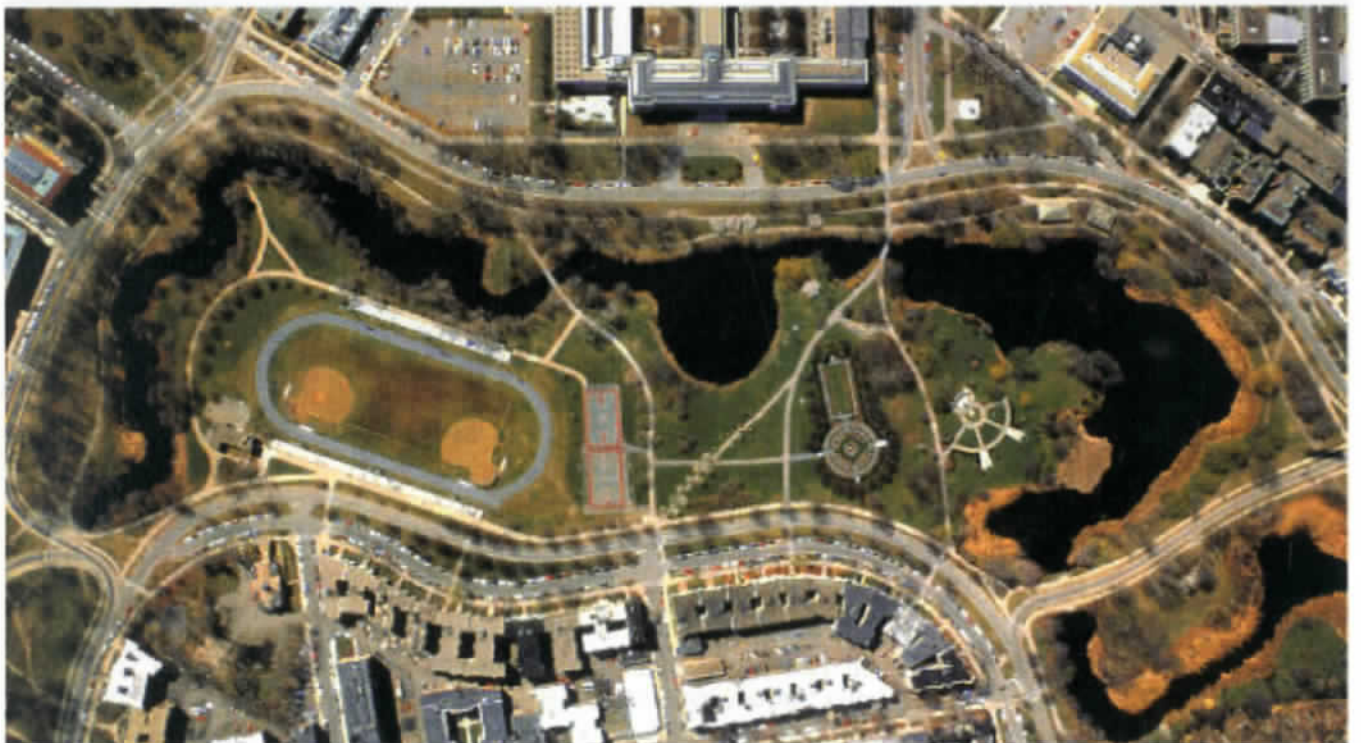
Aerial Photo: Boston Back Bay Fens and Muddy River, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted

Healthy as Accessible City

[In the Plan of Chicago] Burnham provides a radical redefinition of the city's responsibility for providing public services.[1]

-Kristen Schaffer *Fabric of City Life.*

Healthy Space: that which has a beneficial effect on the physical and psychological health of the individual

Burnham's Plan of Chicago picks up on Olmsteds understanding of organic systems and their role in the city. He metaphorically compares the systematic operation of roadways, public squares and parks to the organic processes of "circulation" and "respiration" in the city to provide fresh air, sunlight and movement.

All levels of the city are dealt with, beyond just the visible, representational city. Public Services, toilets, transportation, child care, and more were all conceived as integral parts of Burnhams overall plan for the city. The social and organizational effects of the plan were just as important as the visible effects of his design.[2]

The psychological health and the sense of belonging it provided to all members of society, not just the capitalist, demonstrated a developed sense of healthy space beyond its potential physical benefits.[3]

1 Kristen Schaffer, "Fabric of City Life: The Social Agenda in Burnham's Draft of the Plan of Chicago." Introduction to Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, Plan of Chicago , ed. Charles Moore. 1993.
2 Schaffer, "Fabric of City Life
3 Schaffer, "Fabric of City Life
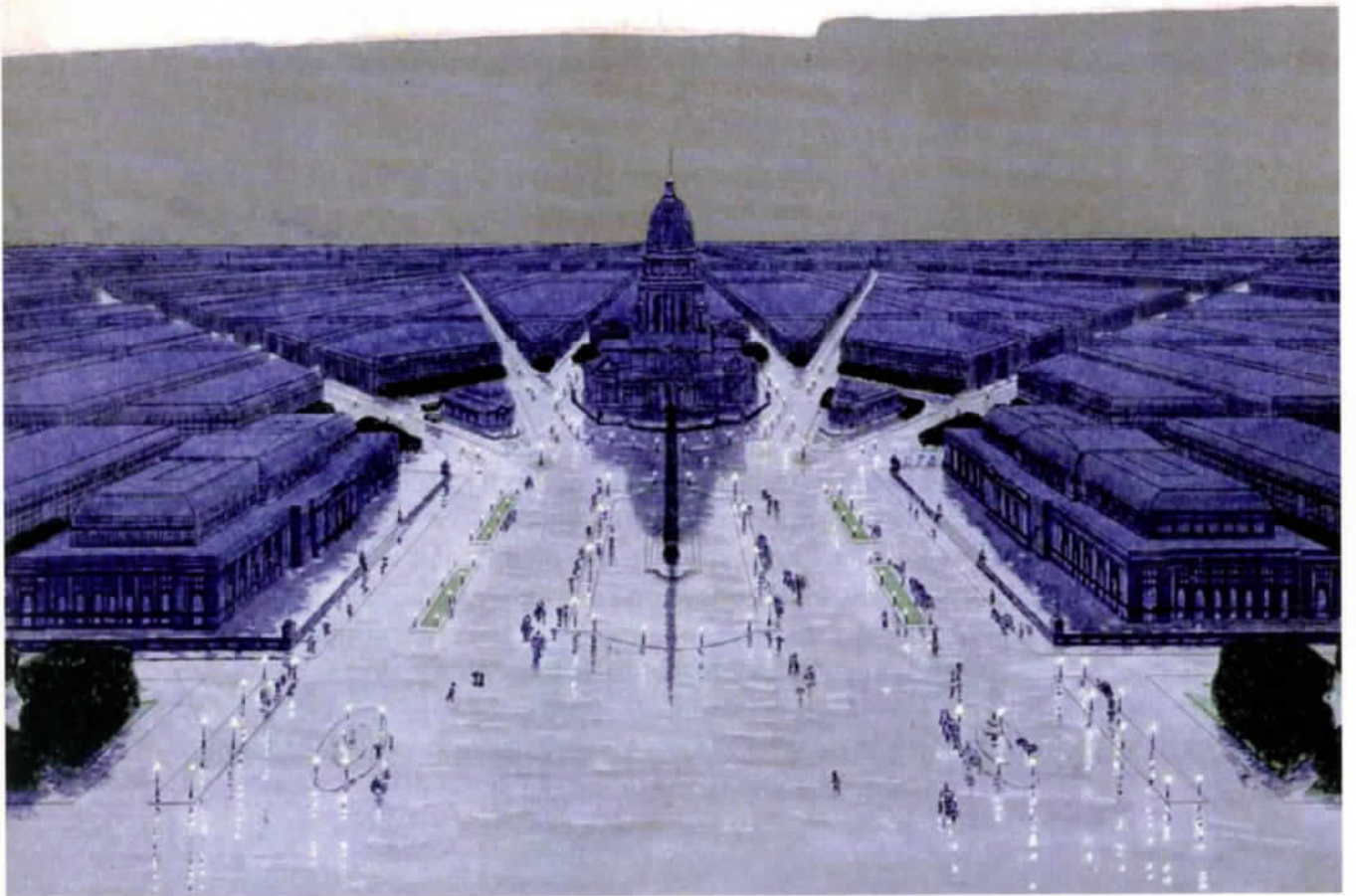
Hand Rendering: Congress Street Boulevard, from Daniel Burnham's Plan of Chicago

Healthy as Imageable Experience

Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences.[1]

-Kevin Lynch, Image of the City.

Healthy Space: An environment which is legible and clear, which provides the dweller with an understanding of place and identity through its elements.

This because it provides emotional security and reduces the anxiety caused by the sublime incomprehension of unfamiliar or illegible urban surroundings.

- Healthy is understood as an experience of the city.
- The City itself is not just a healthy entity
- The experience that it offers to the inhabitant is what makes the city a healthy place, based on comprehension of its elements.
- This restis on a social understanding of place, community, and comfort, beyond an individual work

Lynch focuses on visual clarity or legibilty as it provides Identity, structure, and meaning to the urban understanding.

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1   Kevin Lynch, Image of the City, (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1960)
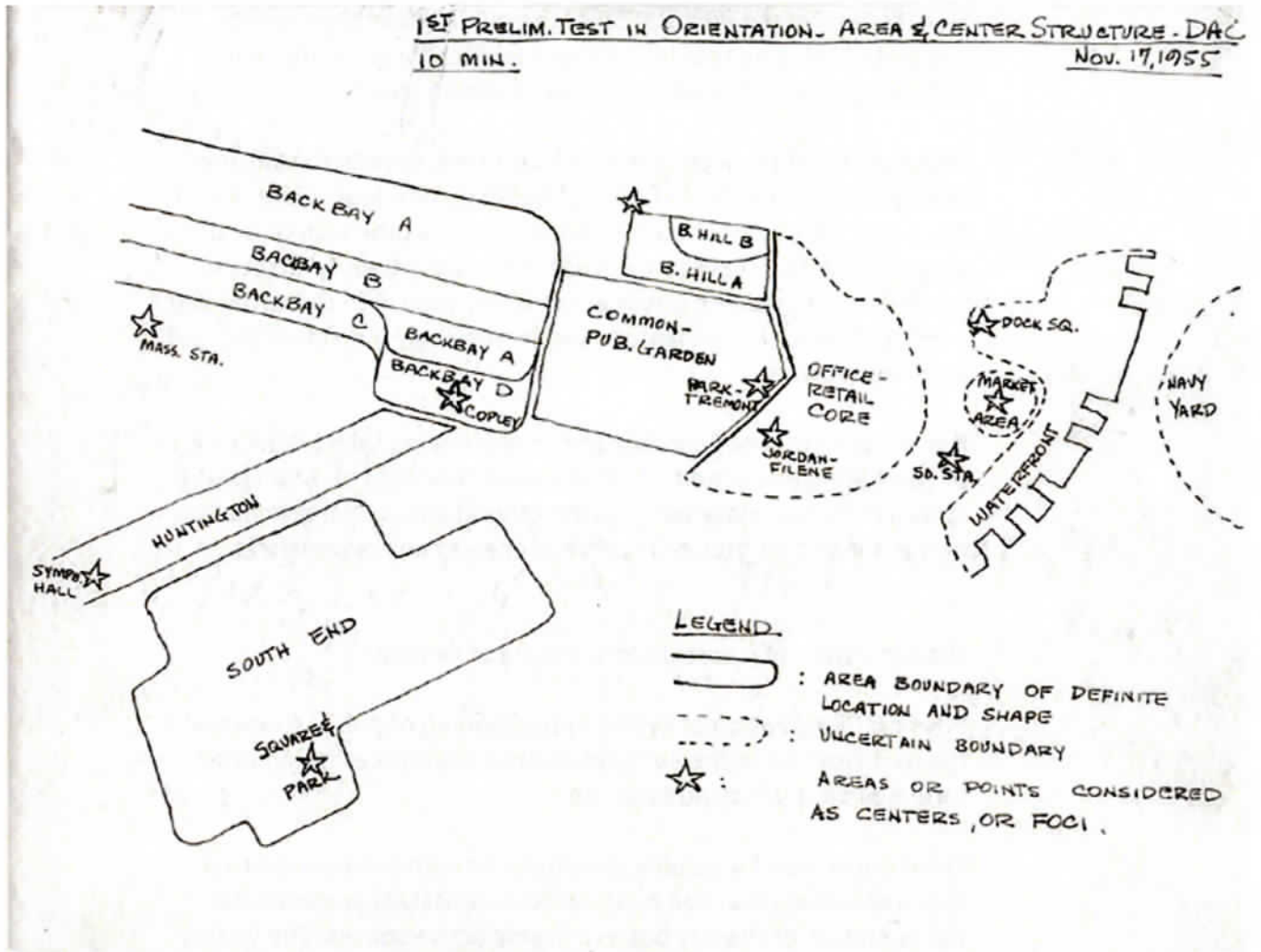
Experientiallly Imaged Map: From Kevin Lynch, Image of the City

Healthy as Livable Surface

Healthy Space: the articulation of the public realm through the city by the treatment of land surface and built interventions to promote a place attachment based on experience.

Urban policy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was focused on matters of public health: on drainage, water supply, public lighting and ventilation, and on the provision of fresh air and sunlight. The urban malaise of the early twenty-first century has less to do with physical morbidity than with the social and psychic alienation manifested in an increasingly individualized and atomized society.

It is key then that our constructed environments take on the task of combating this condition. A new understanding of urban health comes from our relationship to the ground and a clear articulation of the role of that ground in urban processes and experiences.

characteristics of a 21st Understanding of Healthy:

Physical - Realization of hybrid unterstanding of public space and the participation fo this surfaces as ordering devices for architecture. Buildings which address the

Lived - provision for a public environment within the program of civic institutions that can exist not for themselves or merely for the operation of the city but as a livable active spaces. The vitality of a urban center even in times of economic struggle.

Mental - a relief from the dominance of the automotive realm of streets, sidewalks, and parking lots. A sense of belonging and privlege of presence.

The notion of monument I have sought to put forward here is bound up with the lingering resonance of poetry after it has been heard, with the recollection of architecture after it has been seen. This is the strength of weakness.[1]

- Ignasi da Sola Morales
Weak Architecture

1   Ignasi da Sola Morales, "Weak Architecture" in Differences: Topographies in Contemporary Architecture, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997); p. 78.

City Hall in the 21st Century

In his essay "Weak Architecture" Ignasi da Sola Morales argues that the idea of the classical monument, as it offers a coherent representation of visual structure is no longer applicable to the contemporary fragmentary experience.

He offers an alternative monumentality which offers layers and fragments of experience that provide an understanding of place, rejecting iconic representations of power, authority, and order. In this rejection of the classical monument I see the opportunity for architecture to free itself from its shackles as "object" and take on a greater collaborative role in the promotion of a healthy public environment.

The city hall as a building type is one that becomes burdened with the expectation and association with iconography. The demand for symbolic representation of government power relies on an understanding of architecture as object based. Such a fixation furthers the notion of self-referential space which does not provide livable environment for the public to which it is projecting its image.

The 21st century exerts a new set of demands on the concept of a city hall. While it must still operate as an office for the management of a city, the physical exchange of information it once provided, be it information and documentation, is now offered through digital exchange. Therefore the nature of its role as a public building is open to a new program across site, and through site.

The examples of Boston City Hall and Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, Italy offer two strategies the agendas of civic buildings and their role relative to the larger public fabric.

Boston City Hall
Government Center Plaza

The plaza at Government center demonstrates the potentials of space to gather and reference moments and areas of the urban fabric outside of itself while still establishing a clear individual identity. Many major city streets surround or lead to the plaza, including the historic Quincy Market area which conceptually blends into the site.

However, many of these potential connections go unrealized based on the placement of the City Hall building itself, whose monumental presence disrupts visual connections. It operates as a monumental icon of authority on a site which is otherwise devoted to the creation of a space devoted to public use and congregation. The space and the building appear as if at odds with one another.

The building does offer an aspect of public participation through the location of public programs on lower levels and the inclusion of public passage under the projecting building and through the building site. The effect of these connecting spaces is still overshadowed by the building itself and its imposition which inhabits the public space rather than framing or creating it.

Palazzo Pubblico
Piazza del Campo, Siena, Italy

The Piazza del Campo offers a strong example of an urban design in which the public space is given primary attention. All surrounding buildings and the Palazzo Pubblico itself serve to frame the public space.

The Palazzo negotiates difficult sloped site conditions allowing the public space to exist as an entirely inhabitable surface. While centrally located within the city, the piazza does not reference any areas outside of itself, most likely because of the neighborhood associations of its founding era. It is therefore mostly self-contained. It relies on the monumentality of its tower as a symbol of its presence and significance in the urban-scape.

Classical monumentality is maintained in the building but there is a symbiotic relationship in which the space and the monument reinforce recognition of each other through framing and orientation. The space itself becomes monumental, especially in connection with a specific event, the Palio bareback horse race, which occurs there annually. The space is therefore saturated with the memory of this event year round.
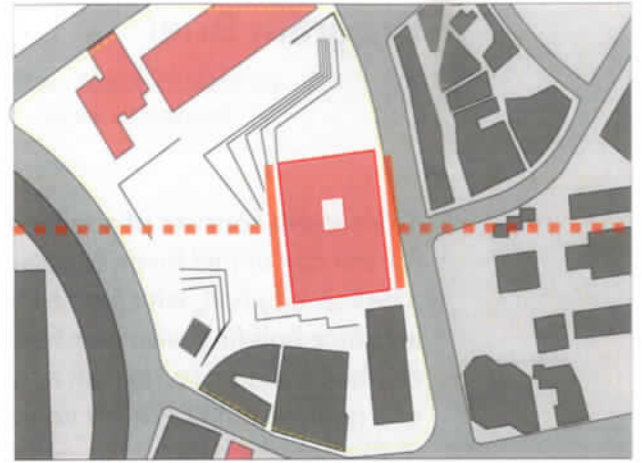
-Space gathers and links urban neighborhoods

-Public interaction through and around building

-Forced monumentality of building inhabits the site and overshadowing the creation of friendly public space

-Public space given primary consideration

-Spatial identity stems from the memory of an event

-Space is self-contained, relies on icon of tower for urban recognition and does not physically gather space
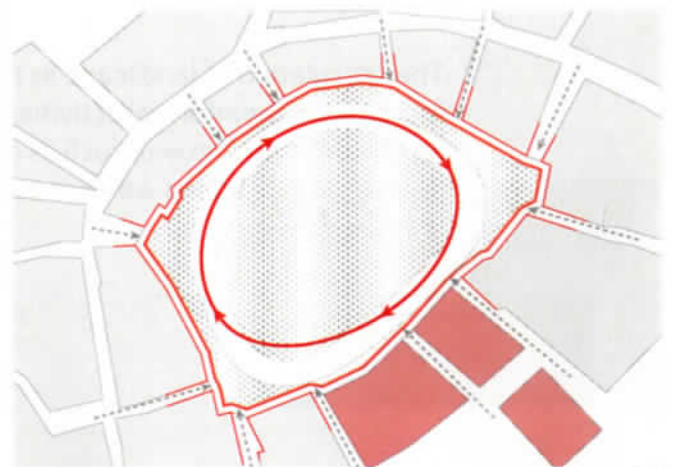
Program Brief

The project consists of a reconception and development of the City Hall for the city of Fall River, Massachusetts. Different from the operation of a typical city hall, which often becomes a monument to bureaucracy, or an office building with glorified representation, the program calls for the city hall building to take an active participation in the lived experiences of a general public. This is achieved by providing zones and purposes for public activity beyond the general administrative operations of such a building.

In recognition of the site as historically an administrative center of the city, the newly expressed program looks to engage the peripheral residential environments with the center, to establish a vital downtown.

A Community Wellness Pavilion devoted to the active education of citizens on healthy living also provides a venue for such activity to occur.

The site must house the offices and staff for the 5 major city deparments of the administrative complex. This does not necessarily have to occur within a single volume, however it must maintain an environment in which frequent office interaction can occur.

Significant open and extending outdoor areas intended for paths of pedestrian activity between the sites of the administrative offices themselves, the wellness pavilion, the city bus terminal, and reaching out toward other key sites in the city provide informal settings for public activity. The pavilion and city hall zones are organized to provoke interrelation with the public spaces

The project allows for a free conception of the role infrastructure and landscape to effect and expand the potentials of the site and role of building. A cross grain strategy of organization helps to bridge connections between city institutions and neighborhoods above the realm of the highway.

The articulation of landscape as ordering device in conjunction with built form allows for informal activities which have no place for occurrence currently in the downtown, such as children at play, areas for congregation, and publicly provided wireless access for the outdoor spaces and pavilion area.

Programmatic Requirements

Department	Offices	Offices Space, Conference Space + (Storage)
City Finances	Purchasing - 3 City Clerk's Office - 5 Treasurer's Office - 5 City Collector - 6	3000 sq ft.
Building/Construction Managment	Planning/Engineering/Conservation - 12 Codes/Inspectors - 8 Public Works Department - 9 Training Consortium -5	4000 sq ft
Operations	Assessors - 9 Sewer Commission - 4 Traffic Department - 10 Water Department - 5	5000 sq ft
Human Services	Retirement Facilitation - 4 Community Development - 9 Health & Human Services - 20 Veteran's Affairs - 4	6000 sq ft
Administration and Legal	Board of Elections/Voting - 6 Law Department - 5 Office of the Mayor - 10 Immigration Assistance- 2 Grant Writier - 1 Personnel - 4 Consumer Services - 6 Staff/Building Operations - 5	10,000 sq ft

Total = Approx 30,000 sq ft

+ Lobby Space and Services

Area = 40,000 sq ft

| Wellness Pavilion | Classroom 750 sq ft
Exhbition Area 1500 sq ft
Lobby 750 sq ft
Agricultural area 1500 sq ft
Services 1500 sq ft
Office 200 sq ft
Cafe 500 sq ft | |

Total = Approx 7,000 sq ft

+ outdoor spaces

City

Fall River, Massachusetts

Population: 91,000 (2000)
Capital of Bristol County
Located on Route 195, 20 miles East of
Providence, Rhode Island

Once a major industrial capital of the Eastern
seaboard, Fall River is now sleepy American
city. Having reached the down end of its de-
cline in the mid-twentieth century, the city
ha sustained a population of around 100,000
people. It operates as a working satellite city
of Boston, at about the farthest reach of rea-
sonable commute from the state capital.

In an effort to breathe life into the city in the
late 1960's, it was decided to run interstate
195, the major interstate between the South/
West and Cape Cod, through the heart of the
city. This initiate left a hollow corridor at the
center of the city, a fragmented city center,
and spurned any sort of central development
or identity. The City Hall became the capstone
of the interstate initiative, and was built on a
platform of linked overpasses, directly above
the highway. The chosen site for this research
and project centers on this location.

The proposed reconception of this city hall
on this site has to recognized the significance
of the location as a link between two other
separate sides of the city. My design initiative
stems from the idea that such a loaded site
with the potential for urban connections and
interaction must extend its influence and its
scope beyond that of an isolated building on a
single site, as is currently the situation.

This potentials of this site demand a design
which can incorporate layers of landscape, in-
frastructure, and building, for the promotion
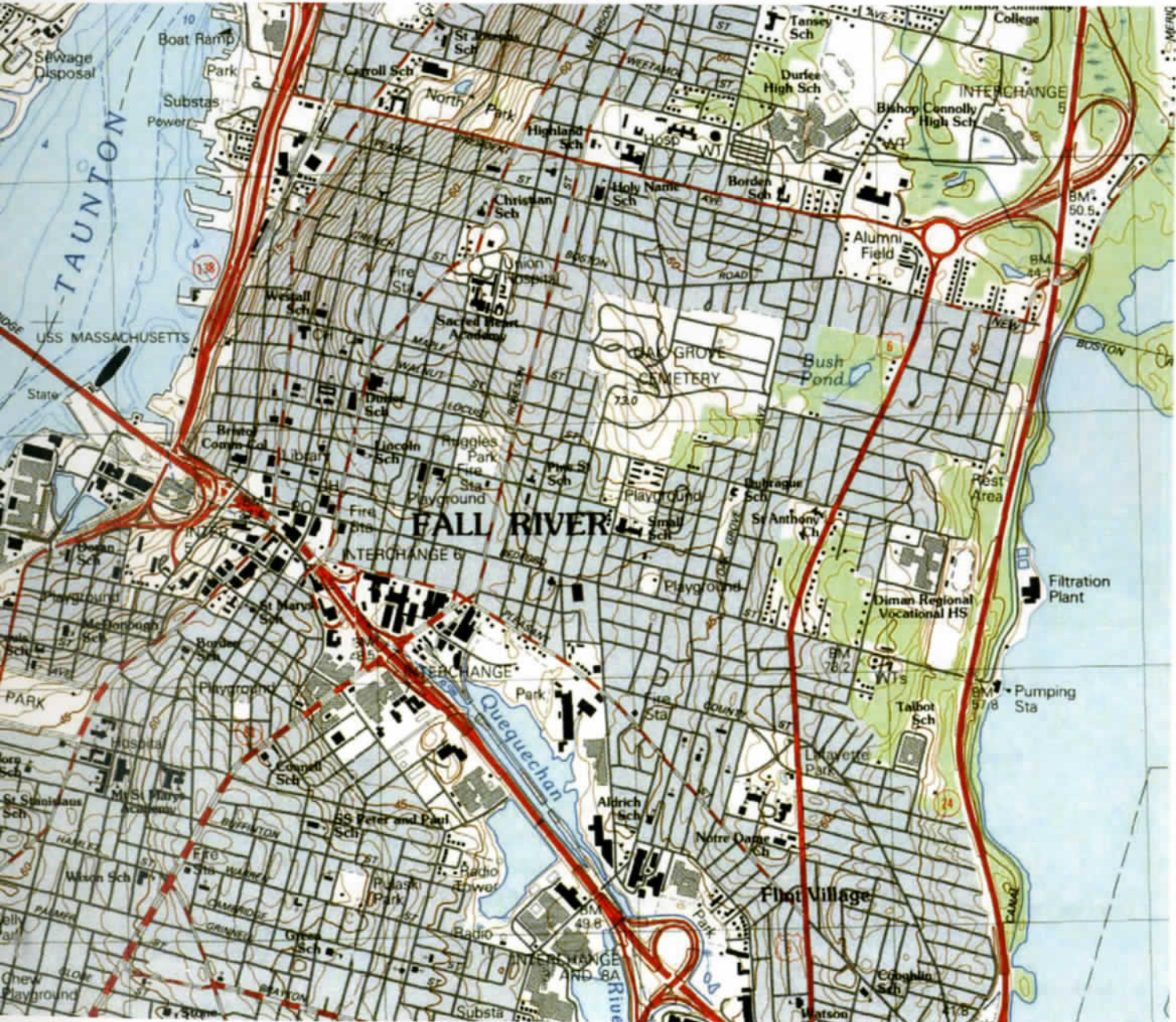of a new public identiy in the downtown. [1]

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1   Topographic Map from State of Massachu-
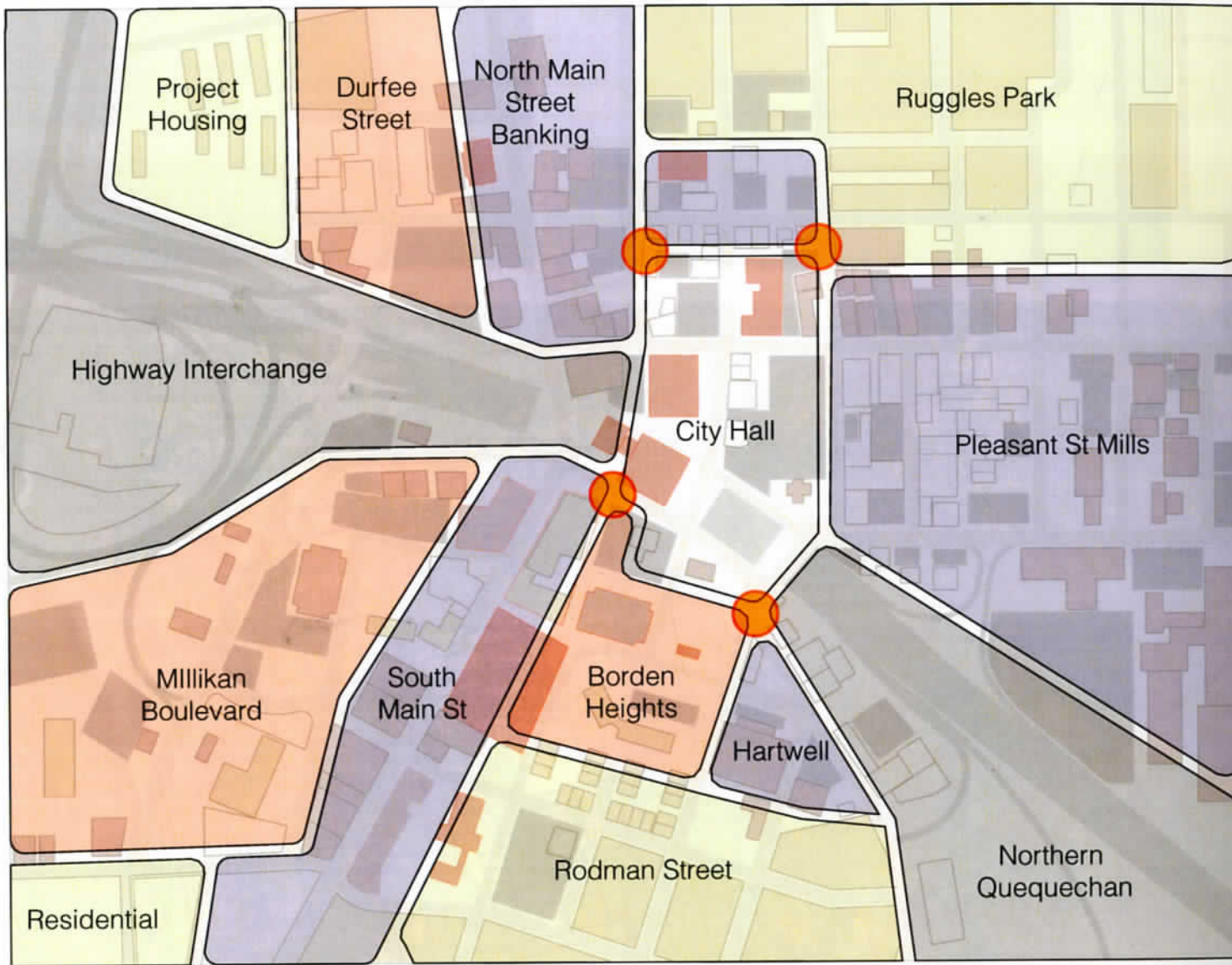setts GIS website. << http://www.mass.gov/mgis>>
38

Downtown

Site Location

Fall River, Massachusetts
Downtown Neighborhoods

Project Housing

Durfee Street

North Main Street Banking

Ruggles Park

Highway Interchange

City Hall

Pleasant St Mills

Millikan Boulevard

South Main St

Borden Heights

Hartwell

Residential

Rodman Street

Northern Quequechan

N

500 ft

Mixed Use

Residential

Commericial

City Hall Neighborhood

Nodes of Connection

The presence of the highway under and around the existing city hall makes it difficult to comprehend a neighborhood of the civic building. Instead it exists at the nexus of multiple surrounding neighborhoods.

Fall River, Massachusetts
Key Civic and Cultural Sites

City Institutions
City Hall
District Court
County Courts

Public Services
Public Library
Post Office
Bus Station

Other Key Sites
Culinary School
Lizzie Borden House

St. Mary's Cathedral

N   500 ft

All of the traditional and necessary elements of the down-
town urban fabric are present in the city, however their
organization is strung along in loosely linked fashion. Such a
site without a cohesive downtown district demands a differ-
ent method of planning for the articulation of surface con-
nectinos and passages

Fall River, Massachusetts
Downtown Neighborhoods

N
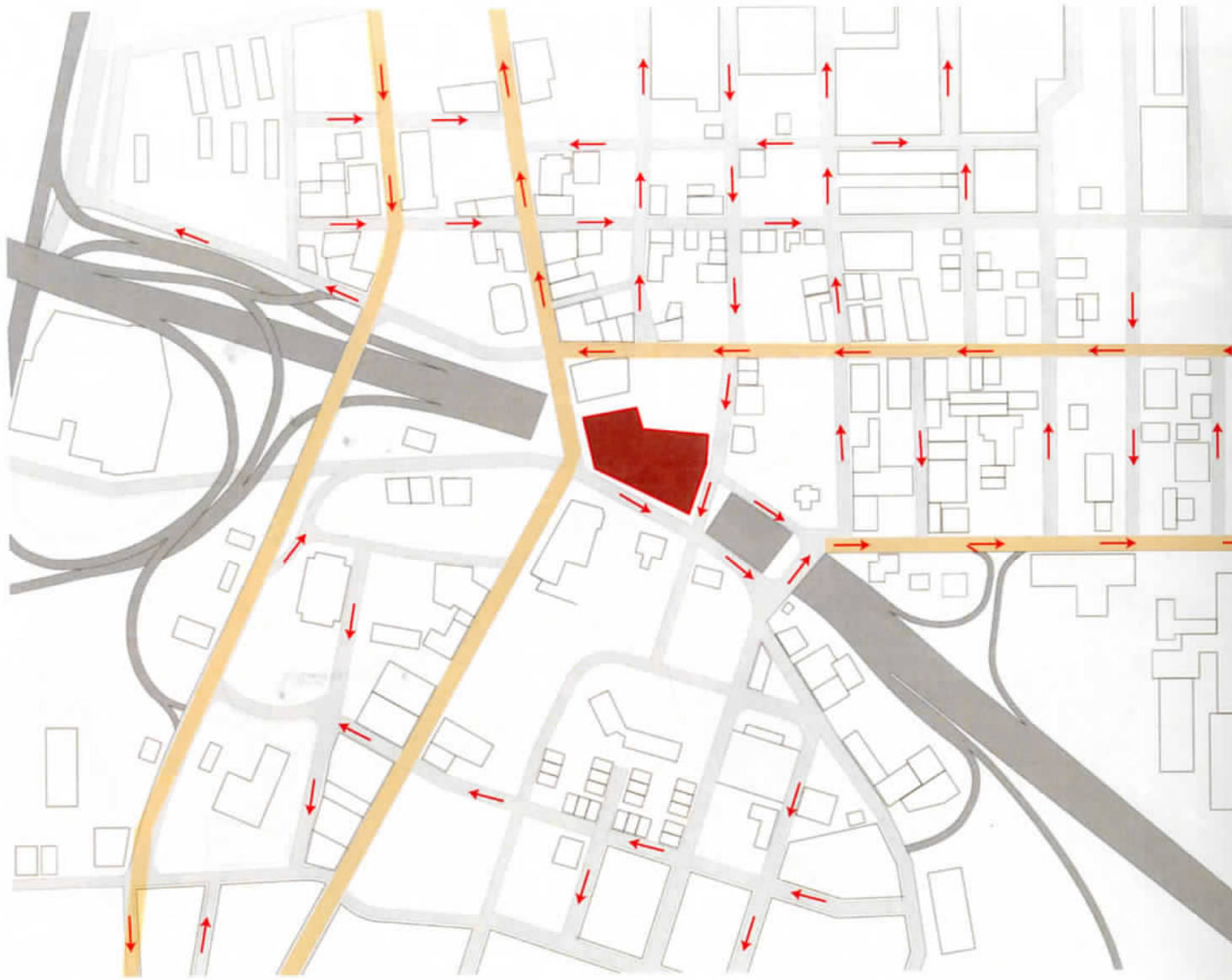
500 ft

Highway

City Streets

Heavily Traveled
City Streets

Existing City Hall Site

One Way Trafic

The intervention of the highway and the various exit and
entrance ramps of accessibility create a complex web of one
way streets and oddly shaped blocks which further compli-
cations the organization of the downtown

# Fall River, Massachusetts
## Key Civic and Cultural Sites

N

500 ft

Residential Blocks

1 & 2 Family Dwellings ●

Apartment Complex ●

Retirement Home ●

The Central area of Downtown Fall River around the city Hall is zoned primarily as commercial and has no residence buildings other than 1 aparment complex and two retirement housing developments. There are densely populated residential areas on the north and south fringes of the downtown area.
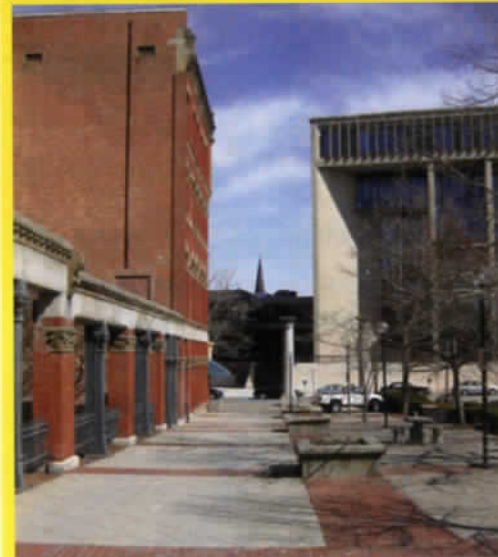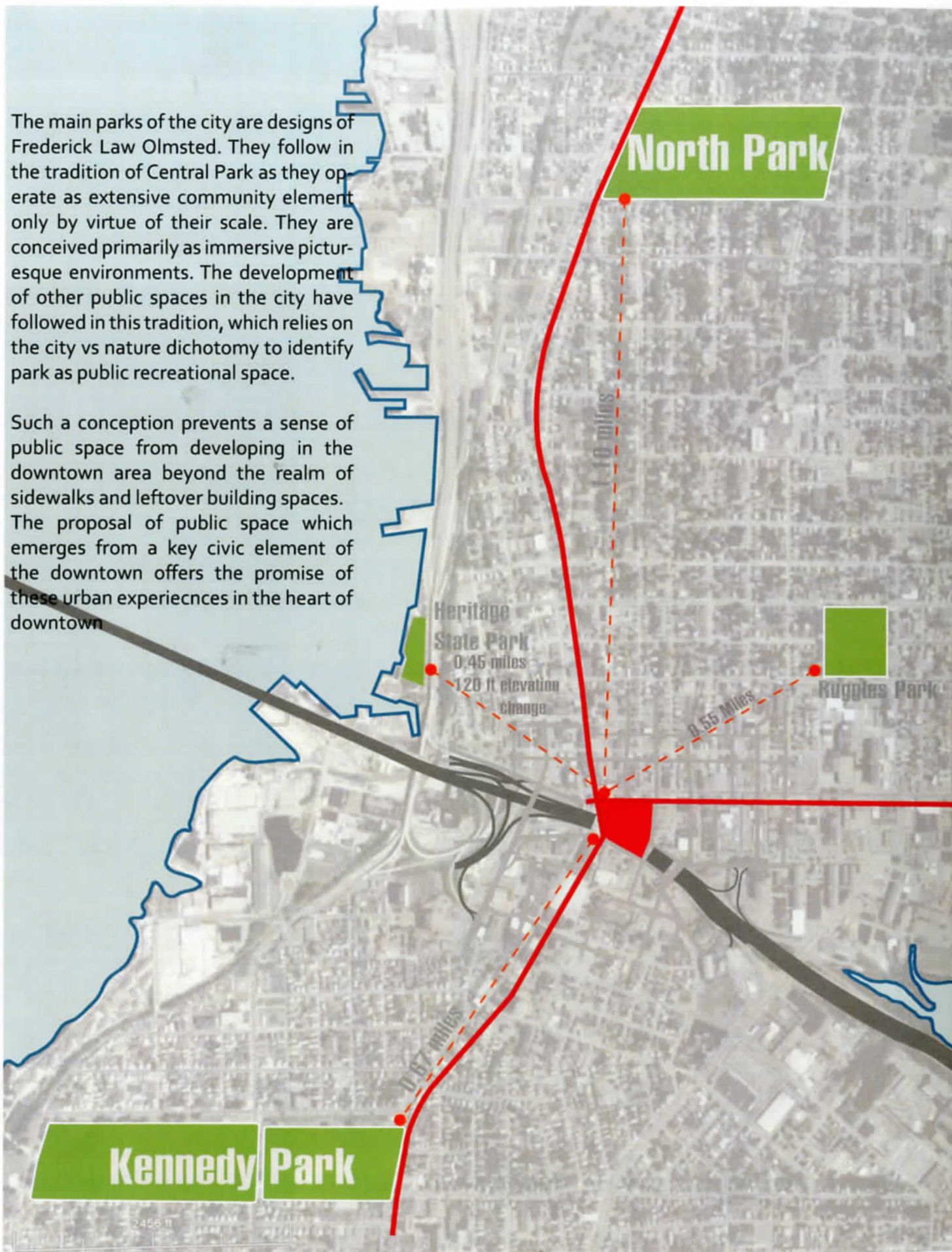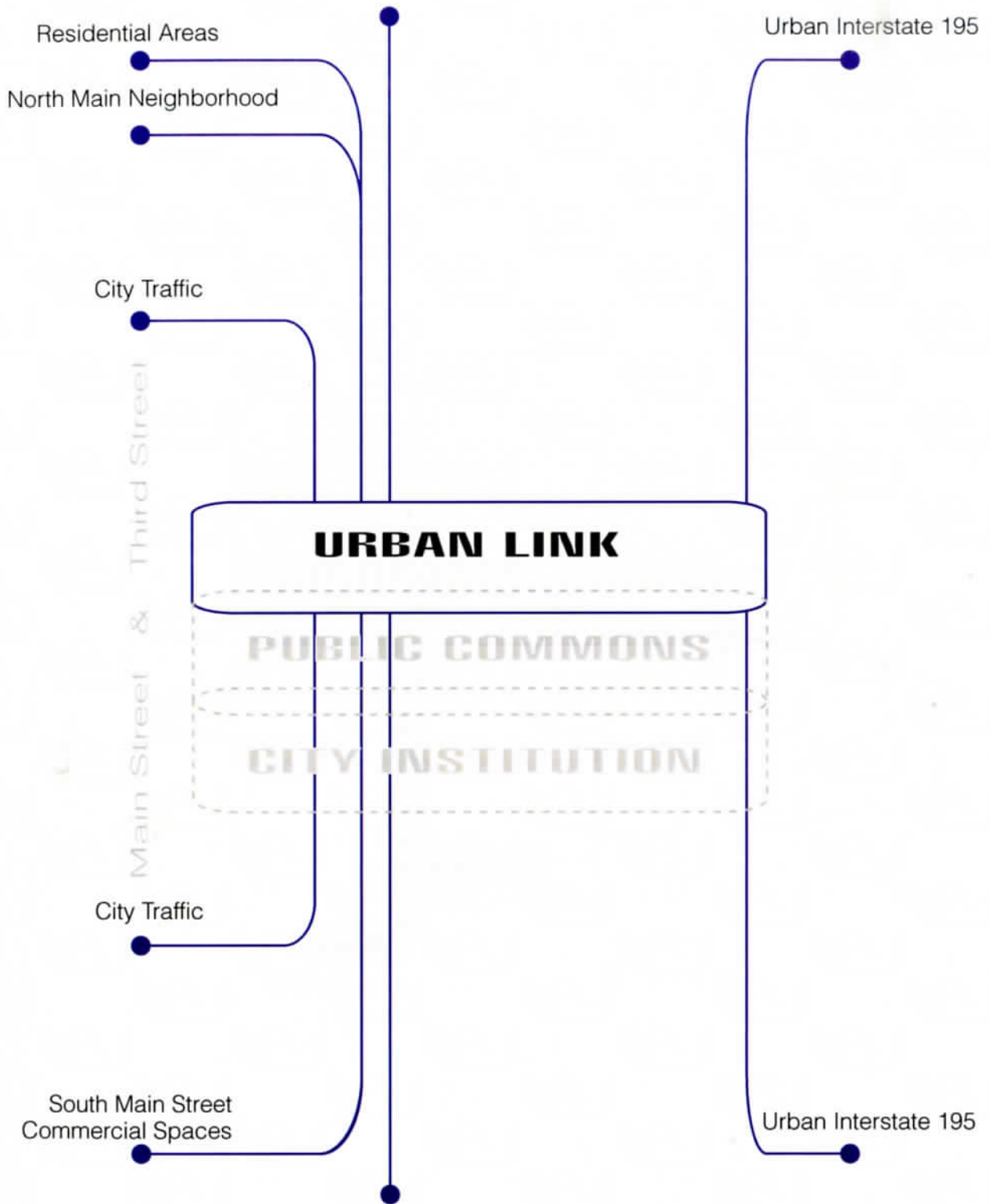
Photographic Map of existing city hall and surroundings
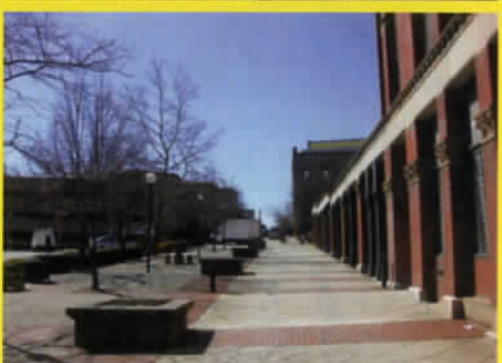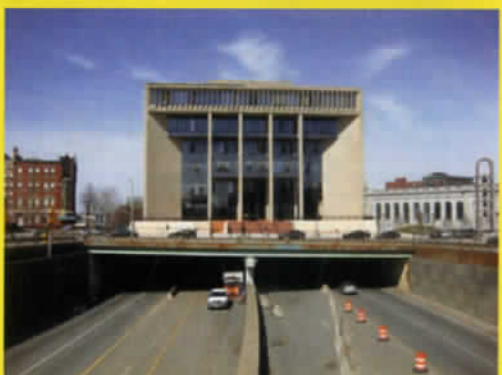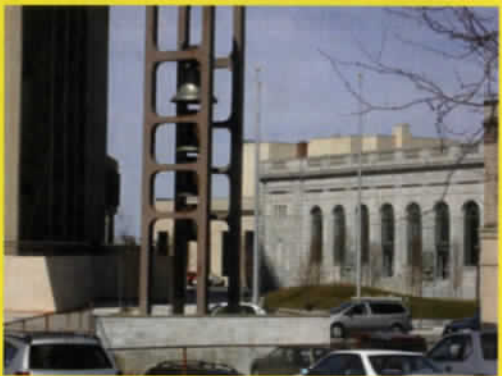
The main parks of the city are designs of Frederick Law Olmsted. They follow in the tradition of Central Park as they operate as extensive community element only by virtue of their scale. They are conceived primarily as immersive picturesque environments. The development of other public spaces in the city have followed in this tradition, which relies on the city vs nature dichotomy to identify park as public recreational space.
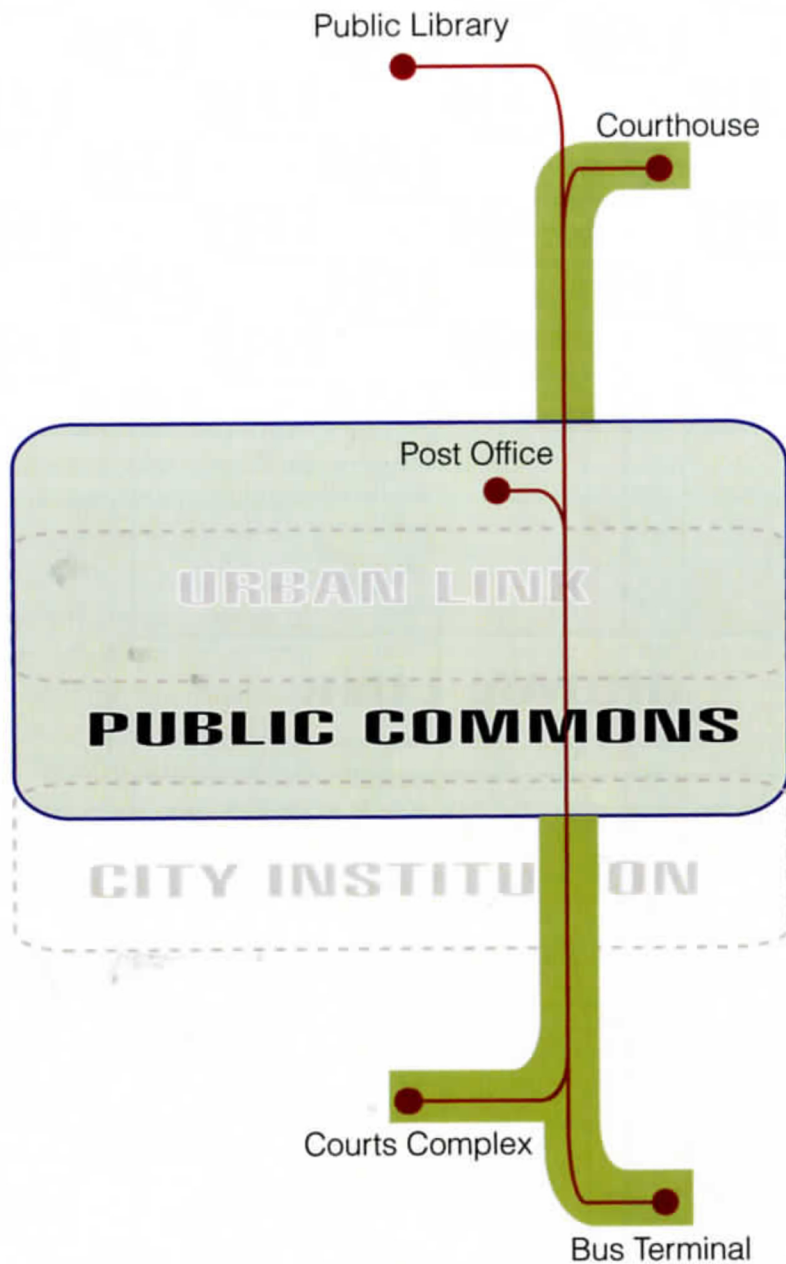
Such a conception prevents a sense of public space from developing in the downtown area beyond the realm of sidewalks and leftover building spaces. The proposal of public space which emerges from a key civic element of the downtown offers the promise of these urban experiecnces in the heart of downtown

North Park

1.10 miles

Heritage State Park
0.45 miles
120 ft elevation change

0.55 Miles

Ruggles Park

0.87 miles

Kennedy Park

Residential Areas

North Main Neighborhood

Urban Interstate 195

City Traffic

Third Street

Main Street &

URBAN LINK

PUBLIC COMMONS

CITY INSTITUTION

City Traffic

South Main Street
Commercial Spaces

Urban Interstate 195

### Linking Agenda - Enhance Recognition and Performance of Site as an Urban Link

Essentially the center of the city, the site operates only as sidewalk and roadway, around an imposing monument. My project seeks to enhance the realization of this link as experience, public space, as vital urban center. It is through these three components that one can imagine a new understanding of healthy space in the city.

Site Strategies

Public Library

Courthouse

Post Office

URBAN LINK

PUBLIC COMMONS

CITY INSTITUTION

Courts Complex

Bus Terminal

ESTABLISH HEALTHY URBAN SPACE

The Urban Parks are far removed from the site. The urban condition demands a healthy public space priveleged to all to rest, to socialize, and to pass through. A public realm beyond merely the roadway and sidewalk is necessary to invest a sense of belonging and access to the those in the city.

Public Library

Courthouse

The institution exists as a component within a system of public projects, intended to establish and understanding of public accessibilty to the spaces and experiences of downtown

Post Office

URBAN LINK

PUBLIC COMMONS

CITY INSTITUTION

Courts Complex

Bus Terminal
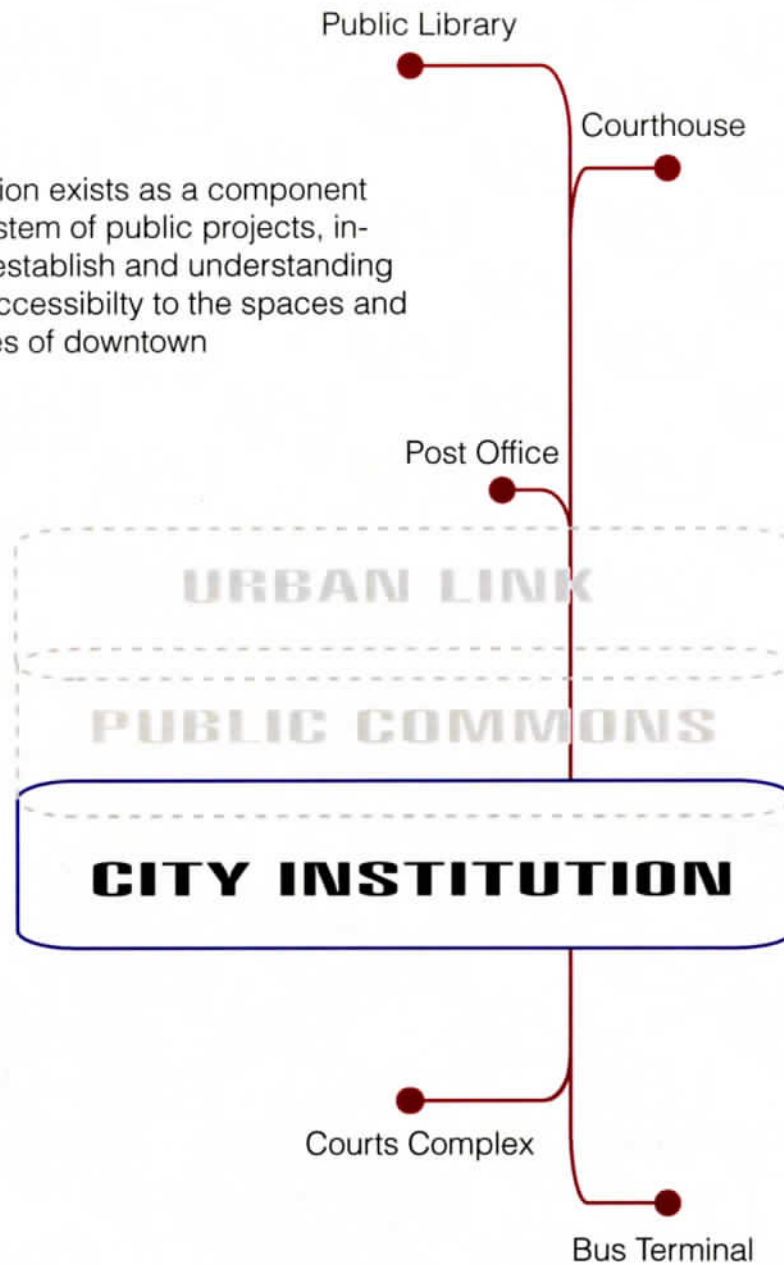
Built Form as Soft Edge and the integration of the classifications of Urban Space

A fixed spatial frame, a traditional monument, as currently exists on site, or in other urban capitals, does not inherently serve to expand the associations of built form beyond its own walls. On such a systematically dense site, an nnstitution which operates as a soft edge which incorporates and references the outside landscape, and streetscape, and urban fabric can serve to strengthen the vitality of an urban center.
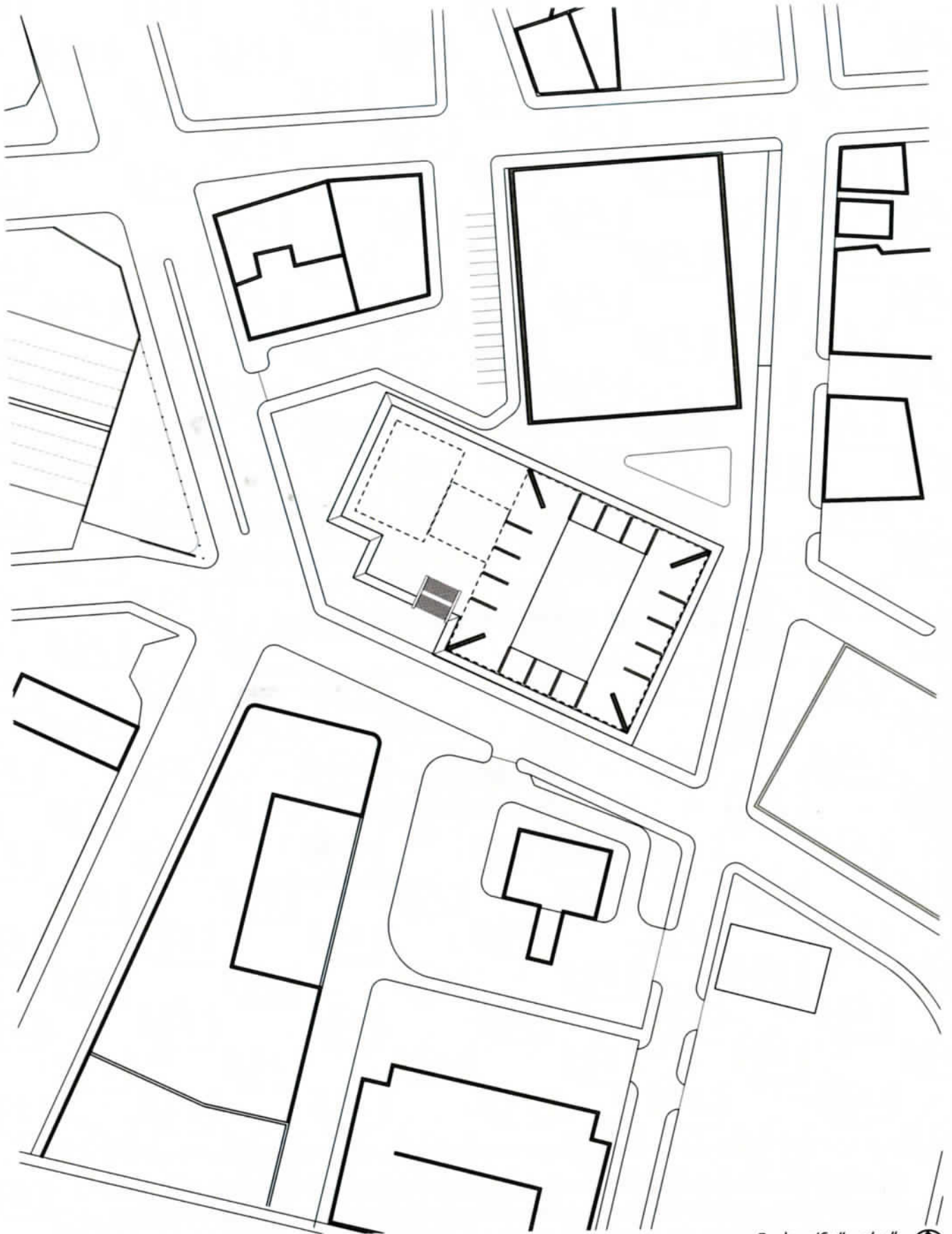
Plan of City Hall Area

Scale: 1/64" = 1'-0"
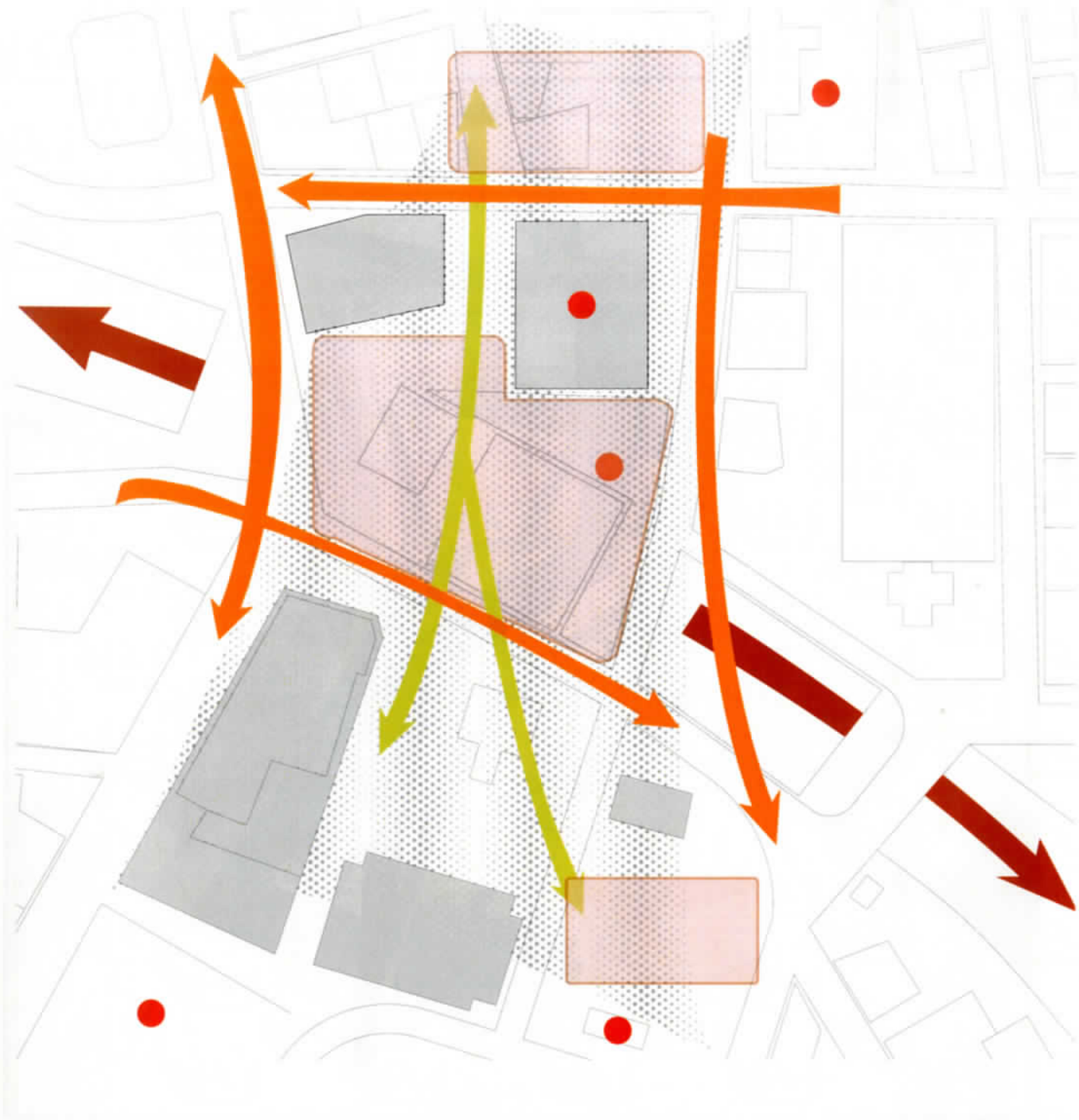
A linking agenda is a major component of the project, especially in the presence of the Urban highway and the stretched organization of downtown elements. Maintainin multiple continuities of flows of movement and activity not just at but across and through the site is a key goal of the project. Pedestrian, Programmatic, City Street, and Highway paths must all achieve or maintain a clear expression of continuity.
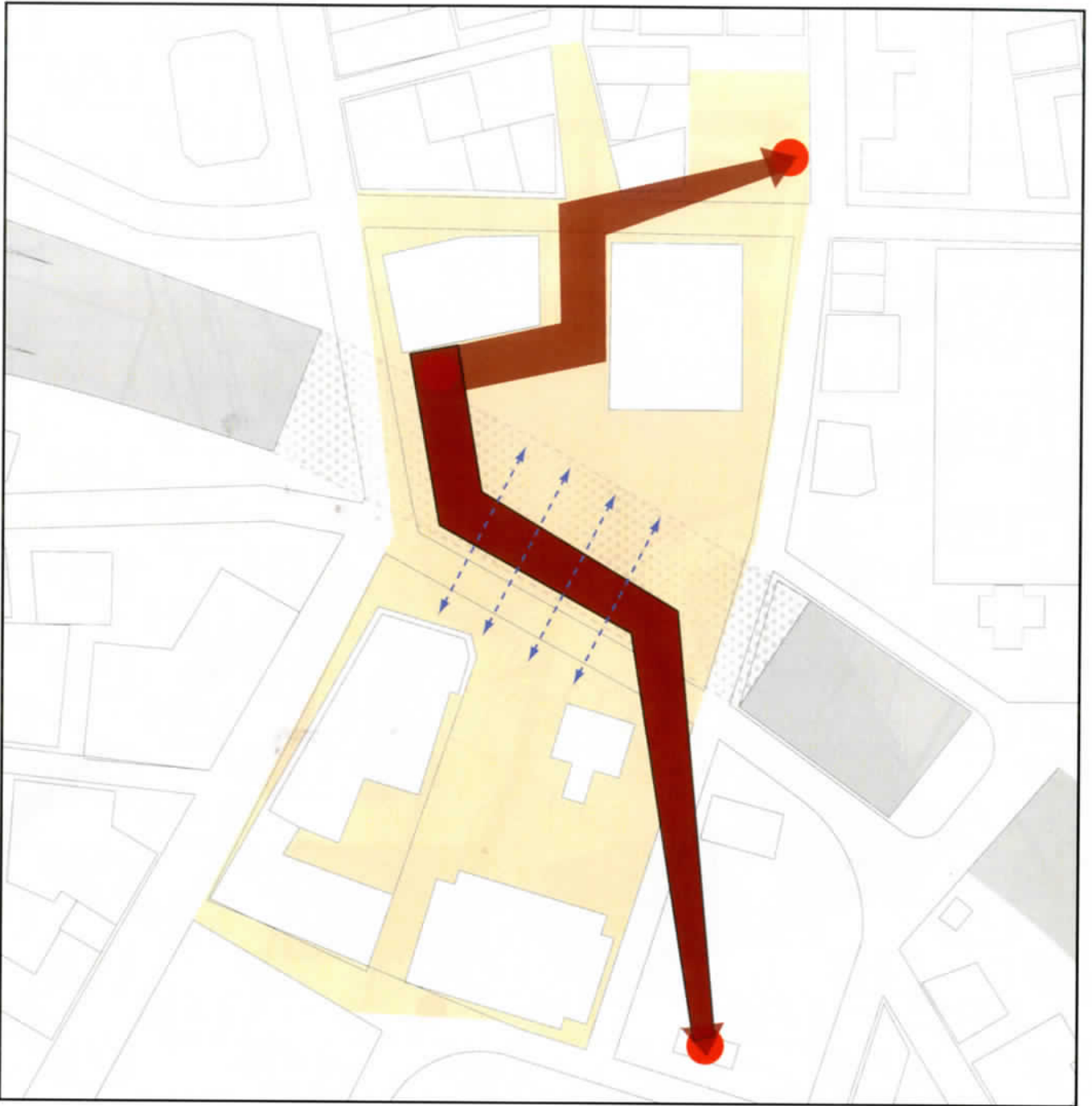
Giving figural form to the connection gesture. In the Olympic Sculpture park this done through the figure of diagonal z which forms the main path of the museum. It has a much more physical three dimensional presence in the East River Corridor Project.

The strong figural forms preference the types of activity which may begin to order the organization of activities and movements on sites, which although separate may begin to operate together through common activities and paths of movement.
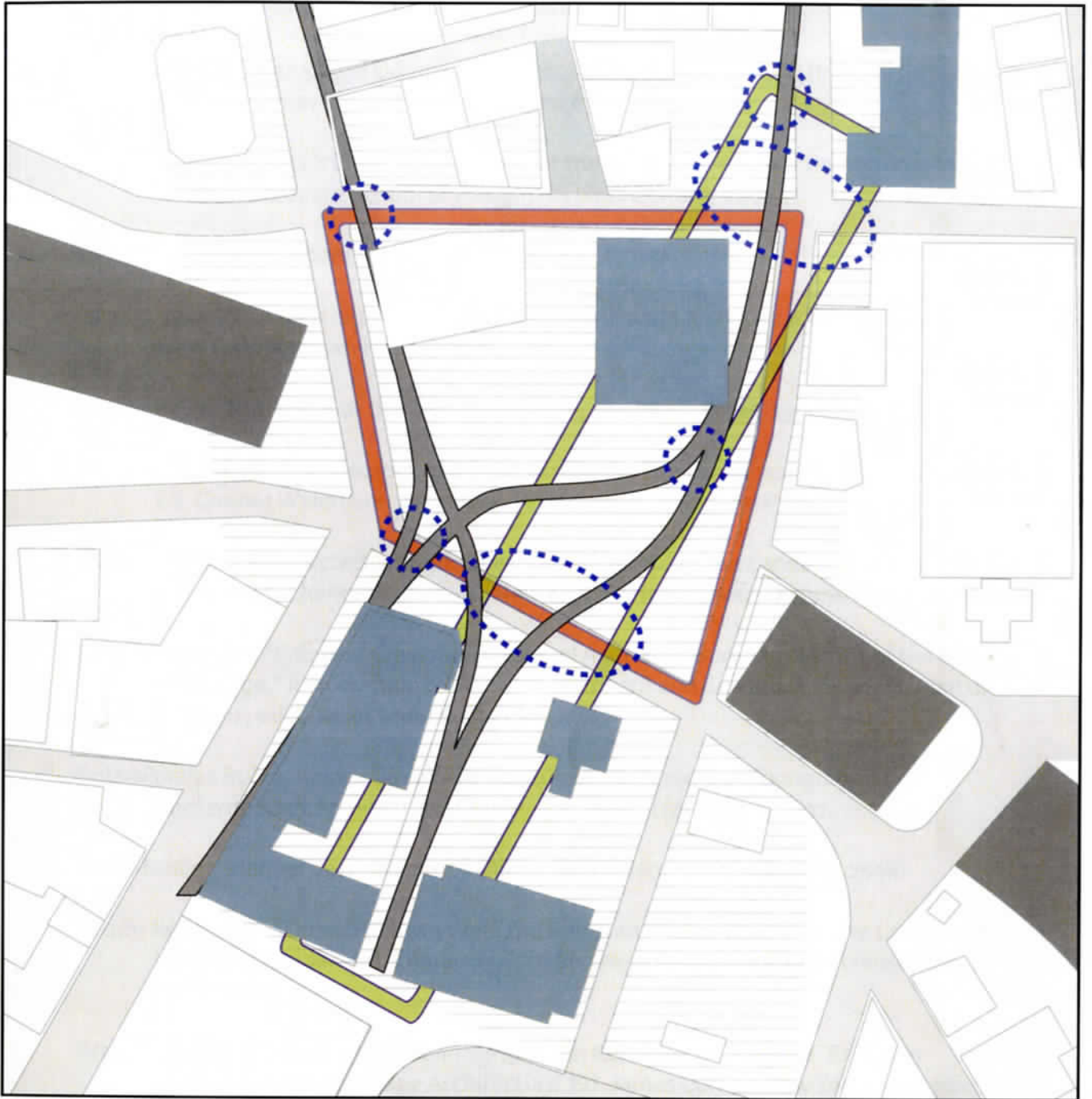
Articulating Multiple programmatic circuits on site.
According to the multiple modes of use and inhabitation of the site, there will be different circuits of activity and routes that will flow through the site. An initial gesture towards approaching the site in this manner looks as the possible, vehicular, institutional, and public use circuits, highlighting moments of overlap as moments of exchange within the built form and surface.

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