Creative Placemaking with the The International District Community

Albuquerque New Mexico

The Design of a Story Plaza
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Creative Placemaking with the Albuquerque International District Community

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Project Partners
City of Albuquerque
UNM School of Architecture + Planning
Story of Place Institute
Littleglobe
Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo and Flood Control Authority
Bernalillo County
The International District in Albuquerque

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## Appendix

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Nineteen projects from students in
Landscape Architecture Design Studio LA 508
Introduction

For many years Albuquerque’s International District (formerly known as the ‘War Zone’) was defined by crime, poverty, drugs and violence. Residents and community leaders and organizers believe that these challenges can be overcome by the real and potential assets of the neighborhood and its people. They have actively worked to transform the district into a new reality with a new image.

With the intent to help build community capacity and community pride in Albuquerque’s International District through arts engagement, community-based design, and the development of a community plaza/story garden, the City of Albuquerque partnered with the UNM School of Architecture and Planning (SA•P) , Littleglobe, the Story of Place Institute, the Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo and Flood Control Authority (AMAF-CA) and Bernalillo County. The City of Albuquerque Cultural Services Department took the lead in coordinating the project.

In the first phase of the project, Littleglobe facilitated a community arts engagement process with 5 professional artists collaborating with 50-80 community members over a period of 7 months. At the same time, the Story of Place Institute (SoPi) created a document of stories of the International District using archival documents, field research, and in-depth interviews.

The final selection of a site was ultimately influenced by AMAF-CA’s need for temporary water storage, and the CABQ Libraries need for a site to construct a new library in the International District. The site that fulfilled the criteria for the project is a two square block piece of land on the North side of Central Avenue between San Pablo Street and Charleston Street, currently the site of the Caravan East nightclub.

In the next design stage second year graduate Landscape Architecture students focused on the Caravan site for one of their studio projects in Spring 2016. Nineteen different site design proposals were generated in the studio with the primary site elements being the Story Plaza, the new 25,000 square foot library with parking, and a storm water detention basin with a capacity of approximately 20 acre feet. At the end of this process a jury of eight people from the City of Albuquerque (Cultural Services, Planning and Libraries), AMAFCA and Littleglobe selected two of the projects for further development. The nineteen designs are shown in the appendix of this document.

For the final phase the project principal investigators worked with four graduate Landscape Architecture students during the summer of 2016 to further develop the two selected designs. These two projects are the focus of this report.
The International District Boundary + Project Site
The International District

Neighborhoods in the International District
Overall zoning patterns
- commercial
- single family residential
- multifamily residential
- other

Zoning
Public Parks in the International District
The Site

Site Location and Major Storm Drains
Land Use in the Area Around the Site

Zoning in the Area Around the Site
Site Area

Lot 1: 97,150 Sq. Ft
Lot 2: 112,308 Sq. Ft
Road: 11,648 Sq. Ft

TOTAL= 221,106 Sq. Ft.

Soils

EtC - Embudo Tijeras Complex
Sand 77%
Silt 14.7%
Clay 8.3%
pH 8.2

MWA - Madurez-Wink Association
Sand 67.4%
Silt 15%
Clay 17.6%
pH 8.4
Topography

2’ contour interval
Character
Initial Design Stage
Design Charrette

In the initial Design Stage a 5 day design charrette focused on preliminary ideas for two sites that had been identified as potential locations for the story plaza. At the time the two primary program components were the story plaza and a component that would address AMFCA’s needs and opportunities. The library had not yet been identified as a partner. The two sites were a two square block area on Central Avenue between Grove and Charleston streets (the current home of the Caravan East nightclub), and a site on the South-West corner of Central and San Pedro.
Central - San Pedro Site
Final Design Stage

Program

Story Plaza
This part of the program needs to be well integrated into the site layout and can occupy more than one area. The space should be flexible to accommodate a variety of activity types including performance, festival gatherings, markets, food trucks and celebrations. It should incorporate elements that reflect and celebrate diversity, unity, identity fellowship and community. Its presence should be felt on Central Avenue and should help to give strong identity to the site.

International District Library
The regional library is to be a 25,000 square foot building. In addition to traditional library functions, the facility is to be an important community resource, with varied programming and events for people of all ages. Entries/exits should be limited, and good oversight/visibility within the building is important. There should be 100-110 parking spaces provided.
NOTE: This study is focused on a site design. A detailed space planning/programming/design for the library building was not a part of this process.

Storm Water Detention Basin
The need for 400 acre feet of temporary water storage in the International District region will be spread out among several sites. On this site the basin will receive water from the Dallas storm drain, one block to the East. The inlet from the Dallas storm drain would enter the site at 25’ below grade. Based on the available space on the site the design goal is to accommodate around 20 acre feet of temporary storage. The goal is to create a basin landscape that is accessible to the public, and that can incorporate multiple uses.

Project Selection

The jury that selected the two projects for further development represented the interests of the three programmatic elements that are incorporated in the site design. After reviewing all nineteen projects the ones identified in the semi-finalist group were discussed and debated relative to how well they achieved the needs of each of the site programs, and how well they integrated all three.

The two final project selections are shown on the following pages, with brief comments about what aspects the jury found to be compelling.

Design Issues

The program for the 5 acre site requires a careful organization of elements. In order to accommodate 20 acre feet of storage in the detention basin we need to occupy approximately 2.5 acres of the site. The inlet/outlet from the Dallas storm drain enters the site at 25 feet below grade. The challenge with this is to design a basin landscape to that depth that is accessible to people and that has character. While a ‘hole in the ground’ is more efficient for the water storage needs, it is not effective in making the basin a ‘place’ within this site that interacts with the other site spaces and invites human engagement.

The library building footprint will occupy .6 acres, and parking will require 1 acre. This leaves approximately .9 acres for the story plaza and other circulation as required. While the basin serves as temporary water storage, the multi-use approach means that some or all of it can also be a part of the story plaza.
In the design above by Jeremy Gwin the jury commented on the strong relationships among the site elements. The library building has a presence on Central Avenue and is juxtaposed with the basin by extending out over it. The covered walkway references the former street and provides a continuous shaded space that extends through and connects all parts of the site. The active spaces in the basin, a basketball court and a performance stage, bring people into the basin landscape and connect it effectively with the site.
The International District is home to over 47 different cultures, some still undocumented. People leave their home and come to Albuquerque for many reasons; a truly commendable feat. To pack up everything you own to live in an unfamiliar climate and unfamiliar culture is difficult. This design represents unfolding, unpacking luggage and learning about different cultures. It involves transformation in terms of becoming a human sponge and a creasing topography that dissolves stormwater issues in the International District.

The plan is simple. One 25,000 square foot library, 105 parking spaces, an open story plaza with varying planters incorporating seat benches and sloped walls for climbing on both sides. A 25 acre foot park can retain a 100 year flood in the district but also act as a multi-level quiet reading zone and large event space.

In the design above by Bonnie Strange the committee noted the interesting configuration of the detention basin, and the opportunity to experience the basin landscape as a ‘journey’. The space along and fronting Central Avenue is an opportunity for extending the plaza space and telling the stories of the District. The Jury also commented on the strong presence of the library building on Central Avenue and that the building footprint provides an effective enclosure of space that could become a part of the plaza.
Site Proposal 1
In this design the primary organizing element is the long covered walkway, or pergola, situated along the former road, and is the spine, or armature, to which all spaces on the site are connected.
**Site Grading**
The slopes into the basin are relatively gentle and accessible, at ratios of between 1:12 and 1:10 down to the lower, active areas. In order to maximize the usable and accessible area on the slope, retaining and terracing is used on the North, East and South sides.

**Site Design**
The story plaza is a large open space that can accommodate a variety of events, as well as a shaded seating area under a bosque of trees on the north end. Vegetated seating walls wrap the north and west ends of the plaza and act as a buffer between pedestrian and vehicular zones. The seating wall incorporates metal grid story panels where community members can mount changing installations representing their stories and cultures. For larger events the plaza can extend out on either side into the detention basin and parking plaza. The art plaza along Central Avenue is designed with colored columns on a grid to represent symbolically both unity and di-
versity in the international district. The LEDs embedded in the columns bring life to the night landscape and provide a strong presence for the site along Central Avenue. The detention basin is an active space that includes a gently sloping plane leading down to a basketball court and a performance stage. The north side has a stage for cultural expression through performance, with extended seating on the tree covered grass slope. The south slope incorporates vegetation zones and colored wall striping that mark storm water levels. The slope is planted with a grass and wildflower mix that is mowed to create changing paths throughout the year. A basketball court is at the bottom, and the inlet/outlet structure is located at the South East corner. The library’s second story reading lounge and rooftop patio, all accessible by an open ramp system, extend over the site’s central walkway and the detention basin, allowing for views to the mountains. The main entry to the library, located on the building’s north side, is accessible from the parking lot and the story plaza.
Looking towards the library building from the plaza

Looking into the bosque of trees at the north end of the plaza
Looking into the plaza from the edge of the pergola showing the panels along the west edge to be used for rotating installations.

Looking to the north east into the plaza towards the bosque.
Looking down into the plaza from the roof terrace

Looking towards the library building from under the pergola
Walking west along Central looking towards the column forest

The column forest at night with LEDs
Walking west along Central looking towards the library

Looking south towards the basketball court at the bottom of the basin
Looking from the bottom of the basin in front of the stage up towards the library.

Looking down into the bottom of the basin from the sidewalk along Chico Road.
The roof terrace

Aerial view looking North-West
East-West section looking South

North-South section looking West
Site Proposal 2
In this design the primary organizing element is a geometry that interlocks the different zones, allowing the journey through the site to unfold.
Site Grading
The complex grading in the basin enables a series of paths and layers. The walking slopes down into and along the basin edges are relatively gentle and accessible. Landings and seating areas punctuate the gradient. The diversity of the journey is enhanced by slopes that range from steep retained areas to gentle drops.
Site Design

The story plaza area is a large open space that can accommodate a variety of events, including markets, festivals and performances. A shaded seating area with seating walls and trees lines the north side of the plaza. Gridded metal story panels act as installation surfaces where community members can mount changing expressions of their stories and cultures. The plaza also extends along Central Avenue where quotes from residents of the district are etched into lit steel panels. Stripes in the paving with surface lights lead into the main plaza area.

The detention basin is accessible, and experienced as a journey though different planting textures and art installations as the geometry ‘unfolds’ itself. It is a passive space for strolling along pathways, viewing and sitting. The bottom of the basin is the quiet center. The inlet/outlet structure is also located in this space. The L-shaped one story library, with a presence on Central Avenue, embraces the main plaza area, which leads into the art park basin.
Looking into the plaza

Looking to the East from in the plaza towards the end wall that contains the space. The wall has a map of the world etched into it with origins of the various resident groups in the district identified.
Walking East along Central looking at a story panel

Walking West on Central towards the library entry
Walking East on Central along the Central Avenue plaza. The bus stop has been moved closer to the library entry.

Night view looking West on the Central Avenue plaza showing pavement lights and lit story panels.
Looking East along the Chico Road pedestrian way

Walking West on the Chico Avenue pedestrian way with bike racks to the left and angle parking along Chico to the right
Walking West on Central Avenue beside the basin and towards the library

Looking west along Charleston Street and to the corner pathway leading down into the basin
In the basin sculpture garden looking towards the library

Walking into the basin sculpture garden from the corner of Central and Charleston
Tall grass meadow with wildflower meadow in the distance, in the basin sculpture garden.

Walking down into the basin sculpture garden.
Looking South-East over the site from the library terrace

Aerial view to the South-East
Conclusion

In both proposals the three main programmatic spaces have a robust and meaningful presence, and are spatially integrated. The plaza, in both cases, is a flexible space that can accommodate a variety of uses, and also extends out onto Central Avenue to present a strong identity for the site.

In proposal 1 the basin landscape is an active space, with a performance stage and a basketball court drawing users down to the lower plane of the basin.

In proposal 2 the basin landscape is a passive space incorporating textured planting zones and art installations to be discovered as one journeys through the space.

Because of its size and location along Central Avenue the Caravan East site is an ideal location for the development of this project.
Appendix

Nineteen projects from students in Landscape Architecture Design Studio LA 508
The International District is home to over 47 different cultures, some still undocumented. People leave their home and come to Albuquerque for many reasons; a truly commendable feat. To pack up everything you own to live in an unfamiliar climate with unfamiliar voices is difficult. This design represents unfolding; unpacking luggage and learning about different cultures. It involves transformation in terms of becoming a human sponge and a creasing topography that dissolves stormwater issues in the International District.

The plan is simple: One 25,000 square foot library, 105 parking spaces (mostly on-street), an open story plaza with varying planters incorporating seat benches and sloped walls for sitting or reclining, and a 25 acre foot park which can retain a 100 year flood in the district but also act as a multi-level quiet reading zone and large event space.
The site is at Caravan East which is in the International District. The proposal is designing a library, a story plaza, and a detention pond, and each function has specific requirements. I start with the function of the Library. I try to design some outdoor reading spaces which can emphasize the gathering place. Therefore, I have the parti of "Room". Due to the idea, I create a chessboard and have some square spaces, and I design different types of reading spaces and put them into those square spaces. Each reading unity is independent, at the same time, it connects with public place, so people can walk through the site and find their interesting spaces for reading. According to the framework, then I set the library, parking lot, and detention pond on the site and make them fit to the idea. Without the detention pond, the basin provides playing facilities for children and running roads for neighbors. The parking lot uses permeated bricks, so stormwater can pass through the surface and be collected.
CUENTi MUNDi is a world of stories. Its community library is organized with contemporary media access alongside spaces facilitating opportunities to do it oneself. Adjacent is a public open space developed with the mechanisms and structures of narrative in mind. Drawing upon structured repetitions of features designed to bring awareness through perception and association, the space affords movement and play within the deeply contoured basins developed for enhanced stormwater detention capacity in the flood-prone neighborhood.

Together the programs creatively engage a distinctive space with welcoming gestures to neighborhood residents needing assistance with projects and repairs, students young and old seeking communities of learning, and nearby La Mesa Elementary and Community Center programs needing additional space and programs to facilitate their youth development goals.
I propose to re-design the Caravan site; changed in total from the existing parking lot to a library space that has an exterior program which follows: a detention pond, plaza, story garden and parking lot. I envision this 5 acre lot mainly as an area for a detention pond; that’s artistically composed with interactive scenic pathways, over filters, accented stone walls, nesting filters view stones, Islamic water stream, a view deck and relief sub ponds. The plaza and story garden space will be proportionally separated on the site to enhance the spatial experience. Different garden types will incorporate the concept of nesting for a more collaborative site, that educates the community and changes the physical state of feeling through landscape like a Chinese stroll garden. The library will be nested by having an inner shell as glass that’s covered by a metal facade. This will allow light to protrude into the building, resembling water. This design in total will add character to the area and reconnect the International district to the world surrounding it.

**Project Proposal**

1. **Legend:**
   - A. Detention pond
   - B. Nesting Rock Vista Story Garden
   - C. View Deck
   - D. Scenic Bridge
   - E. Japanese Dry Story Garden
   - F. Chinese Stroll Story Garden
   - G. Plaza Space 1
   - H. Plaza Space 2
   - I. View pod 1
   - J. View pod 2
   - K. Indoor/Outdoor Garden (Transition Space.)
   - L. Library
   - M. Service Dock
   - N. Parking
   - O. Service Road
   - P. Scenic Pathway
   - Q. Islamic Quiet Stream

2. **Site Plan**

3. **Scale = 1:30**

**Site Analysis**

- Library: 25,000 sq ft
- Detention Pond Max Capacity: 18 acre ft
- Parking: Capacity: 110 spaces 35,000 sq ft
- Plaza and Story Garden: 14,000 sq ft
- Total Site: 217,800 sq ft (5 acres)

**Project Concept**

- **Nesting:** The idea of different cultures being all in one neighborhood by agency, financial status or family ties, can be viewed as cultural nesting to one place or environment. In creating a site where this concept will not only exist but allow for the diversities of the different cultures to pour into each other by social interaction. The broad materials of world cultural studies that the library will provide along with the world wide web will be accessible to the public.
The new Albuquerque public library location will be 25,000 square feet of flexible, durable and open space. The new location will provide programs and open courtyards for the community.

BUILDING FACADE PRECEDENT

STORY GARDEN PLAZA

The plaza will serve as a civic amenity to the library, the neighborhood, and the larger community. This public space would be a beacon for the community, attracting people from different backgrounds, ages, and walks of life. It will be a space for social interaction, cultural exchange, and personal growth.

OPEN SPACE PARK

This 25 foot deep detention basin will supply the International District with much needed open green space for relaxation, recreation, and entertainment. It will also serve as a secondary pond to relieve the Dallas drain during major flood events.

CARAVAN EAST: a multi-purpose site design

LA 508 Spring 2016

Cynthia Jacobs

Landscape Architecture

Vanessa Funston

Architecture
VERB.
1. PREPARE & USE (LAND) FOR CROPS OR GARDENING.
   - BREAK UP (SOIL) IN PREPARATION FOR SOWING OR PLANTING.
2. TRY TO ACQUIRE OR DEVELOP (A QUALITY, SENTIMENT, OR SKILL).
   - APPLY ONESelf TO IMPROVING OR DEVELOPING (ONE’S MIND OR MANNERS).

"Cultivation to the mind is as necessary as food to the body."

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

"Musing takes place in a kind of meadowlands of the imagination, a part of the imagination that has not yet been plowed, developed, or put to any immediately practical use... time spent there is not work time, yet without that time the mind becomes sterile, dull, domesticated. The fight for free space — for wilderness and public space — must be accompanied by a fight for free time to spend wandering in that space."

Rebecca Solnit, Wanderlust: A History of Walking

Sindhuri Patllola
Architecture

Whitney Phelan
Community + Regional Planning
Emmanuel Nkuranga
Community + Regional Planning