

USING THE URBAN DESIGN PROCESS AS A CATALYST FOR ONGOING COLLABORATION BETWEEN
COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS: NORTHSIDE, PATERSON, NEW JERSEY

by

La Tonya M. Green

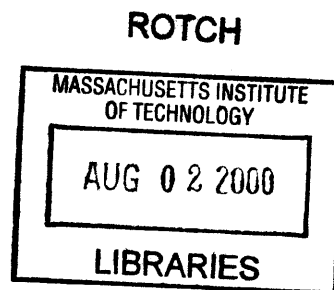
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ABSTRACT

Inner city neighborhoods and schools are inextricably linked to each other. While this fact seems obvious and irrefutable, cooperation between urban schools and the neighborhoods they are in is often either non-existent or counterproductive. In planning for whole school reform, discussions of how the community could be improved are often ignored or deemed not to take priority. This thesis argues that the use of a communicative urban design process can be a successful community development tool. More specifically, a communicative urban design process can help forge collaborative, cooperative relationships between neighborhoods and schools.

Notions of a communicative urban design process are linked with community development to analyze planning of a educational park that will be located between two schools in the Northside neighborhood of Paterson, New Jersey. By involving staff, faculty, parents, and students from the schools and residents from the Northside neighborhood in the design of the educational park, it became possible for the two groups to share their thoughts and concerns with each other. The communicative urban design process provided a space and cause for the wide set of constituents to participate. The process allowed for collaboration which was critical to the broadening of perspectives of the relationship of the school to the community and vice versa.

Through participant-observation of the planning and design process, light is shed on the feasibility of using a communicative urban design process as a community development tool. Factors in the design process that enable better collaboration and cooperation between the schools and community are identified, and recommendations are made to address shortcomings in the design process.

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Roy Strickland, Professor, Department of Architecture

God grant me the courage to change the things I can not accept, the serenity to accept the things I can not change, and the wisdom to know the difference.

-unknown

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Peace and Blessings Most High,

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critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever stage of their struggle for liberation [not in the open, of course, that would provoke the fury of the oppressor and lead to still greater repression].

-paulo freire

Power is not a thing; it's a process.

-Marie Kennedy¹

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Imagine an urban village. Imagine a place where school faculty and staff know and respect all of the local community residents and the local community residents know and respect all of the school faculty and staff. Imagine this urban village working together with the same goal of strengthening the community in everything they do.

The reality is, however, that “many parents and communities experience the school as an alienating institution.”² In extreme cases they may see the school as “like the encampment of a foreign power,” and “in the eyes of some it appears so uninviting that it is more like a fortress of a hostile force than a center of community.”³ On the other hand, schools are the only public institution mandated to serve all children no matter if they are illegal immigrants, poor, hungry, or sick (Noguera 1996). Therefore, the role schools play in urban communities is vital and unique and should be recognized as such. However, often times the most well planned school reform proposals avoid addressing the connection between the urban environment and the quality and character of urban schools.

¹Kennedy, Marie. “A History of Radical Planning.” *The Indigenous and Planning Development Times*, cycle 1, number 2. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

²Ferguson, Ronald F., Dickens, William; eds. *Urban Problems and Community Development*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 1999; 341.

Research Question

This research asks whether a communicative urban design process can be a means to not only change the physical form of a neighborhood but be a catalyst for initiating collaboration and cooperation between communities and schools. I examine whether a communicative urban design process used to design an educational park that will be located between two schools sharing the same plot of land could be a successful strategy in initiating conversation not only between the schools and the neighborhood but between the two schools themselves.

I will test the premise that a communicative design process can be used as a community development tool. I want to find out if a communicative urban design process in the creation of a park between two schools can help bring about better collaboration and cooperation between the schools and the community.

The Project

I came to the idea of using this project as the case study for my research in a design seminar I took in the spring of 1999 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). During the seminar, Professor Roy Strickland introduced a concept called “A Neighborhood for Learning.” He spoke about economic development, physical revitalization, and community development all being programmatically connected to schools, and vice versa, potentially creating a learning environment that extends out of the four walls of a classroom and into the community at large. I became very intrigued by

³ Ibid.

the idea and the following semester I enrolled in Professor Strickland's urban design workshop focused on exploring the concept of the "City of Learning."⁴

The "City of Learning" workshop focused on the city of Paterson in northern New Jersey. Paterson is a post-industrial city that used to be a great manufacturing center and at one time was known as the "Silk City" for its manufacturing of fine silk. However, with decline of manufacturing, Paterson became, and still remains, a city in decline. For example, the city's industrial base declined as manufacturing and industrial companies left Paterson to take advantage of cheaper means of production outside of the city. While the health care service industry has grown tremendously over the past ten years, between 1987 and 1992 Paterson lost 33.6% of its retail sales market and wholesale sales declined by 22%.⁵ As a result of the decline, the current unemployment rate is at 10%.⁶

As result of to the disinvestment in the city, school funding, which is based on local property taxes, greatly declined. As an additional sign of decline, Paterson Public Schools (PPS) went into receivership in 1991. For the following six years the PPS School Board fought the New Jersey State Board of Education's attempt to take over full control of the day to-day functions of the school district.

Finally, in 1997, the New Jersey State Board of Education appointed Dr. Edwin Duroy to be the Superintendent of PPS. Dr. Duroy was brought in to completely restructure the management of the school district. Specifically, Duroy's mission was to

⁴ The "City of Learning" concept is a city-level concept of the "Neighborhood for Learning" concept. The "City of Learning" draws upon the same ideas as the "Neighborhood for Learning" concept where institutions located throughout the city work together programmatically to promote economic development, physical revitalization, and community development, all connecting to creating a integrated learning environment.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. Summary Table File 3A CD-ROM.

raise PPS students' scores on various state and national proficiency tests. Dr. Duroy embarked on a five-year plan not only to restructure the school district but to turn PPS into an educational program that produced some of the top students in the nation. So when the opportunity came about for PPS to engage in a project with MIT, Dr. Duroy took it.

Professor Strickland is the Director of the New American School Design Project (NASDP) at MIT in Department of Architecture. NASDP was developed "to begin to address the design of physical facilities to help bring primary and secondary education into the 21st century. NASDP, through graduate-level studios and workshops, generates concepts for learning facilities which are available for use by school systems and their architects."⁷ NASDP has held workshops in Berkeley, CA, Washington, DC, the South End in Boston, MA, and Union City, NJ. In the summer of 1998, Dr. Duroy, hearing of Professor Strickland's work in Union City, asked Professor Strickland and graduate students in his workshop to go down to Paterson, study the situation there, and take inventory of the possibilities for new schools"⁸ that would relate to the application of the "City of Learning" concept. One of the projects was to engage in a design process to provide conceptual designs for a park with an education and technology focus to be located on a paved open-space between Schools 4 and 28 on the Northside of Paterson.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Strickland, Roy. "New American School Design Project." Department of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



The paved open space between School 28 (far left) and School 4 (on far right).

The Urban Design Process

As I began talking with staff and faculty from the two schools and residents of the Northside neighborhood about the project and what the educational park might look like, as there were no particular mandates for the space (i.e. no requirement that the space had to be completely open, unbuilt, or programmed with play equipment) except that the space had to integrate education and technology, I began to reflect more and more about what my role is in this design process. I am not only a participant in the process but, in order to conduct my research, I am an observer. It became increasingly important to me

⁸ Paterson Workshop 1&2. City of Paterson, New Jersey, Paterson Public Schools. Transcripts- October

that my colleagues and I approach this design process in a reflective manner, and that we conduct our work deliberately, not taking any for granted and to communicate all issue that might arise to the stakeholders. I began to examine our role in the process itself as well as examine the design process as a driver for practical work to get down to the community level.

There are many approaches to urban design that produce good urban design projects. The urban design process is a set of various activities such as meetings, charrettes, and design reviews that involve various actors such as architects and designers, clients, and sometimes the constituents in order to plan for, create, or redesign a physical space in an urban environment. Urban design is unique from architecture because urban design is concerned with the form of the urban environment not just an individual site or building.

Because urban design has a wider view of design than architecture, “complexity of community issues, diversity of community interests, diffusion of responsibility across a wide array of actors, and expectations for community empowerment require new, more collaborative approaches to planning (Baum 1996).”⁹

One approach to urban design sees the process as having discrete steps and the designer’s role as being a neutral expert. This process suggests that information and alternatives to address problems can be dictated by a rational decision-making process (Forester 1989). The stages of this rational urban design approach include: 1) identify the problem, 2) specify the criteria to reach the goals and objectives, 3) determine all of the

16,1998 and November 16, 1998, March 19-20; pg. 49.

possible alternatives, 4) evaluate the options in light of the goals and objectives, and 5) select the optimal alternative (Forester 1989). However, the rational decision-making process often ignores the actors who carry out the projects and is often indifferent to the object of their efforts (Forester 1989).

An alternative to a rational decision-making process is a communicative design process. Habermas argues:

it is through communicative efforts that cultures and structures are formed and transformed. For him, the normative ideal of good communication is conversation. Inherent in the conversational communicative effort is the acceptance of a degree of collaboration and reciprocity.¹⁰

An urban design process that is communicative involves negotiation and consensus building. A communicative design process involves constant communication between the “technical experts” such as the designers, planners, and architects who engage in dialogue with the various constituents of the project in order to “make sense together (Forester 1999).” The various actors deliberate over design alternatives and appropriate strategies and work toward a consensual final decision. John Forester, in the Deliberative Practitioner, writes,

We do ourselves a great disservice if we think about planning and design deliberations as mere “process,” periods of potentially distracting and draining “talk,” a necessary evil accompanying the “real work” of planning and design. Planners and designers shape not only physical spaces, but what Lynda Schneekloth and Robert Shibley (1995) call “dialogic spaces,” deliberative or broadly argumentative spaces as well.¹¹

⁹ Warner, Mildred. “Collaborative planning Broadens the Local Economic Development Policy Debate.” Journal of Planning Education and Research 19:201-206. 1999.

¹⁰ Healey, Patsy. “Institutionalist Analysis, Communicative Planning, and Shaping Places.” Journal of Planning Education and Research 19:111-121; 1999.

¹¹ Forester, John. The Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1999.

A communicative design process provides a space for a wide set of actors to participate in the design process to share their thoughts and concerns in a way the rational decision-making model approach to urban design does not. In the rational decision-making process the designer sits in her office with the design problem, evaluates various design strategies, tests some of the strategies through drawings and sketches, and then presents her design solution to the client without ever having engaged the constituents of the project in meaningful conversation.

Understanding the framework through which urban designers work is important because designers are often viewed as neutral actors in the design process. Because the project between School 4 and School 28 is a physical design project during which the urban form of the community will change, the community, given the information, will participate in the design of the project. However, the dissemination of information about the project, and therefore community participation in the design process, is at the mercy of the framework through which the designers, who ultimately control the project, work.

Community Development

A communicative urban design process is not only about physical design. The second aspect of a communicative design process is its ability to be a catalyst for community development. According to Ferguson and Dickens,¹²

Community development is asset building that enhances the quality of life of residents in low-to-moderate income communities, where communities are defined as neighborhood or multi-neighborhood areas.

They divide assets into five types: physical (buildings, land, etc.), financial (all forms of financial wealth), intellectual and human (individual skills, knowledge, confidence, motivation), social (all formal and informal relationships, cultural norms, shared understanding), and political (the capacity to exert political influence).

The communicative urban design process, through deliberative dialogue, negotiation, and consensus building, builds the assets of the participants by engaging them not only in conversation about the educational park but about the neighborhood overall. Marie Kennedy notes that “effective community development planning takes a comprehensive approach to meeting community needs--an approach that recognizes the interrelationship of economic, physical and social development.”¹³

Moreover, Ferguson writes,

I see real community development as combining material development with the development of people. Real development, as I understand it, necessarily involves increasing a community's capacity for taking control of its own development--building within the community critical thinking and planning abilities, as well as concrete skills, so that development projects and planning processes can be replicated by community members in the future.¹⁴

Although it was not an explicit part of the contract with Paterson Public Schools, my and my colleagues' approach to the urban design process was very much about building a process that, at the contracts' end, could be maintained by the students, staff, and faculty from the schools and the residents from the neighborhood.

¹² Ferguson, Ronald F., Dickens, William; eds. Urban Problems and Community Development. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 1999.

¹³ Kennedy, Marie. “A History of Radical Planning.” The Indigenous and Planning Development Times, cycle 1, number 2. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Significance of Research

I hope this investigation suggests to urban designers who work in communities, communities of color in particular, that the communicative design process is an effective approach to urban design that not only enhances the quality and integrity of their design work (because it is informed by local knowledge), but also has the ability to be used as a tool to address other community needs.

I intend to show how the communicative urban design process is especially important for empowering the residents of distressed urban neighborhoods to not only change community aesthetics but to change social relationships in their community. The communicative urban design process was used in Paterson to not only produce quality urban design recommendations but to also bring school faculty and staff together with local neighborhood residents to engage meaningful dialogue about community issues.

Methodology

This thesis will “test” the premise that a communicative urban design process has the ability to be a successful catalyst to help bridge the communication gap between neighborhoods and the schools. Success in this case is defined by whether this design process spurs collaboration and cooperation between the schools and the community to begin to take ownership of the project as the contract between PPS and MIT comes to an end. The design process is not only about providing a good design for the park but about its ability to encourage the staff and faculty at the two schools and the residents of the community to work collaboratively on the design and implementation of this project. I measure success of the project based on analysis of meetings held between members of

the Paterson Workshop and students, staff, and faculty of the two schools and the residents of the Northside community. Success of the process is determined by (1) the content of dialogue between faculty, and staff from Schools 4 and residents from the Northside community and vice versa; (2) the exchange of social capital during the same exchanges of dialogue mentioned above; and (3) the initiation of staff, and faculty as well as residents from the Northside community to take a more proactive role in organizing the design process.

My methodology includes the collection of information from the following sources: (1) the review of designs, reports, and meeting transcripts from previous NASDP workshops held in Paterson from Fall 1998 to Spring 2000; (2) charrettes, workshops, and design reviews with residents from the Northside neighborhood and administrators, teachers, parents, and students from Paterson Public Schools 4 and 28; and (3) in-depth interviews with neighborhood residents and school officials.

Since the process is still going on, I will not report on the outcome of the design project nor is this the purpose of my research. I will only report on the process up to the stage of revising the initial design concept based on feedback from students, staff, and faculty from Schools 4 and 28, the District Superintendent and Technology Planner, and an environmental psychologist.

Thesis Outline

Following this introduction, **Chapter 2** examines two approaches to the urban design process. This chapter examines using the traditional paradigm of the rational decision-making model which promotes formalist physical solutions to the urban

environment and argues that a more effective approach to design especially in communities of color is the communicative planning process. **Chapter 3** is an introduction to Paterson, New Jersey and its Public Schools, as well as a discussion of MIT's role in the redesign of the open space between Schools 4 and 28 in order to give a more in-depth context to the design process. **Chapter 4** is the story of the first two years of the design process for the educational park. The purpose of this chapter is to examine a communicative design process in order to analyze its success and failures. Lastly, **Chapter 5** addresses the successes, as well as difficulties, of using a communicative urban design process as a community development tool in practice. This chapter concludes with recommendations for urban designers who want to use a communicative approach to urban design.

Education takes place when there are two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue. Both participants bring knowledge to the relationship and one of the objects of the pedagogic process is to explore what each knows and what they can teach each other. A second object is to foster reflection on the self as actor in the world in consequence of knowing.

-Stanley Aronowitz¹⁵

CHAPTER 2

TWO APPROACHES TO THE URBAN DESIGN PROCESS

There are many approaches to urban design that produce solutions for urban design challenges. This chapter focuses on two specific approaches to the urban design process: in particular, the rational decision-making model and the communicative planning process. The discussion from this chapter is in preparation for the framework that will be used to analyze the urban design process for the educational park in Paterson. More specifically, this chapter speaks to urban designers who have good intentions as they engage in community design projects but do not know how to approach the process. This chapter speaks explicitly to the fact that although the urban design process is a powerful process, how the designer approaches the process for a city hall plaza or office park is very different from approaching communities, especially disenfranchised communities or communities of color.

The Power of the Design Process

Through the design process “we can learn about how new relationships we can develop, and about who we may yet come to be together as we reshape our shared public world. All of these issues of ‘is’ and ‘ought,’ and historical, present, and future identity, are at

stake, potentially explored or neglected, in many of our planning and design processes (Barber 1984, Reich 1988, Sandercock 1995, Schneekloth and Shibley 1995.)¹⁶ John Forester, in Planning in the Face of Power, writes, “designing is both instrumentally productive and socially reproductive--accomplishing ends and reproducing social and political relations of status, power, and culture at the same time.”¹⁷ Therefore, the design process has the ability, if conducted with an inappropriate approach, to perpetuate the marginalization of one group of constituents over another.

Although the design process in its nature is a powerful tool for shaping the urban form, there are approaches better suited for certain design processes than others. Designers at all levels often have to “avoid the traps of both participation and negotiation: the pressures toward exclusion, deal-making, prisoner’s dilemma-like lose-lose outcomes, [or] “lousy compromises.”¹⁸

The Role of the Designer as an Actor in the Design Process

The designer has a powerful role in the design process, so it is important to understand how designers approach the design process. “Reflective practitioners” learn from experience (Schon, 1983) whereas “deliberative practitioners” learn and work with

¹⁵ Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of Freedom. New York: Continuum Press, 1998.

¹⁶ Forester, John. The Deliberative Practitioner. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1999; pg. 62.

¹⁷ Forester, John. Planning in the Face of Power. University of California Press, 1989.

¹⁸ Forester, John. “*Reasons to Bother with Planning Theory*.” Rodwin, Lloyd, Sanyal, Bishwapriya, eds. The Profession of City Planning: Changes, Images and Challenges (1950-2000). New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research; 2000.

others.”¹⁹ There are many ways to approach the design process. The following is a discussion of two of those approaches.

Rational Decision-Making Model

Rational decision-making has discrete steps and the planner’s role is to serve as a neutral expert, providing information and alternatives that address the design challenge by following a distinct path of problem solving. This path includes: 1) identify the problem, 2) specify the criteria to reach the goals and objectives, 3) determine all of the possible alternatives, 4) evaluate the options in light of the goals and objectives, and 5) select the optimal alternative.²⁰ “Technical experts” are often trained that “good managers” attempt to attain this ideal decision-making pattern. This “model assumes that the repository of knowledge”²¹ is in the designer.

Designing is often conceived as a comprehensive rational analysis of issues and alternatives that integrate interests to provide a blueprint for future action. The rational decision-making process ideally combines analysis of design problems, participation by relevant parties in problem definitions and solutions, and systematic analysis of alternative solutions and consequences to produce plans whose logic compels widespread support for implementation. While this approach is valuable in its thorough assessment and analysis of the problem, it is not as effective in promoting democracy in the process or empowering those voices that have been historically disenfranchised. At one time

¹⁹ Forester, John. The Deliberative Practitioner. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1999; pg. 2.

²⁰ Forester, John. Planning in the Face of Power. University of California Press, 1989.

²¹ Kennedy, Marie. “A History of Radical Planning.” The Indigenous and Planning Development Times, cycle 1, number 2. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

the designer and his or her private client traditionally came from the same social milieu;” they ‘talked the same language’ and could at least communicate about the function and symbolism of a proposed new house or other building (Forester 1989). Today, however, the communication process is more complex: Fee-paying clients are often institutions, and they are represented by committees that frequently do not even include eventual (non-fee paying) users. Time and budget pressures often preclude detailed, analytical consideration of the users and functions of buildings.²²

As I see it, two particular shortcomings of the rational decision-making model are:

(1) the limited applicability of comprehensive rational analysis in regard to communities, particularly communities of color (the “experts” do not have knowledge of local issues), and (2) the model’s failure to make explicit restrictions on information and influence of some stakeholders over others caused by concentrations of wealth (not necessarily monetary) and power. This model does not take into account the historical relationships of power or personal biases that are intrinsic to the design process. Paulo Freire writes,

The research industry has become more and more specialized and hidden behind a technocratic veil of supposed “scientific method,” which effectively excludes laypeople. Conditioned to believe they can’t adequately understand their own lives and cut out of participation in research and analysis which might enhance their understanding, ordinary people often simply stop trying. And, in truth people do lack the information, skills and experience to critically understand the roots of their powerlessness.²³

A more effective model in approaching design process in historically disenfranchised communities is the communicative planning process.

Communicative Planning Process

A communicative process theory responds to the force of the top-down approach to designing by assuming that

²² Marcus, Clare Cooper. Housing As If People Mattered. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1986; 32.

²³ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo; Macedo, Donald; eds. The Paulo Freire Reader. New York: Continuum Press, 1998.

designing is not simply a matter of mastery and intuition. This common creation of sense lies at the core of the social process of designing: giving meaningful form to a building, a park, a project, a program that is recognizable, a coherent, significant, and realizable by a variety of interested parties.²⁴

A communicative planning process is more sensitive to including people who are not usually included in the rational decision-making model. Group processes with a wide representation of constituents are essential to the communicative design process because group processes have more potential for addressing a wider range of concerns and complex interactions than standard, top-down bureaucratic approaches do. These group processes have a greater capacity to develop solutions tailored to the uncertain and unique contexts of particular communities (Dryzek 1987, Innes 1994).

This theory also speaks to the importance of using local knowledge and local ideas for problem solving. A communicative design process is a better approach for a design process with multiple goals. The participants, including the designer,

learn that communication is a form of action and that its form and content matter because it changes the participants. This planning is driven, not by a search for the best way to achieve a goal, but for a package of actions that participants agree will improve the situation. In these collaborative processes, decisions are only one product—along the way many things happen which are not envisioned by the rational model.²⁵

Moreover, essential to this process is consensus building. In a communicative design process

consensus building is a significant and useful tool for coordination, not only because it helps key participants in the growth management process reach agreements on action but, even more importantly, because it helps them build shared social, intellectual, and political capital. This set of social relationships and trust, agreed-upon data, and

²⁴ Forester, John. *Planning in the Face of Power*. University of California Press; 1989.

²⁵ Ibid.

understandings of the issues and political alliances is the basis for long-term coordination.²⁶

This framework works to arouse the consciousness that puts ideas into practice, involves leadership and the mobilization of power, not just people rationalizing and reasoning together. A communicative planning process focuses on, and allows time for, ongoing learning that actors in the design process engage in together.

Conclusion:

Planning literature suggests that there are many ways to approach urban design. The design process, while it is effective in facilitating communication and collaboration, will sustain itself as a meaningful process only if the facilitators of the process approach the design process with the appropriate model for the design challenge and the context in which it will take place.

While the rational decision-making model is a more effective approach to the urban design process for design challenges such as regional malls or suburban office parks, design processes that are not rooted in communities, especially communities that are disenfranchised or marginalized, a communicative design process is more effective in such contexts. The rational-decision model gives little regard to either political conflict or to the specific community in which the project is being designed. Social definitions of communities are derived from interaction patterns, which ultimately are “the primary mechanisms through which neighborhood effects are transmitted. It is therefore doubly

²⁶ Innes, Judith; Gruber, Judith; Neuman, Michael; and Thompson, Robert, “Coordinating Growth and Environmental Management through Consensus Building.” California Policy Seminar. Berkeley: University of California; 1994; pg. 1.

problematic that most efforts to establish the existence of neighborhood influences are based on the compositional characteristics of places to the neglect of social interaction and social networks.”²⁷ Therefore, it is important that designers be conscious of the social interaction and social networks of the community they are engaging in the design process.

The following is a table of elements that will be examined in Chapter 4 and how each approach to the design process, based on planning theory, responds to that element.

Design Process Matrix

	Rational Decision-Making Model	Communicative Planning Process
Empowerment of the community	Secondary	Essential
Meaningful communication between designer and the constituents of the project	Essential	Essential
Bring various stakeholders together	Essential	Essential
Effective solution to design problem	Essential	Essential
Bring stakeholders along in the design process	Secondary	Essential
Building community capacity	No contribution	Major Contribution
Promotion of democracy²⁸ in the design process	Secondary	Essential

In conclusion, it is not that one approach is better than the other. It is more appropriate to say that one approach is more effective than the other in certain design challenges.

The purpose of this chapter and the next chapter, which is a brief history of the city of Paterson, including the economic and educational problems the city is facing, is to

²⁷ Ibid.

provide both a theoretical framework and context for analysis of the story of the design process in Chapter 4.

²⁸ I define democracy in the process by saying that supreme power is vested in the constituents of the design project.

Their lack of information and their preoccupation with daily survival interferes with their understanding of how power structures work and affect their lives. Therefore, the oppressed often share the oppressors' viewpoint, blaming themselves for their own poverty and powerlessness--essentially what we know as "internalized oppression."

-Paulo Freire²⁹

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY OF THE CASE: PATERSON, NEW JERSEY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief in-depth profile of the City of Paterson, to provide a context for the design process my colleagues and I are engaging in with the students, parents, faculty, and staff from Schools 4 and 28 and the residents from the Northside neighborhood in the Riverview community.



Map of neighborhood boundaries in Paterson.

Paterson: Past and Present, Economics and Demographics

The 8.3 square mile city of Paterson, New Jersey was the first planned industrial city in the United States. Paterson was, and still is, a port of entry city. Dutch immigrants settled in Paterson in the late 1600's and erected the first saw mill in the early 1700's. Shortly thereafter, the first factories of the manufacturing industry were established along the Passaic River, which bisects the city. The manufacturing sector of the economy included the "cotton industry and the locomotive industry and Paterson soon became a large textile and manufacturing center."³⁰ Paterson was seen as a great location for manufacturing because the river could be used as a power source.

However, as a result of a decrease in the amount of cotton transported from the south, Paterson changed industries. The silk industry soon became the leading industry in Paterson, and because of the amount of silk it produced, Paterson became known as the "Silk City." By the late 1880's Paterson achieved a high degree of industrial and economic prosperity and by the early 1900's it developed into the urban center of Passaic County.

By the mid-1900's, however, many of the manufacturing and industrial companies left Paterson to take advantage of cheaper means of production and manufacturing outside of the city, leaving skilled and semi-skilled workers unemployed. Furthermore, as

²⁹ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo; Macedo, Donald; eds. The Paulo Freire Reader. Continuum Press, New York, 1998.

³⁰ Paterson Historic Society. "History of African Americans in Paterson" pamphlet.

companies began to relocate, the main retail strip in Paterson faced strong competition from regional malls and other retail shopping areas located outside of the city as well.³¹

As a result of disinvestment, Paterson is a city facing economic isolation. Compared to the state as a whole, which has the eighth largest economy in the nation, Paterson is facing high unemployment, low investment of new capital, blighted conditions, a substantial amount of obsolete or abandoned industrial and commercial structures, and an almost non-existent tax base. According to the Department of Community Development, Paterson is facing a growth in the population of low-income households, a surge in the number of homeless individuals, growth in the special needs populations, especially among children, and an increase in the gap between wages earned and the cost of living.

While the median household income for Paterson was \$26,960³² in 1997, it was \$43,073 for Passaic County, and \$47,589³³ for the state, which means that Paterson residents are greatly disadvantaged in their income earned compared to the rest of the county and the state. Furthermore, Paterson's current unemployment rate is 10%,³⁴ compared to 3.9% for the state and the nation.³⁵

Although there has been a steady high unemployment rate and high poverty rate in Paterson, there has also been a steady population growth rate. According to the Census

³¹ City of Paterson, New Jersey Department of Community Development Consolidated Plan: Five Year Strategy 1997-2000; One Year Action Plan.

³² <http://www.state.nj.us/commerce/paterson.htm>.

³³ U.S. Census Bureau. Summary Table File 3A CD-ROM.

³⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Local Area Unemployment Statistics (Series ID: LAUPS34065003). www.bls.gov/cgi-bin/ds.

³⁵ April 13, 2000. <http://search.npr.org/cf/cmn/cmnps05fm.cfm?SegID=73793>.

Bureau, Paterson's population was 148,394 in 1995; the population is now estimated to be at 170,000.³⁶ This rate of growth is putting a tremendous amount of stress on the already overburdened city resources.³⁷

Moreover, while the growth rate for the city increased rapidly over the past five years, the race of the residents changed rapidly as well. Since the 1970's, as a result of the loss of industry, there has been a steady decline in the White residents in the city. While the number of White residents moved to the surrounding suburbs, Latinos moved in. According to the 1970 Census, the City of Paterson consisted of mostly of White-headed households, but by the 1990 Census Whites composed only 24.5% of the population of the city.³⁸ While there has been very little change in the Black population which is currently at 32.7%, the number of Latino residents has increased almost a hundred percent and is now at 40% over that same period of time. The racial breakdown for the state is 13.9% Black, 7.6% Latino, and 73.9% White.³⁹

There are also problems with the quality of housing in the city. The housing stock is deteriorating because the majority of the houses were built around the turn of the twentieth century and the city is experiencing very little new residential development. Moreover, 53.4% of Paterson's housing stock was built prior to 1950 compared to 34.2% for the state.⁴⁰ The age of the housing stock has led to problems with lead paint, fire

³⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. Summary Table File 3A CD-ROM.

³⁷ City of Paterson, New Jersey Department of Community Development Consolidated Plan: Five Year Strategy 1997-2000; One Year Action Plan.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ U.S. Census Bureau.

⁴⁰ City of Paterson, New Jersey Department of Community Development Consolidated Plan: Five Year Strategy 1997-2000; One Year Action Plan.

hazards, lack of handicap access, and the size and types of housing units available. To compound the problem, only 33.6% of housing is owner occupied, compared to 64.9% average for the state.⁴¹ Because to the high cost of renovation and abatement, absentee owners have no incentive to renovate their property.

Owing to disinvestment in the city, property values fell, resulting in very little property taxes being collected. As a result there was very funding for the schools, so the quality of education greatly declined. However, Paterson was not the only urban city in the state with failing schools. As a result of the great disparity in access to education a class-action lawsuit was filed against the State of New Jersey Commissioner of Education.

The Abbot v. Burke Court Case

In 1981 Frances Abbott filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Raymond Abbott, who was a minor, against Fred G. Burke, the Commissioner of Education for the State of New Jersey Department of Education. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of children and parents in impoverished cities throughout the state, where spending on schools was as much as \$5,000 a year less per child than the amount spent in affluent suburbs. It took 14 years for the courts to decide, but in 1995 the Supreme Court of New Jersey ruled on *Abbott v. Burke (153 N.J. 480)*. The Court ruled that it was absolutely necessary to modify school funding in the state of New Jersey to account for the great disparities in support of education between the wealthy suburban districts and the poor urban districts. They ruled that New Jersey's school-finance system was unconstitutional and ordered

⁴¹ U.S. Census Bureau. Summary Table File 3A CD-ROM.

higher spending in the poorest, mostly urban, "special needs" districts.⁴² The State Supreme Court required the New Jersey State Department of Education to revamp its school funding formula.

The Court then outlined several characteristics of poorer districts in the state. They said that urban districts have "evidence of substantive failure of thorough and efficient education," including "failure to achieve what the Department of Education considers passing levels of performance on the High School Proficiency test (HSPT)," a large percentage of disadvantaged students who need "an education beyond norm," existence of an "excessive tax for municipal services" in the locality where the district is located, and lastly, a large percentage of people of color.⁴³

The Court ruled that there has to be equity in school financing and decided to equalize spending across all districts. Abbott argued that just because a city suffered from an extremely low tax base did not mean the education the students received should be sub-standard. The Supreme Court ruled that the State is constitutionally obligated to "provide facilities for children in the special needs districts that will be sufficient to enable those students to achieve the substantive [content] standards that now define a thorough and efficient education."⁴⁴ In five separate rulings the court found that the education offered to students living in urban areas was "tragically inadequate" and "severely inferior." Under the ruling, urban students have a right to: (1) an education based on New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards; (2) school funding at the

⁴² McGrath, Mary. "N.J. Officials Contest Funding of School Suit Use of State Aid Challenged." *The Record*, Northern New Jersey; May 4, 1999.

⁴³ Abbott. The Education Law Center. <http://www.edlawcenter.org/ABOUTAB.HTM>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

spending level of successful suburban school districts, or “parity funding”; (3) intensive preschool and other supplemental programs to alleviate disadvantages; and (4) educationally adequate school facilities. The Court ordered the New Jersey Commissioner of Education to dramatically improve urban schools. The State Supreme Court identified 28 Abbott Districts in the state, including Paterson.

Paterson Public Schools (PPS)

In 1989 PPS was the lowest testing school district in the state. No schools in the district had passing scores on the Core Curriculum Contents Standards for the State of New Jersey.⁴⁵ As a result, the State of New Jersey took over the school district in 1991⁴⁶ and after a six-year court battle, appointed Dr. Duroy, who has 30 years of experience in education, to be the District Superintendent in 1997. Dr. Duroy, who is often described as a “[institutional] builder,” developed a five-year plan to revitalize PPS.

Dr. Duroy hoped to develop more than just good schools; he hoped to develop the city as a whole through comprehensive educational programs. By improving the schools and initiating projects that invested in the entire community, he felt he could help stabilize the neighborhoods in Paterson. He said that there is a critical link between the schools, community, and investment dollars. Three of his goals as outlined by his plan are:

⁴⁵ “The Core Curriculum Content Standards describe what students should know and be able to do in specific academic areas and across disciplines. Content standards are concerned with the knowledge students should acquire and the skills they should develop in the course of their K-12 experience. That is why each of the content standards is further described in terms of cumulative progress indicators at specific benchmark grades of 4, 8, and 12.” < <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/cccs/01intro.html>>.

⁴⁶ Graduation rate for the 1996-1997 academic year for Paterson was 47.6% compared to 75.6% for the state, which is ranked number seven in the country. (The Education Center. <http://www.edlawcenter.org/ABOUTAB.HTM>.)

- “Develop learning communities at each school level that will help students improve their academic achievement, achieve excellence and become life-long learners.
- Improve the communication between the home and the school.
- Provide training to staff and parents on effective communication between home and school.”⁴⁷

The way he planned on finance his plans is through Abbott funds. PPS will have between \$400 and 800 million to draw from over the next five years for renovating, building, and reforming schools. Moreover, not only did the Abbott decision provide funding to PPS, but it has also given the Superintendent the political capital to try new and innovative programs to increase the performance of the students in the district.

Technology Grant

Because PPS is one of the worst-performing districts in the state they are eligible for additional grants and special programs. In 1998, The New Jersey State Department of Education embarked on a Technology Literacy Challenge Fund for “the three state-operated districts (Newark, Paterson, and Jersey City) in order to create a technology-enriched program in at least one school in the district.”⁴⁸ The grant is to focus on five key goals: 1) equip each classroom with multimedia computers, effective software for instruction, online resources and Internet access; 2) support all teachers through intensive training in computer basics and assistance in developing and implementing a technology-enriched curriculum; 3) raise student academic performance and achievement in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) through effective use of

⁴⁷ Edwin Duroy, Ed.D, State District Superintendent of Schools. Paterson Public Schools Annual Report 1997-1998; July 10, 1998.

⁴⁸ Paterson Public School District Action Form for the New Jersey Technology Literacy Challenge Fund for Technology Model School for year two; May 12, 1999.

technology-enhanced instruction; 4) increase parental/community involvement in the school; and 5) develop a connected learning community that extends beyond the school.⁴⁹

When the Technology Literacy Challenge fund was granted to PPS, School 4, located in the Northside neighborhood of Paterson, was chosen as the designated District technology school.

The Northside neighborhood



Map of Northside neighborhood within Riverview community.

The “Northside” neighborhood, a majority black neighborhood in the Riverview area of the city, faces a much higher concentration of poverty than anywhere else in the

⁴⁹ Ibid.

city.⁵⁰ The community is located north of downtown to which it is connected via two bridges that cross the Passaic River. The neighborhood borders are North 4th St. to the north, Presidential Blvd. to the south, West Broadway to the west, and East Main St. to the east.

The neighborhood is reminiscent of a classic urban renewal neighborhood. The eastern section of the neighborhood is residential, with the front of the houses facing the two schools, School 28 (an elementary school) and School 4 (a middle school). The Riverview Apartment Towers and the Christopher Columbus Housing Projects dominate the western section of the neighborhood, which may have been, at one point, a housing superblock. On the north side of the neighborhood there are dilapidated classic 1950's two-story walk-ups that sit on a hill above the neighborhood and face the downtown.



The Riverview Towers behind School 28.

⁵⁰ City of Paterson, New Jersey Department of Community Development Consolidated Plan: Five Year Strategy 1997-2000; One Year Action Plan.

Neighborhood landmarks are the Riverview Towers, known as “The Towers,” a moderate-income high rise apartment complex that looks much like public housing projects, and the infamous Christopher Columbus Projects, known as CCP, a public housing project earmarked as a HOPE VI project that is in the process of being demolished.



The Christopher Columbus Projects (CCP) before demolition.

The evacuation of the residents from CCP greatly affected the social fabric of the Northside neighborhood. CCP consisted of four buildings with 498 households. All 498 households were given Section 8 vouchers and evacuated 2 years ago. Many of the residents from CCP used their Section 8 vouchers and either moved to another part of the city or moved out of the city altogether.⁵¹

⁵¹ City of Paterson Housing Authority; interview November 12, 1999.



The Christopher Columbus Projects during demolition.

According to a official from the Paterson Housing Authority, residents from CCP met with representatives from the Housing Authority and their development partner to address outstanding issues such as relocation and rehousing. He said the group plans to continue to meet and identify services such as innovative job creation initiatives, initiating commercial development at the site to provide retail jobs for the residents, job training, and on-site life-skills instruction. However, according to one leader in the community most of the former residents either moved across town or out of the city. He does not believe there is much participation from former residents in the planning of the HOPE VI project. He believes that that the developer does not care about the residents and that they are more concerned about making money.

Lastly, the evacuation of the housing project reduced the number of students at the Schools 4 and 28 by approximately 200 students. The evacuation broke the chain of generations of families who went to both Schools 4 and 28.

The Educational Park

For year two of the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund awarded to PPS, MIT received a contract to help develop a technology park that would be located between Schools 4 and 28. The technology park is supposed to link education and technology to the open space between Schools 4 and 28 and involve the community. When Dr. Duroy asked MIT to develop ideas for an educational park he had very little idea of what the park should look like. He left it up to the students in the Workshop from MIT to create a vision for the park. He asked that the park link the two schools, incorporate technology and school curriculum, as well as involve the students and teachers from the two schools in the design of the space.

Conclusion:

Paterson is facing very complex socio-economic problems. These same problems manifest themselves in the day-to-day lives of the residents of Paterson. For that reason it is important to understand the problems and how they might affect the design process for the educational park between Schools 4 and 28. While I do not think the Superintendent intended to use the project as a community development tool when he commissioned it, to my satisfaction it is turning out that way.

Chapter 4 is the story of the communicative design process between the students, parents, staff, and faculty from Schools 4 and 28, the residents from the Northside community, and participants from the Paterson Workshop at MIT.

I agree with Mannheim that “as democratic processes become widespread, it becomes more and more difficult to permit the masses to remain in a state of ignorance.” Mannheim would not restrict his definition to illiteracy, but would include the masses’ lack of experience at participating and intervening in the historical process.

- Paulo Freire⁵²

CHAPTER 4

THE URBAN DESIGN PROCESS: THE EDUCATIONAL PARK

The goal of this chapter is to tell the story⁵³ of what I know and observed about the process of designing the educational park in the Northside neighborhood of Paterson, New Jersey over the past two years. By the end of the chapter, the story will reveal how this project has turned into more than the design of the educational park but has become a way to dialogue critically about the neighborhood while dialoguing about the reform of the schools. Ultimately this chapter is about MIT (“the experts”) listening to and engaging the School 4 and 28 communities and the surrounding Northside neighborhood residents (“the constituents”) in an extended conversation about the schools and the community working collaboratively.

Fall 1998-Summer 1999

After meeting back and fourth between Professor Strickland, Dr. Duroy, who was working on his own ideas for community development for the city, commissioned several projects as year zero projects between PPS and MIT. The year zero projects included

⁵²Freire, Ana Maria Arauja; Macedo, Donald; eds. The Paulo Freire Reader. Continuum Press, New York, 1998; pg. 100.

⁵³This story is a combination of mostly my thoughts of what occurred but is also influenced by thoughts and dialogue with my colleagues, especially Professor Roy Strickland. The whole story, however, is told through my voice and I am wholly responsible for any mistakes in the retelling course of events.

helping to plan and develop curriculum for the Metro-Paterson Academy for Communication and Technology (MPACT), find a site for a science or biology laboratory for the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program at John F. Kennedy High School, finding sites and conceptualizing for four computer club houses, and developing conceptual designs for an educational park between Schools 4 and 28.

In the fall of 1998 the first MIT Paterson Workshop, comprised of a group of MIT graduate students and a MIT Research Associate, led by Architecture Professor Strickland, began doing research on what Paterson would be like if it were to become a “City of Learning.” At the beginning of the spring semester the group presented their design ideas to The Paterson Public Schools Board of Education, The City of Paterson Public Housing Authority, as well as various other interested parties in the city. Over the course of this two-day presentation the various parties in the city engaged in dialogue with the Workshop group about their ideas for the year zero projects. Dr. Duroy, being very encouraged by the buzz in the city as a result of the presentations, deemed it worth while to renew the contract with MIT so the Workshop could continue developing their ideas for the “City of Learning.”

The summer of 1998 Professor Strickland, Jean Riesman, a witty Ph.D. student from the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT, and Timothy Jones, an MIT graduate student in both urban design and planning, would help Stephen Cohen, the District Technology Planner for PPS, design the space and curriculum for the Metro-Paterson Academy for Communication and Technology (MPACT). MPACT is a charter-

like school of design, architecture, and planning that is a part of Eastside High School.⁵⁴

The academy is a partnership between PPS and the New American School Design Project at MIT. One of the Superintendent's goals in establishing MPACT was to explore how to incorporate technology into a quality public school program. Part of the MPACT curriculum is to develop students who could be planners, architects, or designers for their own city. Currently MPACT is comprised of one class of ninth graders. Over the course of the next few years, however, the academy will grow into a high school program for all grades, 9 through 12.

Fall 1999- Information Gathering

In the fall of 1999, a second Paterson Workshop, through a new team of MIT graduate students, the same Research Associate, and Professor Strickland, continued working on the various projects in Paterson. I began working on developing design ideas for an educational park between Schools 4 and 28. When I started the project I had no idea what an educational park was suppose to be. All I knew is that the park had to incorporate the curriculum of the schools with technology. Never the less, I was excited about researching and testing different design ideas for the park.

The first thing I thought of as we discussed the project in Workshop was how to use this project to test the "Neighborhood for Learning" concept. I thought about using

⁵⁴ Eastside High School in Paterson is the same school the movie "Lean on Me" was made about. The movie is about the infamous failing school whose principal, the notorious Joe Clark, also known as "Batman" because he was known to carry a bat to chase off the thugs and drug dealers, drastically reformed in the early 1980's.

the educational park project as the starter project to what might become one of many catalyst projects in developing an integrated learning environment in the neighborhood.⁵⁵

My colleagues and I began focusing on the physical space between the two schools but figured that the success of the park was going to be as a result of the entire neighborhood feeling ownership of it. Therefore, Professor Strickland, Jeff Shumaker, a

⁵⁵ The “Neighborhood for Learning” concept comes from Ernest Boyer’s 1991 book, Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation. While he does not give a specific definition of what a neighborhood is he does describe the components of what a neighborhood for learning should be like. He says that a neighborhood for learning should offer children some way to learn in each and every place they go. He says that neighborhoods should have “literally dozens of well-marked, child-friendly spaces and places for learning.”

Boyer implies that each neighborhood that is striving to become a “neighborhood for learning” must have an affirmative effort by a cross-section of stakeholders in the community trying to integrate learning in every part of the community. One way of forging this integration is the creation of a committee that represents a cross-section of individuals who live, work, and interact with the neighborhood. This committee works to identify community assets and tries to create linkages between the existing resources. The committee then tries to identify projects that would help build capacity, spark economic development, and leverage physical revitalization in the neighborhood.

Although Boyer, in his book Ready to Learn, coined the term “neighborhood for learning,” is not one clear, well-defined formal theory. It is an idea that explores educational reform as the relationship between neighborhoods and places for learning they provide.

One of the first people to write extensively about education reform, schools, and neighborhoods was John Dewey. In his book Education and Experience, Dewey discusses the importance of learning as “intelligently directed development of the possibilities inherent in ordinary experience.”¹ He argues that, instead of students being passive spectators waiting for the educator to supply them with information, education should be grounded in and relevant to one’s social conditions.

Dewey asserts that society will be integrated only artificially if we keep our focus only on the school system itself and not the whole picture. In The School and Society he presents a series of diagrams showing the connection between the home, business, and university life. He says learning should not be a composite of isolated parts but an organic experience where learning is carried back and articulated through just about everything.

Dr. James Comer, a psychiatrist at Yale University’s Child Study Center, developed the Comer School Development Program (SDP). Comer’s model of educational reform is based on the assumption that the process of change in schools is the process of relationship and community building. Comer says: “our conclusion is that most programs designed to improve schooling fail because they do not adequately address the developmental needs of children and the potential for conflict in the relationship between home and school, among school staff, and among staff and students. Many problems stem from the first difficult contact between home, student, and school which initiates a process in which administrators, staff, and students begin to struggle for power.” This “whole village” concept emphasizes on building good relationships among relevant adults--the school staff, the principal, and community members--for the benefit of the children. The theoretical basis for SDP emerges from four main principles of human ecology: (1) the community is the client; (2) the reduction of the use of community resources that maintain the status quo; (3) strengthening community resources; and (4) planning for change. SDP views the child as part of the family unit and the neighborhood as well, as part of the school community. The emphasis is on changing the social structures and building local capacity and enterprise.

MIT graduate student who is a dual degree candidate in planning and architecture, and I spent the entire fall semester doing research on the neighborhood, the two schools, the school district, as well as the city as a whole.

➤ September 13, 1999

Professor Strickland met with Anne Carter, the principal of School 28 who is a classy lady who parks her Mercedes as close to the School 28 building as she can get it without scratching it; Julian Jenkins, the principal of School 4 who is the type of principal every one loves and respects because of his cool, yet firm nature, Jean Riesman, who became the studio instructor at (MPACT); and Rosetta Wilson, the vice-principal at School 28. The principals from Schools 4 and 28 agreed to identify and coordinate representative members from their school communities to help with the planning of the educational park. Professor Strickland agreed to produce a memorandum describing the park's design process for distribution to the faculty and staff at Schools 4 and 28 (See Appendix A). Jean agreed to organize an educational park design project as part of the MPACT curriculum to be presented as part of the design process. The point of this meeting was to start the design process by introducing various stakeholders to each other.

That same day Professor Strickland met with members of the staff and faculty at School 4 to begin to brainstorm about the space. He asked the group to think about what they would want the space to look like if they could design it any way they wanted. During the meeting it was suggested that there be some kind of physical and programmatic connection between the two schools. It was also suggested that a dome be

placed over the two schools for safety reasons. By the end of the meeting a list of items was developed that would be pursued as a part of the design process.

➤ September 27, 1999

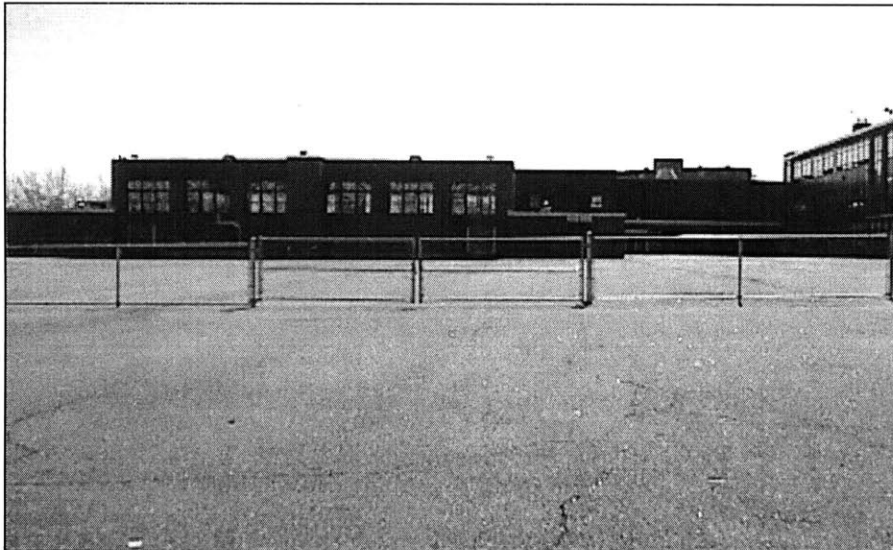
Several MIT students from the Workshop met with Dr. Duroy in Paterson to discuss the projects the Workshop would be working on that semester. He said that over the next five years more than \$400 million dollars would be invested in Paterson Public Schools. He said his mission is to parlay this investment in education with the rest of the city to (1) help stabilize the city neighborhoods through investing in the entire community, (2) improve security for people of all ages, and (3) improve the cities real estate values. It was clear that he believed that it is critical to link schools, community, and investment dollars in order to assure a better future for everyone in the city. He says that it is important to include the community in the process of our design projects. One of his primary goals is to get the students in the schools to think about and to share their perspectives about their communities. He also said that his ultimate goal with the projects he is embarking on with MIT is to raise students' test scores. He says that higher test scores are the measure of success for any program and for himself.

➤ October 15, 1999

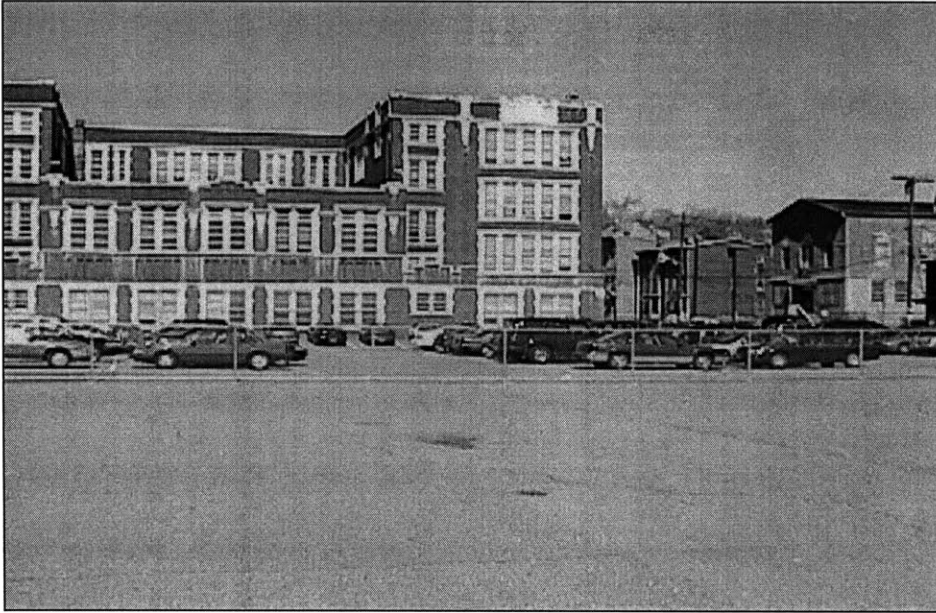
This was my first focused visit to Paterson. My first and previous visit to the city was packed with tours and meetings, not to mention I was a little disoriented, so I did not have a chance to really spend much time getting to know what Patterson was all about. However, for the little time I was there I found the city to be very vibrant. I loved seeing

all of the Black and Latino people walking around the city and hearing the hip hop and salsa music blaring from different cars. I was pleased to see nothing had changed since my visit three weeks before.

Professor Strickland, Ahsha Safai, a MIT graduate student in the Workshop, and I went to the Northside first thing that morning so we could see the students from the two schools at play. I was not surprised to see the play area was a huge parking lot between the two schools. I was told that before the first Paterson Workshop made a suggestion to the Superintendent that fences be put up to separate where the students played and where the teachers parked, that the students darted in and out of the parked cars for play space. It amazed me that even though there was a huge space for the students to play the teachers cars dominated the space. Non the less, I was excited to see the parcel of land we would be designing with two school and neighborhood communities.



Paved open space facing back of School 28.



Paved open space facing left side of School 4.

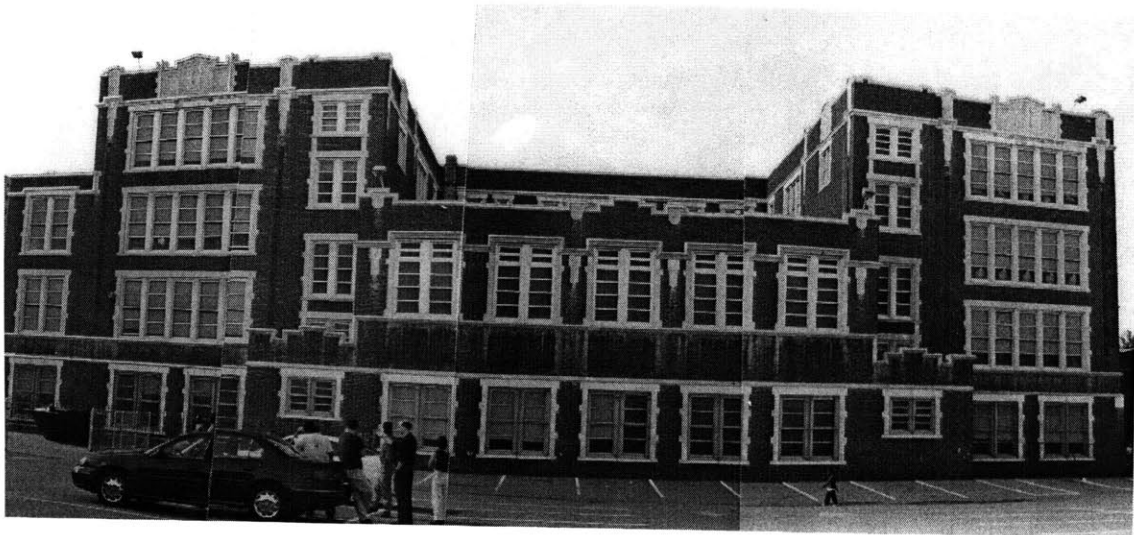
Next my attention turned to the two schools. School 28, an elementary school, reminded me of army barracks. The building was long and dark and the windows are not really windows but thick pieces of weathered plastic that had turned yellow over time.



Front of School 28 on Temple Street.

I assumed the plastic was put there to prevent all of the windows from getting broken but I could not help but wonder what it was like on the inside of the school. I wondered if the school was as oppressive on the inside as it looked on the outside. Moreover, it reminded me of the small elementary school I attended in Texas in a city that, on my side of town, was not quite urban or suburban. I was surprised to see such a suburban looking school building like this used for a school in such an urban environment.

On the other hand, School 4, a middle school, reminded me of the high schools I had seen in movies about the 50's like *Grease*. School 4 is a distinguished looking school with its front facing the small houses across the street. Although the school had the same thick plastic, opaque windows, there was a dignified character about it.



Paterson Workshop participants on left side of School 4.

As for the neighborhood itself, it seemed to have a worn-down look to it. Clearly the houses had been built many decades before and were not shy about showing their age.

Also, there seemed to be a need for some growing room as there was very little green open space. It was no wonder the paved lot between the two schools was in line for redesign. A good design for the space could have a great effect on the urban form of the community. Non the less, it was 8:00 in the morning and the neighborhood was alive with screaming kids, adults rushing off to work, and us--Professor Strickland, Ahsha, and I--the MIT folks on our way to meet Reverend Stafford Miller whose church is across the street and a half block away from School 4 on North 1st Street.

Reverend Miller is the pastor of the United Methodist Church. He reminded me of one of the southern preachers I grew up with. He had an air about him that he knew something about everything. I got a definite feeling that he was a leader in the community and that he felt very passionate about his role. Just before we started our discussion with him, he marched to little boys, one around the age of 6 and the other around the age of 8, who had sent home from school that day. He marched the boys into the room and instructed them to tell us why they were at the church in the middle of the day instead of school. I was impressed with his love and concern for the boys expressed through his firm discipline.

After that we spent over an hour talking with him about the Northside neighborhood and the neighborhood's use of the park. When we asked the Reverend what he would like to see the park look like he said he wanted to have a park with a "[water] fountain" and "gazebo" where the elders and children in the community could sit and socialize. It was interesting that he wanted a suburban-like park in the middle of the hood. (Never the less, by the end of the semester when we began to produce our conceptual drawings of the

park, he would not be the only one to visualize the educational park as a duplicate of one of Frederick Law Olmsted's⁵⁶ own).

When ask specific questions about the neighborhood the Reverend talked about neighborhood factions being divided between the renters and the owners. He also talked about the demographics of the neighborhood changing and the need for people in the community to learn to speak Spanish. He then began talking about the role of his church changing from “[on a] mission to serve” to “community building.” He said the Northside community was dealing with serious issues of the quality of life. I left the meeting feeling very excited about talking to the Reverend. I was eager to meet more people in the community and find out as much as I could about what was going on.

Next we with we met with Julian Jenkins, the principal from School 4, and Gerald Thaxton, a compassionate middle-aged man who lived in the neighborhood and was the School/Community Liaison at School 4. We talked about School 4 and the existing schoolyard but spent quite a bit of time talking about the surrounding community. Julian was particularly concerned about the young people in the neighborhood between the ages of 15 and 25 who had dropped out of school. He said it is not that they are not intelligent but that the school system failed them. He said he hoped to capture some of them through some of the technology the school had and was getting. I got a strong feeling of urgency from Julian. I felt that he was very concerned about the young people in the neighborhood and the tension in the neighborhood that manifested itself in the animosity between the community residents and the schools' faculty and staff. He also expressed concern about

⁵⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted planned parks such as Central Park in New York City and the Emerald Necklace in Boston, MA. Olmsted parks are know for their thick vegetarian, lush landscaping, and scenic views.

gentrification taking place in the neighborhood. He spoke about the Christopher Columbus Housing Project and how the evacuation not only changed the school, he lost about hundred and fifty students, but changed the social fabric of the neighborhood.

I left the meeting with Julian and Gerald feeling the same sense of urgency Julian had as he talked about the neighborhood. I was also eager to see how the faculty and staff at School 28 felt about the neighborhood. When we walked into School 28 I was pleased to see the long dark hallways were alive with colorful bulletin boards. One bulletin board in particular caught my eye because of the letters written backwards in a child's handwriting. The bulletin board read, "This is A Comer School." We continued walking down the hall to the Principals' Office where Carra Jordan, a grandmother-like woman who was one of the school social workers, met us. She escorted us down more dark, gloomy halls until we arrived at the tiny office she shared with Joanne Pickatello, who sat behind her desk the whole time we were there fading in and out of the conversation, the Learning Specialist; one other social worker, and Mike Kline, who serves as many roles in the school. Mr. Kline serves as a quasi-counselor/social worker and physical education teacher. He lives in the neighborhood and is seen and respected by both the staff and faculty from the school but also by the folks in the neighborhood.

During this meeting it became clear to me the role CCP played in the neighborhood. Unanimously all of the staff said the school and the community became much calmer since the close of CCP a year and a half before. They told stories of the drama going on in the projects making its way into the school through the children of the two adults who happen to be fighting that week. They also talked about all of the drinking

Olmstead built parks that would act as a green oasis in the mist of a dense urban center.

of alcohol that would take place on the weekends in the parking lot of the school. They talked about people in the neighborhood just hanging around and the lack of space for the kids to play. So they were excited at the prospect of part of the parking lot being turned into a park of some sort.

I left Paterson that weekend with a lot on my mind. I thought about the condition of Black people in America and the projects. I thought about the librarian from School 28 who we talked with after we wandered into the library while walking around the school. She was very saddened by the evacuation of CCP and said the loss of the CCP residents was a great loss to her literacy program. She talked very passionately about the students and parents who used her library religiously. She talked about the parents who would volunteer their time in the library helping kids to read. Most devastating to her, it seemed, was the severing of the generations of families who attended both School 28 and School 4 who were great assets to the school and community. I thought about her sadness and the Reverend and the way he handled those kids with tough love. I thought about the urban environment and I returned to my thoughts of Black people in America and I was extremely excited about the prospects of this project changing the Northside community.

➤ November 12, 2000

I returned to Paterson the following month to spend more time in the Northside neighborhood as well as spend more time in the city in general. I stayed with the family of one of the MPACT students, LaToya Matthews, a clear leader in the rough who reminded me of my fourteen-year-old cousin LaToya who lives in Texas. After walking through the city from LaToya's house on the eastside of the town we went to the Paterson Housing

Authority to get information about the CCP/HOPE VI project in the Northside neighborhood. I expected to be greeted with individuals who could not wait to tell me all about the project, after all, the city is not that big. Unfortunately, however, we planned our visit the same day as a major departmental meeting so it took a while before anyone was able to speak with us.

We finally met with Wifredo Vasquez who did not work specifically on HOPE VI but because it was a small part of the scope of his work he was able to provide us with some of the information we were looking for. I was under the impression that after the meeting at City Hall with the first MIT Workshop that spring that PPS and the Paterson Housing Authority had discussed putting a computer clubhouse in the Slezak-Thompson Memorial Community Center, also know as the Christopher Columbus Community Center, that was across the street from CCP on Temple Street. However, Mr. Vasquez told me that no concrete plans had been made between the Housing Authority and PPS. I left that meeting with the impressions that some of the partnerships I had assumed were talking place in the city between PPS and other public offices were either stagnant or non-existent.

After our meeting at the Housing Authority we walked north to the Northside neighborhood to see what the neighborhood was like near the end of the day. It was close to 5:00 in the evening and I figured the neighborhood would have a different life in the evening than in the middle of the day. Toya and I started on Main Street and walked over to West Broadway to see what the “commercial area” was like. West Broadway was a very busy street. People were walking up and down the street talking with each other and going in and out of the small stores. There was a definite difference in the fabric of the neighborhood on this side of the neighborhood. It was considered the “commercial

district” of the neighborhood even though there were only about ten small stores on the entire strip. We then walked further up West Broadway and into the hills above the Northside community. The houses were larger but just as worn down as the houses on the bottom of the hill. As we walked back down the hill on Halden Street to North Main Street I notice police stopping cars as they turned the corner from North Main to make a left on Clinton Street. I could definitely feel tension between the folks on the corner of North Main and Clinton Street and the police. However, there was a calmness about the situation as a whole; no one really seemed to be bothered. We watched car after car get stopped and pull over to the side as we walked toward “The Towers” where a family friend of La Toya’s lived.

➤ November 14, 2000

I received a phone call from Laura Allen, an alum of the MIT Media Lab Program whose consulting firm, Vision Education, was hired by PPS to work on getting the four computer clubhouses off the ground. Her first clubhouse for PPS was going to be in the Northside neighborhood. She said that the neighborhood is fractionalized and that there was someone who was connected to both the School 4 and the community who was not telling all the residents of the neighborhood about the community meetings to discuss the computer clubhouses. As a result attendance to the meetings were low. Only after more people came to some later meetings that were publicized on the web and through the community access channel, did she find out that a lot of the community was not being informed about the meetings. She was concerned that there was a community leader who speaks mostly Spanish and was left out of the loop. Nevertheless, a board was put

together based on the members of the community who did attend the meetings. After our conversation it became ever clearer to me that we needed to try to talk to get as many different constituents involved in the process as we could and we could not rely on one means of getting the word out about the planning process.

➤ November 15, 1999

I met with Charlotte Anderson, a parent of students who attended both School 4 and 28; Maria A. Benavides, a parent of a student at School 4; Michael Brown, a teacher from School 4; Pam James, the school nurse from School 4; Phyllis McCraw, the Education Specialist from Vision Education; Reverend Miller; Brenda McMilla, a parent of a student at School 4; Gayle Smith, a parent of a student at School 4; Gerald Thaxton; and Vernon Woody, a resident of the Northside neighborhood; and Laura Allen for a trip to MIT to see the Media Lab. The trip was planned so the parents, teachers, and neighborhood residents could see a community-based computer clubhouse in action, talk to different people about experience with the computer clubhouse start-up, and explore success factors and key considerations for a successful clubhouse.

I met the group at the Media Lab and introduced myself. I had met the Reverend and Gerald Thaxton in Paterson and spoken to Laura on the phone the day before but my first introduction to the rest of the group. The group was very interested in why I was interested in Paterson. I explained to them that I was interested in looking at urban design process and education in communities of color. Brenda McMilla, a very sincere woman in her early thirties, expressed concern that various “researchers and consultants come to the Northside telling us that we are poor. They prod over us as though we are helpless

children.” I explained how I too shared her concern and hoped my research would speak to some of those researchers and consultants. The group then went into the Media Lab where they listened to a short presentation about some of the projects several graduate students at the Lab were working on. The group became very enthusiastic about the idea of having a computer clubhouse in the neighborhood and seemed to be ready to get started planning for it right away.

I spent the part of the afternoon with the group at a computer clubhouse started by some graduate students from the Media Lab started in Boston five years earlier. The group was excited about the clubhouse but did not seem to understand how the whole planning process was going to work. I got the impression the Laura had a process all worked out in her mind but had not shared it with the group. I left the group that afternoon feeling a sense of urgency to make sure that in our process for the educational park we continued to express that the park would be developed as a result of design ideas put fourth by the stakeholders. I wanted to remind them that we were not designing this park but rather translating and synthesizing their ideas into visuals.

➤ November 16, 1999

Professor Strickland met with the School-Based Management Team (Louise Albert, the Director of the Technology Challenge Project Grant; Dollie Daniel, a teacher; R. Ivey, a teacher; Julian Jenkins; Gerald Thaxton; Susan Ware, a teacher; and Gwen Wells, the Home/School Council President) from School 4. Mr. Jenkins informed the staff and faculty of the meeting but only eight people, including Professor Strickland, attended the meeting. We were very conscious about getting more people involved. Even though there

was a small turnout, the meeting was productive. It was at this meeting that more about the tension between the staff and faculty from the schools and the neighborhood residents was revealed. Several teachers expressed concern about losing their parking to the park. They said they felt nervous about parking on side streets. It was clear that they were concerned about their safety and did not want to deal with the surrounding community if they did not want to. When asked to make a sketch of their ideal design for the space one of the participants drew a parking lot in the middle of the space with play space drawn to the side. The sketches ranged from very radical ideas for the space such as the parking in the middle of the space to very modest sketches with green grass and play space covering the entire space.

That same day, the MPACT students made a presentation of their model for the Schools 4 and 28 educational park to a reporter from the *New York Times* as well as Dr. Duroy. The students engaged in the conversation with each other and the reporter with a similar intensity that students at universities engage in. They asked each other interesting probing questions as they looked at the model. This presentation would prepare the students for future presentations at Schools 4 and 28 that would be critical to the design process.

➤ November 22, 1999

Professor Strickland met with the homeroom class representatives from School 4, which was about twenty students to develop concept designs for the park. He thought the charrette with the students could be used for both a design session and also sort of a classroom session where he would encourage the students to not only draw but share their

idea with each other. As each group of students presented their drawings, Professor Strickland was surprised at how many students developed the space with a heavy amount of programmed activities. He expected the students to suggest soft things such as grass and play fields. It became very clear that the students were conscious that there were very few things to do and places to go in Paterson. They wanted the space to be filled with things to do and places to hang out. They drew the space as a sort of place where people from all over the city would come to socialize. They did not talk about education very much at all. It was clear that they were thinking about traveling to different places around the city, having a larger network of people to interact with besides the people in their neighborhood, and thinking about exercising choice in decision-making. The students wanted the space to be a sort of town square.

By the end of the semester, Jeff and I, working closely with Professor Strickland and participants of the Workshop, developed seven visuals and a project report (See Addendum) to articulate our research. We felt we had done quite a bit of research,⁵⁷ although there was still a lot more to do, and were ready to tell the various stakeholders what we had heard from them. We planned to use our visuals as our primary medium for communicating our findings with the schools and the community and were eager to meet with them.

⁵⁷ We visited the site and began conducting interviews with the school principals, school staff such as social workers, teachers, as well as kids. We spoke with residents from the neighborhood, local clergy, as well as a staff person from the Paterson Housing Authority. Other ideas were informed by materials collected by the previous Paterson workshops such as the City of Paterson, New Jersey, Department of Community Development, Consolidated Plan, Five Year Strategy 1997-1998, One Year Action Plan 1997-1998; the Paterson Workshop I&II transcripts from meetings on October 16, 1998, November 16, and March 19-20; "The School of Technology," School 4 1999/2000 Parent/Student Handbook. Moreover, ideas were formed from drawings collected from meetings with parents, teachers, and students from Schools 4 and 28.

Spring 2000-Information Sharing

Professor Strickland and Jeff spent most of January interpreting (they tallied up all of the objects or labels students, teachers, parents put in their pictures) design sketches/concepts produced during Schools 4 and 28 student, teacher, parent meetings held in the fall. Jeff did an analysis of the drawings collected over the previous semester. From that information they identified key ideas and priorities quantified from design sketches/concepts and itemized for use in MIT concept development. The results were then sent to Sandra Howell, Ph.D., Environmental Psychology, for her review.

Also in January, Professor Strickland, Timothy Jones, and I worked with MPACT students to develop concept ideas and a model for Schools 4 and 28. We hoped the model could be a communicative tool. We hoped to use the model to help reinforce some of the ideas people put out by the school and neighborhood communities. The model was part of helping the communities see that this project was going to be a reality.

I also spent much of the end of winter break and the beginning of the spring semester doing follow-up interviews with various individuals I had spent quite a bit of time with in the fall. From the very beginning of my involvement in the process I told everyone I spoke with that I was not only participating in the process but I was also observing it as a part of research I was doing for my thesis. I told them I wanted to hear their thoughts about the divide between the schools and the community as well as their thoughts about the prospects of the design process for the educational park bringing the two groups together.

➤ January 12, 2000

I returned to United Methodist Church to follow-up with Reverend Miller about school/community relations and to talk more about the design process for the educational park. Since our last meeting the Reverend got a copy of the Technology Challenge Fund Grant. He was surprised that I had not seen grant. He talked about how the grant was suppose to be a “community” grant but no one from “the community” was ever asked for input when the grant was written. He said that the community was told about the project not asked about the project, and, therefore, the community was not part of vision building. When I asked him to clarify exactly what “the project” was that he was referring to he responded that it had to do with the whole grant but in particular the computer clubhouse.

He also expressed surprise and dismay the “MIT was being compensated for their role in the project.” He thought MIT’s role in the project was voluntary not consulting. He said he felt the whole project was “colonialistic.” He said the process was not empowering or enhancing the community and that the project seemed “okay in concept but not in reality.” To him the project was in the hands of a very few people and the right hand did not know what the left hand was doing.

He said that the educational park must be designed by the community. That “last fall a group of students from Princeton came to the neighborhood and talked to no one.”⁵⁸ He said that trust is gone from both the school community and the Northside community. He said that the divide between the school and the community is deep. He wished the

⁵⁸ According to a newspaper article these Princeton students were in the neighborhood researching the housing stock in the Northside neighborhood in order to make design suggestion to the Mayor’s Office.

school and neighborhood communities were friendlier because it is essential to a healthy neighborhood. “However,” he questioned, “how can that be possible when the teachers drive into the neighborhood from the suburbs and park their fancy cars in the lot leaving no where for the children to play?”

After this meeting it was clear to me that not everyone had a clear grasp of our role in the design process and because of it, some of them did not trust the process. I knew that something definitely had to be done about the misunderstanding of our role in the process but did not know what to do next. I left the meeting with the question of who was really controlling the process.

I then went over to School 4 to meet with Gerald Thaxton. He said he was fed up with the Community Clubhouse project. He said he was “tired of white folks telling us what to do.” He said “the community has to get together.” When I asked him to define community he said community is “the people who the politicians do not run to giving them crumbs.” He then began to tell me about the planning for the computer clubhouse. He said that in July 1998 several residents formed an advisory board once they found out about the grant. He then said the consultants wanted to be in control of the decision-making for the grant so there were a lot of “parking lot meetings” where decisions were being made without the entire group.

He said there is a lot of development going on in the community and HOPE VI is a testament of deals that were made before the community was able to get involved. He said that because the community was not involved that the project it is destined to fail. He also pointed out that there was a lot of consultants are making money in all of these projects and none of those consultants were Black or from the neighborhood.

As I left my meeting with Gerald I realized how important it was for us to make a clear distinction between the educational park design process and the computer clubhouse project. I thought about the confusion stemming from the fact that the two projects were funded from the same grant.

From School 4 I went to meet with Louise Albert the Technology Challenge Grant Director, I hoped she would help clear-up some of the confusion with the processes for the two grants. However, it was not long in our conversation before I was taken aback by her lack of clarity about all of the parts of the Technology Grant. However, it all made sense when she explained to me that she is a normally a teacher not an administrator but at the beginning of the school year she was asked to take the position. She said she was “still trying to figure out” her role in the project.

Moreover, it was not long before I was surprised again when she said she had not had any conversation with the faculty and staff from School about the project. I was surprised to hear that given that she is the grant administrator and the project effects both schools. She did say that she had a Community Awareness Team who was the link between the school and the neighborhood so we scheduled a meeting with them for my next visit.

That night I met with the Computer Clubhouse Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee comprised of Vernon Woody, a community resident, Charlotte Anderson and Brenda McMillan, who are community residents who have children who attend both School 4 and 28, Julian Jenkins, Gerald Thaxton, and Laura Allen who facilitated the meeting. I expected a productive meeting and a lot of decisions about the clubhouse being already made, afterall, I did see part of this group in Cambridge in

November. I expected the Advisory Group to have a better relationship with Laura based on the enthusiasm I saw at MIT. I was also surprised to see that the Advisory Board was so small for the same reason. I did not get the feeling that there was enough people on the Board to really make the project a success. Moreover, it was clear, by the thick tension in the room, that there were some fundamental issues about the planning for the clubhouse that needed to be put out on the table. I did not get the impression that the Advisory Board did not understand the scope of the clubhouse project or the technology behind it.

After talking with Laura further I realized that the two groups' roles, the Advisory Board and Laura's, as the consultant, had not been clearly defined. It became increasingly important to me that as we approached our part of the grant that we explain our role in the grant from bottom to top.

➤ January 26, 2000

Parent Outreach/Community Issues Team: Dr. Paul Tillman, School Psychologist; Pamela James, School Nurse; Mary Crooms, LDTC; Daniel DiGiacomo, Guidance Counselor; James Hargrove, Special Programs Teaching Assistant; Gerald Thaxton, Louise Albert. I thought I was going to be observing a strategic planning committee that was going to talk about all of the wonderful things they were planning in order to bring the community and the school closer together. I was very surprised when Louise introduced me as a community development specialist and that I was going to advise them on ways to get out into the community. They were just as surprised when I told them I was at the meeting not to participate but listen, that I was not at the meeting as a consultant. The

room was already tension when I walked in but it got even more tense after I told them what I was there to do and what I was there not to do.

Needless to say, I was not surprised that they were the Community Outreach Committee and not only had not done any community outreach but they did not know where to start. I left the meeting just as frustrated as they seemed to be. It was ever clear to me that the teachers were not very concerned about what was going on outside their windows. Maybe it was the thick yellow plastic used as windows or the fact that they drove their cars practically into the School lobby every morning that they did not realize that the success of their school hinged on the health of the surround community.

I then went over to School 28 and met with Ms. Galina who is the Comer Whole School Reform Implementation. She said it was the schools 8th year with Comer model. When I asked her about the schools role in communicating with the surrounding neighborhood she said Site Based/Community Committee as part of the Comer model but she admitted that the committee had not done any communicating with the surrounding committee. She said that teachers and faculty from the school communicated with other Comer Schools more than they did the surrounding community or School 4. She admitted that there was animosity between community and neighborhood and that the perception of community was a very real barrier in trying to make that school/community connection. Among issues of general safety she said that there were definite issues of race and class that was keeping the teachers inside the school and not out in the neighborhood.

I then returned back to School 4 to meet with Mr. Jenkins. When I asked him how he felt the planning process for the Technology Grant he said the process was slow and hard. Since School 4 is the designated technology school it bares the weight of the whole

grant. For that reason he said some teachers did not want to have anything to do with the grant while other teachers are learning their role with the grant. He also felt that the community had to be better educated about the grant. He said that it was important that the community take ownership of the grant in order to create the type of school that parents are eager to send children to and the teachers comfortable sending their own children to the school as well. In regard to the school/community divide he talked about parking being a major issue for the teachers. At the same time he talked about how lucky the teachers were to even have on-site parking because they were one of very few schools in the district with that amenity. He also talked about the existence of a strong school/community divide because the community is galvanize by two individuals that keep neighborhood tension high.

I left the meeting with Julian hoping that the design process we were engaging with the community in, would help relieve some of the tension and frustration I heard and felt that day and not contribute to it.

➤ January 28, 2000

Roy met with Dr. Edwin Duroy to review status of Schools 4 and 28 project and other projects part of PPS/MIT collaboration. This meeting was extremely important because it would be determined if the Workshop would be able to continue to work on the projects for the next six months (The previous contract ended at the end of the fall semester).

Duroy was very satisfied with the projects and renewed the contract for six more months.

➤ March 6

Dr. Duroy and Stephen Cohen, District Technology Coordinator, came to MIT to see the Workshop present the preliminary concepts for the projects that they had been working on last semester. I expected Duroy to say that he was unsure about some of the ideas we presented about the School 4 and 28 project; after all, based on what we heard from the school and neighborhood communities we were suggesting that the space be developed into some what of a community square. To the contrary, however, by the end of our ten-minute presentation, Duroy was very excited about the ideas. He was so excited that he wanted to start building that day.

After the meeting I felt confident that when we presented these ideas back to the communities, we had not only the financial support of the Superintendent, after all, he is the client, but the political approval of the design ideas. Therefore, whenever the community was ready to put the design ideas into construction documents we had the support from the Superintendent to prepare to do so.

➤ March 11, 2000

Roy Strickland, Jeff, and I met with Sandra Howell, who reminded me of one of those intelligent, gun-totting women you see in those old western movies, who is an environmental psychologist, to review the sketches, preliminary concept, and to develop a presentation strategy for Schools 4 and 28 and surrounding community. She said that we had to work harder to get residents from the community involved. She suggested that we use neighborhood residents in visioning for the space by planning a community day in the space where various stakeholders can actually come and interact with the space as they

pan for it. She said the students and young people in the neighborhood could help run that part of the design process. After the meeting I felt very confident about her suggestions. She not only confirmed what we had been thinking we needed to do but she gave us an excellent suggestion on how to do it.

➤ Meeting March 31, 2000



(Front row, l to r) Students from School 4; teacher from School 28; (Second row, l to r) Timothy Jones, Workshop participant; Gerald Thaxton, School/Community Liaison for School 4; me; and Jeff Shumaker, Workshop participant.

This meeting was a very critical meeting in the design process. It was the first time anyone from the school or neighborhood communities would see the design ideas they

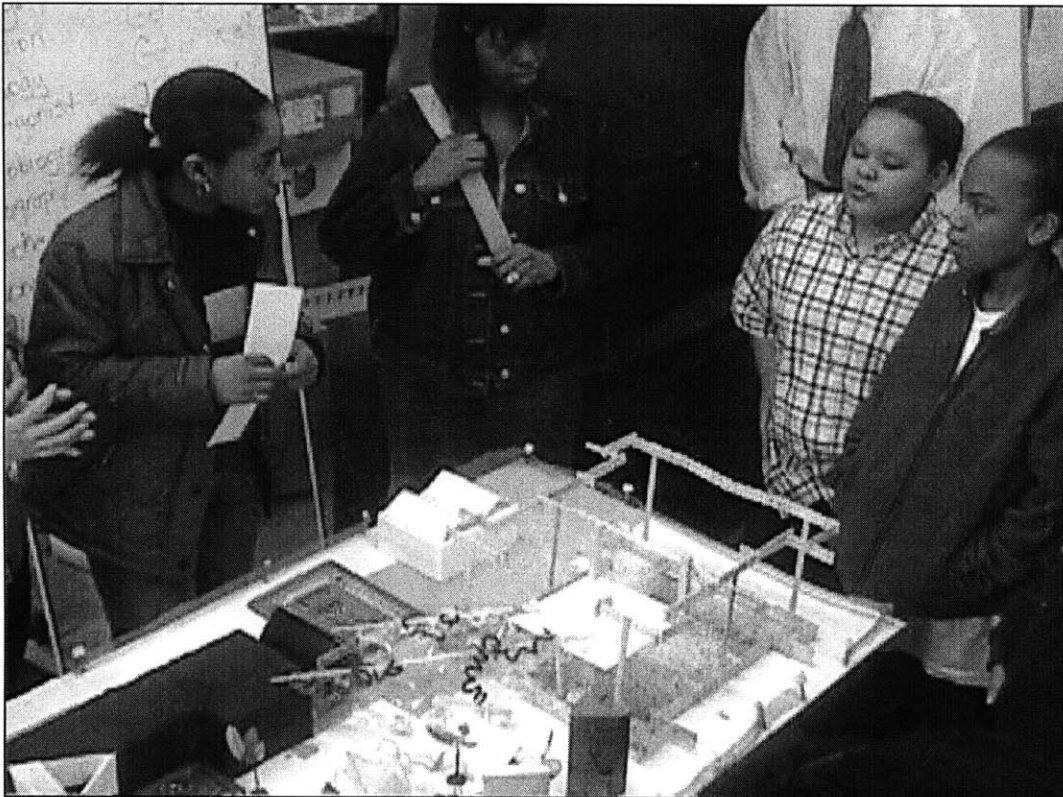
had been giving us all semester, visualized. The meeting was held at School 4. We expected the meeting to be held in the auditorium in order to fit the students, staff, and faculty from both Schools 4 and 28. However, the meeting only consisted of two teachers from School 28, the class representatives of 5th through 8th graders at School 4 (which was about 15 students), the MPACT students, and us, the MIT folks--Professor Strickland, Jeff, Timothy Jones, and I.

Despite the lack of attendance the meeting was very productive. The students from School 4 were very bright. In the beginning when we were doing introductions all the students said they wanted to go to college and two students in particular, Magnolia and Hector, said they wanted to go to Spelman College and Harvard, respectively. There was a marvelous exchange of dialogue between the students from School 4, MPACT students, us folks from MIT, and the faculty and staff from School 4 and 28.



Magnolia, an 8th grade student from School 4.

There was a powerful exchange of dialogue during which kids from School 4 took over. They commented on safety at the schools and how they were concerned that the design ideas did not have representation of separate play spaces for the older kids and the younger kids. They were concerned that the younger kids would get trampled.

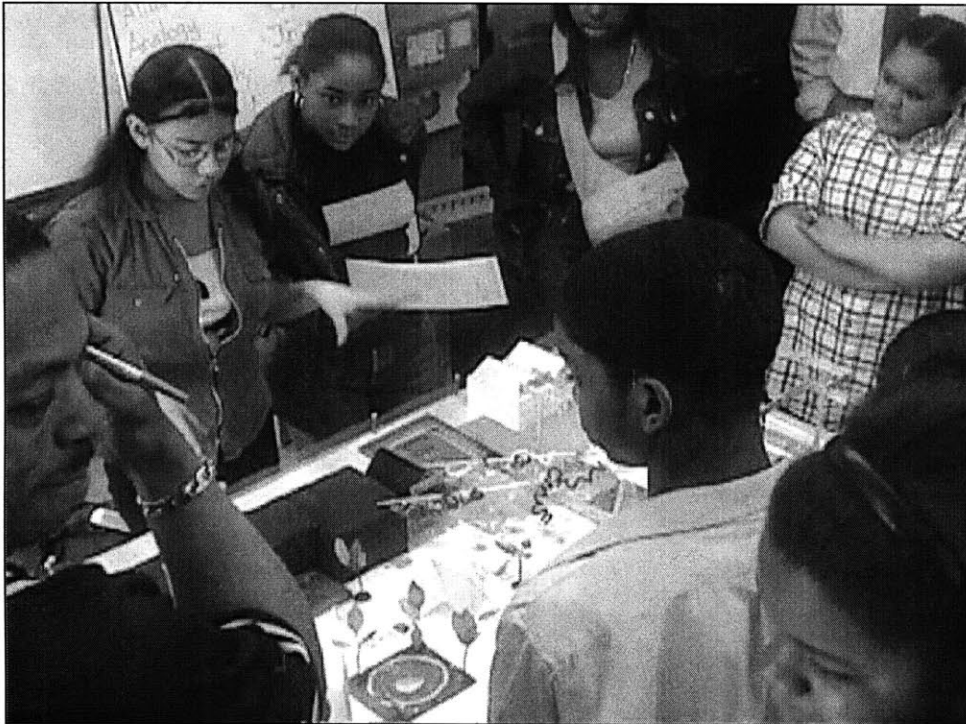


Two MPACT students in dialogue with two students from School 4.

It was very interesting to listen to the teachers engaging in serious dialogue with the students from School 4 and MPACT in order to “make sense” of the design suggestions.

It was the model made by the MPACT students that really enhanced the conversation. It was during the critique of the model that the MPACT students and the students from School 4 began talking about working together to go to the school board to petition for

better security guards. They also talked about getting people in the neighborhood together to start getting the word out about the project. It was exciting to see the conversation moving from the physical project into process.

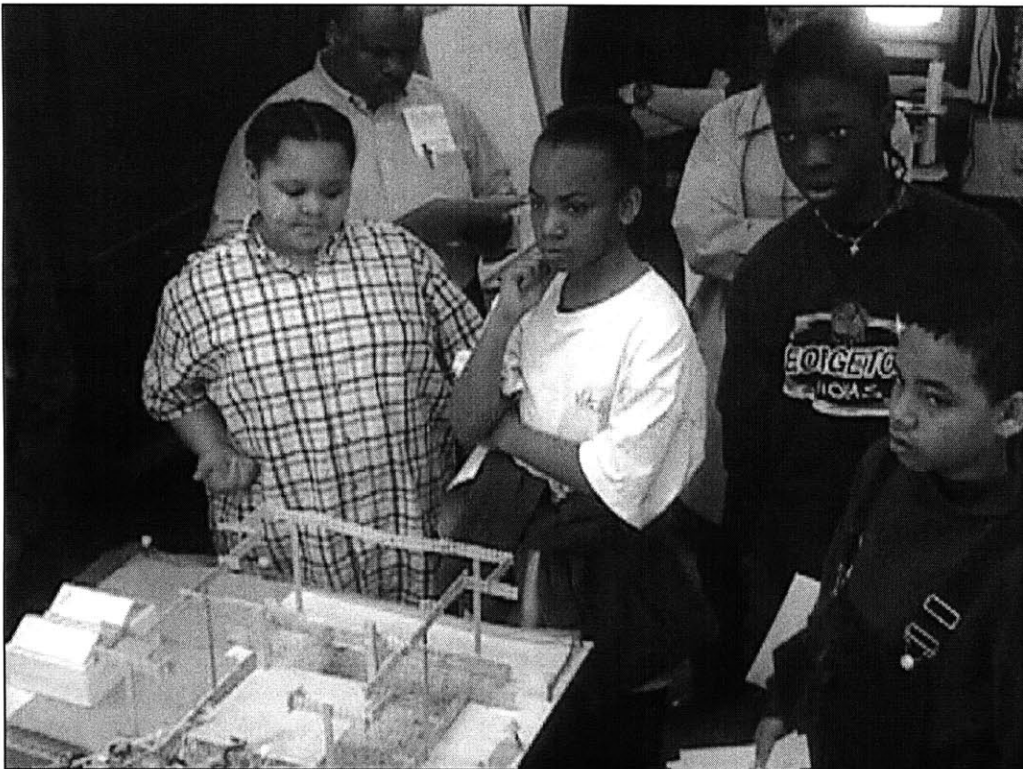


Mr. Kline (far left) in discussion with a School 4 student (far right). (Back) MPACT student leading discussion about the model with students from School 4.

Mr. Kline, from School 28 and Mr. Thaxton agreed form a committee of the staff and faculty of their two schools to get together and talk about the project in order to help build better communication between the two schools. They also talked about the need to go out into the community disseminate information to the neighborhood block captains. They both agreed that the schools will do better if neighborhood does better.

This meeting was the pinnacle of the design process because teachers from both Schools 4 and 28 were talking about organizing an activity outside of the design process

that we, the MIT folks were facilitating. It was very exciting to see the teachers excited and determined about organizing their respective staffs to meet and talk about not only school issues but community issues. It was great to see that both of the teachers who were organizing these activities were both staff at their schools but they were also neighborhood residents. To me that meant that there was a greater chance for not only organizing but also sustained organizing.



Students from School 4 critiquing the model for the educational park built by MPACT students.

Even more exciting to me was listen to the MPACT and School 4 students talking about going to the next School Board Meeting and petitioning them for more security guards. They exchanged e-mails and continued to talk together even after the meeting was over. Most of the students from School 4 skipped their lunchtime so they could continue

talking with the MPACT students about community organizing. They talked about going to neighborhood businesses and door-to-door to let the community know about the project. It was very rewarding to hear this kind of discussion going on between both the teachers as well as the students.

➤ Meeting April 14, 2000 at School 4

This meeting was also a very critical meeting. The meeting was held at School 28 in the cafeteria. Again we expected more staff and faculty but we were particularly disappointed that there were no students. We left the publicity for the meeting up to Mrs. Carter and I suppose she decided that organizing the students into a meeting would be too much trouble. The meeting was mostly women who responded to the visuals as though all the children were their children or their nieces and nephews. Based on all most of the design workshops and charrettes I thought that the teachers would focus on the lack of parking designed in the space. Only one man and he was very concerned about parking as well as who would pay for the project. I anticipated that parking would be an issue but it was not. Teachers were not very concerned about the fact that parking was being taken away at all. They were more concerned about where the parking was represented in the conceptual drawing. Some years ago a car ran up Temple Street into the kindergarten area. It is the same area we had a bubble that represented where parking could go. They were very puzzled by that saying that the younger kids have no money to buy things from there, parking too close to the school; They were more concerned, however, with the openness of the space and their need for more security. They believed that the space was too programmed with activities that did not address the needs of the younger constituents

of the project. The teachers said they did not have time to stress about safety issues. They wanted a space that was more negotiable that they could better supervise. Safer space for kids. Several teachers suggested that there be a bubble placed over the school to keep the outside out. One teacher told me of a case where some in the neighborhood broke a teacher's windshield a few weeks ago.

The most interesting part of the discussion was the exchange between the teachers and the MPACT students. Teachers really appreciated work done by the MPACT students. The teachers talked to the students like mothers and aunts. It was interesting to see the teachers skeptical about some of the design ideas presented by the students but they engaged in a dialogue with the students they did not just end the conversation saying that their ideas were unrealistic. The teachers suggested to the students that they program more space for the children to run free. Overall the teachers felt that the space needed to be better programmed for kids in the pre-K to 4th grade. I left the meeting with a feel of accomplishment. Again, the visuals and model were catalyst for meaningful dialogue. We had learned that we needed to better translate the needs of younger children into the visuals and model we present to the schools and neighborhood communities.

Conclusion

As I began to take a deep look at the process we engaged in, in Paterson, I began to examine the process in two different ways. Forester, in his book, Planning in the Face of Power, states that “the conventional view that design is a search through a solution of

space of alternatives is problematic.”⁵⁹ He asks: “Just who is conducting the search? By answering ‘the designer,’ we replace a problem with a label. Any theory of design must address this problem: the relation between the design professional and the people affected by the designer’s work.”⁶⁰ He then offers an alternative for looking at design as a search and posits that design is a process of “making sense together.” He says that “designing is not simply a matter of master and intuition. It is also a process in which social actors such as planners, architects, and clients seek to “make sense together” quite practically. This common creation of sense lies at the core of the social process of designing: giving meaningful form to a building, a park, a project, a program that is recognizable, coherent, significant, and realizable by a variety of interested parties.”⁶¹

Throughout the process my colleagues and I debriefed, dialogued, as well as shared our concerns about the project and process with a number of various individuals. We were very excited about the process, because of the emphasis placed on meaningful dialogue, having a way of transforming a lot of negative energy that the schools and the surrounding community had for each other into excellent design suggestions. This process has provided the means to allow for interesting conversation to take place by the students, staff, and faculty about not only the schools but the neighborhood and vice versa.

We used our materials (a short memo with a color copy of one of the seven visuals we produced, the seven visuals themselves, as well as the model we help the

⁵⁹ Forester, John. Planning in the Face of Power. University of California Press, 1989; pg. 12.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

MPACT students to design; see Appendix) to help people have something tangible to work with as they critiqued ideas for the educational park. The visuals and model became more than just visuals and a model; they became the central elements of all the various constituents, including ourselves, to “making sense together.” Moreover, the visuals and model became a way for us to not only solicit reactions from the various constituents but to manage the process. The visuals and model became more than representations of what could be; they became a way for the various constituents to articulate deep felt values and conflict between the schools and the community. In the meeting at School 28 on April 14, the teachers were very clear about safety being a major concern for them. Several teachers mentioned, half joking and probably half sincere, that they would not mind having “a dome put over the school.” “To keep neighborhood residents out?” I asked, but no one responded. It was only as a result of this process and the tangible materials that the various stakeholders could begin to dialogue and find solutions for the deep-seeded feelings they felt about each other.

Moreover, because the students from MPACT were able to play a hands on role in the project and process by building and presenting their model, they were about to engage in meaningful dialogue with the students, staff and faculty from the two schools. As a result, the students from School 4 have been communicating with the students from MPACT about organizing the Northside community to participate in the design of the park.

Young people, a group of American society that is systematically disenfranchised, were an integral part of the design process. The students from both MPACT and School 4, especially, were very important in not only critiquing and providing solutions for the

park, but pioneers in beginning to organize action in the community. The students have the ability to make this project work not only for the schools but the neighborhood. They are the solid link between the schools and the community.

My colleagues and I have had a very interesting role in the design process based on the fact that we had to fulfill the agreement of our contract while at the same time putting all of efforts into facilitating a meaningful process. Chapter 5 is a brief reflection on the premise of this thesis that a communicative urban design process can be used as a community development tool.

It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but most involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be praxis.

-Paulo Freire⁶²

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: THE REALITY OF CONNECTING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Having told the story of the design process to date it is important to re-examine the premise of this research. The premise this research is that a communicative urban design process can act as a means to not only change the physical form of a neighborhood, but at the same time can act as a catalyst for initiating collaboration and cooperation between communities and schools. I examined whether a communicative urban design process used to design an educational park that will be located between Schools 4 and 28 in the Northside neighborhood of Paterson, New Jersey, could be a successful catalyst in not only initiating conversation between the faculty and staff from the two schools but be a catalyst for initiating conversation between the faculty and staffs from two schools and residents from the surrounding Northside neighborhood as well.

The premise of this thesis is very much tied with the purpose of this thesis. The first purpose for this thesis is to inform urban designers who work, or want to work, in communities of color that there is an effective approach to urban design that does not compromise the quality or integrity of their work while at the same time empowers the community throughout the process as well. The communicative urban design process in Paterson was not only about producing quality urban design recommendations for the

educational park, it was also about bringing the faculty and staffs from the two schools together with the residents from the Northside community to engage in meaning dialogue. The second reason for this investigation is to speak to the power of the use of a communicative urban design process as a means to help empower a distressed urban neighborhood that is inhabited almost entirely by people of color.

Before examining if the premise of this research, however, there are three assumptions of this thesis that must be clearly articulated. The first assumption of this thesis is that the design process is a powerful means of building collaboration and cooperation between two, seemingly opposing, constituents of a design project. That is that the design process, because of its ability to engage various stakeholders, has the ability to shape more than the urban environment.

The second assumption is that it is the approach to the design process that is the real determining factor in the success of a design challenge. This assumption is particularly true when the design challenge encompasses multiple goals or goals outside of just producing a good design solution.

Chapter 2 examined two approaches to the urban design process, the rational decision-making model and the communicative planning process. In that chapter I argued that the rational decision-making model is a more useful approach when dealing with design challenges that do not occur in the context of extremely complex community issues. Projects such as an office park that has to be designed well, on time, and within budget, would benefit from a rational decision-making approach to the design process.

⁶²Freire, Ana Maria Araujo; Macedo, Donaldo; eds. The Paulo Freire Reader. Continuum Press, New York, 1998; pg. 52.

The communicative planning process is, however, a more useful approach to use when the design challenges is in the context of social and political issues outside of the design challenge itself.

In the case of Paterson, the teachers from School 4 and 28 saw the building of the educational park as a means to develop a better learning and play environment for their students. Residents of the Northside community felt entitled to the space due to the lack of open space in the community to socialize. These two ideas for the space may seem different and opposing, however, the communicative design process provided opportunity for both stakeholders to dialogue together about the space. This approach to the design process also provided opportunity for the two groups to come to the conclusion that while they had differences, they shared a common concern over having a safe place for the kids to learn and play. Without this communicative process there may not have been an opportunity for the two constituents to meet and process their ideas.

Lessons Learned

Now that the assumptions have been made explicit it is important to revisit the design process matrix found in Chapter 2. This matrix examines how each approach, in theory, responds to each element listed. “Essential” means that the element listed is always a part of the design process when using that approach. “Secondary” means that the element is important but not always present as a routine part of the design process.

Design Process Matrix

	Rational Decision-Making Model	Communicative Planning Process
Empowerment of the community	Secondary	Essential
Meaningful communication between designer and the constituents of the project	Essential	Essential
Bring various stakeholders together	Essential	Essential
Effective solution to design problem	Essential	Essential
Bring stakeholders along in the design process	Secondary	Essential
Building community capacity	No contribution	Major Contribution
Promotion of democracy⁶³ in the design process	Secondary	Essential

This matrix identifies two unique elements, that are a part of the communicative design process that are not essential to the rational decision-making model. The first is empowerment of the community during the design process.⁶⁴

Throughout the design process in Paterson faculty and staff from the schools and residents from the neighborhood were asked about their ideas for the park. They were also told that it was completely up to them to decide what they wanted the space to look like. I, at the advice of a very wise professor in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT, to be conscious of how I repeat back to the staff and faculty from the schools and the Northside community exactly what I heard from them. He reminded me to make sure that I always reiterated so that the ideas they see before them in sketches are

⁶³ I define democracy in the process by saying that supreme power is vested in the constituents of the design project.

⁶⁴ When I say “the design process” I speak of the process as having one unified voice. The design process in Paterson, however, was shaped by a myriad of different voices. For this investigation, however, it is beneficial for sake of coherency in the telling of the story, to present the process in one voice.

their ideas not mine or my colleagues. (After working with the project for so long it is hard not to feel a natural ownership over what you have witnessed.) None the less, my colleagues and I were always conscious of our role in this process as translators of the ideas not dictators.

The second element is the promotion of democracy in the design process, which has two parts. The first part of the promotion of democracy in the process is the acknowledgement of voices that do not normally get heard as a normal part of the decision-making process.

Central to this process was both the students from Schools 4 and 28 and the students from MPACT. My colleagues and I were very conscious about engaging and listening to the youth in the process. As a matter of fact, for the later part of the meeting at School 4 on March 31, the students from School 4 dialogued with the students from MPACT about organizing the community around the project. The two groups of students also discussed going to the next Board of Education meeting with a petition to get better security guards for the school, which was a conversation that came out of the students from School 4 talking about their concern for security for the educational park.

The second part of the promotion of democracy in the design process is to recognize that design processes are not exempt from deep-seeded power relationships that are a part of other day to day interactions. When designers do work with communities they must realize that everyone does not have equal access to power and information, and therefore, in most cases, participation in the process.

One area that my colleagues and I could have done differently is have made it more of a priority to engage a wider cross section of the Northside community in the

design process. As of the April 14 meeting, we had not engaged the young adults who hang out on the corner of North Main and Clinton Street, which is perpendicular to the teacher parking lot for School 28. The corner of North Main and Clinton Street is known in the community for drug activity. Because this corner is known for drug activity it is absolutely necessary that we try and engage these individuals in the design process. Furthermore, not only is it essential that they be involved in the design process but they should have meaningful roles in the process (i.e. the construction and landscaping of the park, security guards if they are deemed necessary, etc) of the design of the park. As I asserted in the beginning of my engagement in the process and was later reinforced by several Northside residents, for the project to be successful the whole community, in relative terms, must have buy-in of the project.

Now that the assumptions are explicit it is important to return to the purpose of this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is a discussion of what using urban design as a community development tool means in terms of design in distressed urban communities and in terms of education reform. This chapter also addresses the difficulty of using urban design as a community development tool in practice. Finally, this chapter concludes with and some lessons learned through the design process that took place in Paterson and some process recommendations for others who want to use urban design as a community development tool.

The Urban Design Process

The design process in Paterson between PPS and MIT is a valuable process but unique from a typical design process for several reasons. When the second Workshop was

commissioned to do our work in Paterson we did not sit down and create a precise plan of action. We had goals for the projects we were embarking on, but subconsciously, as well as consciously, we allowed the design process to play itself out. Part of the reason the design process would have to play itself out was because MIT is 240 miles away from Paterson in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We traveled back and fourth which meant that we could not carry this process on day to day nor was that our strategy. Therefore our work-- interviews, meetings, charrettes, workshops--were conducted deliberately as not to waste the valuable time we had on site.

Furthermore, MIT is a university not a consulting firm, even though sometimes we act as one. Furthermore, for that reason, and per contract, we were able to operate more conceptually and allow the design process to develop over a longer period of time. At times it may have seemed to the residents of the Northside community that we were consultants, even though we made it clear explicitly clear where we were from and what we were doing for who. Some of the residents did not understand how research universities work and were angered that MIT, a powerful university, was receiving money for participating in the project.

Although this process is unique in the fact that it was graduate students and a university professor facilitating the process instead of employees and a project manager from a consulting firm or government agency, there are important lessons for designers who may engage in a design process of this nature.

- Process could engage and empower the community but not result with a design solution for the project. It must be understood that just because a communicative process takes place, does not mean the result of the process will automatically produce a well

laid-out design proposal. It is part of your role as the designer to make sure the design objectives are met.

- Negotiate a flexible contract with your client. In order to engage in a communicative design process, because of the emphasis on process, it is important to negotiate a flexible contractual agreement with your client.

- Some communities have an established community organization and others do not. The designer must realize that not every community they engage in a communicative design process with will be organized. For some communities a process as this will be used to revive hope in the community. Therefore it is important to inform the community of what you are embarking on with them. They must see and believe that the process is transparent. Otherwise they may not trust or participate in the project.

- Engage as many cross-sections of the community in the process as possible. The process in Paterson only began to engage in the power relationships of both of the schools and the neighborhood. A way to begin to understand community relationships and power dynamics is to form preplanning activities that enable the various constituents, including the disenfranchised residents in the community, an opportunity to participate in analyzing the design problem and brainstorming about a solution. Furthermore, having interviews and focus groups early in the process will help move the process beyond the usual suspects in the community who may monopolize power in the community.

- Avoid the hurry up/wait syndrome. It must be acknowledged and accepted that a lengthy amount of times is required for such participatory processes. Lengthy community processes sometimes lead to burnout among the participants as well as a sentiment that nothing will ever get accomplished. It is difficult to do but it is important to keep this in

mind and work proactively to make sure the project is moving forward but not at the expense of a productive process.

- Make sure there is an evaluation process. Evaluation of the process by all participants allows everyone to debrief about what occurred. If for some reason the process does not proceed as smooth as it could have, providing a means for participants to express their dismay will serve to maintain integrity in the process even if it does not end with all participants being completely satisfied with the product.

The Urban Designer as an Actor in the Urban Design Process

Not only is it important to be deliberate and reflective about the process but it is important that urban designers see themselves as shaping the future. Forester writes, “designers design with others as much as they do with their heads or hands and that furthermore, wherever the creative impulse originates, the development, refinement, and realization of design is a deeply social process.”⁶⁵ He goes on to say that

“planners and designers face the challenges of playing multiple roles simultaneously. At different times within the same process, they must bring the knowledge of experts; they must listen and encourage creative solutions as mediators; they must defend particular values as negotiators; they must structure processes of participation, discussion, invention, and decision making as organizers too.”⁶⁶

Although I was very explicit with the school communities and the Northside community about my role in the process, I grappled with exactly what my role was supposed to be in the process. Being connected to a university allowed me a lot more flexibility in the design process than I would have been afforded if I represented a consulting firm.

⁶⁵ Forester, John. *The Deliberative Practitioner*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology; 132.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*; 64.

Therefore many times I felt the need to serve many more roles in the process than I set out to. At times I felt like a mediator, a social worker, a professor, and a consultant, just to name a few. Due to the nature of the process I was asked/expected to provide services I did not plan on being confronted with. Therefore it is important that designers constantly be reflective about their role in the design process especially in communicative design processes which may have multiple goals.

Moreover, I offer the following points of advice for designers engaging in this kind of process to reflect about:

- Understand and constantly evaluate your role in the process. Therefore it is important that you constantly define your roles and responsibilities and communicate with the participants in the process if they change. In the same manner it is just as important that you stay clear about what your contractual outcomes are suppose to be. It is at this point that it be understood by you and the community that you may define “success” for the project as something very different from how they may be defining success.
- Invest time in the process. Doing design work in communities is part management and part public relations. Because you are so central to the process it is extremely important that you make connections and build relationships of mutual respect between yourself and the constituents of the project.
- Put together a stakeholder/member profile and try to understand the priority of each group. Having some understanding of the politics of each group or leader in the community will help you organize, manage, and build relationships amongst the various groups in order to make constructive use of the diverse perspectives.

- Talk to the participants of the process at the level they are at. It is important to understand that people are intimidated by technical language they do not understand. Use a combination of high-tech and low-tech devices and materials to relay ideas.
- Have progressive goals for the process and be serious about advocating for the interest of historically underrepresented people so that they can advocate for their own interest in a design process over time.

The Use of Urban Design as a Community Development Tool

Now that the assumptions have been discussed, there has been reflection on the design process as well as reflection on the designer as an actor in the design process, it is important to respond to the premise of this thesis. The premise of this thesis is the assertion that a communicative urban design process can be used as a successful community development tool. In order to make a fair assessment of that statement it is important to revisit the definition of “success” and “community development” as they were presented in the Introduction.

“Success” was defined as the communicative design process being the catalyst for: (1) meaningful dialogue between faculty, and staff from Schools 4 and residents from the Northside community and vice versa; (2) the exchange of social capital during the same exchanges of dialogue mentioned above; and (3) the initiation of community organizing activities outside of design process meetings, workshops, charrettes, etc. facilitated by students and faculty from MIT. “Community development” was defined as building assets (physical, financial, intellectual and human, social, and political) that enhance the quality of life of residents in low-to-moderate income communities. Based on

those two definitions, the premise proves to be true. At the beginning of the design process faculty and staff from the two schools nor the residents from the neighborhood gathered to dialogue. By the March 31 meeting at School 4, two teachers, Mr. Kline from School 28 and Gerald Thaxton from School 4, began dialoguing about and planning organizing the staff and faculty from their respective schools to dialogue not only about the educational park but the neighborhood.

Furthermore, the exchange of the MPACT students and the students from School 4 is an important part of the exchange of social and intellectual capital by young people in the Northside community and others who live in various parts of the city. This process provided the proper environment for community capital to not only be exchanged but also to continue to grow.

Concluding Remarks: An Epiphany

It is important that designers who engage in design process in communities, particularly communities of color, not merely focus on shaping spaces. These designers should also focus on the other outcomes of the process such as the building of capital. They should be concerned with how to engage in design processes that change the store of understanding, the networks of relationships, and the capacity of the community to organize themselves for change.

This thesis is interwoven with quotes about power and process. Paulo Friere, the most revolutionary educator of the twentieth century, writes:

“Their lack of information and their preoccupation with daily survival interferes with their understanding of how power structures work and effect their lives. Therefore, the oppressed

often share the oppressors' viewpoint, blaming themselves for their own poverty and powerlessness--essentially what we know as "internalized oppression."⁶⁷

I strongly believe the urban design process, if conducted with the right approach, is a powerful tool for empowering oppressed peoples who believe that just because no one cares about their lives or their physical environment that they should not either. The communicative design process, because of its emphasis on meaningful dialogue can contribute to changing the attitudes of the participants about themselves, each other, and their physical environment.

It must be understood, however, that the design process alone does not lead to community development nor do I assert that it has the capacity to do so. It, however, provides the space for meaningful dialogue between various actors as well as, because it is dealing with the changing the urban form, provide the opportunity to have a long-term effect on the constituents of the project. Without having a means and space to share ideas, no matter how severe the problem may be, people with the same basic values and commitments to better their community, may never feel empowered to move towards action. The type of interaction afforded through a communicative design process, in an ideal design process, allows people to build stronger alliances and increase the chances that their efforts lead to sustained community revitalization. Even after two years since the commissioning of this project and there is still a long way to go until the design process is complete. More people, especially residents from the Northside community, need to be informed about and invited to be a part of the process. In the meantime, I am please with the progress the school communities and neighborhood residents are making

⁶⁷ Friere, Ana Maria Aruja; Macedo, Donaldo; eds. *The Paulo Friere Reader*. New York: Continuum Press,

as the school community and the Northside community are beginning to communicate and take action.

In short, this analysis sought to describe the power, as well as, the complexity of the designers' roles in the design process. This analysis sought to clearly articulate the diverse ways designers can be active participants in community development projects. Moreover, this analysis sought to demonstrate more clearly how designers can encourage community learning through providing the purpose and space for meaningful exchange of ideas. Success of this process will really be measured in terms of the ability of the students, parents, staff, and faculty of the two schools and the residents of the Northside neighborhood who are involved in the design process to replicate the achievements of this process in other situations. Furthermore, this process will have been successful if the various constituents of the process continue movement towards demanding equity, inclusion, power, and control in other projects in their neighborhood. Lastly, this process will also have been successful if the faculty and staff from the schools and the residents from the community work together to create the urban village I talked about in the first chapter.

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ADDENDUM

December 16, 1999

La Tonya Green
Jeff Shumaker

Neighborhood for Living and Learning: The Creation of an Educational Park at Schools 4 and 28

I. Introduction:

The purpose of this paper is to explain the analysis and process behind the redesign and program of a paved open space between two schools. The objective is to design the space into a park that, through physical design changes and programming, has an educational focus. The “educational park” will not only be used by the two schools but will be used by the surrounding Northside neighborhood as well. The educational park is one of several catalyst projects that will help turn the whole neighborhood into a “neighborhood for learning.” The overall objective of the “neighborhood for learning” concept is that education and learning are used as the medium for increasing access and use of social, political, and economic resources within the neighborhood.

In short, on the micro-level, the project is to redesign the open space between the two schools and turn it into an educational park that could be used by both the school and the community. On the macro-level, the project is the first of many catalyst projects in turning the Northside neighborhood into a “Neighborhood for Learning”.

II. Project Description/The Site:

The Northside neighborhood is located north of downtown Paterson, NJ. The Neighborhood is bound by West Broadway St. to the east, East Main St. to the west, N. 10th Street to the north, and Presidential Blvd. to the south. The neighborhood has two schools, School 28 (an elementary school) and School 4 (a middle school), that are connected by a large open space currently used as a play space and for teacher parking. This project stems from the belief that open space needs to be redesigned and programmed to be used as an educational park.

III. Methodology:

The current proposed design and program recommendations do not vary much from the design and program ideas offered by the previous Workshop groups. This is because they are informed by the same constituents. The current proposed design and program recommendations are a result of synthesizing the physical needs and program objectives of the schools with some of the needs of the Northside community as a whole.

Ideas were informed by materials collected by the previous Paterson workshops such as the City of Paterson, New Jersey, Department of Community Development, Consolidated Plan, Five Year Strategy 1997-1998, One Year Action Plan 1997-1998; the Paterson Workshop I&II transcripts from meetings on October 16, 1998, November 16, and March 19-20. Moreover, ideas were formed from drawings collected from meetings with parents, teachers, and students. Lastly, ideas were formed from informal interviews conducted with school administrators as well as several residents of the Northside.

IV. Findings

The following is a summary of the research findings, program recommendations, and design recommendations we planned to present to the schools and Northside community the following semester:

➤ The Needs:

The following is not an exhaustive list of needs of the Schools or the Northside neighborhood but were the list of needs we used to inform our design and program recommendations.

A. School 4:

1. Facilities Needs:¹

- Space for music lessons
- Space for small group instruction
- Space for science classes
- Space for art, wood shop, and home economics
- Speech and ESL rooms
- Expansion and improvement of library

2. Program Objectives:²

- Language Arts- to improve the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.
- Mathematics- to improve the mathematics skills of all students.
- Bilingual/ESL- to help identified bilingual students assimilate into the mainstream of American society while maintaining his/her own unique culture.
- Gifted/Talented- to provide educational opportunities which meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of gifted students.
- Affirmative Action- to increase the affirmative action opportunities for staff and students.
- Student Attendance- to improve the attendance of all students.
- Computer Education- to provide students with the opportunity to become computer literate.

¹ Paterson Public Schools 5-year Facilities ..

² The School of Technology” School Four 1999-2000 Parent/Student

- Library- to expand the capabilities of the School number Four Library/Media Center.
- School Climate- to continue to improve the climate of School Number 4 through beautification of interior and exterior of the building.

B. School 28:

1. Facilities Need:³

- Bilingual self-contained space
- Additional library space
- Specialized science rooms
- Conference space for meetings with parents

2. Program objectives:

- Implementation of the Comer model of education reform.⁴

C. Facilities needs that could be shared by the both schools:⁵

- Science space
- Small group classrooms
- Library
- Parent/staff conference space
- Space for life skills, art, music, and home economics

D. Northside community needs:⁶

- Safe open space for both adults and kids; a “village square”
- Adult education and life-long learning programs and facilities
- Community Center

➤ Potential points of conflict and controversy:

The educational park could become a point of controversy not only between the neighborhood and the schools but also between the school communities or between

³ Paterson Public Schools 5-year Facilities ..

⁴ As part of the *Abbott* decision School 28 adopted the Comer model of school reform. Comer’s model of educational reform is based on the assumption that the process of change in schools is the process of relationship and community building. This “whole village” concept emphasizes on building good relationships among relevant adults--the school staff, the principal, and community members--for the benefit of the children. The theoretical basis for the School Development Program (SDP) emerges from four main principles of human ecology: the community is the client; the reduction of the use of community resources that maintain the status quo; strengthening community resources; and planning for change. SDP views the child as part of the family unit and the neighborhood as well, as part of the school community. The emphasis is on changing the social structures and building local capacity and ..

⁵ Paterson Public Schools 5-year Facilities ..

⁶ Based on responses from neighborhood ..

various members of the Northside neighborhood itself. Some points of controversy could be:

1. Ownership:
 - Some of the Northside residents feel as though their community is always targeted for some type of study or program. They feel that this design project does not belong to them but rather to an outside entity that is not concerned with what is important to the people who actually live in the community.
 - Some residents feel as though the teachers at the schools want to have the park for the exclusive use of the school and the school only. They feel that having the park for the exclusive use of the schools is problematic because the community lacks adequate open space and feels the space between the schools could be used for both the school and the community quite successfully.

2. Parking:
 - Residents feel that school officials do not have the interest of the neighborhood at heart and only want to serve their personal needs, such as using the space for parking.
 - Teachers do not want to park in the neighborhood. They feel that the space is large enough to be split between parking and open space.

3. Security:
 - Parking- some teachers and administrators may refuse to park in the neighborhood because they feel it's unsafe.
 - Facilities- after hours there will be fewer people in the area so there will not be adequate security for the space.
 - The schools themselves- inviting the general public onto school property by creating a educational park that can be used by the entire community causes concern about the security of the premises both during and after school hours. It also raises questions about who should regulate who uses the space. Should the schools monitor the space during school hours or should an outside entity, someone from Paterson Public Schools administration office, set the policy and monitor the use of space since the land is owned by the school district.

Therefore, careful consideration should be given to the educational park design and implementation process. If developed through a communicative process the development of the educational park between the two schools could help facilitate meaningful dialogue between not only the schools but the Northside neighborhood as a whole.

➤ Design and Programming Recommendations:

Programming and designing the space appropriately will forge a stronger relationship between the schools and the neighborhood at large. Some preliminary recommendations are as follows:

1. Parking:
 - Using the southern portion of School 28 that runs along Presidential Blvd. for parking. In addition, parking is dispersed in different places throughout the neighborhood. For example street parking could be introduced on Temple and Matlock Streets. The parking lot across from St. Phillips Church could also be used for some of the parking. A lottery system or some other system of designation may need to be introduced to determine who will park in the spaces on campus. Maybe the spaces could be designated for the top administrators. Moreover, parking throughout the neighborhood would improve teacher presence in the neighborhood.

2. Ownership/Neighborhood Assets:
 - Develop the alley between School 4, the fire station, and the athletic field as a pedestrian pathway. This pathway would not only connect the schools to the Lester Titus athletic field but could also connect through to Matlock Street and to the business corridor on Presidential Blvd.
 - Open up the enlarged cafeteria to the park as a community cafe to encourage greater interaction between students and faculty from each school and the larger community.
 - A portion of the Community Center on Temple Street can be used for a computer clubhouse that is a joint project between the Paterson Housing Authority and Paterson Public Schools.

3. Security:
 - Build coalition between the schools and the community not only to help design and program the educational park but also to help keep the community and the streets safe.

4. Open Space:
 - Part of the middle paved area on the side closest to Clinton Street will be used as a community performance theatre and neighborhood “gazebo”. This shared community theatre/gathering space will encourage interaction between the schools and the community.
 - Use the green space across from School 28 on Presidential Blvd. for additional athletic space.

5. Science Laboratory:
 - Use green space across from the River Tower Apartments for a science park. Use the Stem program and the Passaic River to help facilitate an in-door/outdoor science laboratory. This park could have a greenhouse, a

community garden, as well as have a facility built where students could have direct interaction with the Passaic River for use as a science laboratory.

6. Library:

- Renovate the existing library on N. Main and Arch Street as a joint library that could be used by both schools and the community.

7. Classroom Space:

- Remove the cafeteria from School 4 to make room for additional classrooms.
- Use the park next to the library on N. Main and Arch Street for outdoor classrooms and reading spaces.

8. Joint School Assets:

- Physically connect the school through a shared over bridge from one school to the other. The bridge will connect from School 4 to the cafeteria of School 28. Both schools will share the cafeteria.
- Add a pedestrian walkway between Schools 4 and 28. School 4 could be connected to School 28 on the fourth level where School 4 joins with School 28 at the cafeteria. Opening School 28's cafeteria to both schools will facilitate better interaction between the two schools not only because the teachers and students will interact in the same place for their meals but teachers will share joint responsibility for supervision of the space. School 28's cafeteria is in a place that could be used by not only the students and teachers but also the community at-large. The cafeteria could be used after hours and on the weekends for community functions.
- Move the recording studio from the fourth floor of School 4 and place at the ground level of a new media center as an attempt to engage the public in the media program.

➤ Goals of the Proposed Design and Program:

Our design and program recommendations nor can this one project address all of the Schools 4 and 28 and Northside neighborhood needs or points of conflict and controversy. However, we do recommend the following that could be used as a part of the educational park project that might be revisited during other catalyst projects in the development of the overall neighborhood for learning.

1. Ownership/Neighborhood Assets:

- Create a committee or coalition of stakeholders.
- Build access to resources in the neighborhood by creating and linking places of learning.
- Create ways to integrate the schools with the surrounding neighborhood (i.e. libraries, business activity, the downtown).
- Link schools with social services and retail amenities for use by the overall community.

- Intensify the use of the common spaces by strengthening the services available to the community.
 - Reduce the stigma of public housing by creating a better relationship with the larger community.
2. Parking:
 - Find alternative sites for teacher/visitor parking.
 3. Security:
 - Position or change some of the school facilities so they face the open space as well as the community.
 - Place community amenities along well traveled paths as a means of informal supervision.
 4. Open Space:
 - Redesign the paved area between Schools 4 and 28 so that it would not only be an asset to the schools but to the entire neighborhood; an educational park.
 - Create uses that facilitate multi-generational activity.
 - Create amenities that appeal to multigenerational age groups.
 - Enhance the overall quality of public space and services.
 5. Science Laboratory:
 - Identify space for science laboratory.
 6. Library:
 - Locate alternate space for a library that could be used not only by both schools but the larger community.
 7. Classroom Space:
 - Identify location for addition classrooms

Recommendations for Further Action

Due to the high tension in the neighborhood not only between community residents and staff and faculty from Schools 4 and 28 but also between members of the community it is essential that there be an open forum to the design of this educational park. It is essential that before any design is adopted that there be a series of open workshops/forums where all the stakeholders of the project have an opportunity to voice their opinion. This opportunity could help ease tension between neighborhood residents and the schools' faculty and staff. The right process could provide the opportunity for community residents to get to know School 4 and 28 faculty and staff.

The redesign of the playfield/parking space between schools 4 and 28 could be a catalyst project that could start the process of increasing access to resources within the Northside

neighborhood. A project group should be formed to help ensure that the interests of all the various stakeholders are represented. This project group should consist of officials from Paterson Public schools, stakeholders from both Schools 4 and 28, Northside residents, students and faculty from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Metro-Paterson Academy for Communication and Technology (MPACT) students. This group will review the design of ideas presented by MIT students and critique them to begin to develop the design that will be approved by general consensus.

APPENDIX

Existing School Conditions

- Paved area between the schools is used for both play space and parking.
- Schools share the same grounds but do not share any educational space.
- There is very little communication between the schools and the Northside neighborhood.



Aerial photo of Schools 4 and 28

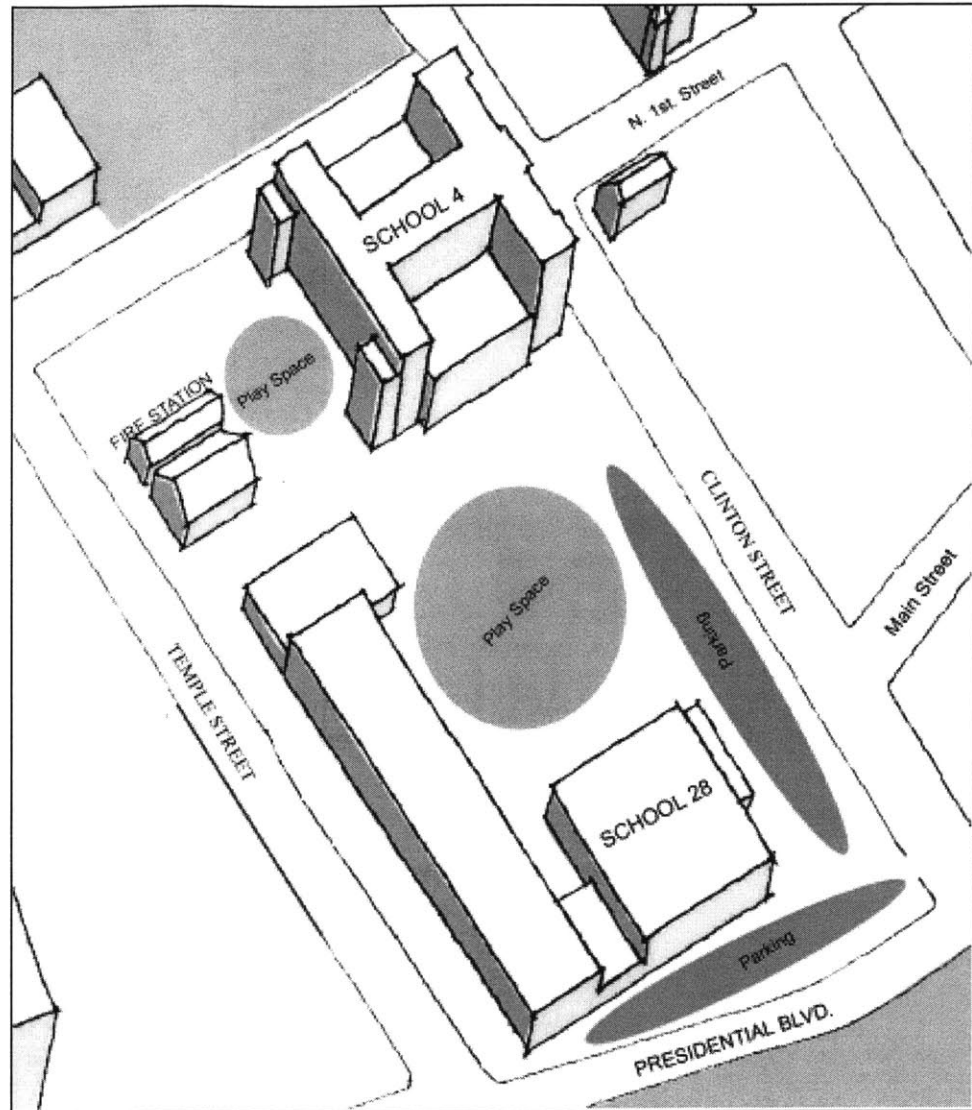


Diagram of the existing use of paved space between the schools

NEIGHBORHOOD FOR LIVING AND LEARNING:

The Creation of an Educational Park at Schools 4 and 28

Schools 4 and 28 Design and Program Recommendations

· Create a "Village Square" in the paved area between Schools 4 and 28.

· Physically connect the two schools through a shared over bridge from one school to the other. The bridge will connect from School 4 to the cafeteria of School 28. Both schools will share the cafeteria.

· Remove the cafeteria from School 4 to make room for additional classrooms.

· Move the recording studio from the fourth floor of School 4 and place it at the ground level of a new media center in order to engage the public into the media program.

· Convert the alley between the school grounds and Lester Titus Field into a pedestrian pathway. This pedestrian pathway will be the physical connection between the schools, the playfield, and the Computer Clubhouse.

· Utilize the front and southern side of School 28 as well as Temple Street for teacher parking.

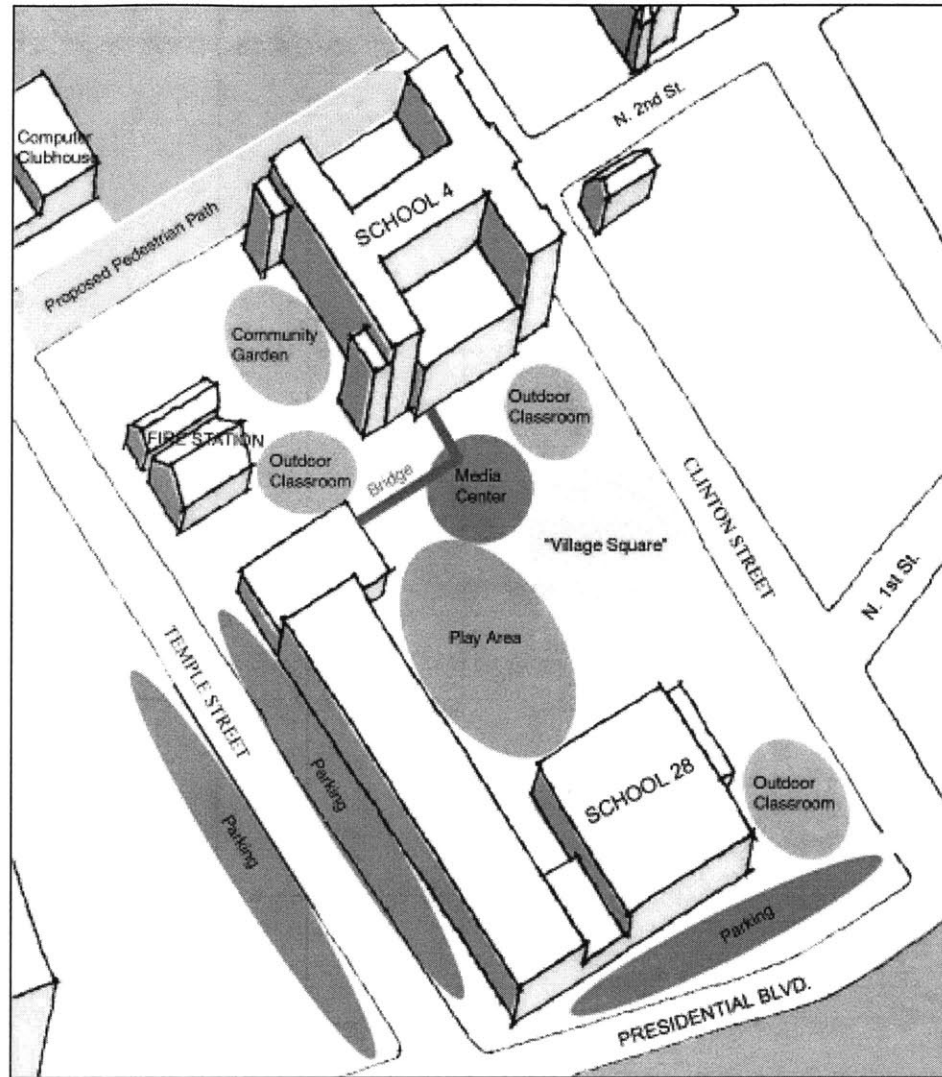


Diagram of the Schools 4 and 28 recommended uses

NEIGHBORHOOD FOR LIVING AND LEARNING:

The Creation of an Educational Park at Schools 4 and 28

Existing Neighborhood Conditions

There is need for a safe open space for both adults and kids; a “village square.”

There is need for better community resources that could be shared by both the schools and the community.

There is need for better coordination and collaboration between the schools and the neighborhood.



Aerial photo of a section of the Northside Neighborhood

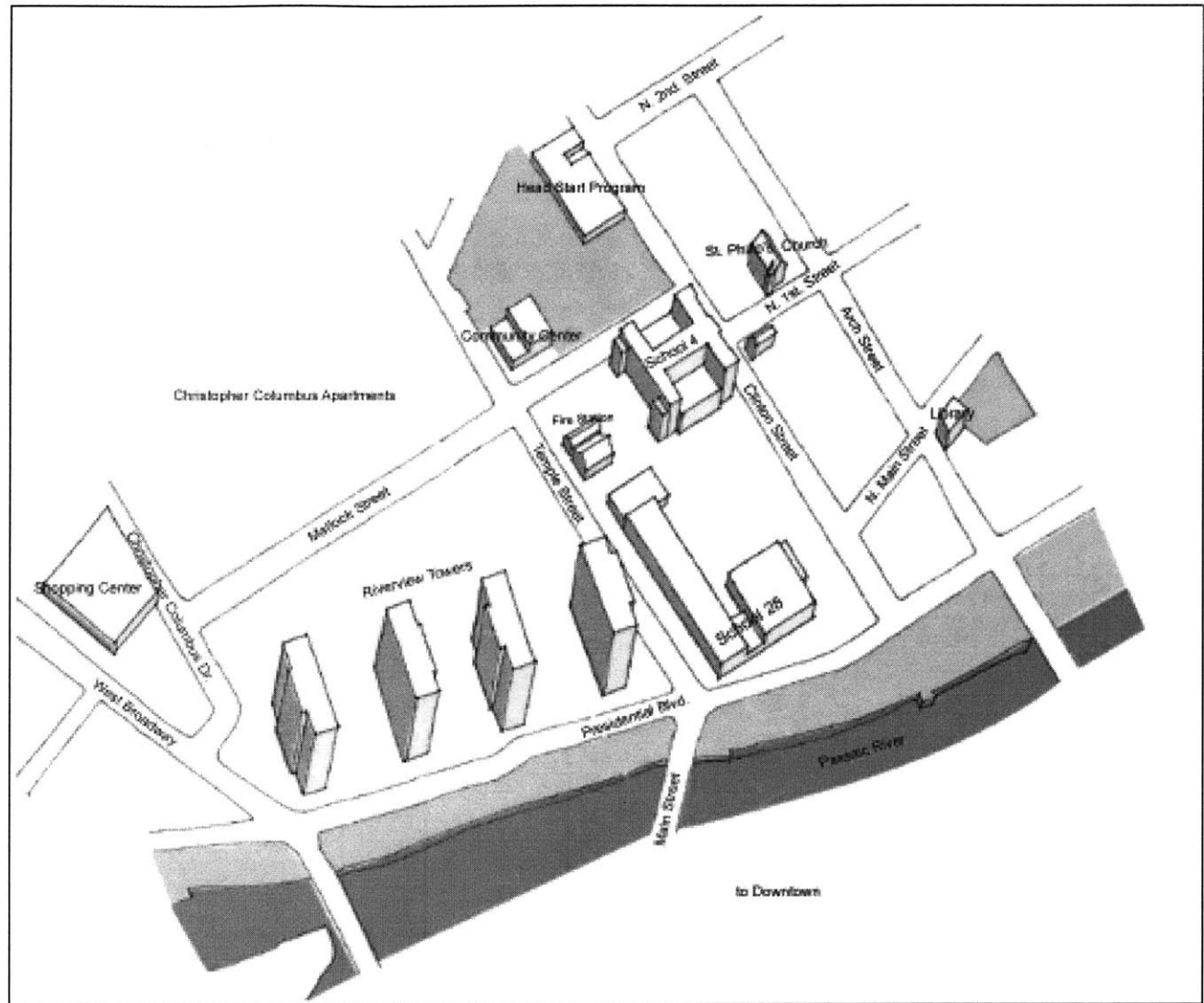


Diagram of the current neighborhood uses

NEIGHBORHOOD FOR LIVING AND LEARNING:

The Creation of an Educational Park at Schools 4 and 28

MIT NEW AMERICAN SCHOOL DESIGN PROJECT
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

ROY STRICKLAND TURID HORGEN KIRAN MATHEMA AYAN SEN DULCY ANDERSON PABLO RIVERA
ACHILLI CARLO SARAH HUNNYBALL LA TONYA GREEN JUNG FU ZHU AHSHA SAFAI TAMMY SAKAGAWA
ELSIE HUANG XIAOFANG LUO SHAOHUA DI KISHORE VARANASI JOHN DIMITRIOU JEFF SHUMAKER

Nearighborhood Design and Program Recommendations

- Create a Educational/Community Park in the paved area between Schools 4 and 28 for use by the schools and the neighborhood at large.
- Utilize the Housing Authority's community center on Temple Street to create a Computer Clubhouse. The Computer Clubhouse could be used by the residents of Christopher Columbus Homes, the schools, and the entire neighborhood.
- Utilize open space along Passiac River for additional educational space.
- Renovate existing library on N. Main and Arch Streets for use by the schools and neighborhood.
- Use the open space next to the existing library for an outdoor classroom.
- Utilize Matlock and Temple Streets for teacher parking. Parking throughout the neighborhood will improve teacher presence in the neighborhood.

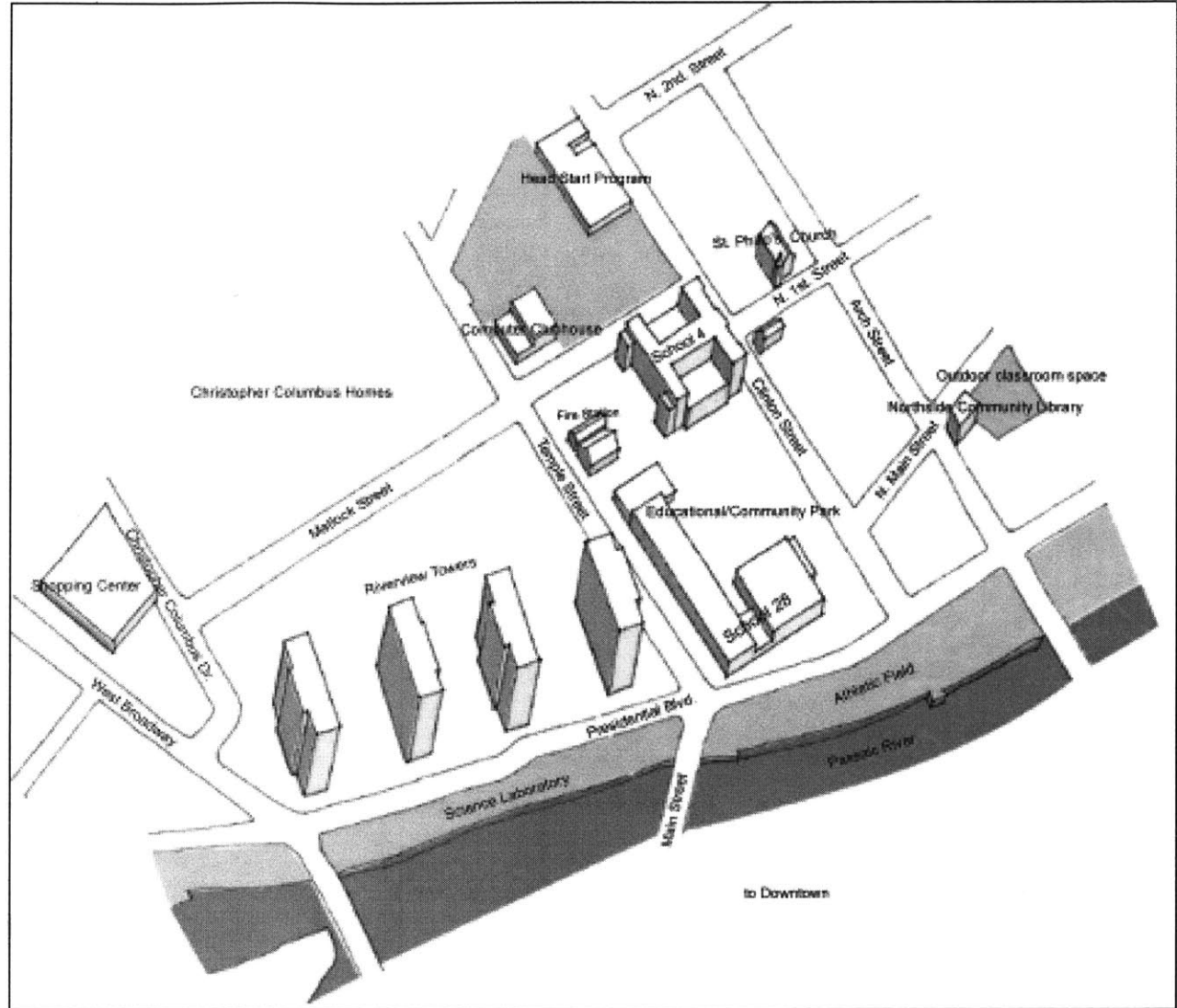


Diagram of the recommended neighborhood uses

NEIGHBORHOOD FOR LIVING AND LEARNING:

The Creation of an Educational Park at Schools 4 and 28

Educational/Community Park

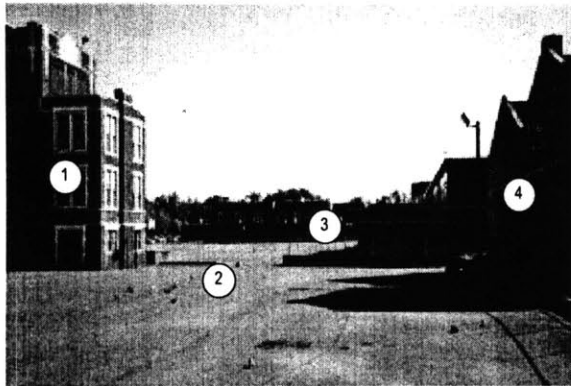
Outdoor learning spaces are dispersed throughout a new community park

Outdoor eating area encourages interaction between students and community

The existing fire hall is opened up to the park and serves as the backdrop for learning

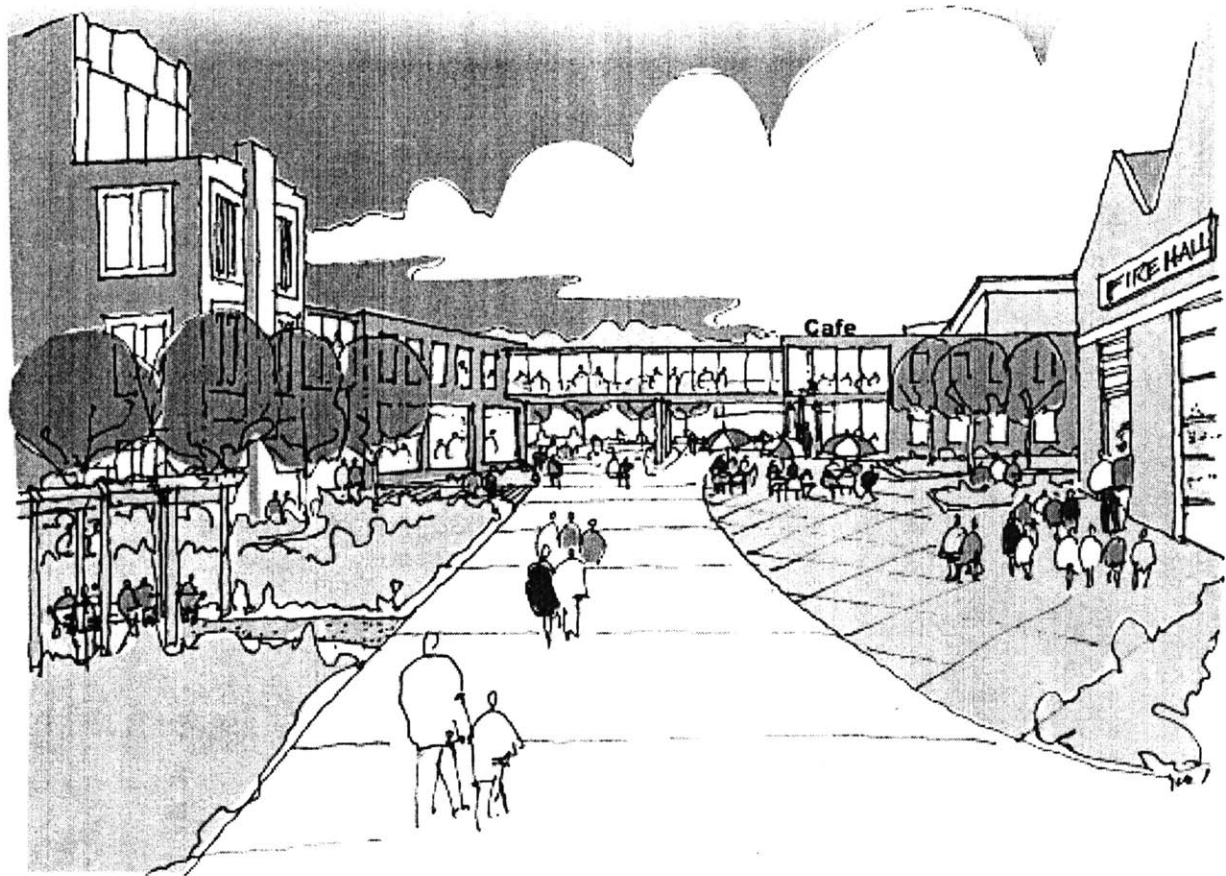
Schools 4 and 28 are linked through a new pedestrian bridge and 2-story cafeteria/cafe

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Before: Existing view of School 4 and 28 schoolyard

1. School 4; 2. Existing Play Area; 3. School 28; 4. Fire Hall



After: View of proposed bridge and expanded cafeteria between Schools 4 and 28. In the foreground, outdoor learning spaces are also visible within the community garden and in front of the Fire Hall

NEIGHBORHOOD FOR LIVING AND LEARNING:

The Creation of an Educational Park at Schools 4 and 28

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Gateway to the Northside

The corner of Temple and Matlock Streets is activated through placement of a computer clubhouse in the existing community center

Existing alley is turned into a pedestrian path

The schoolyard in back of School 4 is created into a joint student/community garden

Landscape elements enliven primary circulation paths and serve as resource for learning



Before: Existing view of community center and alleyway next to School 4,
1. Community Center; 2. Lester Titus Playfield; 3. School 4



After: Gateway to Schools 4 and 28 with view of proposed computer clubhouse, pedestrian path and student/community garden

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NEIGHBORHOOD FOR LIVING AND LEARNING:

The Creation of an Educational Park at Schools 4 and 28

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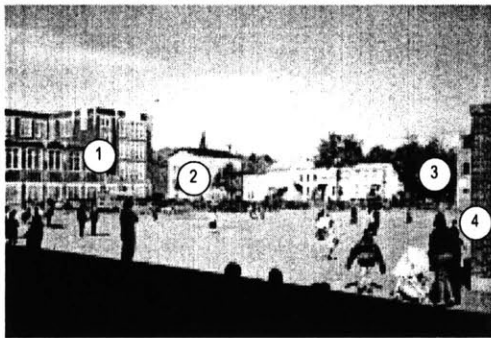
A New "Village Square"

Existing asphalt play area is redesigned as an educational/community park

A central "gazebo" serves as the stage for student and community performances

A joint School 4 and 28 morning program is visible from the exterior as it is recorded in a new shared Media Center

The landscape is maintained by the students and serves as a natural resource for learning



Before: Existing view of the School 4 and 28 play area

1. School 4; 2. Church; 3. Health Center; 4. School 28

After: A new "village square" that functions as both an educational park and as a place for community gatherings

NEIGHBORHOOD FOR LIVING AND LEARNING:

The Creation of an Educational Park at Schools 4 and 28

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