Reinventing the Golden Age Ballpark and the Pastoral Ideal: A New Home for the Boston Red Sox on Fort Point Channel

by Scott Raphael Schiamberg

S.B in Art and Design
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Cambridge, Massachusetts
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Submitted to the School of Architecture and Planning in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degrees of

Master of Architecture
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Abstract
Despite of the relationship between the development of the American city, the pastoral ideal (a longing for a more rural and simple past) and the game of baseball, the urban ballpark has been the focus of little attention, particularly in the fields of architecture, urban design, and American cultural history. The special qualities found in the ballpark, specifically the "golden age ballparks" (built between 1909-1914), offer valuable lessons in understanding the factors that have shaped and influenced our urban centers. The contribution of the pastoral ideal to the American urban experience, in the form of the ballpark, is an example of a genre of urban environments such as parks and cemeteries that reflect a concerted effort to incorporate an American pastoral heritage within the city landscape. The ballpark, however, is a unique example of this genre because it is a built structural landmark that symbolizes a blending of the natural, or pastoral landscape, with the brick, steel, and concrete of the city.

This thesis is an attempt at distilling the architectural and urbanistic mannerisms and characteristics of the early twentieth century ballpark into a proposed design for the new "home" for the Boston Red Sox on Fort Point Channel. The primary objective is to determine how a new ballpark might be integrated into the urban fabric of Boston, accentuating the structure's special relationship with the city, while using as a guide the paradigm of the successful golden age ballpark (i.e. those which augment a sense of place, intimacy and a blending of the pastoral and urban). The design of a new ballpark on Fort Point Channel will have to address a dilemma in the conceptualization of a modern ballpark. By contemporary standards the classic golden age ballparks lack infrastructure, modern amenity, and parking while their replacements of the 1960's and 1970's - the concrete multi-purpose stadia - lack character, sense of place, and intimacy. Ironically, both the golden age ballparks and the concrete multi-purpose stadia have ignored the design of a public realm beyond the grandstands. This represents a major design feature which has the potential for further investigating the role of the ballpark within the city and for reaffirming the stature of the ballpark as an urban landmark. The challenge of the contemporary architect and urban designer, therefore, is to re-invent the early 20th century golden age ballpark in the context of the demands of the 21st century. As such, this thesis is an investigation of the vitality of a ballpark architectural tradition and a pastoral heritage rich in American cultural meaning.
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DEDICATION

To my family - mom, dad, Bruce and Elizabeth.

1. Tiger Stadium, Detroit, Michigan
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"Building a ballpark is more work than you might imagine."
introduction

the golden age ballpark and the city
the ballpark as american cultural history
the ballpark as pastoral oasis
the ballpark as home away from home

the contribution of the ballpark to the city
defining a sense of place
creating civic presence and identity
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THE BALLPARK AND THE AMERICAN CITY

INTRODUCTION

In the next ten to fifteen years the Boston Red Sox will probably leave Fenway Park for a new ballpark. Potential sites for the new park in the Boston metropolitan area are currently being considered, including a promising fifteen acre site on Fort Point Channel at the corner of “A” and Washington Streets (just North of the Gillette factory). The purpose of this thesis is to design a new ballpark for the Red Sox on this site, a task which requires that the architect address three primary considerations. First, a background understanding and appreciation of the ballpark and its relationship to the city is essential in order that the design take into account the historical role of ballparks in American cities. Second, the design of the ballpark will have to include the intimacy and contextualism of the golden age ballpark, the infrastructure and support services of the multi-purpose stadia, and a public/civic space which has been ignored by both. Third, the ballpark will need to fit into the existing context of Fort Point Channel and the larger urban fabric of downtown Boston in order to define a unique sense of place and help give direction to future development of the city.

The lessons to be learned from both the ballparks of the past and present are numerous and this thesis will attempt at to distill the essential components as a basis for contemporary design. It will be important that new ballparks successfully accommodate their role in the urban fabric while neither pandering to misguided nostalgia, artificial imitation, nor becoming non-descript concrete shells that

ignore the importance of our ballpark tradition. Therefore, a new ballpark for the Red Sox will, in a sense, be a re-invention, re-discovery, or reinterpretation of classic ballparks of the early twentieth century, adapted to the technology, aesthetic, and urban fabric of the contemporary American city.

In the immediate future several cities, including St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Seattle, Detroit, New York, and San Francisco, will likely face the challenge of designing a new ballpark. It would be most unfortunate, for both the American city and the game of baseball, to forget the lessons of the past from the golden age ballpark, to repeat the mistakes of the multi-purpose stadia of late 1960s and 70s, or to simply design without a full understanding of the historical relationship and importance of the ballpark to the American city. This thesis will illustrate ballpark design integrating both general design principles and site-specific attributes of Fort Point Channel which enhance a sense of place and redefine the role of the ballpark as a pastoral oasis within the modern city.
THE GOLDEN AGE BALLPARK AND THE CITY

More than simply being an arena for viewing a game or a nostalgic icon of a rural past, the ballpark has developed a specific role in the American city. A ballpark defines space on a grand scale, creates a civic aura bordering on the religious, and serves as a landmark evoking a distinct pride of place. While its basic presence requires a large footprint, the best ballparks are intimate, human scaled and attuned to the pedestrian. The ballpark and its pastoral antecedents represent a tradition full of the myth and memory of an accumulated American heritage, including the Elysian Fields, Doubleday Field in Cooperstown, and the Mudville where Casey struck out. Unlike many of the customs and culture that have been borrowed or assimilated from European tradition, the ballpark is truly indigenous and unique to the American city.

In some ways the game of baseball has become a window into the American soul and the ballpark presents us with the opportunity to "look in." The traditional or golden age ballpark is an urban idiom of our mythic past in the built form of the nineteenth and twentieth century American city. It connotes a once

"dominant image of an undefiled, green republic of forests, villages, and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness"^2

within the everyday realities of city life. The ballpark is one of our most important urban landmarks and as such it is deserving of an appreciation commensurate with that status. Thus, before an architect can responsibly design one it is important to have a sense of the history of the ballpark and its contribution to the American experience, including the following: 1) the evolution of the ballpark as a distinct feature of the American urban fabric and 2) the contribution of the successful ballpark to the city and the design features which make this possible.

Reinventing the Golden Age Ballpark and the Pastoral Ideal

7. Early origins of the pastoral ideal. The shepherd and flock in the "middle landscape."

8. Defining elements of American cultural history - baseball, the landscape, and the Civil War.

THE BALLPARK AS AMERICAN CULTURAL HISTORY

In order to appreciate the importance of the ballpark as a landmark in the city and as an element of American cultural history, it is necessary to briefly consider the joint contributions of the pastoral ideal and the game of baseball to its development. The pastoral ideal, in its most basic form, represents a yearning for a way of life closer to nature - a longing for a middle landscape in between the laws and customs of society and raw wilderness of nature.

It is this idealistic notion that has largely defined the pastoral ideal and that which has shaped the origins of our ballpark history. In the opening chapter of *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville expresses concern for the rapidly emerging industrial metropolis of the American city represented by the Manhattan of the 1850s.

"Loitering under the shady lee of yonder warehouses will not suffice... nothing will content... but the extremist limit of the land. How then is this? Are the green fields gone?"3

The game of baseball has played a special role in the definition of the American character and the ballpark has come to symbolize these "green fields" as a vestige of earlier agrarian visions coexisting within the midst of our rapidly industrializing cities. The ballpark is "not paradise... but as close as you're going to get in America."4

The mid-nineteenth century was a watershed in American history which included the emergence of the industrial revolution, the increasing urbanization of the city, and the origins of baseball and the ballpark. As unique urban phenomenon evolving out of this period the ballpark became an urban metaphor for the pastoral ideal which has continued to play a special role in American cultural history. Not unlike the recent movie character, Forrest Gump, baseball has been in the middle of, or influenced, a great many of our historical events, customs, and institu-

tions. From stories of the game being played by soldiers during the Revolutionary War, to the myth of its origins in Cooperstown, or the folklore of its pastoral origins on the Elysian Fields, the game of baseball and its urban form - the ballpark - together constitute a significant contribution to the American experience. In fact, the ballpark pre-dates many of our cultural institutions and landmarks while it has influenced numerous others. For example, the game of baseball was being played in the Boston Commons as early as the 1830's (see figure 3). During the Civil War soldiers played baseball behind the White House, in prisoner camps, and on the battlefields. A Union soldier once recalled a game played between battle lines.

"Suddenly there came a scattering of fire... the center fielder was hit and was captured... the attack was repelled... [and] we had lost not only our center fielder, but... the only baseball in Alexandria."

A decade after the Civil War baseball was being played on Staten Island at a ballpark called St. George's Field as the Statue of Liberty was being constructed in the skyline beyond the grandstands (see figure 9). Even our national anthem developed within the framework of the ballpark as the tradition of singing it prior to games was started over 70 years before it officially became the national anthem. Within these associations one can appreciate and understand the sentiment Americans attached - and continue to attach - to the ballpark.

However, as the reality of the pastoral ideal flickered and the city increasingly became industrialized and urbanized, the ballpark took on a distinct role as a living artifact of that ideal. As the reality of the pastoral ideal was vanishing

"somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night"\

the ballpark was increasingly serving as a reservoir of associations of the game with an implicit admiration of the pastoral ideal - a simpler, more

consummate way of life.

"Baseball is our game - the American game. It will take people out of doors, fill them with oxygen, give them a larger physical stoicism. Tend to relieve us from being a nervous dyspeptic set. Repair these losses, and be a blessing to us." 7

Walt Whitman

THE BALLPARK AS PASTORAL OASIS

"Ballparks exist... because there is in humanity a vestigial memory of an enclosed green space as a place of freedom or play." 8 In addition to creating a sense of harmony between the natural landscape and the city, the golden age ballpark served as a symbolic pastoral oasis or sanctuary in the teeming industrial cities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

"A baseball stadium does a wonderful thing in the city. It breaks up the grid. When you get inside the stadium, you're confused geographically. You lose contact with the outside. There's something pastoral within this greensward, which is why we see it as a peaceful game and always try to transfer the game out of the city and into the rural pastures. But it started in the cities and spread outward. Baseball reflects our society, but at the same time it offers this wonderful refuge from it. It is like an embassy to which one can flee for asylum." 9

It is not entirely coincidental that the ballpark is the only sports venue, or civic building type, for that matter, which is referred to, in its formal name or design, as a field, park, or grounds (e.g. Wrigley Field, Fenway Park, and The Polo Grounds). Such terminology appears to reflect the vestige of an underlying pastoral tradition. Players called fielders defend an outfield and an infield and home plate is the center of activity and attention. Within the ballpark the field is an oasis where "jaded urbanites can renew their relationship with earth and sun." 10 In fact, it is difficult not to find pastoral associations in the tradition of baseball and ballparks.

However, it is relevant to note that bucolic scenes such as the Elysian Fields were largely mythical since, in reality, in most cities, the game was played by young boys in the streets. In distinct contrast to the poetic imagery of such pastoral scenes as the West Branch School in Geneva, New York, a more realistic depiction of baseball was captured by the famous Lewis Hines photograph taken at the turn of the century in the North End of Boston (fig. 12 and 13). In a similar fashion, the ballpark was far cry from a purist version of Washington Irving's "lovely green hollow." Nonetheless, both the pastoral ideal and the ballpark, as one source of that vision, were so ingrained in the American mind that their metaphorical imagery may as well have been real.

"The image of this... became... a collective representation; a poetic idea... that defined the promise of American life. The master symbol of the garden embraced a cluster of metaphors expressing fecundity, growth, increase, and blissful labor in the earth."11

Given the stress and dislocation of the early industrial age, the ballpark provided a symbolic escape from the rush of the city to an urban "park." The ballpark emerged as "an oasis of the uncontrived... that reminds us of an America that was - and, even more distantly, of a land of wonders to which we can never return... [i]t is the game of our past, our nation's and our own."12 Baseball granted an escape from the monotony of industrial life while, at the same time, serving as a cohesive focal point for communities kindling memories of a vanished and mythical past.

As part of the developing city, the ballpark became a symbol of the pastoral while blending in with the surrounding urban context. Much like the attraction of the late nineteenth century cemetery as a picnic spot, the ballpark was a welcome respite - "a Mecca for fans who would come by the thousands on Sundays [in the days before games were played on Sunday] just to look at the place."13 At the ballpark the fast-paced, mechanical urban lifestyle outside gave way to a pastoral or prairie-like vastness inside. In such a location "time move[d] differently, marked by

no clock except the events of [a] game"14 of pastoral origin. The absence of a clock in baseball was a product of a pre-industrial sensibility, wherein “life was governed by just two things, daylight and its absence.”15 The ballpark served as a pastoral respite calibrated to the time cycle of nature - a “cycle of mythic time to provide a needed psychic relief from the tedium of western linear time.”16 While surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the teeming city inside the ballpark the game followed the “rhythms of Nature... and not... city watches.”17 In fact it is probably not ironic that players even run counter-clockwise around the bases. A game, based on outs and innings, not a ticking clock, could seemingly go on forever, at least until darkness or rain - nature - intervened. But even these phenomenon are just considered natural delays. “Banked around this little green acreage... the sense of urgency that governs most lives is pushed to one side like junk mail shoved to the back of a desk.”18

Although serving as a type of urban sanctuary, the golden age ballpark was not a purely escapist venue. Rather, it was a civic form of respite, helping the harried urban dweller to symbolically balance or integrate the hard scrabble life of the city with the natural landscape. The ballpark served as a vehicle for reconstructing disparate elements of the urban mechanical world and the pastoral vision or sentiment into a more cohesive pattern. For example, the golden age ballpark, Wrigley Field, interestingly has outfield brick walls (representing the city) covered with the natural landscaping of ivy. From the stands one can view both the green playing field and, in the distance, both the row houses of Chicago and Lake Michigan. In a similar vein, John Updike’s eloquent description of Fenway Park, may be taken as a summary of all the golden age ballparks as unique contributions to their urban context as well as to the sanity of the city dweller.

“Fenway Park, in Boston is a lyric little bandbox of a ballpark [where] everything is painted green and seems in curiously sharp focus, like the inside of an old-fashioned peeping-type Easter egg. It... offers, as do most Boston artifacts,
THE BALLPARK AS HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Going to the ballpark meant much more than just seeing a game of baseball. It was a symbol of American values and ideals - a vicarious relationship with the pastoral and a returning home. "Americanitis...[the] instinct for home and for some tie that connects us with the land" and the ballpark became the magical site where this happened. In fact, the ultimate goal of this game, for both the players and the spectators, is not centered around fourth base but home plate. The ballpark had come to symbolize a rural and time-independent "reassurance of...traditional small-town values" in an urban setting where "the game...moved along, gentle and unhurried as a brook in a pasture." 

Although celebrated in American folklore as a game of rural origins, baseball was also a large-scale economic enterprise operating within the city. In this sense the ballpark, in addition to serving as a pastoral oasis, reinforced a connection or link to the past. Going to see a ballgame in the city was much more than just seeing a ballgame. "My God, it was like the Emerald City, and as you got closer, you'd pick up your pace, and you'd give your tickets and go charging inside." Much as it had in the nineteenth century, baseball continued into the early twentieth century as one of the pillars of a romanticized perception of American society. At the ballpark the city and the pastoral countryside were perceived as one, as an integrated whole - as a home away from home. It became a place that both "affirm[ed] the possibilities of the city" while providing a respite from it. Thus, the golden age ballpark takes us full circle - from the imagery of the city in nature to simultaneously evoking nature in the city.

"Baseball is our most pastoral game, and its relation to open space is fundamental to its importance to urban Americans. The baseball park with

23. Ward, Geoffrey and Burns, Ken. p. 239.
In essence, only in America where the pastoral ideal was interpreted as a hope about a glorified past being possible in the present would the ballpark come to symbolize a returning to nature and a coming “home.” In the summer of 1956 the distinguished American poet Robert Frost stated, “I am never more at home in America than at a ballgame. Beyond this I know not and dare not.”

Our nation’s history has been carefully woven into the fabric of our ballpark traditions such that the ballpark is like a thread in the cable rope of our national character. The ballpark is a place where urbanites have come to temporarily escape the anxieties, dislocations and lifestyle of rapid urbanization. Amidst the bustle of teeming streets, overcrowded living conditions and otherwise abrasive qualities of the cement paved city the ballpark has come to represent a real place where the Edenic myth remains as a flickering possibility - an ephemeral and soothing vestige of our once rural and mythic past. The ballpark is one of the few, if any, physical attributes of the city that in some way recaptures our longing for the pastoral ideal - for a way of life closer to nature - and that which simultaneously maintains the American inventiveness for progress and modernization. Things that delineate a city culminate in the architecture and the architecture of the ballpark represents one of the special contributions to the American city.

18. Baseball, the pastoral ideal, and the ballpark - a returning "home" and American myth.

19. Reference and association with the landscape was a defining element during baseball's development as evident in the background of this team photograph.
THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BALLPARK TO THE AMERICAN CITY

In addition to the pastoral connotations and associations, the ballpark represents a civic landmark in the truest sense of the word. Since the 1870's and the professionalization of the sport, many ballparks have emerged as the defining elements of the city, eventually assuming the role of an active civic monument. However, not all ballparks have attained this stature. Many of the 1960's and 70's ballparks - more appropriately multi-purpose stadia - failed to reach this potential. Therefore it is best to analyze successful ballparks as a way of seeing how they have effected their cities and why more recent multi-purpose stadia have fallen short of their civic responsibilities. The golden age ballparks were particularly effective, providing an example of three major contributions to the American city: 1) defining a sense of place and urban character; 2) creating a civic presence and identity; and 3) providing a public domain where urbanites can be an active part of a larger community.

DEFINING A SENSE OF PLACE

Probably the single most important contribution the ballpark has imparted on the American city has been its place-making ability. This is all the more impressive considering that the ballpark represents a single urban artifact. What has enabled this one urban element to so clearly define a sense of place has been a careful understanding, appreciation and respect for (or in some cases the establishment of) its surrounding context.

While the pastoral ideal was quickly vanishing as a realistic possibility at this time, the ballpark was emerging as the embodiment of the ideals and potential of an "Adamic vision of the 'New' World."27 The urban ballpark represented the harmony of the natural/pastoral landscape and the industrial city, not only defining architecture within the urban fabric of the

city but also offering a statement of identity and regional character.

"These modest early ballparks were a locus of attention... urban landmarks... in the process of psychological nation building." 28

At this stage in American urban development, the myths of baseball and the pastoral ideal were readily incorporated in the form of the ballpark. With the emergence of the post-romantic, industrial version of the pastoral ideal the ballpark would come to define urban identity, community and association of place.

"As the new century was born, baseball parks had already become landmarks of the consolidating industrial city. They were set in a landscape of voracious and pitiless commercial energy, liberated appetites, and growing social contradictions... In the middle of this burgeoning, bristling urban texture, the new home of the democratic Everyman, was a baseball park." 29

These early ballparks were built on the fringes of rapidly expanding urban core, within the existing city grid and amidst intersecting transit networks of surface trolleys, subways and elevated lines, rail lines and yards, warehouses, factories, commercial buildings, residential blocks and industrial waste land. Despite the eclectic mix of surrounding uses and activities, the ballpark was not only an urban destination in this new industrial city but it "morally belong[ed] to the people of the community." 30

CREATING CIVIC PRESENCE AND IDENTITY

The planning and design of the golden age ballpark was integrated with the traditions "akin to the architecture of older American neighborhoods" 31 while the inside echoed associations with a pastoral setting. During the definitive six year period of the golden age ballpark (from 1909 to 1915), an essential theme that defined all the parks was the bridging of the pastoral landscape and the urban context or setting. Within the city, the ballpark was defining (or being defined by) the contextual qualities of its urban neighborhood. This was the result of many factors such as the

reinventing the golden age ballpark and the pastoral ideal

financial forces of subway and streetcar lines and real estate speculation. However, it was the baseball team club owners who ultimately made the decisions determining both the architectural style and the relationship of the ballpark within its urban context. Always a constant was a view of the downtown and vistas looking out to the city. “Gazing over the rooftops of the row houses, chimneys, factories, warehouses, steeples and historic buildings which gave each particular city its salt,” an individual was reminded of the two-way, reciprocal path from urban context to pastoral enclosure, and vice versa. The ballpark provided a transition from the industrial city, as expressed on the facade of the ballpark, to an enclosed pastoral realm. In true form, the golden age ballpark was an urban synthesis of its unseparable and unifying elements - the urban context, baseball and the pastoral.

Most golden age ballparks were built on a single block in middle income neighborhoods on the site of earlier wooden ballparks. Each ballpark was unique, as an architectural statement reflecting its respective urban context and reinforcing perceptions of place. The defining characteristics of these ballparks derived from a remarkable adaptability of programmatic concerns within a stringent respect for contextualism. The existing site constraints led to design elements resulting in charming irregularities (odd nooks and crannies) that gave the game, the ballpark, and the neighborhood a unique character. The golden age ballparks were not only conscious of their surroundings but almost to a ballpark used such contextualism to generate vital elements of ballpark design. Short outfield fences, cropped grandstands, missing bleachers, odd angles and overhanging upper decks were all the result of urban site conditions. As such, the experience a baseball game at such a ballpark provided for a unique experience and singular sense of place. For each ballpark, design was the product of location and “the architectural dialogue between two opposed forces: the diamond, the outfield, and the stands pushing outward, and the surrounding streets and structures containing them.”


The design of the golden age ballpark followed one of two options in the design of the exterior: 1) reflecting the existing urban character, or 2) creating its own architectural language in the absence of an existing neighborhood. In either instance it was the exterior enclosure which bridged the city and a pastoral interior. The exterior facade design typically reflected and assimilated into the urban context, taking such forms as a warehouse, factory, business or formal civic structure. Echoing the contemporary architectural trends of the early twentieth century, the end result was an exterior facade or permeable (two-way) boundary which served to connect with its neighborhood context on the outside while capturing a vision of the pastoral on the inside. The transition from city to nature was accomplished as individuals walked from the outside urban context, through the facade, into the “bowels” of the boundary structure (again, often reflecting the innards of a factory), and finally up through a narrow entryway or tunnel to an expansive space of pastoral greenery.

The mechanism for integrating the contained interior “greensward” with the city was the transition through the facade, or outer urban shell. In many ways, the golden age ballpark was “a refreshing realm of diversity” in an increasingly industrializing era. “These new parks were not only urban but urbane, acknowledging the pre-modernist principle that cities are (or should be) a continuous fabric of harmonies.” Imbuing a sense of local urban tradition on the outside and hearkening back to a pastoral ideal within, golden age ballparks became city landmarks as architectural structures. Like snowflakes, no one ballpark was like any other, each reflecting the particular identity of a neighborhood or community as an outgrowth of nature in the industrial city.

The first golden age ballpark, Shibe Park in Philadelphia (built in 1909), illustrated a specific approach to bridging the pastoral landscape and the urban context. At the time Shibe Park was constructed there was little, if any, neighborhood context in the surrounding locale. It was built anew.
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(not from a former wooden structure on the site as was the case with many other golden age ballparks) and, therefore, it was without a history specific to Philadelphia. As a result, the owner, Ben Shibe, in effect created a context for a pastoral park and neighborhood by creating an urban structure that would define the direction of its future community. Its French renaissance and neo-classical architecture (perhaps influenced by the Columbian Exhibition of 1893) portrayed the presence of a civic building on the outside, serving as a transition from the urban-industrial city as experienced outside the ballpark and seen in the facade, and the progression into the green expanse within. Most likely, in a conscious effort to engage with and integrate contemporary urban design, the ballpark promoted its street-side facades as public/civic spaces while hearkening to an era of harmony with nature within.

The designers of Fenway Park in Boston, took another approach to assimilating the pastoral with the urban context. The brick outer facade of Fenway echoed the nearby warehouse and factory buildings and was in clear relation to its surrounding urban context. Furthermore, the progression into Fenway was much like the experience of entering a contemporary industrial factory. A maze of ramps and tunnels within a skeleton of concrete columns and steel beams (the contemporary construction technology) provided the transition to the pastoral. The transition was experienced (and still is) as the spectator progressed through the industrial bowels of the exterior, emerging into a large expanse of greenery - a bounded landscape within the city. In addition, its 37 foot tall green left field wall, eclectic center field bleachers and view of the Citgo sign over left field, has become a defining element of Boston. Today Fenway is as much an icon of Boston as the golden dome of the state house, the old north church or Fanueil Hall. Virtually all the other golden age ballparks followed this pattern.

Other classic ballparks, including Griffith Park, Forbes Field, and Borchert Field, are noteworthy examples of the relationship between the urban
context, the ballpark and a "tendency to idealize rural ways." At Griffith Park the outer envelope of the ballpark closely matched its surroundings - so much so that, in fact, the ballpark had to be constructed around a tree and five private houses in center field which could not be acquired by the ball club owner. In a similar fashion, Forbes Field had an auto mechanic's garage under the third base grandstands and a tree lined city street defined the left field wall. Borchert Field, home of the Milwaukee Brewers from 1887-1952, provides an excellent example of urban contextualism. The field takes its shape, literally from its surrounding urban fabric, and the sense of character and identity is unmistakable. Almost everything about this ballpark is unique to its specific context in Milwaukee except for the dimensions of the infield diamond and the rules of the game. However, even the rules of the game were later amended in response to the peculiarities of the park which included a motorized 60 foot tall chicken wire fence mounted on the 266 foot right field wall and moved into foul territory only when the Brewers were at bat.

In short, the facade and relationship of the outside of the golden age ballpark often times took components which represented a clear response to nearby buildings, which gave the ballpark a relation to the existing surroundings (even if that effect was dictated as much by the particular demands of a setting or by intent).

PROVIDING A PUBLIC DOMAIN FOR AN URBAN COMMUNITY
The architecture of the golden age ballpark created a civic structure tailored to a specific neighborhood as the narrative icon for uniting a community with its pastoral heritage. What the architect, urban planner, social scientist and the popular writer find in the ballpark relates to what Kevin Lynch has called the "social role" of landscape. A building's "imageability... facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment." This same environment provides a "vast mnemonic system" in which individuals find "memories and symbols," As a welcomed break from the city, the

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Forbes Field, Pittsburgh. A golden age ballpark unique to its city and neighborhood.

golden age ballpark became a symbol of the community within a pastoral setting. Baseball supplied a common bond and strengthened communication helping those most in need of it - the urbanites and immigrants living in the "anonymity and impersonal vortex of large industrial cities." As the traditional ties with society disappeared, going to the ballpark was an opportunity to become and feel a part of the community. Cheering for the home team "gave to the urban dweller the sense of belonging in a community that in former times - when they may have lived in small towns - was commonplace." "A baseball club is part of the chemistry of the city. A game isn't just an athletic contest, it's a picnic, a kind of town meeting."

The ballpark was a symbol of the "greensward" where one might go to picnic on a spring day - a version of the New England town green. Such associations, of course, conjure up the imagery of a bygone era and a nostalgia for the pastoral. In sum, the golden age ballparks exhibited a remarkable capacity for giving the residents of cities a shared emotional experience and tradition of pastoral association.
THE MULTI-PURPOSE STADIA

Just as the turn of the century wooden ballparks had once become outdated and replaced by the golden age brick and steel ballparks, multi-purpose stadia began to replace the golden age ballparks in the 1960s. While the intentions were the same - to build ballparks which could be more profitable - the results were significantly different. The ballparks that followed the golden age era addressed different aspects of the ballpark such as the automobile, luxury boxes, unobstructed view seats, and the ability to accommodate for professional football.

"What baseball should have everywhere is not another ramshackle stadium but a brand new baseball plant with brand new ideas and engineering. It should be one with power brakes and steering. It should have escalators and radiant heating, adjustable seats for box seat patrons. It should have a spacious restaurant with a dance floor. It should have parking for 12-15,000 autos, with 1,000 spaces for season box holders."43

Reacting to a changing market and the automobile, the results of these multi-purpose stadia were significantly different than the previous ballpark upgrades in the golden age. For a generation of Americans who watched the golden age ballparks fall prey to the wrecking ball, progress largely meant accepting what was new because it was new, and disposing what was old because it was old. While this might be a rule-of-thumb for computer hardware and software it is not a good idea for urban continuity and balance. Particularly, with such a vital element of the urban fabric. In a more holistic sense, progress should be cumulative and the result of accrued experience. When multi-purpose stadia of this time, such as Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh, Busch Stadium in St. Louis, and the Astrodome in Houston, were built they focused on parking lots, luxury boxes and football games but virtually ignored the essential elements of intimacy, character and urban scale of their predecessors. While many of the golden age ballparks became out-dated for an age increasingly dependent upon the automobile their replacements did little to accommodate the fans beyond the provision of oceans of downtown parking lots.

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and the removal of obstructed view columns.

Most of these multi-purpose stadia provide for the same experience independent of their site location. They look alike, feel alike and provide the same placelessness. Games played and watched at such structures are almost indistinguishable and little is offered that the fan, or player, can recognize as defining a sense of place.

"I stand at the plate in Philadelphia and I don't honestly know whether I'm in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis, or Philly. They all look alike."44

While the intention of the owners may have been the same - the profit margin - the golden age ballparks and the multi-purpose stadia have clearly effected different results. While the multi-purpose stadium works much better as a facility, it is inferior as a place. The character and site specific features which made the golden age ballparks so unique to their surroundings have given way to mechanical space-eaters which reveal "nothing except a desire to compete on equal esthetic terms with the supermarket and the hot-dog emporium."45

Multi-purpose stadia have failed as replacements of their golden age predecessors for the very reasons which they attempted to address and people continue to go to these ballparks perhaps thinking or assuming that they will escape from such elements. Today

"the Pittsburgh Pirates play in a stadium that contains a restaurant that is about as big - bigger, maybe - than the park they used to play in."46

Having forsaken a sense of character and intimacy, even the last vestigial remnant of the ballpark and pastoral tradition - real grass - has been replaced. The multi-purpose stadia have been such a disappointment that the golden age predecessors are still mourned. For example, the original home plate and a small section of the outfield - all that remain of Forbes Field in Pittsburgh - are now enshrined within the office buildings that replaced them. They are the American equivalent of holy relics and people continue to make pilgrimages to visit their ruins.

What ultimately differentiates the multi-purpose ballpark from the golden age predecessor is the adaptation to context. While the golden age ballparks were first opposed to by their communities for the very same reasons that the multi-purpose stadia were (too big, noisy, and troublesome) they eventually became part of, or defined, their surrounding context. I am convinced that this is the direct result of the strong relationship between the ballpark and the surrounding urban fabric. The golden age ballpark worked with its site and took advantage of what was or wasn't available. The result was a distinctive sense of place based on the context of the site and its city. However, the multi-purpose stadia ignored this vital element and the surrounding context in favor of the need for parking lots. As a result these stadia sit in the middle of the downtown often in once populated areas bulldozed for vast oceans of asphalt paving and easy access to the highway. This civic defacement has left ugly patches of unhealed urban scar tissue in the place of once distinctive areas and many of these cities have yet to fully recover.

Progress is not just about the new or current but about learning from our past and improving upon it. “We lose part of the gain offered by a new invention if we automatically discard all the still valuable inventions that preceded it.” The multi-purpose stadia virtually ignored all that made the golden age ballpark good while solving for its service and infrastructure deficiencies. Two recent ballparks, Camden Yards in Baltimore and Coors Field in Denver, represent a beginning reinterpretation of the golden age ballpark. The sense of place and character is distinct and particular to their cities and presents a destination for fans who have long relished the opportunity to experience a ballpark as opposed to a placeless stadium.

The structural expressionist multi-purpose stadia neither defines a sense of place nor an intimacy worthy of civic gathering. Rather they are violently antiseptic concrete injection molds which have no particular relation to their context, their use, or their inhabitants (unless one consid-

47. Mumford, Lewis., p. 235.
ers the car as an inhabitant). As a result, this thesis is an attempt at solving for the loss of the golden age ballpark, the failures of the multi-purpose stadia and the civic needs of the ballpark without false nostalgia or mistaken caricatures.

36. Dodger Stadium, Los Angeles, California. Much less integrated with the surrounding context than its golden age predecessors.
general ballpark design guidelines
elements determining a sense of place
elements of general ballpark character
ballpark infrastructure requirements

prototypical elements of a reinterpreted ballpark tradition

civic/public space
residual space and the inner ballpark linings
connection with the city
PAST LESSONS AND FUTURE PROPOSALS

The three distinct characteristics that "make for a good ballpark" previously described - defining a sense of place, civic landmark status, and creating a presence in the urban fabric - provide a useful beginning for the design of future ballparks. These features have played a significant role in defining the golden age ballpark as an urban landmark symbolic of our pastoral mythology. These specific elements do not imply that ballpark architects abandon new possibilities, ideas or interpretations. There is always room for innovative design but it is important that this emerge first from an understanding of these essential ballpark components. If architects forget the history of the ballpark, they may well be vulnerable to the same temptations and errors that characterized the era of the multi-purpose stadium. To paraphrase Louis Kahn, we must address what the ballpark wants to be and not what the architect wants the ballpark to be.48

Heretofore, we have addressed those features which are a part of our ballpark tradition. From the discussion of this ballpark history a general list of "ballpark design guidelines" can be derived which illustrates how to design a ballpark for the future that is based on past successes and failures. I will also suggest that from this same analysis several important, but recently overlooked, elements of good ballpark design which should be a part of a "reinterpreted" ballpark tradition. These features, which will be addressed and illustrated later in the design proposal, are as follows: 1) the provision for a civic space where the public can congregate; 2) the residual space between the outside world of the city and the inside greensward; and 3) integration of the site with the larger urban structure of the city. While listing such ballpark guidelines might appear formulaic and arbitrary, they represent an attempt at articulating and clarifying some matters which have yet to be addressed, by both those who have studied the game and those who have designed the ballparks. Taken together these are important features of overall ballpark character. And in their balance rests the distinction between a ballpark and a stadium.

Reinventing the Golden Age Ballpark and the Pastoral Ideal

GENERAL BALLPARK DESIGN GUIDLINES

**elements determining a sense of place**
- view of skyline
- palpable tradition and urban contextualism
- transition zone
- downtown location
- unmistakable character
- utilize dead space
- public space

**elements of general ballpark character**
- proximity to playing field
- intimacy with ballpark
- real grass

**ballpark infrastructure requirements**
- luxury box dilemma
- deck sloping
- sight lines
- setback precedent
Camden Yards visually integrates itself with the city of Baltimore. Inside the ballpark the spectator is not only part of the game but part of the city. A panoramic skyline view makes Camden Yards a part of Baltimore and Baltimore a part of Camden Yards.

elements determining a sense of place

VIEW OF SKYLINE: This provides a direct connection with the urban context as a starting point for defining a sense of place from within. However, since the layout of the field dictates that the ballpark face a northerly direction (home plate must face a northern direction due to the path of the sun), it may be necessary to consider partial skylines or shoreline vistas.

38. View of downtown Baltimore skyline at Camden Yards.
Philadelphia's Baker Bowl represents the special golden age proclivity for urban contextualism. Built within the confines of an urban industrial landscape the Baker Bowl was a Philadelphia landmark. A particularly unique feature of the park was the rail lines that actually ran under center field.

PALPABLE TRADITION AND URBAN CONTEXTUALISM: When a proposed site provides (and the architect acknowledges) an urban context with character, history, and local tradition the potential for a ballpark has a rich palette from which to paint. Elements of the nearby urban fabric and city history need not be re-created into the design but there should be a clear and underlying relationship between the site and its surroundings.
Tiger Stadium, like many golden age ballparks, provides for an experiential transition from the industrial surroundings of Detroit through ramps and tunnels into a secluded green expanse within. The "transition zone" represents an urban labyrinth of concrete and steel that protects a manicured garden of grass inside.

TRANSITION ZONE:
The progression from outside (urban fabric) to inside (pastoral park) is an element of the ballpark which adds an experiential quality. The transition from city to park, from urban density - through tunnels/ramps - into the open green-sward is an essential element of going to the ballgame. Furthermore, the incorporation of site specific features as part of this progression enhances the distinction of place while making the journey more memorable.

40. A glimpse of green within Tiger Stadium.
Fenway Park, in the "Fens" neighborhood of Boston's Back Bay, is located off a subway line and within walking distance of most of the city. As a result, the ballpark's downtown location provides for a healthy pedestrian environment and connection with the greater Boston area.

DOWNTOWN LOCATION:
This is independent of design, planning or ballpark intentions - either the site is downtown or it isn't. When the ballpark parcel is located in an urban setting, the potential for intimacy, character and sense of place is significantly enhanced. Somehow many of the multi-purpose stadia failed to take advantage of this opportunity, in part, because they bulldozed their surroundings. Nevertheless, the lessons of this error have become clear.
Wrigley Field, with its ivy-covered brick outfield wall, represents perhaps one of the most distinguishing features of the American ballpark - unmistakable character.

"...and on the seventh day the Lord rested, and came to beautiful Wrigley Field to watch his own game, on his own grass, under his own lights."

-- bleacher bums

UNMISTAKABLE CHARACTER:
The ballpark should serve as an active urban artifact which allows for dialogue between the site and location yet independent and able to stand on its own. Excessive nostalgia or imitation should be avoided as much as non-descript structural expressionism. New ballparks should not be remakes of old golden age classics nor ventures outside the realm of a ballpark for baseball.

42. An icon of baseball and the classic ballpark - Chicago's Wrigley Field.
Comiskey Park II is an example of amenities and modern day conveniences. However, the massive amounts of unused dead space necessitated by these amenities has precluded the character, sense of place, and intimacy of experiencing a ballpark in favor of a mall-park.

UTILIZE "DEAD SPACE:"
The typical ballpark leaves large amounts of interior space unused and unplanned. Specifically in multi-purpose stadia and more recent ballparks (primarily due to the code requirements for egress ramps). However, these elements should not be used as excuses but rather as opportunities to integrate with site-specific features or surrounding context in order to provide a richer experience through the transition zone.
Because of its urban location Fenway Park provides for a pedestrian friendly environment. Seemingly by default the ballpark has served as a town square or an Americanized piazza even though no such space was designed for this use. Urbanites just spill into nearby streets and sidewalks. Little if any public or mixed-use civic space has been designed into the ballpark or its environs including the multi-purpose stadiums and golden age ballparks. However, the masses of pedestrians and ballpark surroundings would surely benefit from such public space.

PUBLIC SPACE:
One element of that has yet to be built as part of the ballpark has been a civic/public realm. Mixed-use office, retail, commercial and entertainment space can be incorporated into an exciting American version of the Italian piazza.

44. Public space by default at Fenway Park.
The demands of unobstructed view seats and skyboxes have dramatically altered the ballpark intimacy and proximity. For example, virtually all of the original Comiskey Park could fit inside of its replacement. Today’s front row seat in the upper deck is actually further from home plate than the last row in the original Comiskey Park.

PROXIMITY TO PLAYING FIELD:

The closer the fan is to the playing field is directly proportional to the experience of the game and the ballpark. While recent ballparks (e.g. Three Rivers Stadium, Riverfront Stadium, and Busch Stadium) have all but removed structural columns in favor of having no obstructed view seats. This has pushed back the upper deck such that the spectator is no longer as close to the game.
Proximity to the field is perhaps the best in baseball in the upper deck of Tiger Stadium. Structural posts largely provided for this intimacy. Fans are closer to the field than in any other major league ballpark. Ex-Tiger, George Kell, once recalled a fan relentlessly heckling the Tiger pitcher. George went to the mound to calm the pitcher telling him he was doing just fine and not to listen to the heckler. When he returned to third base the same heckler replied "George, you're not doing too well yourself."

INTIMACY WITHIN BALLPARK:
While closely related to proximity to the field, the intimacy of the ballpark can be understood as a more general category which includes the overall massing and seating layout of the ballpark. Ballparks like Tiger Stadium provide an experience where one can actually hear the players talking on the field, the smack of the ball hitting their gloves and the crack of the bat. While there is generally a small trade-off in sight line angles, more recent ballparks have all but ignored the importance of the snugness and tightness of the intimate ballpark.
The well tended grass of the playing field represents the most basic notions of the pastoral ideal. Replacing this "garden" with synthetic green plastic of Astroturf is akin to colorizing classic black and white movies.

REAL GRASS:
This is the ultimate connection to the pastoral ideal and our American rural mythology. Even without many of the good features of a ballpark, the one common element that says "ballpark" is the greensward within. One cannot mention the American pastoral ideal and Astroturf in the same breath. An ex-player once said, "if cows don't eat it, I don't want to play on it."
ballpark infrastructure requirements

This issue has been the single most difficult element of the post golden age ballpark to address. The demands for truck docks, commissary storage, TV and satellite vehicles, parking, and egress ramps have all transformed the golden age ballpark into a much bigger operation. While they are necessary elements and must be integrated into the overall ballpark design, the multi-purpose stadia simply chose to focus on these infrastructure features while ignoring the components that give meaning to a ballpark. It is the responsibility of the architect to address these infrastructure elements while at the same time minimize their impact and presence.
While skyboxes push the upper deck further back they are significant revenue generating features of the modern ballpark. Therefore, the architect must accommodate their presence while still preserving view angles and upper deck proximity. At Fort Point Channel this has been accomplished by tucking the skyboxes under and behind the upper deck.

LUXURY BOX DILEMMA: Much like the other service and infrastructure elements, the demand for luxury boxes is a reality that will have to be accepted. The economic gains demand their presence. As such, it is the architect's responsibility to minimize their presence while maximizing their revenue.
Tiger Stadium has perhaps the optimal deck sloping of any ballpark. This is made possible by structural columns which support the upper deck. Because this creates lower deck obstructed view seats it was not considered viable for the multi-purpose stadia a generation later.

DECK SLOPING:
Typical deck sloping (the slope of the seating plane) varies from ballpark to ballpark. However, a rule-of-thumb based on precedent suggests that the lower deck range from 12 to 17 degrees and the upper deck range from 28 to 33 degrees. Once seating decks approach anything near the mid-thirties it becomes increasingly uncomfortable for the fans. In Toronto at the Skydome the upper deck is so steep that railings in front of all seats were installed out of the fear and anxiety of those who were unlucky enough to have to sit in the upper deck.
In order to follow a typical baseball fly-ball a sight line of 12 degrees is necessary. Golden age ballparks were as low as 6 degrees. As such, the Fort Point Channel proposal not only provides for a 15 degree sight line but also optimizes deck sloping, upper deck proximity, and "hidding" the skyboxes from interfering with any of the above.

SIGHT LINES:
View Angles - Minimal view angles are necessary so that those sitting in the back rows underneath cantilevering upper-decks can see fly balls. Typically, the minimum angle acceptable in the modern ballpark varies from 12 to 15 degrees. Golden age ballparks were sometimes as low as 6 degrees.

52. and 53. Fort Point Channel proposal and Tiger Stadium, respectively.
Obstructed view seats at Fenway Park. While the view of those sitting under the roof structure is compromised with structural posts the view is still one of the best in all of baseball.

OBSTRUCTED VIEW SEATS:
The trade off between obstructed view seats and the overall proximity and intimacy of the ballpark suggests that a compromise is necessary. Unless one is sitting directly behind a structural post the actual view of the playing field is only occasionally awkward and the benefits to the rest of the ballpark make this a necessary sacrifice. In the Fort Point Channel proposal structural posts are included in order to provide for this sense of intimacy. However, this trade-off only effects those sitting in the last 6 rows of the lower deck and includes only half the total number of structural posts required in the typical golden age ballpark.

The original Comiskey Park (like most golden age ballparks) attempted to blend into its urban context with external facade setbacks. In particular, the upper deck is pushed back from the street leaving a more human scaled facade. The multi-purpose stadia all but overlooked this small but important feature adding to the increasing anti-pedestrian, anti-human scale ballpark.

**SETBACK PRECEDENT:**
This point/guideline comes directly from the golden age ballpark which almost to a park, integrated the height differential between the ballpark and surrounding context with setbacks. As a result the full height of the ballpark was rarely evident on the street facade, but rather broken up according to surrounding building heights. This minor adjustment played a significant role in the blending of the ballpark with the city because there were no overwhelming 125 foot tall facades on the street.

55. and 56. The original Comiskey Park and the new Comiskey Park, respectively.
PROTOTYPICAL ELEMENTS OF A REINTERPRETED BALLPARK TRADITION

The general design guidelines and principles discussed above reflect more than a century of American ballparks. As such, they provide essential design parameters for a new ballpark prototype. At the same time however, the traditional golden age ballpark and the multi-purpose stadium have omitted necessary and appropriate features. For example, the civic space and inner lining or residual space has all been but ignored. In addition, integration with the surrounding urban fabric and city at large have sometimes occurred by accident or unintentionally, while at other times completely failed to emerge. The role of a modern ballpark must reclaim its special urban status and reclaim the mythical associations of its history with three essential prototypical design elements - civic space, residual space, and urban integration.

CIVIC SPACE

Intentionally designed public or civic space has long been a missing element of the ballpark. While such a space was not originally necessary for this type of structure, as the game evolved and the ballpark became a more integral element of the national character this need emerged. However, this has never been addressed and such public space has, more or less, been a default characteristic. That is, the ballpark has literally borrowed space from the existing context of neighboring streets and adjoining property in order to accommodate this goal, as necessary. Eventually, this element of the ballpark became such an important component of the experiential quality and perception of going to the

57. Lacking a public or civic realm. Royals Stadium, Kansas City, Missouri.
Reinventing the Golden Age Ballpark and the Pastoral Ideal

The golden age ballpark, however, was more fortunate in this regard than the multi-purpose stadia. Even though the golden age ballpark and the multi-purpose stadia both neglected to accommodate a preconceived civic space, the added dislocations of the multi-purpose stadia, isolated within endless concrete parking lots and ribbons of highways, prohibited any such activity. Even the potential of spilling out onto the surroundings was precluded primarily because any urban fabric which could accommodate this was demolished for parking. Furthermore, the sterile and non-descript facade of the multi-purpose stadia further discouraged the possibility of providing this activity outside the structure. Perhaps Camden Yards is the only recent ballpark that attempts to provide such a public space at an appropriate urban scale. The right field B & O Warehouse (fig. 58) serves much the same function as Fenway Park's Landsdowne Street.

While this "spilling out" is actually a sign of vitality and integration with the site, it is simply not the equivalent of providing for the necessary public space. Individuals within the ballpark can congregate as a "community," but this becomes a default characteristic once outside the realm of the grandstands. Designed and planned civic space is an essential element of any new ballpark.

ballpark that it literally created itself wherever and whenever possible.

For example, at Fenway Park in Boston, Landsdowne Street literally transforms itself on game days from a typical, everyday street to a pedestrian arcade (fig. 44). At the same time it serves as the place to buy souvenirs, hot dogs, and programs it is also the place where people gather, mingle and congregate. Because there is no other place for such activity it simply spills out onto the street. This situation was much the same at most of the golden age ballparks and substituting Shibe Park, Ebbets Field or Forbes Field with that of Fenway Park would describe the same phenomenon.

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RESIDUAL SPACE AND THE INNER BALLPARK LININGS

Another element that has been ignored is the transition zone which negotiates the passage from the outside world of the city into the inside world of the ballpark. While the ballpark originally evolved as a way of keeping nonpaying fans out, the increasing size of these structures eventually created a middle zone of structural columns, ramps, and concourses which the spectator had to decipher in order to reach the ultimate end - a glimpse of the green within. Today this zone has developed into a cavernous volume, devoid of a once minimal and tight fit. Much of this is unavoidable and the result of providing for unobstructed view seats. As such, the upper deck is pushed back and a large dead space underneath is the result (fig. 59). Often times this residual space is so large that even the new codes demaning massive egress ramps are hard pressed to make use of all this space.

"Architecture should be conceived of as a configuration of intermediary places clearly defined. This does not imply continual transition or endless postponement with respect to place and occasion. On the contrary, it implies a [departure] from the contemporary concept of spatial continuity and the tendency to erase every articulation between spaces, i.e., between outside and inside, between one space and another (between on reality and another). Instead the transition should be articulated by means of defined in-between places which induce simultaneous awareness of what is significant on either side. An in-between space in this sense provides the common ground where conflicting polarities can again become twin phenomena." 49

Aldo van Eyck

Therefore, it would seem most appropriate to create an opportunity for intermediary places to occur rather than simply ignore it. By combining the experiential tradition of progressing from outside to inside with the new result of leftover/dead space, it would seem that an architect could enhance the experience of the ballpark and its sense of place by developing a transition zone/residual space which could sharpen the character of the ballpark and the urban context within. To date, no ballpark has

ever addressed this matter. The typical dead space underneath the upper deck is a vast wasteland of concession stands and restrooms that neither sharpens an awareness of the inside or outside nor makes the transition from one to the other a richer experience. Such in-between spaces have yet to play a defined role in the ballpark. This will be addressed later, as a specific design proposal issue.

The transition from the city to the playing field within this residual space progresses through three distinct "zones." First, there is the outside urban zone which reflects contextual elements of the site and city. Second, there is the residual middle zone. This has yet to become a contributing element of the ballpark, however in it lies the possibilities of creating linings, or layers, which would take advantage of the large space resulting underneath the upper deck and simultaneously celebrate the urban fabric on the outside and the green playing field on the inside.

Finally, the third zone is the protected and sheltered inside greensward or pastoral zone. For many the passage through such a transition zone is the magical journey from an outside zone of the city through a residual middle zone, reflecting both the outside and the inside, and into the inner greensward or pastoral zone. The greenness and wide expanse of the field is a breathtaking image, especially in relation to its history and juxtaposition within the city.

The etymological root of the word 'paradise' is an ancient Persian word meaning enclosed park or green. Ballparks exist... because there is in humanity a vestigial memory of an enclosed green space as a place of freedom or play.
CONNECTION WITH THE CITY AT LARGE

Finally, the connection of the ballpark with the larger urban fabric is an essential, if not vital, element of the ballpark. This greatly adds to the character and sense of place of the city and the ballpark. The ballpark is itself a unique experience and this integrated within the framework of the urban anatomy of the city - linear parks, major pedestrian pathways, waterfront activities - would make for a better ballpark and a better city. To incorporate such a prominent civic structure within the hierarchy of the city's central elements is only fitting for this uniquely American building type. Furthermore, the separation of the pedestrian from major traffic arterials allows for both the reliance on the automobile and the case of walking from one urban destination to another.

This way of thinking about the ballpark - as a component of city building - is currently being considered (such as Jacobs Field in Cleveland, Coors Field in Denver, and Camden Yards in Baltimore) at the most basic levels of our most recent ballpark designs.

"The desire behind this is not to imitate, but for experience and feeling to assimilate, for spiritual nourishment beyond that which is offered by the immediate environment or a brief present moment." 51

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site specific intentions on fort point channel

site analysis
  regional
  ballpark site
  site area plans

ballpark proposal issues
  site specific design issues
  layers and linings
  site specific characteristics and the ballpark interior
  urban integration
PART THREE: BALLPARK PROPOSAL

SITE SPECIFIC INTENTIONS ON FORT POINT CHANNEL

The incorporation of site specific peculiarities on Fort Point Channel presents a significant challenge for the design of a new ballpark. Unlike other more common elements of the American city, such as office, commercial and retail space, designing a ballpark represents much more than just erecting a singular building or building type. The ballpark is both an essential and rare city structure. It is the American summation of an Italian piazza, medieval European market square, and French Versailles all wrapped into one. The good ballpark takes what the site has to offer and integrates it into defining features, peculiarities, charms and quirks that give it character and a sense of place. Deep outfields, jutting upper decks, water and landscape features should find themselves as elements of a ballpark based on surrounding site conditions and urban texture such as block patterns, street networks, and the city fabric (not just the whim or fancy of the architect).

The design of ballparks, based on an understanding of their history, tradition, and mannerisms has long been neglected, despite the importance of this American symbol. We have yet to provide the architectural and urbanistic form appropriate to the important associations these urban monuments evoke. However, a window of opportunity for a new era of ballparks is on the horizon (new ballparks are now being proposed in San Francisco, Detroit, Cincinnati, Seattle, etc.). These design issues will be at the architect's call waiting for appropriate expression — in fact demanding it — to accentuate the building's special relationship with the city. What follows is the integration of basic design guidelines, the site-specific features of my proposal, and the incorporation of the as of yet unbuilt ballpark elements of a future ballpark on Fort Point Channel.

After a brief site analysis this design proposal will attempt to incorporate the three major elements of this thesis: 1) the lessons of our ballpark history in the form of general ballpark design guidelines; 2) addressing the elements which have yet to be designed into the ballpark including civic/public space, residual/lining space, and the linkage with the urban fabric of the city at large; and 3) the ballpark's role within the surrounding context and urban fabric. The underlying premise is that the integration of these three elements will provide a template for ballpark design adaptable to any site and flexible to any architect. These elements will be addressed as ballpark proposal issues, site specific design issues and urban design issues.
SITE ANALYSIS

The proposed location for a new ballpark for the Red Sox on Fort Point Channel presents an exciting opportunity, not only for the special role of the ballpark, but for defining the direction of future growth of one of Boston's last undeveloped regions. Situated on the channel waterfront and within the historic Leather District (see Urban Analysis: Existing Site Area Plan), this area has remained virtually untouched since it was first constructed in the 1870s by the Boston Wharf Company. However, the vitality of the area (and Dewey Square across the channel in Boston proper) has still yet to recover from the construction of the Central Artery in 1959. This highway from the urban renewal age effectively cut off the Fort Point harbor area from the downtown and destroyed the pedestrian atmosphere of Dewey Square (see figure 64). Today, with the construction of the third harbor tunnel, the submergence of the central artery, a new federal courthouse on nearby Fan Pier, and talk of a possible convention center off Summer St., the proposal for a new ballpark could be very well be a driving force to reconnect the Fort Point Channel of the future with the once active and pedestrian atmosphere of Dewey Square and downtown Boston of the past. This site presents itself as an area prime for a ballpark and the next phase of Boston urban development.

Currently the parcel is in the middle of a mix of primarily warehouse, loft, and small commercial space. Bounded on the north by water, the east by the Leather District, on the south by a handful of reclaimed loft buildings, and on the west by the Gillette razor blade factory, the site provides for just enough space to fit a new ballpark, while at the same time cozy enough to force the recognition of the peculiarities of the site and its immediate urban context.

The area is readily accessible to the downtown with all modes — mass transit, vehicular traffic and, most importantly, the pedestrian. The historic South Station Terminal provides for commuter rail access and a high-capacity subway line while a proposal is currently underway to
construct another subway line from the Boston Commons, through the Leather District, to Northern Avenue (see Urban Analysis: Mass Transit Lines). Commercial and vehicular transportation will be accommodated with direct linkage to the Massachusetts Turnpike and East Boston.

Perhaps it is only fitting that this site be selected as the future home of the Boston Red Sox. Proposing a building type symbolic of American identity and cultural history could be no more appropriate at the corner of Washington and "A" where a new ballpark would be above the Ted Williams Tunnel segment of the Third Harbor Tunnel and within a stone's throw of the site where colonists once demonstrated American independence by throwing British tea into the channel. Simply put, this site presents a very exciting opportunity for a new ballpark and might very well serve as the springboard for future urban development in the downtown and Fort Point Channel region.

67. Panorama of existing conditions at the proposed Fort Point Channel site. Ballpark site is located where current Ted Williams Tunnel construction is underway.
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urban analysis

existing urban condition
existing site area plan
existing site area iso
proposed site area iso
proposed block pattern
proposed figure ground
mass transit lines
major buildings
pedestrian and vehicular corridors
view corridors
regional urban block diagram analysis: before & after
EXISTING URBAN CONDITIONS
PROPOSED BLOCK PATTERN
PROPOSED FIGURE GROUND
PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR CORRIDORS
REGIONAL URBAN BLOCK DIAGRAM ANALYSIS: BEFORE
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service level
lower deck
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upperdeck
roof

sections
grandstand
right field
williams corner
ballpark plans
1. ballpark entrance
2. public pedestrian arcade
3. bullpens
4. "a" street plaza
5. ted williams plaza
6. restroom & concession
7. office
8. press & media
9. home team club house
10. visiting team club house
11. mechanical
12. commissary
13. truck dock/receiving
14. groundskeeping
15. employee lockers
16. dugout luxury box suites
17. special parking
18. picnic grounds
19. pitching/batting cages
20. luxury box suites
BALLPARK PROPOSAL ISSUES

site specific design issues
entry as termination of urban corridors
pedestrian v. infrastructure
ballpark civic spaces and waterfront connection
leather district bricks
mitigation of summer street

layers and linings

site specific characteristics and the ballpark interior
right field seating
melcher street "cut"
left field "wildcat bleachers"
intimacy and proximity of upper deck

urban integration
BALLPARK PROPOSAL
ISSUES
The proposal for a Fort Point Channel ballpark is more than just the design of an individual building. It represents a major step in the development of a new region of Boston. Much like the golden age ballparks that predated and largely defined their urban context (such as Shibe Park in Philadelphia), the design of new ballpark at the intersection of “A” and Washington Streets will have a significant influence on the future of the Fort Point Channel area and the neighboring downtown of Boston.

A necessary first step in a ballpark proposal is the incorporation of the “ballpark design guidelines” mentioned previously. Regardless of site, these components are essential ballpark features and provide a well grounded set of “rules” to follow. The integration of these elements with more site-specific features is a second step. Below is a brief list of essential site specific design issues addressed in the proposal.
site specific design issues

entry as termination of urban corridors
Main entries should be positioned on axis with major streets or pedestrian corridors. This empathizes the ballpark as a destination within existing urban conditions and reinforces the ballpark as a termination node or point of public/civic activity.

pedestrian v. infrastructure
Pedestrian Emphasis v. Urban Infrastructure. If this issue is addressed properly no one should ever know, or more appropriately, have to experience "theme park" parking lots or blocks of surrounding parking. If this component is not adequately integrated within the overall urban context we will simply get a more recent version of the 1960's multi-purpose stadia.

ballpark civic spaces and waterfront connection
Connection of ballpark public spaces with waterfront activity and use. It will be essential to capitalize on this unique waterfront site. Home runs being hit over the left field wall into the channel, the smell of the ocean and the integration of a future harbor park pedestrian corridor will all significantly contribute to a unique sense of place in the ballpark experience.

leather district bricks
In order to further reinforce a sense of character specific to the site it will be necessary to address the "brick feeling" of the Leather District. This can be accomplished by integrating brick elements into the overall ballpark design. While this is a minor issue the incorporation of this element will help to integrate a late twenty-first century design into an early twentieth century site.

mitigation of summer street
The mitigation of Summer Street, which is twenty feet above grade, will be another vital element of the proposal. Connecting pedestrian, existing grade, and water levels with the existing Leather District street and pedestrian context will be essential in making this a successful proposal. Instead of working around this obstacle, the proposal takes advantage of this twenty foot discrepancy. Most of the region between the ballpark and Summer Street will accommodate all service/infrastructure needs below the twenty foot level while providing smooth transition from Dewey Square and a public space at the Summer Street level. Addressing this level change is essential not only to the viability of a pedestrian attuned ballpark but also to the fact that the third harbor tunnel (recently renamed the Ted Williams Tunnel) runs directly below the site and precludes the depression of the playing field or service levels.
layers and linings

A mixed-use "shell" of layers or linings will be essential to the viability of creating a good place (in addition to the primary role of a ballpark). Major elements to be included are pedestrian arcades, a large civic space connecting the ballpark, Leather District and the channel, and pedestrian friendly streets. Possible components of this layer zone could include: office space, night clubs, micro-breweries, restaurants, small hotel, loft space, movie theaters and parking facilities (sandwiched within the aforementioned elements). All of these potential lining elements provide activities and uses for the residual space which to this point have been ignored in ballpark design. In general they should help to activate the otherwise dead and monstrous leftover space underneath the upper decks, both when games are and are not being played.
At a minimum the overall "interior design," or arrangement of seating (i.e., lower deck, luxury boxes, and upper deck) ultimately defines the character and ballpark experience. This is the essential ballpark litmus test. Without an interior that responds and reacts to its urban context all other ballpark elements will be much like a beautifully framed canvas which has yet to be painted.

In addition to some of the other ballpark components, the most memorable and lasting contribution is the character defined within. As such, this proposal attempts to combine the essential ballpark requirements set forth in the above "ballpark design guidelines" while incorporating the features unique to the site and Fort Point Channel. When all is said and done the ballpark, especially the inside, should fit the site like a glove. The following are a few elements that have emerged as a result of taking advantage of what the site has to offer.

**right field seating (upper and lower deck)**

In order to maximize the public plaza/civic space and allow for the residual space within the right field wall, a shorter right field foul line is necessary. This resulted in a minimal change that shifted right field approximately twenty feet closer to home plate. As a result of the right field foul line distance became 325 feet and the right field wall was made twenty feet tall in attempt to counter the shortened outfield distance. This significantly maximizes intimacy and proximity of the right field upper deck (especially in the outfield) and the right field stands are closer than elsewhere in the ballpark. In short, the simple move of maximizing the public space beyond right field greatly effected the inside and created a unique feature adding character and sense of place to the experience within.

**melcher street "cut"**

The "cut" in the right field upper deck and the building that bridges the inside of the ballpark with the public/civic space are both in-line with the primary entry off of Melcher Street. This combined with a formal gated entry addresses a relationship of the ballpark to its context. Furthermore, this echoes existing street patterns and contextual elements of site.

**left field "wildcat bleachers"**

Reminiscent of the golden age ballpark wildcat bleachers, the proposed ballpark is both aware of the site conditions and historical precedent. The adjoining harbor cuts off the left field before the waterline making it a shorter than average distance down the left field foul line. By taking advantage of this and the realistic possibility of a future harbor park the ballpark makes this feature a signature element of the ballpark. The result is a minimal left field stand much like the old-fashioned wildcat bleachers of the turn of the century and a waterfront park promenade that passes directly behind it. As such the ballpark takes advantage of the waterfront edge by making it a unique element of the interior experience and makes use of what will eventually become a public pedestrian corridor that can see into the greensward within. This pedestrian promenade will be a permanent element of the ballpark and provide everyone visual access to a ballpark during game days and a "park" during times when one just experiences the waterfront promenade.

**intimacy and proximity of upper deck**

Significant attention has been focused on sectional studies and the mitigation of luxury boxes with intimacy and proximity of the fan. One of the highest priorities was afforded this effort so that the qualities of good ballparks could be maintained even when faced with the demands that helped to create the 1960s and 70s multi-purpose stadia. The luxury boxes are tucked under the upper deck and out of view in addition to respecting lower deck sightline requirements.
urban integration

The ballpark is a special element of city building and requires a thorough understanding of the city's anatomy and hierarchical structure. Having already addressed the ballpark guidelines and site specific issues the remaining component to be integrated are the larger urban design strategies. The proposal suggests several characteristic elements which could link features of the ballpark with the city and elements of the city back to the ballpark. The proposed site lies in the hear of a soon to be booming region of Boston and could serve as one of the civic/public nodes or points of destination linking major elements in the area such as the new federal courthouse, the Children's Museum, and the historic Leather District, Dewey Square and the central artery parkway and harbor park. For example, the urban waterfront promenade/waterfront park of greater Boston will be incorporated with the ballpark and the two will actually overlap in the form of a pedestrian concourse that passes above and behind the left field wall, allowing for visual access to the green playing field within. Another major move to integrate with the larger urban development/planning of the area is the proposal of the civic/public space behind right field.

Taken together these elements give the city much more than just a ballpark. Many of the elements which were present on and near the sites where the golden age ballparks were built are part of the Fort Point Channel parcel and region. For example, the site is on the fringe of the downtown, near rail yards, on the waterfront, and within comfortable walking distance to mass transit. This would suggest that many of the same elements that made the golden age ballparks successful will be available for integration in a new ballpark proposal and should be taken advantage of.
"[Ballparks] are like snowflakes and fingerprints; no two are ever the same."
CONCLUSION

It is ironic that the ballpark, one of our most cherished civic buildings, is at the same time one of the buildings we know the least about. Therefore, this thesis represents a beginning attempt at defining the essential elements that make for a good ballpark and their incorporation into a proposal for a new home for the Boston Red Sox on Fort Point Channel. It is important that we not overlook preserving the qualities of the classic or golden age ballparks while at the same time it is our responsibility to provide for the amenities necessitated by the modern ballpark.

The urban ballpark represents a significant element, not only of the American city, but as a unique contribution to the American experience and in the words of the distinguished American cultural historian, Studs Terkel, "we definitely don't know where we're going as a society if we can't remember where we've been." Our ballpark tradition and its pastoral heritage are rich in meaning, and will continue to be, if only we can remember what they know.
"We’re not just ordinary people, we’re a congregation. Baseball is a ceremony, a ritual... A ballpark at night is more like a church than a church."

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

page 2, figures 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 19, 21, 25, and 36

figures 1, 13, 46, 47, and 48.

figure 2
landslides, rocht visual collection,MIT.

figures 3 and 4

figure 7

figure 9, 15, 18, 20, 23, 24, 30, 39, and 48

figure 11, 16, 27, 28, and 29

figure 14

figure 17, 32, and 33
USA Today, Monday April 1, 1996, p. 13C.

figure 22

figure 26

figure 31
Norman W. Schumm, Gold Star Photography, Prospect, PA.

figure 34

figure 35
HOK photograph.

figure 37, 44, 54

figure 38, 58

figure 40
Schiamberg, Bruce. photograph, 1995.

figure 41
Abts, James T. Eastern Illustrating, Union, ME.

figure 42

figure 43
Bertsch, Werner J. Pitt Souvenirs, Northbrook, IL.

figure 57, 59

figure 63

figure 64

Urban Figure Ground Precedents c/o Philip Bess, Univ. of Michigan.

BALLPARK FIGURE GROUND ANALYSIS: Philip Bess, Univ. of Michigan.

unless otherwise noted all other images are by the author
boston ballparks

1. braves field
   1915-1952
2. fenway park
   1912-date
3. huntington avenue ground
   1901-1911
4. walpole street grounds
   1888-1914
5. congress street grounds
   1890-1894
6. fort point park
   thesis proposal
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1. *golden age ballparks*
   - comiskey park
   - tiger stadium
   - fenway park
   - fort point park proposal

2. *multi-purpose stadia*
   - riverfront park
   - royals stadium
   - new comiskey park
   - fort point park proposal

3. *neo-traditional*
   - camden yards
   - jacobs field
   - the ballpark at arlington
   - fort point park proposal

*grandstand sections*
fenway park
Boston, Massachusetts
1912-date

Tiger Stadium
Detroit, Michigan
1912-date

Comiskey Park
Chicago, Illinois
1910-1990

Fort Point Park
Boston, Massachusetts
Thesis Proposal
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- **Riverfront Stadium**
  - Location: Cincinnati, Ohio
  - Date: 1970-date

- **New Comiskey Park**
  - Location: Chicago, Illinois
  - Date: 1990-date

- **Royals Stadium**
  - Location: Kansas City, Missouri
  - Date: 1973-date

- **Fort Point Park**
  - Location: Boston, Massachusetts
  - Thesis Proposal
camden yards  
baltimore, maryland  
1992-date

jacobs field  
cleveland, ohio  
1993-date

the ballpark at arlington  
arlington, texas  
1995-date

fort point park  
boston, massachusetts  
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playing field geometries

**golden age ballparks**
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- tiger stadium
- griffith park
- crosley field

**multi-purpose stadia**
- riverfront stadium
- busch stadium
- oakland coliseum
- houston astrodome

**neo-traditional ballparks**
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- jacobs field
- the ballpark at arlington
- new comiskey park
golden age ballparks

crosley field
cincinnati, ohio

griffith park
washington, d.c.

fort point park proposal
boston, massachusetts

polo grounds
new york, new york

tiger stadium
detroit, michigan
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houston astrodome
houston, texas

riverfront stadium
cincinnati, ohio

fort point park proposal
boston, massachusetts

busch stadium
st. louis, missouri

oakland coliseum
oakland, california
camden yards
baltimore, maryland

the ballpark at arlington
arlington, texas

fort point park proposal
boston, massachusetts

new comiskey park
chicago, illinois

jacobs field
cleveland, ohio
urban figure ground precedents

league park
cleveland, ohio

shibe park
baker bowl
philadelphia, pennsylvania

tiger stadium
detroit, michigan

crosley field
cincinnati, ohio

forbes field
pittsburgh, pennsylvania
league park

cleveland, ohio
circa 1915
Reinventing the Golden Age Ballpark and the Pastoral Ideal

shibe park
baker bowl
philadelphia, penn.
circa 1921
tiger stadium

detroit, michigan
circa 1921
Reinventing the Golden Age Ballpark and the Pastoral Ideal

crosley field
cincinnati, ohio
circa 1922
forbes field

pittsburgh, pennsylvania
circa 1925
The golden age ballpark has emerged as one of the few uniquely American structures/building types that distinctively defines itself as an urban landmark and a cultural icon. Each ballpark had a peculiar shape, a unique outfield geometry, and a special way of blending within the urban fabric.

The following images were drawn by Gene Mack in the 1950s as part of a series of ballpark drawings. What is so interesting about these cartoons is not the nostalgic events that are depicted, but rather how the ballparks helped to shape such events. Each home run or great catch is remembered in relation to the ballpark in which it occurred. The overhanging right field upper deck and in-play flag pole in Tiger Stadium, the bathtub shape of the Polo Grounds, and the center field fence built around the trees and buildings at Griffith Park are only a few of the countless features that made the golden age ballpark just as, if not more, important than the events that they witnessed.

These simple cartoons magnificently capture the charm and character of the golden age ballpark.
shibe park
philadelphia, pennsylvania
1909-1970
Reinventing the Golden Age Ballpark and the Pastoral Ideal

griffith park
Washington, D.C.
1911-1961
polo grounds
new york, new york
1911-1963
tiger stadium
detroit, michigan
1912-present


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Reinventing the Golden Age Ballpark and the Pastoral Ideal

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theseis/disertations


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bostonian society archives material


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"Cap at Framingham," Game of Baseball Played by Battery "A" and "C," July 1886. (PHOTOGRAPH)

"Walpole Street Grounds 1893" (PHOTOGRAPH)

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