Urban Transient Spaces:

[RE] Appropriating Knoxville, Tennessee's World's Fair Park

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Architecture Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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August 2013

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DEDICATION

To my loving husband and supportive family. Thanks for always helping me see the light at the end of the tunnel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all my advisors for their knowledge and expertise. Without their help I would have been lost.

ABSTRACT

Transient Space: *An urban site that was developed for a temporary event or short-term program.*

In this thesis, I will explore urban gaps created by transient events, such as the Olympics, World Fairs, and the World Cup. I believe urban environments created to accommodate for these transitory events present an interesting predicament for planners and architects. In several cases, these sites are not properly developed or programmed for post-event occupancy and create gaps in a city's urban fabric.

I will specifically be examining World's Fair Park in Knoxville, Tennessee. This site once hosted the 1982 World's Fair, Knoxville International Energy Exposition. Now, more than 30 years following the event, World's Fair Park has become what I refer to as an "urban gap". In my research, I will examine Knoxville, Tennessee's World's Fair Park and how it can be further developed with an appropriate scale and program to better blend into the city's urban context.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Urban Transient Spaces: Examination of the Temporary

The excitement and unification a city experiences in anticipation of an Olympics or Worlds Fair is unparalleled to any other event. These events promise inhabitants an opportunity to display their cities' greatness through the manifestation of one grand experience. While civic pride motivates these cities toward action, the residual effect of such events is rarely considered when planning future progress, development, and economic growth of the community.

The world's spotlight is temporarily focused on these events, and, for a brief moment, all cultures and nations merge in one place. Millions of dollars and countless resources are invested in these sites where famous architects design pavilions, buildings and stadiums. Cutting edge technology is seen on every surface, and massive infrastructure systems are created to accommodate crowds from every corner of the globe. Every host city endeavors to outdo the last.

Without a doubt, these events serve a necessary cultural purpose; however, once the time has come for the closing ceremonies, the remnants left behind create extensive issues for the surrounding urban fabric.

1.2 The Aftermath: Post-Event

For most cities, the chance to host a worldwide event is welcomed with open arms, but once the gates close and the festivities end, what happens to the remaining event grounds? Kevin Lynch discusses the issue of rapid urban growth in his book, Good City Form. He states:

"In any event, it is apparent that the growth in size of a place or a change in its function can often be too rapid for successful adjustment of the vitality and fit. While growth was once applauded, and still is in economics, we have recently come to see the dangers in it…" (Lynch, 1984).

The issues of rapid growth associated with a global event, are often not fully considered during the fast-paced developmental phase. Often times, these events result in leftover urban spaces, which become massive gaps in the urban fabric. Examples of these "urban gaps" can be seen on nearly every continent, some more derelict than others. However, on several occasion these event sites have been treated in a way that promotes re-development and progress.

1.3 Precedents

New York's 1964 World's Fair

New York City hosted the 1964 World's Fair. Robert Moses (NYC Park Commissioner) was lead visionary and Fair Corporation President. Moses believed that World's Fairs

should be used for the lasting improvements that they generate rather than the temporary entertainment value they provided to patrons during the event. (Stanton, 2006).

The fair grounds were located in Flushing Meadows Park in Queens, NY. This was also the site of the former 1939-40 World's Fair. Moses wanted the World's Fair to secure finances to recreate Flushing Meadows and add a permanent Museum of Science and Industry, Outdoor Sculpture, Zoo and Botanical Garden. He wanted to maximize fair profits by minimizing scale; thus, design conformed to existing 1939 World's Fair infrastructure. (Stanton, 2006). The reuse of the former fairgrounds was a clever way to incorporate existing infrastructure and further develop a former site to benefit the surrounding communities.

Today the park is a thriving part of the urban landscape. In 2009, the New York Mets moved to Citi Field Stadium on the north end of the park at the edge of Flushing Bay, further jolting the park into a modern urban context (NYC Parks, 2012). While Flushing Meadows was planned in a seemingly progressive manner for the time, it lacked any residential planning or district development. Also, the decision to locate both an interstate system and airport on adjacent land created considerable amounts of noise pollution. Flushing Meadows had its faults but showed a progressive movement toward cohesive urban design.

London 2012, Olympic Park

A more recent example of a repurposed event site is the master plan for the 2012 London Olympic campus. The city incorporated extensive planning for all phases of the site including construction, the Games and post event.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, states: “The doom and gloom merchants who said our great city would implode as we tried to stage the greatest show on earth have been proved wrong. And they will be proved wrong again as we use the catalyst of the Games to attract investment into the wealth of opportunities arising in London now and in the coming years. Put simply, there is no other place on the planet where investors will see greater returns.”(Etherington, 2012).

Daniel Moylan, Chairman of the London Legacy Development Corporation stated: “Central London is moving east. Bringing the Games to East London has accelerated investment in an already growing area, and now the world's attention is focused on this fantastic part of the city.” (Etherington, 2012).

After the close of the Olympic Games, the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) quickly began the final development stage to transform the Olympic site into the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The Park will open in phases beginning on July 27, 2013 and is set to house eight permanent venues including an Aquatics Centre, Orbit, Multi-Use Arena, Olympic Village, Velodrome and Eton Manor. The planners integrated space for five new neighborhoods to develop over the next 20 years. Each

neighborhood, including the former athletic village, features its own amenities with 35% being affordable housing (Etherington, 2012).

The study and care London has taken on post-game development of its Olympic Park is anomalous for this type of site. Will the development successfully integrate with its surroundings? Time will tell, but regardless, the London Legacy Development Corporation has placed as much emphasis on the post event planning as the actual event.

2. KNOXVILLE, TN: 1982 WORLD'S FAIR

2.1 The Energy Expo of 1982

Following the 1970s, Knoxville, Tennessee paralleled many post industrial American cities - Knoxville was grappling with a neglected urban core, and suburban sprawl was driving development past the city boundaries. Sprawl sent jobs and tax dollars toward the western Bearden area and the newly developed West Town Mall. The inner city became abandoned, and its only inhabitants were minority groups and the elderly.

In the face of economic crisis, the local government was feeling desperate for a groundbreaking idea. The city council initially toyed with the idea of opening up the infrastructure of downtown to resemble a massive mall-like environment. However, a more radical idea was just around the corner (Wheeler, 2005).

In 1974, W. Stewart Evans, president of the Downtown Knoxville Association, attended the annual International Downtown Executives Association meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma. There, Evans happened to meet a man named King F. Cole. Evans heard Cole's report regarding the success Spokane, Washington felt when hosting the 1974 World Expo. After speaking with Cole, Evans realized the many similarities between Knoxville and Spokane. He quickly made his way back to Knoxville and immediately met with Mayor Testerman.

Mayor Testerman realized the instantaneous benefits an unlikely idea such as a World's Fair could provide. This event could prove to be the catalyst for all of downtown Knoxville's development goals. He saw how the large tract of land used during the event could immediately be re-appropriated after the exposition.

After diligent, hard work and determination promoting the city, Knoxville, Tennessee was selected to host the 1982 World's Fair. The Opening Day ceremonies began on May 1, 1982. The City of Knoxville had accomplished the unthinkable, according to University of Tennessee historian Bruce Wheeler.

"In some sense, however, the Knoxville International Energy Exposition already was a success by opening day. Approximately $80 million in public money had been pumped into the fair site and surrounding area. The city now owned almost seventy acres just west of the central business district that could be used for downtown redevelopment. To handle the anticipated visitors, Interstates 40 and 75 were widened to six lanes, their junction (nicknamed "Malfunction Junction" was rebuilt, and the I-640 beltway was constructed to divert through traffic away from the city center. Taking advantage of Knoxville's new visibility, the Knoxville Sports Corporation was formed, which eventually brought to the city the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, the 1994 National Track and Field Championship, the 1996 United States Gymnastic Trials, and two visits by the United States Junior Olympics. In all, then, the World's Fair had opened up almost limitless possibilities for the city." (Wheeler, 2005).

2.2 Knoxville's World's Fair Park: After Expo

The day following the close of the 1982 Energy Exposition, Knoxville was still basking in the warm glow of success. However, on November 1, 1982, just hours after the closing ceremony, the main financial supporter of the Fair, Jake Butcher, was investigated by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). The Butcher Banking Empire was on the brink of collapse. With more than $90 million in uncollectible loans and only $40 million in the bank reserves, Jake Butcher was involved in a gambit of charges from fraud to insider trading. United States Attorney John Gill was quoted as saying that Butcher was, “the biggest thief in the history of the State of Tennessee” (Wheeler, 2005).

Following the shock of the Jake Butcher affair, Knoxville feared the worst. Once all the dust settled, Knoxville's government officials assessed the damaged caused by the collapse of the Butcher Empire. There were dozens of businesses that immediately filed for bankruptcy, and after examination, many proved to be part of the Butchers' business “paper” empire. The City owned the 70 acre tract of Fairground that could be redeveloped. Aside from an emotional blow, the City of Knoxville had not suffered as much as many initially feared.

Mayor Tyree and his administration, disaffiliating themselves from the fraudulent activities of the Butcher Brothers, sought to quickly re-appropriate the Fairgrounds as a residential development. However, Mayor Tyree was defeated in the 1983 mayoral race by mayoral candidate Kyle Testerman.

Mayor Testerman had different ideas for the growth and expansion of Knoxville. Most of his ideas had to do with the derelict Market Square area and Gay Street. The Fair grounds were turned into a permanent public park funded by a government grant (Wheeler, 2005).

3. SITE ANALYSIS

3.1 Urban Growth Trends: Knoxville's Downtown

For its size and location, Knox County, boasted infrastructure to support such an event as the World's Fair and encourage attendance from countless visitors (Figure 1). Like many World's Fairgrounds prior, the infrastructure was specifically designed for the event. Road systems once used for Fair traffic have become infrastructural barriers to the site. Post-Fair use was not a strong consideration.

Since the closing ceremonies in 1982, few radical changes have been made to the Knoxville World's Fairgrounds. Most notable was the development of the Knoxville Convention Center and the demolition of the U.S. Pavilion due to structural failure. The Sunsphere remains as a daily reminder of Knoxville's time in the global spotlight (Wheeler, 2005).

During the past decade, Knoxville has experienced a massive resurgence in downtown development. New businesses and residential developments are making the Market Square district the cultural epicenter of Knoxville. Knoxville's creative class is flocking to live in its denser downtown core, and restoration projects are seen along the Gay Street corridor leading all the way to the Old City.

The developmental drift from downtown, however, has not extended into World's Fair Park. When comparing the use and overall function of World's Fair Park to the thriving

Market Square district, it is very clear World's Fair Park is underused. It is perplexing that 71 acres of urban land has not been re-appropriated to a more beneficial use.

3.2 Hargreaves Associates- Knoxville South Waterfront

Although development in World's Fair Park is seemingly at a standstill, planning has been alive and well. On April 25, 2006, the City of Knoxville adopted a vision plan for three miles of the South Knoxville Waterfront. Hargreaves Associates was employed to complete the plan and create a framework for future redevelopment and construction improvements (Figure 2 & 13).

"The Knoxville South Waterfront Vision Plan is an effort to develop, through extensive public involvement, a coordinated plan and realistic series of prioritized actions to improve 600 acres of waterfront, ringed by industry and single family homes in an area that has languished over time. The intent of the project is to revitalize the South Waterfront to a level that it is recognized as a citywide asset, attraction, and destination, while still preserving what makes the riverfront special to the neighborhoods. The plan describes a series of public transportation and open-space improvements designed to allow access and views to the water, and to accommodate a range of market driven redevelopment over the next 20 years (Hargreaves)." (Figure 13).

3.3 Knoxville Museum of Art- Sasaki Associates, Inc.

Also included in the planning stages is a 100,000 s.f. addition to the Knoxville Museum of Art. The plan was designed and completed by Sasaki Associates, Inc. in 2008. The

schematic design, similar to the Hargreaves plan, proposes a plan for an urban art district in Knoxville.

“Sasaki's plan for the Knoxville Museum of Art provides a long-term vision for promoting art in Knoxville, Tennessee, and integrates the museum into the urban context of the city. The plan forms open space amenities and connections to surrounding institutions including the University of Tennessee, the Fort Sanders neighborhood, the 1982 World's Fair Park, a future children's museum, and the Tennessee River.

Visitors make their way through a sequence of experiences that create a unified arts district around the museum. A green World's Fair Drive streetscape leads visitors to a museum extension, which provides the museum with a front door on the street. The plan reduces existing parking lots are replaces them with parking gardens, which link back to the museum via a north-south pedestrian walkway and bridge. This bridge mediates a dramatic topographic drop between neighborhoods. Across World's Fair Park Drive, an artists' village with residences and studios allows the museum to partner with the regional artist community (Sasaki).” (Figure 14)

3.4 Site Location

After examining the Hargreaves and Sasaki plans, I identified my site for development as the Lower Second Creek watershed adjacent to the Maplehurst Neighborhood (Figure 5). There is an existing University of Tennessee-owned commuter parking lot with a direct link to the World’s Fair Park performance lawn.

Due to close proximity to campus and the existing student neighborhood of Maplehurst, the site I am proposing for development is an ideal location (Figure 5). Additionally, the site is ideal because of its direct connection to the Second Creek greenway and the Tennessee Riverfront (Figure 7).

Lower Second Creek is a natural creek, buried beneath World's Fair Park. It reemerges below Cumberland Avenue, directly adjacent to my proposed site (Figure 8). Currently the pedestrian connections across Lower Second Creek are underutilized and in need of maintenance (Figure 9). The conditions of the creek pose environmental problems for the area. Due to invasive plant species, erosion, storm water run-off and pollution, the creek is in need of restoration (Figure 10).

The University of Tennessee Knoxville's Campus Landscape Vision and Site Standards addresses the issues associated with the Lower Second Creek bank. Revitalization of the creek's banks would prove beneficial to the aesthetic nature of the space, enhancing the connection to campus (Figure 11). Development of the proposed site would create a link between the downtown Knoxville and the historic Maplehurst Neighborhood (Figure 5).

Although topographic constraints as seen in the site axonometric drawing (Figure 15), appear to be an issue and a design barrier for this proposed space (Figure 3 &4), the

right mix of architectural solutions would incorporate these existing topographic changes in an innovative manner. Thus, the topography could be put to work for the site.

The existing Norfolk Southern rail line, which extends across the Tennessee River to the proposed Hargreaves' Knoxville South Waterfront (Figure 4), is a true relic of the World's Fair site. This line is the only remaining evidence of the site's original use as the L & N railroad yard.

4. PROGRAM

4.1 Programmatic Strategies

Following the site analysis phase, I have established the site as an ideal location for an academic housing community. Due to the location of the site along a major greenway connection, adjacent to campus and the historic Maplehurst neighborhood, this design program best suits the needs of the surrounding community (Figure 6 &16).

Additionally, this proposed building program addresses the University of Tennessee's growing need for additional student housing. Most universities are moving away from the traditional student housing typology, creating communities for upper level students, (researchers, graduate teaching assistants, PhD students, etc.). Universities want to attract more than freshmen to their housing communities. Also, by creating multi-use communities, incorporating restaurants and other amenities, these developments could flex as hospitality areas for University students and visitors.

Finally, I have incorporated six design strategies to shape the building program proposed for the site: create connections, utilize bridging, establish community, open views, develop public space and restore riparian edge (Figure 6).

4.2 Creating Connections

The proposed design would better link students to campus and create flow across the Lower Second Creek by establishing a direct pedestrian connection (Figure 7 & 17).

4.3 Utilize Bridging

Due to the site topography constraints, pedestrian bridging is necessary. A clear solution to this issue is building a pedestrian catwalk within the rail bridge truss work across the river, thereby giving South Knoxville residents direct access to campus (Figure 17 & 18). The second proposed pedestrian bridge will connect Estabrook Road, the University of Knoxville's easternmost boundary, across Lower Second Creek to Maplehurst. This will allow pedestrian traffic to navigate the topographic grade changes with ease.

4.4 Establish Community

An academic community will be established by creating a student housing complex that links to Maplehurst (Figure 20).

4.5 Open Views

Another vitally important strategy for this concept is to open surrounding views. The plan will open views toward the Tennessee River, World's Fair Park and the University of Tennessee's campus.

4.6 Develop Public Space

Thriving university communities are the epicenter of social and progressive academic activity on a university's campus. By developing a much needed public lawn this strategy will move people toward river connection and encourage communal activities

(Figure 17). The pedestrian bridge connection to campus across Lower Second Creek will serve as an additional public space (Figure 17).

4.7 Restore Riparian Edge

The final strategy will restore Lower Second Creek (Figure 10 & 11). It will also utilize the existing greenway to develop a botanical corridor (Figure 9).

5. CONCLUSION

My proposed design solution, incorporating the six design strategies, will encourage re-use of the World's Fair Park space, and make the site a vital piece of the city's urban fabric (Figure 12). It is this unification and excitement for urban space that gives a city character. Memories of our city's significant moments in history can be incorporated into progressive urban design. It is Knoxville's responsibility to plan for future progress by re-appropriating those existing spaces.

**Note: For final design solutions see (Figure 17-30).*

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MAPS:

The University of Tennessee, Cartographic Services Laboratory, Director Will Fontanez Department of Geography

APPENDIX

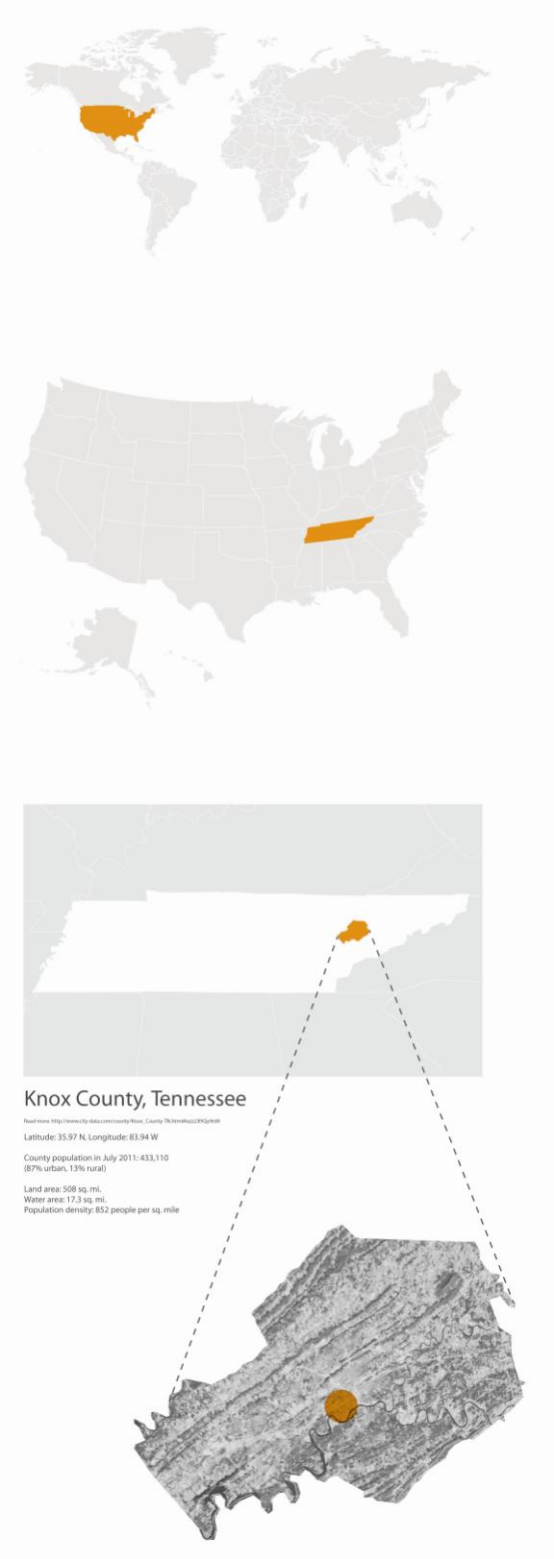


Figure 1 | Knoxville, Tennessee Location Diagram | Author

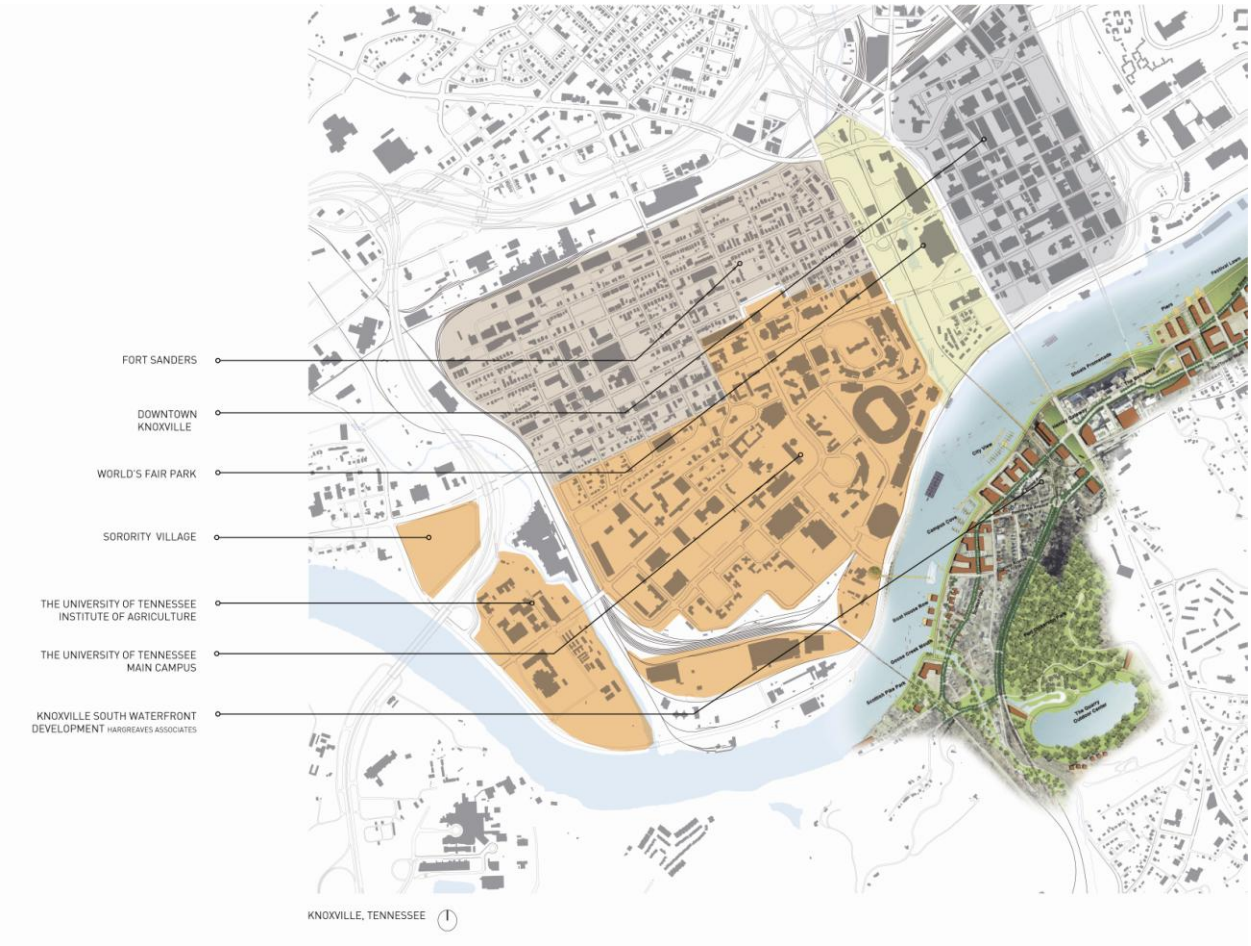


Figure 2 | Knoxville, Tennessee Urban Map | Author



Figure 3 | Infrastructural Barriers | Author

HENLEY STREET



CUMBERLAND AVE.-Lot C18



NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAIL-Adjacent to greenway



NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAIL- Maplehurst / Bridge Connection



Figure 4 | Infrastructural Barriers- Photos | Author

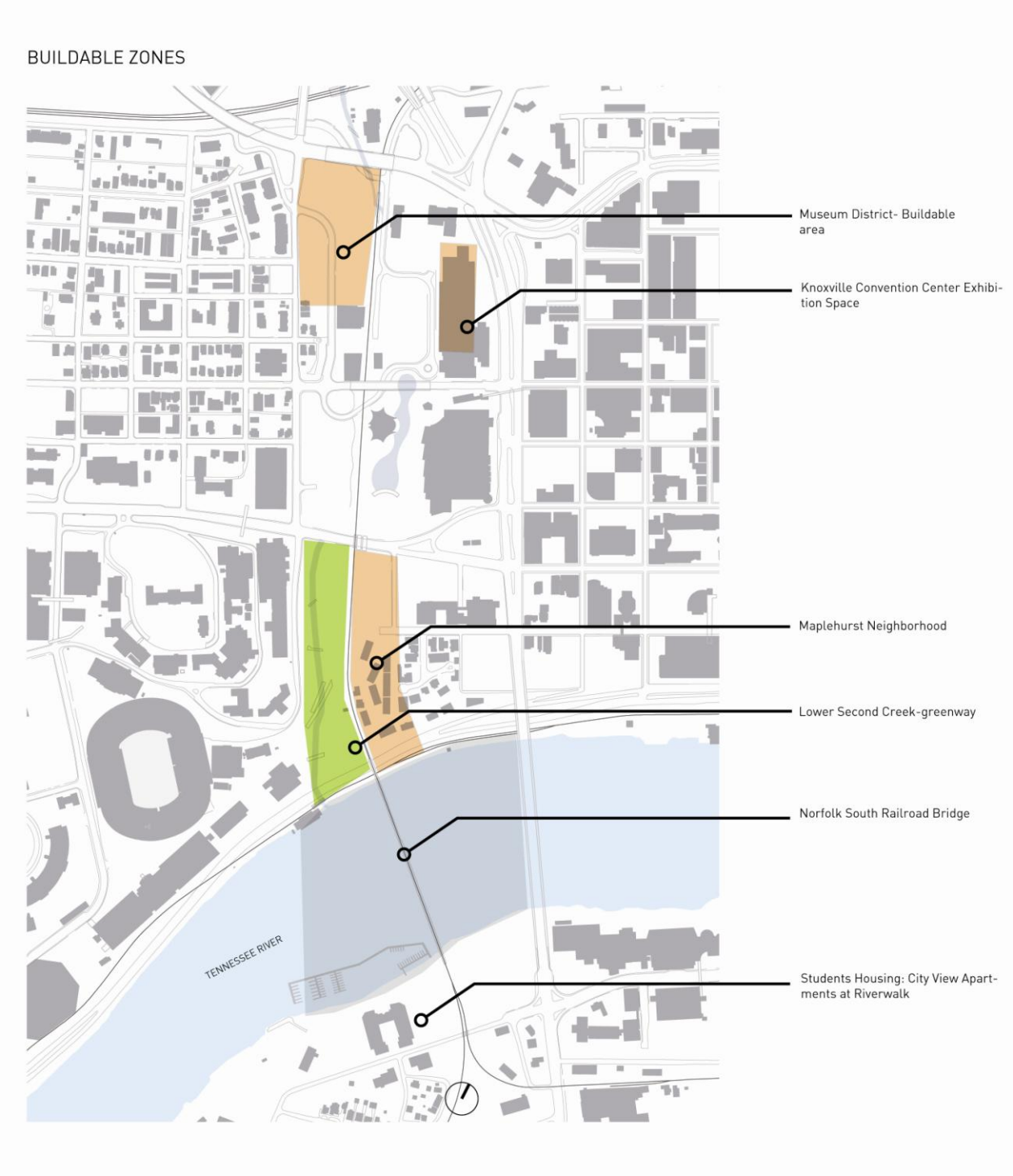


Figure 5 | Buildable Zones | Author



Figure 6 | Design Strategies | Author



Figure 7 | Urban Connections / Strategies | Author



Figure 8 | Lower Second Creek | Author

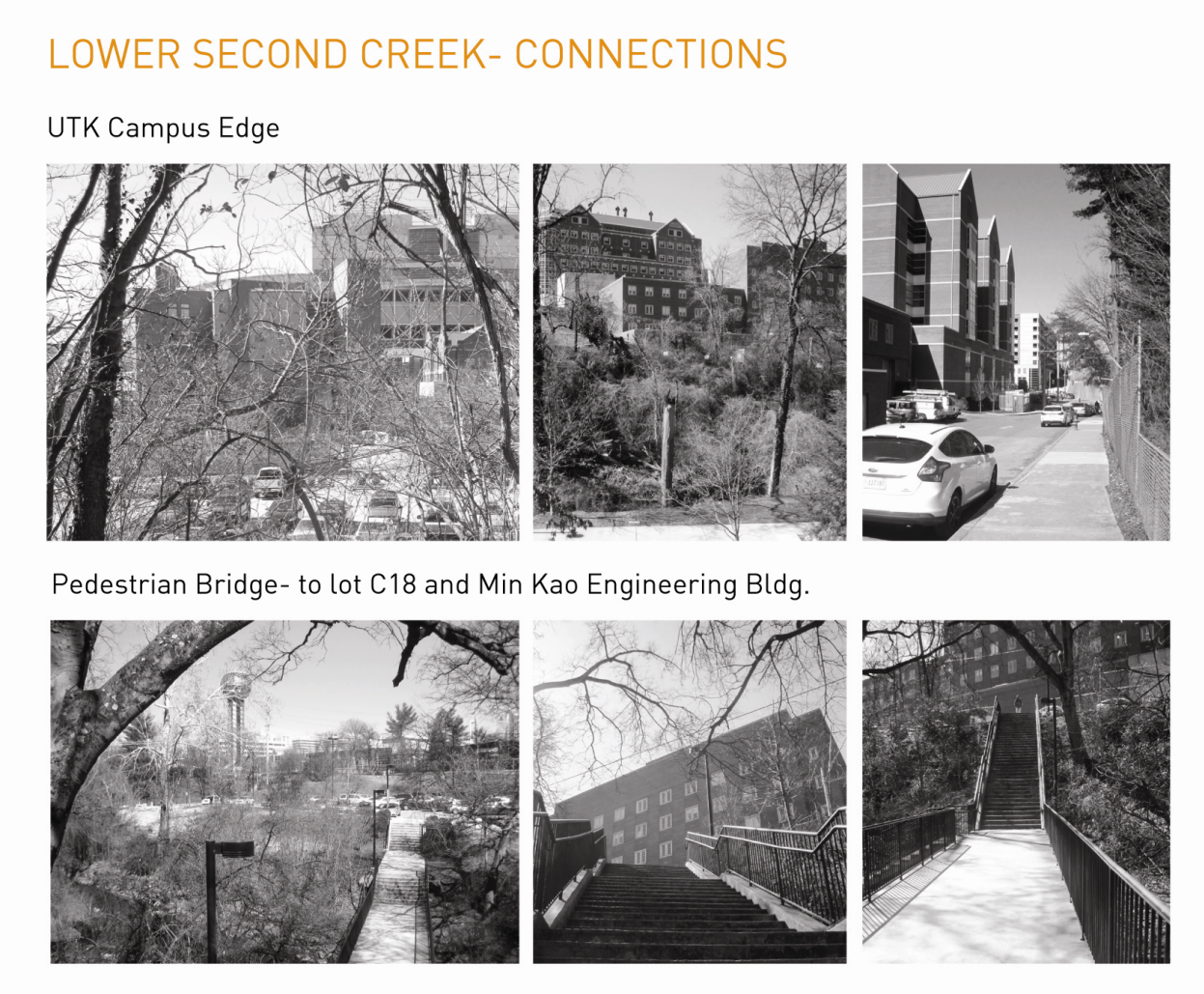


Figure 9 | Lower Second Creek- Connections | Author

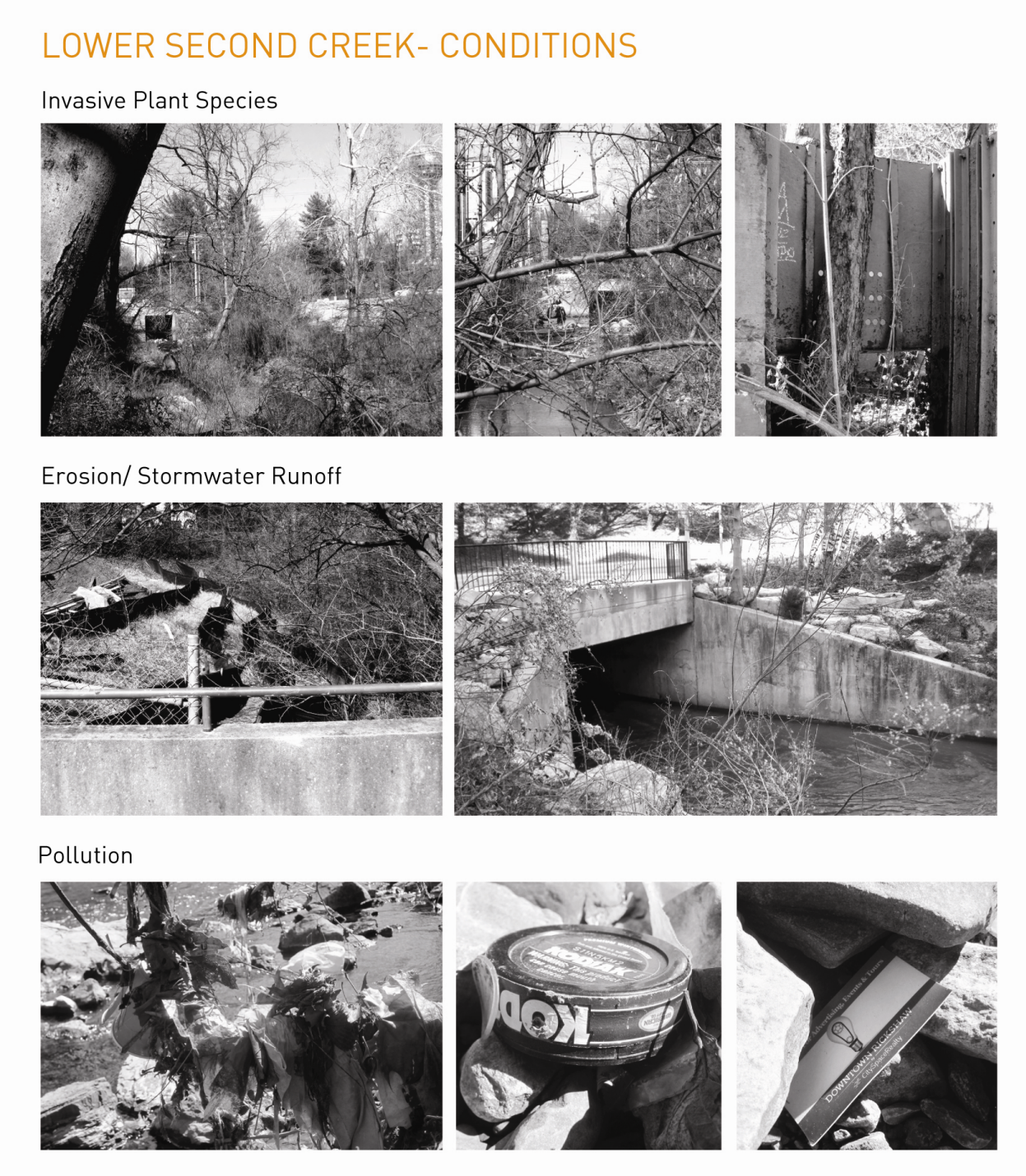


Figure 10 | Lower Second Creek- Conditions | Author

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE
CAMPUS LANDSCAPE VISION AND SITE STANDARDS

EDGES AND BOUNDARIES



Existing attractive access to Second Creek from Estabrook Road



Existing unattractive campus edge along Estabrook Road

The edges of the UTK campus are marked by natural features, industrial uses, major transportation routes, and urban neighborhoods. For this reason, no one structured treatment of the campus edge is appropriate. Instead, both the campus and Knoxville will benefit from the University's consistent application of its standards for site furnishings - especially lighting, banners and signage - and from a high level of maintenance by the University to ensure that all edges are marked by a high-quality landscape. *See Figure 3 below and in APPENDIX B for documentation of the major campus boundaries.*

- Mark the campus edges in a manner that is appropriate to the context; no single approach is appropriate to all edges.
- Create an edge for the campus that is permeable, neighborly, and welcoming in character – avoid the use of a campus fence.
- Ensure that the landscape at all campus edges is a high-quality, well-maintained, healthy landscape that contributes to the character of Knoxville and the University. *The removal of invasive vegetation along the bank of Second Creek would improve the environmental quality of the creek and render the area as an asset to the University and the City. Creation of a more attractive edge along Estabrook Road and an additional entry point to Second Creek would enhance the area further.*
- Consider collaboration with the City to enhance the river's edge opposite the campus along Neyland Drive. Remove invasive vegetation to improve the environmental quality of the riverbank.
- Minimize or reduce the impact of elements that do not contribute or detract from the campus image at its edges.
- Employ the site standards for lighting and signage at all edges.
- Punctuate edges at key points with the standard campus gateway.

Figure 11 | Campus Landscape Vision & Site Standards | UTK



Figure 12 | World's Fair Park Master Plan | Author

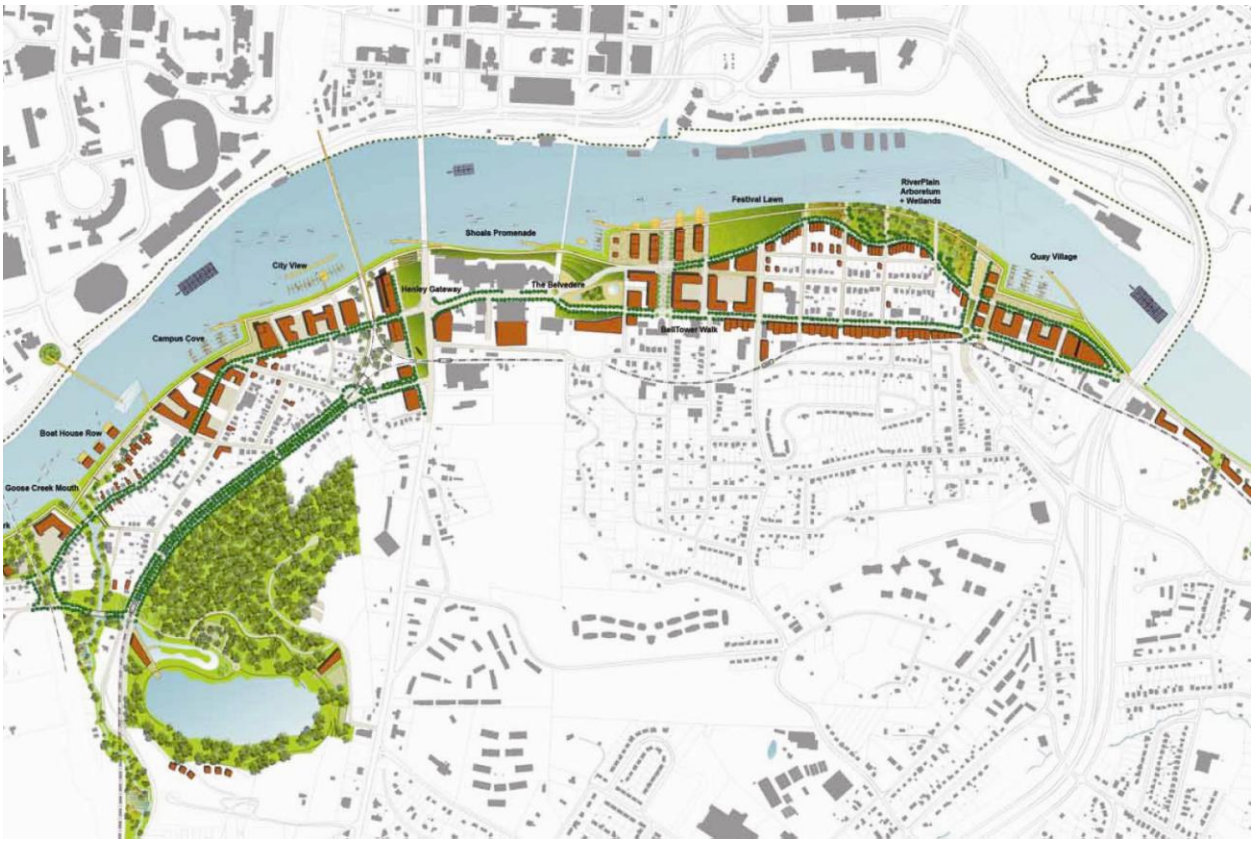


Figure 13 | Knoxville South Waterfront Development | Hargreaves Associates

http://www.hargreaves.com/projects/Waterfronts/Knoxville/

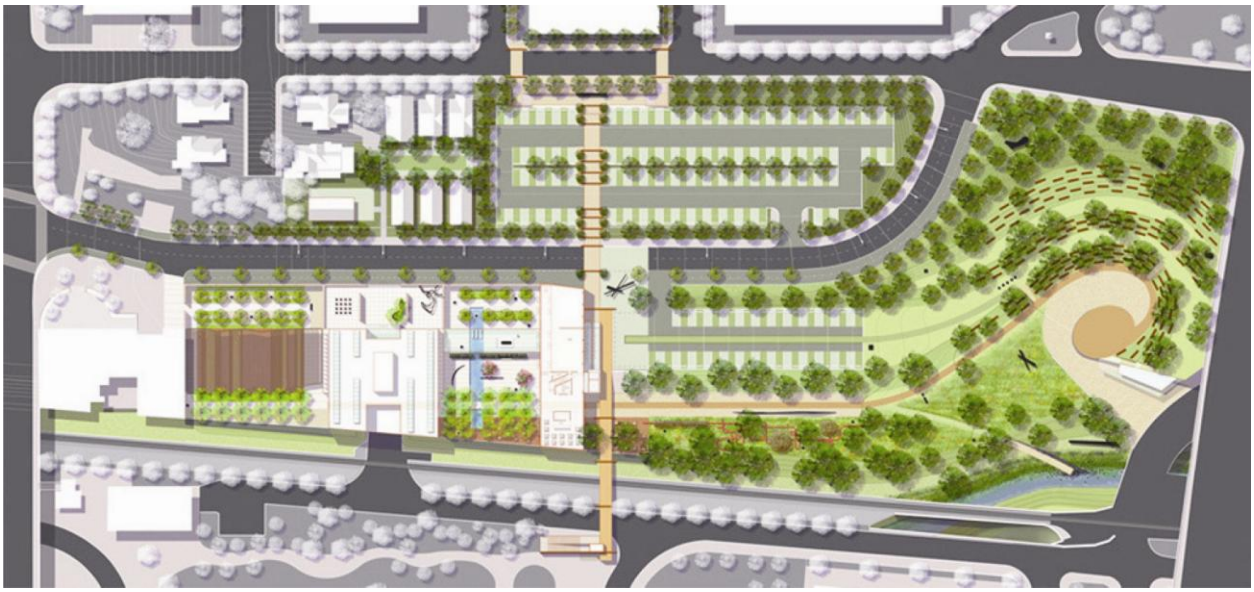


Figure 14 | Knoxville Museum of Art | Sasaki Associates, Inc.

http://www.sasaki.com/project/182/knoxville-museum-of-art/

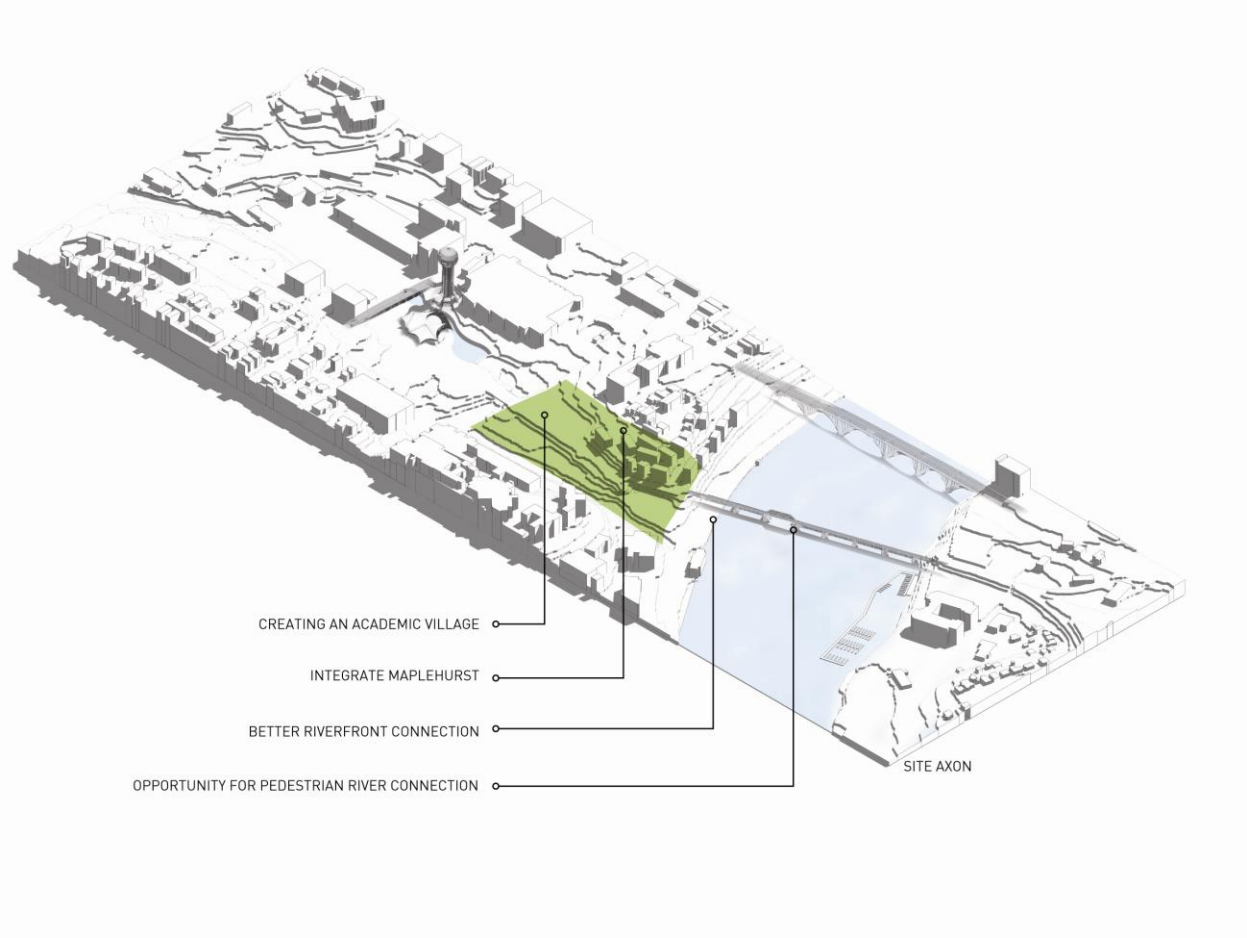
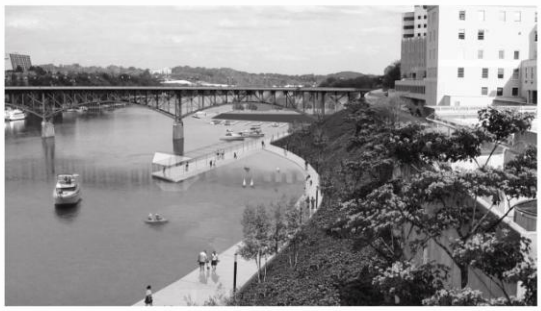


Figure 15 | World's Fair Park Axon | Author

RESPOND TO KNOXVILLE SOUTH WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT / HARGREAVES RIVERFRONT PLAN



CONNECT TO CAMPUS AND RIVERFRONT GREENWAY



CLEAN AND RESTORE LOWER SECOND CREEK BOUNDARY



INTEGRATE THE HISTORIC MAPLEHURST DISTRICT TO ACADEMIC VILLAGE AND CAMPUS



Figure 16 | Urban Design Strategies | Author



Figure 17 | Pedestrian Flow Along Site | Author



Figure 18 | Proposed River Pedestrian Connection | Author

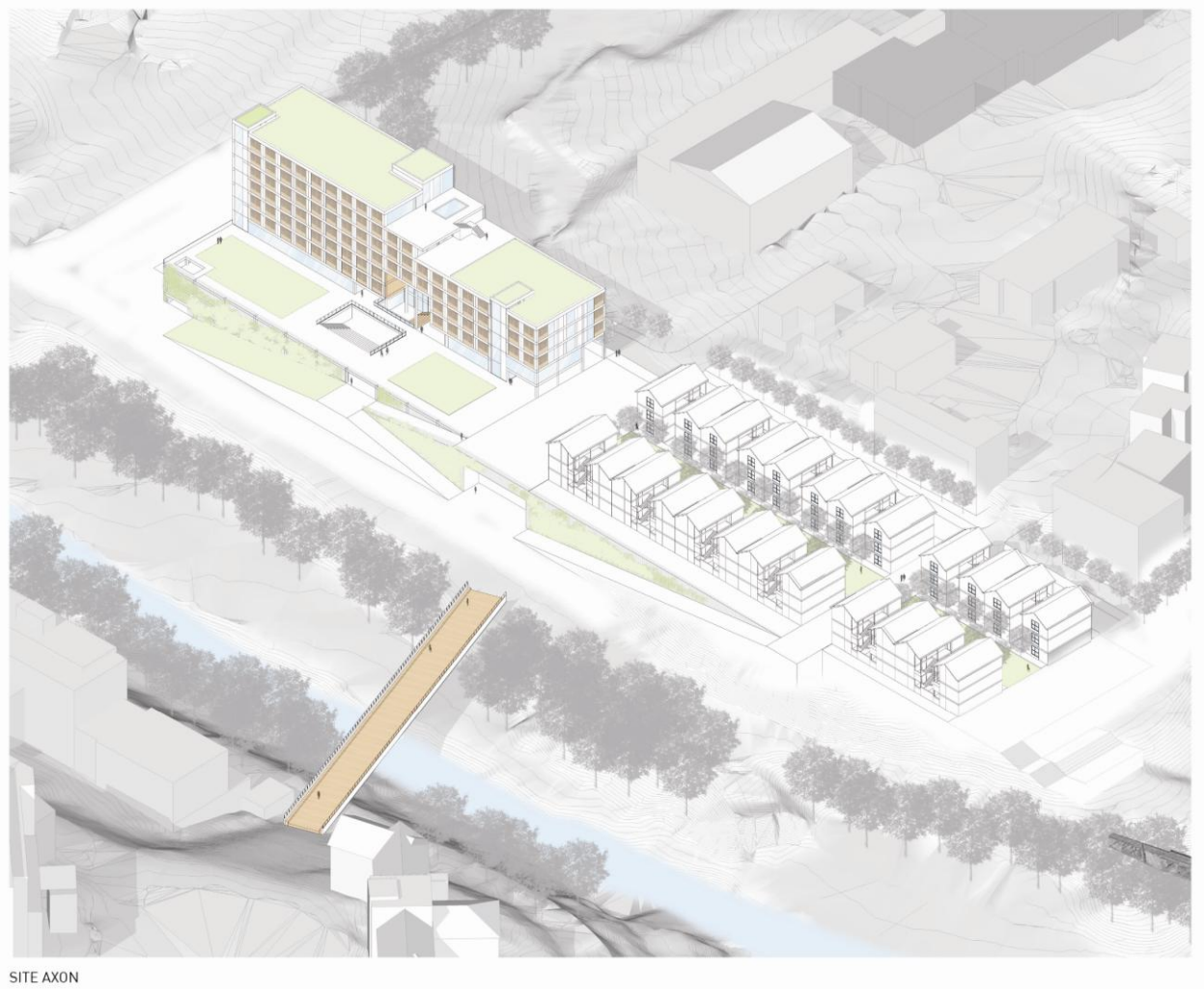


Figure 19 | Site Axon | Author



Figure 20 | Site Plan | Author

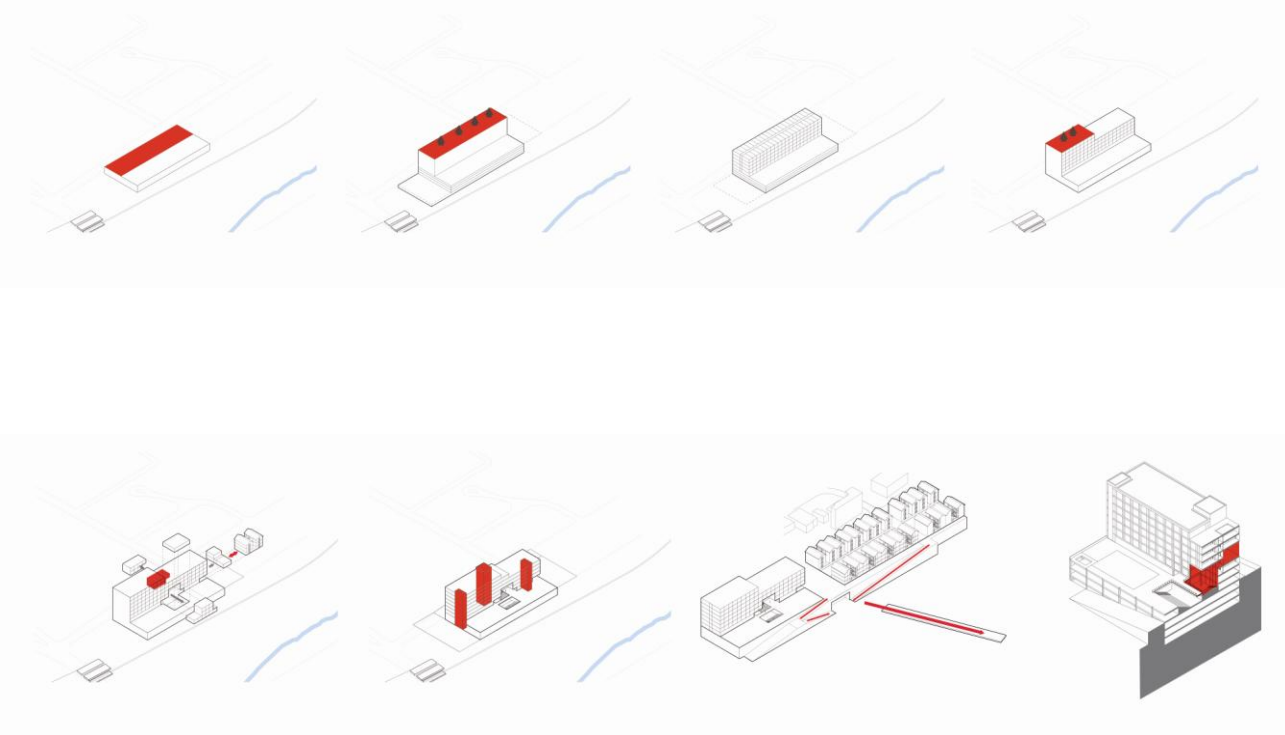


Figure 21 | Building Diagrams | Author

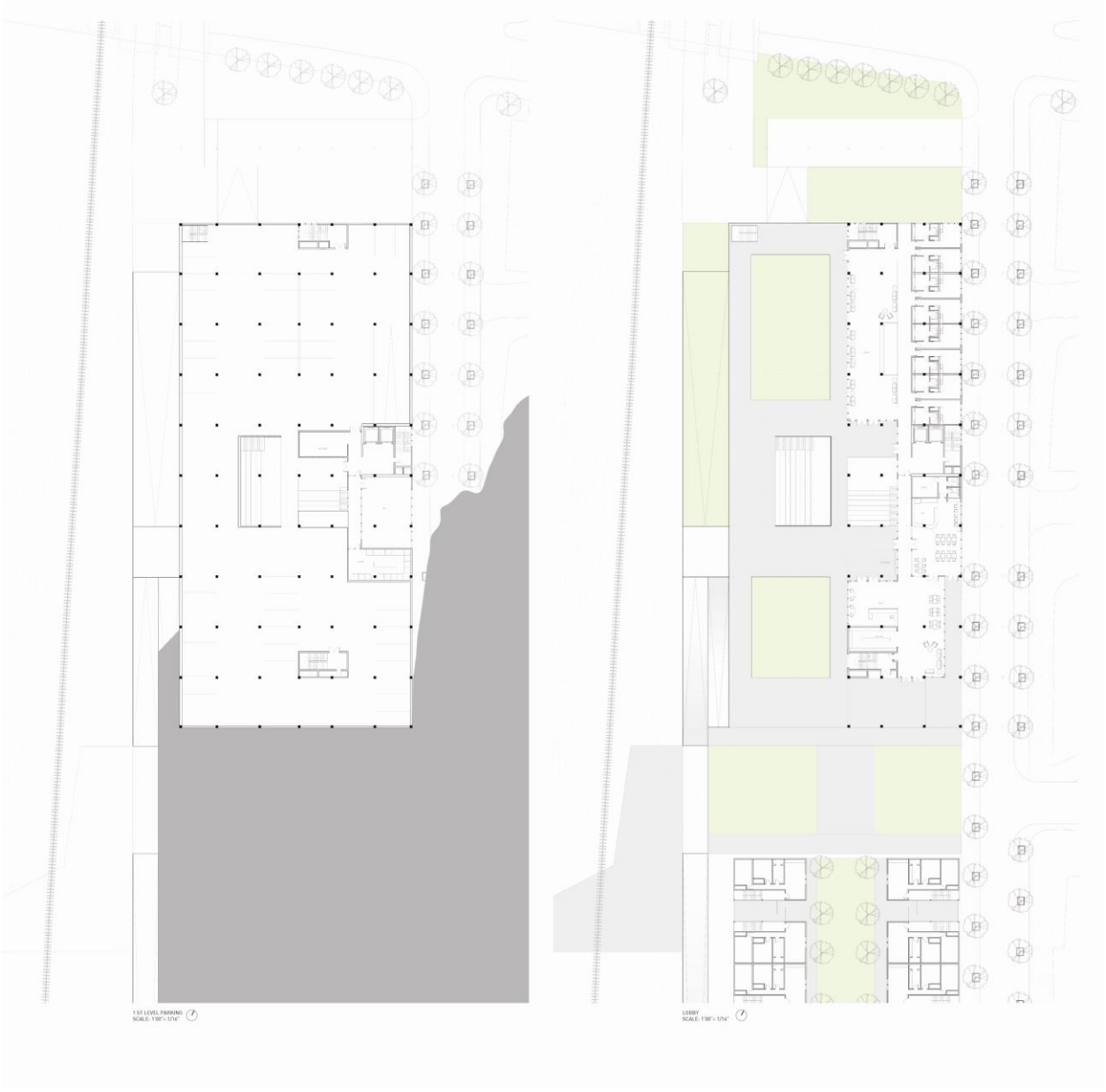


Figure 22 | Floor Plans – Parking and Lobby | Author

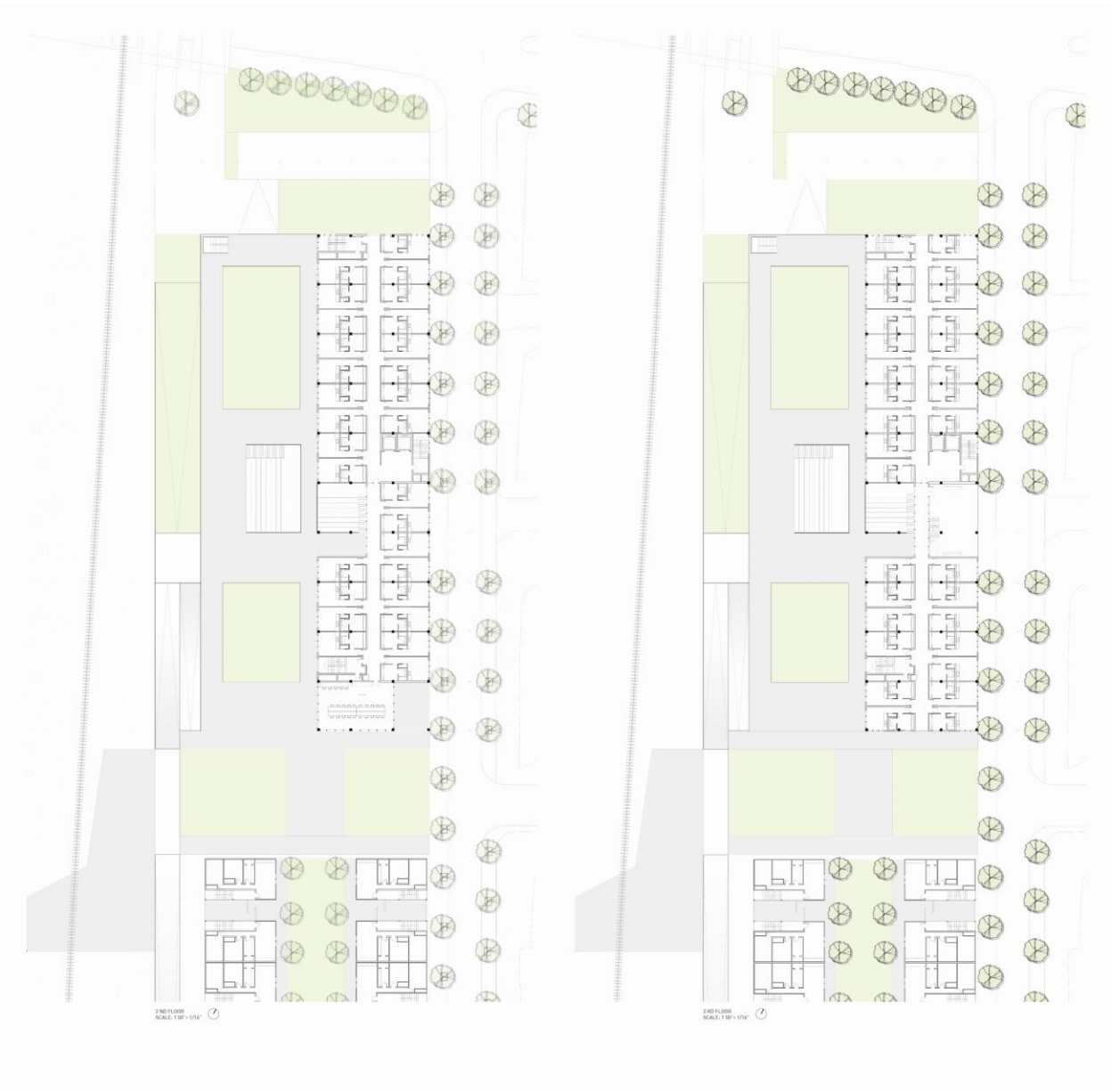


Figure 23 | Floor Plans -2nd and 3rd | Author



Figure 24 | Section-A | Author



Figure 25 | Section-B | Author



Figure 26 | Section-C | Author



Figure 27 | View of Outdoor Public Space from main level | Author



Figure 28 | View of Outdoor Public Space from below | Author



Figure 29 | View from Campus Pedestrian Bridge | Author



Figure 30 | View from Maplehurst Greenway | Author

VITA

Kathryn Greer was raised in Winchester, Tennessee. After graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Georgia, Kathryn immediately applied to graduate school. She obtained her Master of Architecture degree from the University of Tennessee in May 2013. She is planning on living in Tennessee with her husband John Greer.