Surface Parking Lots: The Killer of Vibrancy and Local Culture in Downtowns

A Thesis Presented for the

Master of Architecture Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Aubrie Dianne Damron

August 2013

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DEDICATION

The “mad one” who kept me going.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to propose a solution to a world wide condition, most noticeable in the United States, that is the erosional pattern caused by the downtown surface parking lot. Vibrancy and local culture are crucial factors to the existence of a successful downtown area, but excessive surface parking lots are inhibiting the growth of downtown metropolitan areas. They create gaps devoid of growth. These gaps in the fabric of downtown are killing downtown vitality and identity. The current parking lot density in many downtowns is a cause for concern if there is to be continual economic progress and growth.

In order for change to take place, current economic policies of property taxation must be visited and assessed. My proposal is to address and correct the issue of prime, underdeveloped land used as surface parking. In the current property tax system, the value of land and value of improvements are calculated together. This, in turn, penalizes those who choose to improve their land and rewards those who do not with lower taxes. I propose a re-engineering of the tax structure, by implementing a Land Value Tax, which emphasizes the value of land and discourages underdevelopment. A Land Value Tax will free the land and allow public/private partnerships to construct buildings with highly dense programs that will activate the area and generate revenue to define and revitalize their area.

For my design proposal, I will be simulating a Land Value Tax in downtown Knoxville, Tennessee as well as studying the surrounding buildings, their programs, and the local culture so that I may amplify their presence through building a programmatically dense structure where a surface lot once was. My intention will be to define historic Gay Street, form connections along Market Street, and stimulate energy and culture in a location where both are nonexistent. The idea of a public/private partnership will be pushed through the complex set of programs within a proposed building that will strive to benefit the city, private developers, local businesses, and the public.

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CHAPTER I
INITIAL PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS

Plight of the Surface Lot

The idea of providing controlled parking has existed since the beginning of the Roman Empire over 2,000 years ago, and as the world has evolved into the technologically dependent, consumer culture that encompasses it today, an excess of surface parking lots have been implemented to answer to the current state of vehicular reliance. The steady increase of surface lots in cities has become a plague on numerous downtowns wishing to revitalize their business, culture, and identity, and recover from the loss of revenue and attention brought on during the suburban movement that left downtowns under used and barren after World War II. Density, not only of buildings and services but of people and cultures, is one of the important factors of downtown revitalization. However, the key to this density is a variety of services, businesses, and residences that draw people into the area to live, work, and shop. Downtowns around the world, more noticeably in United States, have been inflicted with the wrong type of density. The surface parking lot is a prime example of misallocated density. Eran Ben-Joseph, in *Rethinking A Lot*, claims that in some cities surface lots have become so frequent that they are taking up one third of the land area (Ben-Joseph) (Figure 1). Joseph's conclusion bring up three important questions: 1) Why are property owners holding onto their vacant lots and converting them into surface parking? 2) Why is this being allowed to happen? 3) What can be done to encourage positive development of these prime, under-used lots? A possible answers lies within reassessment of the current property tax structure as well as the promotion of developments that benefit as many parties as possible, such as local government, private land owners and developers, and the public. Before discussing the current state of economics as it relates to downtowns, it is important to understand the evolution of the American downtown and the manifestoes that have tried, and failed, to deal with infrastructure, density, and growth in cities.

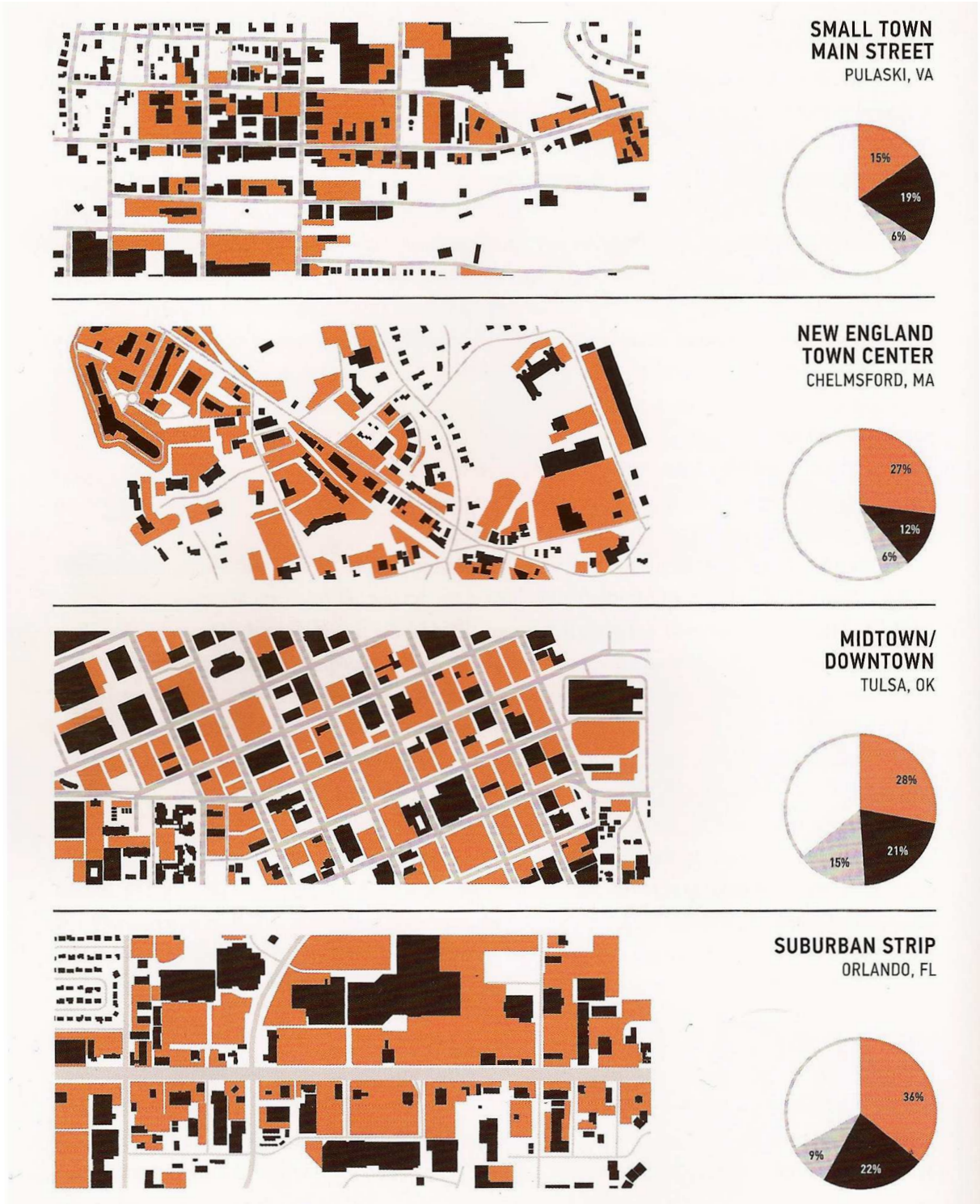

Figure 1: Diagrams showing typical urban land use conditions in the U.S. (Orange: surface parking, Black: building's footprint, Gray: roads, White: unpaved areas)
Source: Ben-Joseph, page 14

Downtown Knoxville : a Victim

Downtown Knoxville is a place with a colorful past and a slow progressing future. There is no doubt that the downtown area is growing, but the surface lots are leeching on to economic growth, but failing to contribute to the economics and culture of the area. The current growth in downtown Knoxville revolves around costly renovations that struggle for funding. Banks are not likely to give out loans without having certainty that the renovation will be successful and bring in retailers and enough revenue over the years to pay back the loan. This leaves developers fighting for grants from the Central Improvement Business District who often cannot decide how the available funds should be dispersed. The CBID is currently debating whether many small grants for small improvements or few large grants for bigger improvements will benefit downtown Knoxville the most. Recently, in the historic Arnstein building renovation, developers received a $300,000 grant from the CBID and a $250,000 grant from the local government. This meant taxpayer dollars were allocated to private development housing an Urban Outfitters, architectural offices, and residences. Although this type of public/private partnership may be controversial, local developer David Dewhirst believes, according to Knoxville's local paper the Metro Pulse, that

> The public/private partnership that has supported the Arnstein development is exactly the kind of 'catalyst' project Dewhirst thinks CBID should be involved in: large-scale, strategic developments that promise ripple effects and encourage additional growth...CBID has thrown money away on small, high-risk projects that offer little return, even if they succeed. It's been too conservative, he says, waiting on developers to approach the board to request money, and it has failed to forge its own vision of what downtown

can be and how it can help create that. (Everett, 2)

This brings up an important point about the community and its needs. The progressive changes downtown Knoxville is in need of require partnerships and support from the community. However, this support cannot occur without the choice of building programs that benefit multiple parties: the city, developers, businesses, and the public. The CBID cannot grow without the extra taxes that businesses pay to reside downtown, and businesses downtown cannot grow without the public to support them. Downtown Knoxville is in need of partnerships and complex programming.

While most development is occurring through renovations, which is excellent for maintaining the history and culture of the area, downtown Knoxville needs new developments to occur in its dead zones, or surface parking lots, in order to create connection between the restored historic buildings. John Jakle and Keith Sculle, in *Lots of Parking*, believe, "That parking lots do not , by in large, help to weave together an over arching sense of place. Quite to the contrary, they destroyed the traditional fabric of place" (Jakle, Sculle, 96). The ending chapters further analyze a surface parking lot site in downtown Knoxville and propose a design solution that will benefit the city economically and culturally through the implementation of a building design. This building design will serve as what Manuel de Sola'-Morales refers to as an "urban acupuncture" which "lies not in the planning or the art of city building, but in creating and stimulating urbanism and achieving a maximal effect through minimal intervention" (Sola-Morales, 11). The goal will be to stimulate energy and culture in a location where there is little energy, if any at all, and further enhance the ripple effect of the renovations to create a connected, cohesive downtown.

CHAPTER II
ASSESSING THE PAST

The American Downtown

The revitalization of downtown area have become increasingly important. Downtown is the heart and, often times, the soul of a city that beats to the rhythm of its past and present inhabitants, for downtown is a place of fusion. It is an attic that stores the past, a home for the present, and an incubator for the future. The following paragraphs will tell a concise story of the life, hardships, near expiration, and revival of the American downtown. The second half of this chapter will visit contemporary manifestoes that address the desire for building, program, infrastructural, and pedestrian density meant to cause a city to thrive.

DOWNTOWN IN SIX STAGES

The history of American downtown development can be categorized into six stages that directly reflect the social and economic presence of the time. Larry Ford, author of *America's New Downtowns,* lists these six categories as (1) inception, (2) exclusion, (3) segregation, (4) expansion, (5) replication, and (6) re-development (Ford, 45). Initially, in the last decades of the nineteenth century during the inception stage, downtown emerged as a place distinct from its surrounding areas. After this distinction of an urban core, buildings began to take on a specialization of typology which caused segregation by function and rent. Because of the separation of building function, expansion had to occur in order for growth of specific typologies, such as business districts. In locations where expansion became difficult, businesses began to replicate various downtown functions and take residence near suburban areas. After the loss of business and density, downtowns entered a constant stage of re-development. The next few paragraphs will expand upon some of these stages and reflect on how influential American society and culture has been to shaping city centers.

THE PREDECESSORS

Original city centers, such as the City of London, and Baroque Paris, and Rome, were designed based on the idea of place. London was a city of mixed-uses while Paris and Rome were redesigned based on perspective and the experience of its visitors. These areas were developed based on the needs of its inhabitants and the necessary organization what would allow for business and living to occur in the same area. In the mid 1600's, the City of London had 100,000 inhabitants living and working within one-square mile (Ford, 46). The sheer mass of people living within the city center shows that the city was developed around the idea of creating a space for its people.

AMERICAN DOWNTOWN AND BUILDING SPECIALIZATION

American downtowns inherited qualities of their European predecessors, but instead of revolving around the idea of place, such as (the main focus of organization being around a major plaza or cathedral), the American focus for organization occurred along the idea of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Prominent structures were built along the main street where most of the vehicular traffic would ensue. European city layouts evolved organically from the historic central structures. In contrast, many cities in America were designed, laid out, and planned from the beginning. This can clearly be seen in the design and organization of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Savannah, Georgia (Figure 2, 3). The American city was designed based off of an urban unit that could be added as needed. As with Savannah and Philadelphia, American Downtowns were organized on grid patterns. The grid lines represent the streets and the voids represent the building lots. American Downtowns are hybrids of the European model and the new American model of designing the entire downtown on a specific site (Ford, 48). Similar to the European model, buildings were designed with multiple functions in mind, but a shift occurred by the 1890's. Special purpose architecture became prevalent and building typologies became segregated and function specific. The first single function buildings erected were businesses, all of which were organized in a single area that is referred to as a business

block. As building uses continued to develop independently, downtowns became filled with a variety of special functions, and as businesses and industry began to grow, the importance of architectural prevalence arose. New technologies such as steel framing, electric light and heating, and the elevator, encouraged architects to design and build structures at a larger scale. These larger buildings became icons of downtowns, and businesses saw this new recognition as a way to justify the commission of taller buildings to grow their business and notoriety. Central Business Districts were created and confined to a handful of blocks within the area.

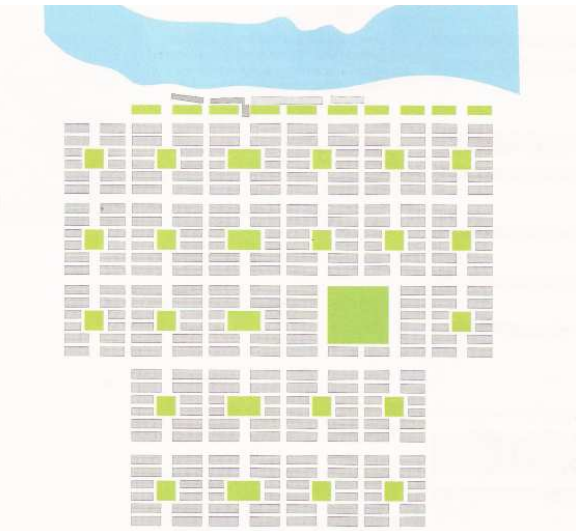

Figure 2: Plan for Savannah
Source: 49 Cities, pg 25

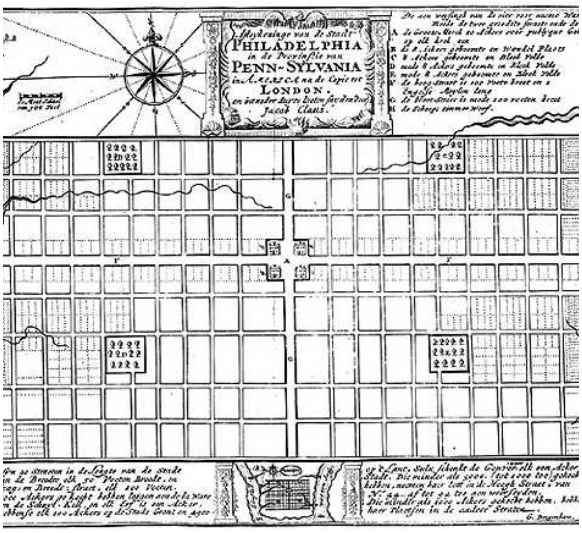

Figure 3: Plan for Philadelphia
Source: Google Images

TRANSPORTATION ADVANCEMENTS

As downtowns grew wider and taller in the 1920s, they became as large as the entire city had been a century earlier. Walkability became less efficient causing new modes of transportation to develop and evolve from horse cars to tracks, street cars, and trolley buses, and personal automobiles. These developments created networks of transportation, but forced the loss of a focal point. By the 1950s, automobile owners were looking for places to go where parking was readily available and inexpensive, and downtowns were not prepared for an influx of

automobiles. People retreated to the outskirts where suburbs were created. The real problem occurred after the Highway Act of 1956 invented and promoted the freeway and expressway. While this medium for quick transport was intended for national defense during the war, it quickly became populated by automobiles and trucks delivering goods. In order for the trucks to easily reach their downtown destination, highways were placed either through or around the downtown area. As a result, congestion from the transportation of goods occurred when a highway was placed through a downtown, and emptiness occurred when it was placed around it. In either instance, downtown areas suffered a loss of visitation and vibrancy that is created by the presence of people.

CULTURE AND CONSUMERISM

As automobile technology became more widely attainable, people continually retreated to the outskirts of city centers. The homes were cheaper, the neighborhoods were quieter, and shopping centers were closer. Ford brilliantly states that "we have been fickle citizens of our cities as we have constantly required new landscape features to keep us amused. As long as downtowns provided the best and newest, we revered them, but when suburban mega malls offered more glitz, we were quick to change allegiance" (Ford, 53). Business demands decreased in downtowns as people became obsessed with the consumption of goods in larger quantities that could be purchased at mega malls.

POLITICAL ECONOMICS

Downtown businesses suffered greatly from the lack of pedestrian traffic, and many were forced to shut down. To make matters worse, building codes were established in order to purposefully worsen conditions as an excuse to tear down the unused, dilapidated buildings to make way for new construction or parking lots as placeholders. Even if a business desired to bring their building up to code, they were not able to receive the necessary financing. They had no other choice but to relocate to the outskirts where larger spaces could be built for less or

hang onto their vacant building. By the 1950s, implosion and decay had taken a toll due to the new economic policies and zoning ordinances.

RECOVERY

1975 became the year when the worst of downtown decay was over. With the recession over and economic recovery occurring, businesses downtown began to receive a sense of permanence once again. The removal of Red-lining practices, which arbitrarily limited or denied financial assistance to specific neighborhoods and areas, allowed for money to flow once again and greatly benefited the old buildings in need of repair. More cash flow paired with Post-Modernist thinking allowed for old buildings to be recycled, preserved, and adapted. Additionally, new zoning once again allowed for retail spaces to occur at street level which addressed the problem of the empty plaza and barren street level brought on by the Modernist office towers. Downtown was once again becoming a place for the people.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Understanding the history of the American downtown is incredibly important in order to understand how influential a downtown can be on the vibrancy and culture of a place. As expressed in previous paragraphs, people will swarm to places they find most appealing and enjoyable. The strip mall and mega mall are declining in popularity, owing to internet sales, and as a result, people are returning downtown in search of their next source of entertainment and enjoyment. Currently, we are one step beyond redevelopment and have entered the realm of reinvention and redefinition. People flock to what is new, and filling downtowns with a resurgence of new and local businesses is the stimulus a growing downtown needs to increase vibrancy and local culture. Unfortunately, one of the obstacles standing in the way of local business development and vibrancy is the abundance of surface parking lots. The surface lot forces segregation and occupies prime building land needed to allow for downtowns to flow, and flourish, and function as a place as opposed to a mere location.

Contemporary Manifestoes Promoting Density

The Modern Architectural Manifesto is a call for change. It encompasses a set of goals intended to innovate and advance the current state of planning and building in dense areas. The ideas are often radical, but are meant to stimulate and revolutionize architectural planning and thinking in hopes of bettering the world. The manifestoes covered in the next few paragraphs will address the need and desire for density and infrastructure within cities, and expresses how architects can be the planners of our cities and downtowns and create desirable places to experience. Interesting ideas are laced within these manifestoes, but each one raises questions about issues of possibility and effectiveness for the creation of interesting, desired, and fluid city centers.

1933-FUNCTIONAL CITY (CIAM'S ATHENS CHARTER)

CIAM's Athens Charter was based on the idea of maximization of functionality for its inhabitants which was necessary due to the city and region becoming one unit (Barnett, passim). CIAM believed that an increase in private interests within the city was causing suffering of its people. CIAM called for structure and order, and claimed that the keys to town planning were to be found in four functions: housing, work, recreation, and traffic (Conrads, passim). The charter focused on sizing streets according to their function, building tall apartments for dense housing on superblocks while freeing the ground level for recreation, and locating workplaces in areas that minimized transportation. Important aspects not addressed by CIAM were political, cultural, and commercial functions of the city. In order to create lively spaces for living, working, and housing, economic and cultural issues must be addressed. A city, or city center, will not strive if solely designed for machine-like function and precision. Function alone does not bring in revenue or vibrancy, people wanting to experience culture and evolve do.

An example of an Athens Charter inspired project with good intentions yet abundant failures is the plan for Brasilia by Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer in 1957 (Figure 4). Brasilia was

criticized for "creating monumental public spaces that served as iconic symbols while alienating visitors, and for over-planning every aspect of urban life so that the city's inhabitants could not redefine the city on their own terms" (Nair). In other words, the criticism was for its reliance on the highway and disregard for walkable streets and neighborhoods. Brasilia has often been referred to as the greatest modernist failure. This plan, while orderly, logical, and attempting to give the city icons through specific monumental structures, ultimately fails as a plan for today's cities and downtowns. Not only are we in a time where building a city from scratch would be impractical and uneconomical, but the of lack building diversity and character would prevent people from visiting and bringing their own cultures into a place that should be dense in aspects of work, entertainment, business, and life.

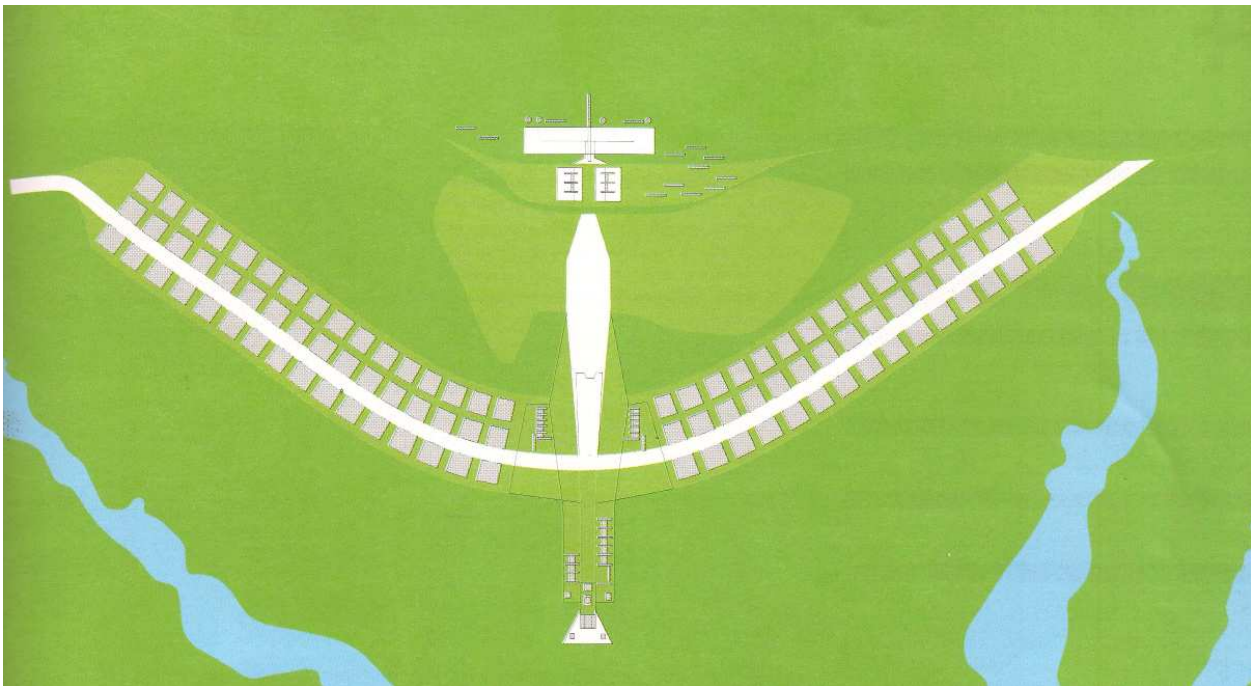

Figure 4: Brasilia Plan by Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer
Source: 49 Cities, pg 59

1956-SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL (SI)

> The creation of a situation means the creation of a transitory micro-world and – for a single moment in the life of a few – a play of events. It cannot be separated from the creation of a universal, relatively more lasting, environment by means of unitary town planning. -Spoken by Constant in 1958 (Conrads)

Unlike CIAM's Athens Charter, Situationsist International focused on culture and social change, as it followed Marxist ideals. SI strove to merge together art and politics in order to create situations for favorable environments. A prime example of a Situationist city is the plan for New Babylon by Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys (Figure 5, 6). The design is that of an infinite megastructure with unprogrammed sectors meant to link together to create flexible spaces. The megastructure is meant to surround but not infiltrate city centers. The project never came to fruition as it was more of an ideal and commentary at the time, but it is interesting to think about whether this idea would increase density and culture within a city center by surrounding it with flexible situations. On one hand, the answer may be yes, that vitality may be restored by bringing people into the surrounding areas of the city center, but the project lacks practicality. Putting the incredible costs it would take aside, city centers are already being choked by highways, and adding additional rings of program around the downtown will further distance it from the rest of the city and its people. Additionally, the spreading out of program will decentralize the parking areas thus creating more lots and more parking spaces than necessary.

1958-TEAM 10

Team 10 began as a cultural critique of CIAM's Modernist city planning and consisted of seven primary, longest acting members including: Jaap Bakema, Georges Candilis, Giancarlo De Carlo, Aldo van Eyck, Alison and Peter Smithson and Shadrach Woods (Pedret). Aldo van Eyck, perhaps the most influential and articulate member, suggested ways passed the "dull

emptiness of Functionalism and the Athens Charter" (Jencks and Kropf, 27), and poetically expressed his ideals in the writing of Team 10 Primer. In this publication, he writes,

> Man is the subject as well as the object of architecture. Whatever space and time mean, place and occasion mean more. For space in the image of man is place, and time in the image of man is occasion...Provide that space, articulate the in-between. (Jencks, Kropf, 27)

Members of Team 10 believed that too much existed within the designs of CIAM, and the pedestrian network needed to be more efficiently addressed. In the design of Haupstadt in Berlin, by Alison and Peter Smithson in 1958, the intentions were to rebuild the business district of Berlin, and there was an emphasis on the flow and habitation of the pedestrian by building on top of the existing street grid which allowed for several levels of pedestrian circulation (Figure 7,8). Unlike their predecessors, Team 10 strove to create organic and playful urban environments. What this means for the design of downtowns is a multi-layered place built for man that resides above an existing city with transport below. Does this negate the issue of the downtown surface lot considering the lower level is dedicated to transportation below? On one hand, this splitting of a downtown into levels could allow for transport and services to coexist, but this splitting cannot be done without raising questions of safety, congestion, and pollution on the lower level. Eventually the entire lower level would likely become uninhabitable by humans as the businesses and activities made their way to the second level thus creating a vertical division between downtown.

1964-ARCHIGRAM

The ideas underlying Archigram are those of movement and flexibility. In their Universal Structure manifesto, Peter Cook states that "a major problem of the organization of large areas of city is the achievement of a consistency running through parts with widely different functions and sizes " (Jencks, Kropf, 41). Figure 9 demonstrates the idea of architecture as the unifier of an area. Their solution was to create a large-scale structural idea, through space frames, with the

Figure 5: Plan of Constant's New Babylon
Source: 49 Cities, pg 71

Figure 7: Plan of Haupstadt
Source: 49 Cities, pg 61

Figure 6: Constant's New Babylon
Source: Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire, pg 214

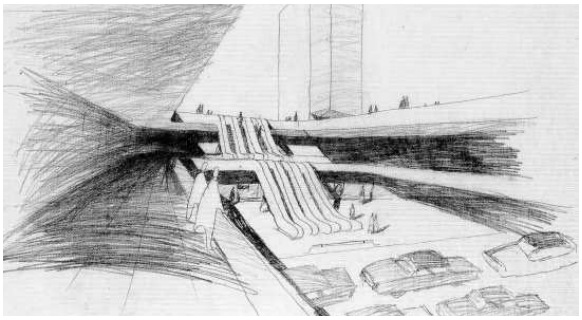

Figure 8: Haupstadt
Source: Team 10 Online

ability to adapt to the changing functions of the city through this kit of parts. Most notable of their projects is "Plug-In City" which allows for functions to easily be moved from one portion of the structural frame to another (Figure 10). Archigram's vision for "Plug-In City"' onwards, "[strove] for a city structure that would yield to individual desires more pliantly than previous forms of cities, and would derive its aesthetic from a demonstration of that compliance" (Banham, 96). While the ideals of Archigram fall short when it comes to practicality and issues of transportation, their emphasis on flexibility is a lesson worth learning, and although they were trying to break free from individual building design, their ideals and belief in expansion and flexibility must now be reconsidered in terms of individual and localized structures due to the lack of available building space within city centers.

1964-ARCHIZOOM

Archizoom's "No-Stop City" serves as a critique of consumer culture.

> Archizoom elaborated a model of extreme and total urbanization wherein technological integration was so advanced that the idea of the center as a place of financial accumulation and the periphery as a place of production would be increasingly superseded by an urban model in which production, accumulation, and consumption coincided within an ever-expanding, ever more isotropic plan. (Aureli, 21)

In the "No-Stop City", there is no differentiation between old and new, inside and outside, public and private, or production and consumption spaces. For example, production (the factory), consumption (the supermarket), and living (the parking lot) are of the same mode of urban living (Figure 11). The division between architecture and urbanity is completely collapsed and a continuous city is formed with no real attributes other than its quality of infinity which is expressed in Figure 12 in which the city is surrounded by mirrors to represent this infinity. In essence, all architecture has been lost. Important to the understanding of this plan is knowing that it is a hallucinatory, exaggerated description of the existing conditions of the city in the

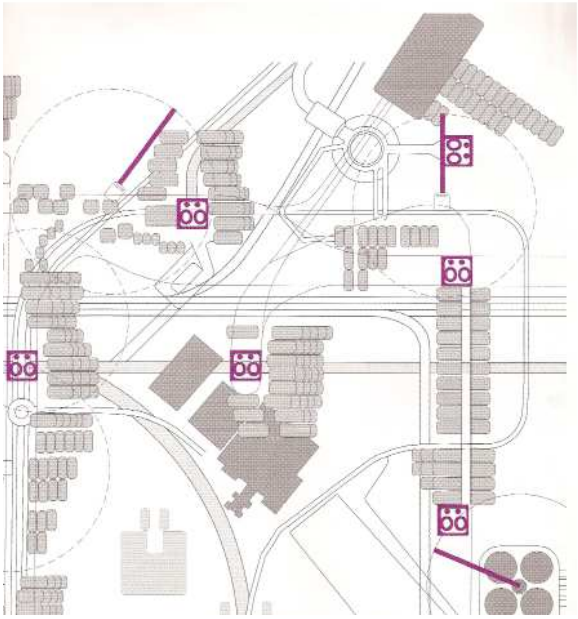

Figure 9: Plan of Plug-In City
Source: 49 Cities, pg 86

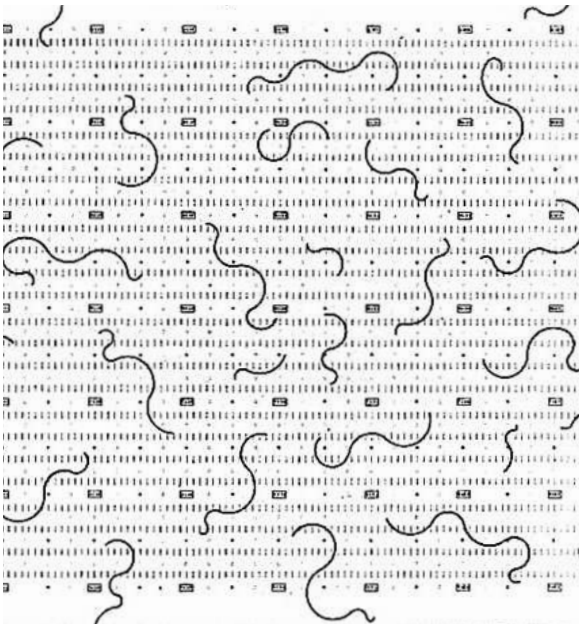

Figure 11: No-Stop City as three urban paradigms
Source: Possibility of An Absolute Architecture, pg 18

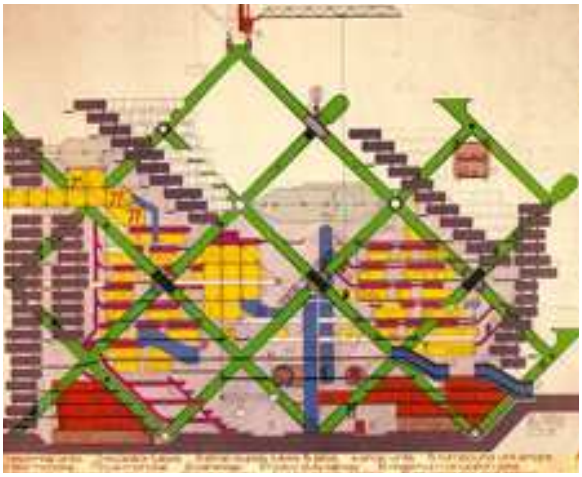

Figure 10: Plug-In City
Source: Team 10 Online

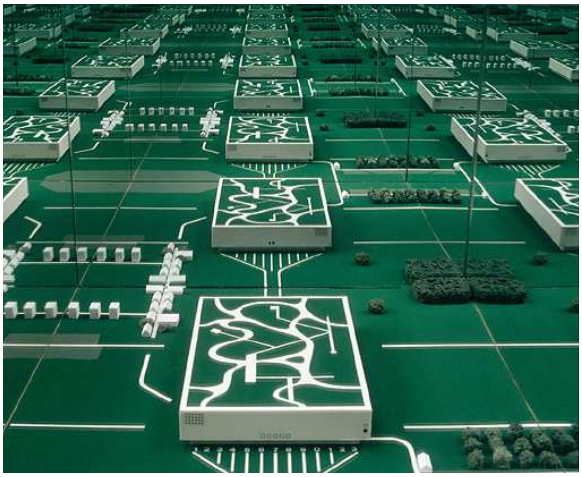

Figure 12: No-Stop City
Source: Future Cities, pg 145

1970s. In a sense, it is a prediction that the future city will be absorbed by an infrastructure that would standardize the entire urban territory. This prediction is correct in its assumptions about consumer culture which can be seen by the sheer mass of parking lots and automobile dependency today that continue to grow at a faster rate than businesses, especially local ones, can arise.

BIGNESS AS IMPRACTICALITY

The manifestoes discussed, while all composed of various modern ideals, all relate in one basic way. They are big. They are not only formulated from big, forward thinking ideas, but bare megastructures. They all strive to make a statement about the current architectural and urban issues of their time. It may be said that this bigness alone stood in the way of their success or probability of existence. Rem Koolhaas, in his essay "Bigness: or the Problem of Large", speaks about the modern issue of large structures that compete with urbanism. He writes,

> Bigness no longer needs the city: it competes with the city; it represents the city; it preempts the city; or better still it *is* the city. If urbanism generates potential and architecture exploits it, Bigness enlists the generosity of urbanism against the meanness of architecture. Bigness = urbanism vs architecture. (Jencks, Kropf, 310)

Koolhaas brilliantly evaluates megastructures as contradictory to urbanism, and the shortage of many manifestoes becoming a realty speaks to the idea that building large, hyper-architecture does not and will not solve the problem of lack of density in many American downtowns, especially those of a medium or small size. Building large will not create spaces of local culture, and building large will not be an efficient use of land. Most likely, an oversized building in a medium to small context, will house a large amount of vacancies that cannot be filled by the majority of local business owners. Instead of a downtown housing surface lots that hold back revitalization, a downtown, with an unnecessary megastructure in the place of a parking lot, will hold back revitalization and development of culture by breaking up the downtown in

a monumental way that is much more difficult to reverse or adapt to. The permanence is its downfall.

IDEAS WORTH EMBRACING

In order to successfully bring density, revenue, and culture into a downtown, flexible, adaptable structures much be carefully designed to take the place of the prime land currently occupied by surface lots that are creating voids within downtown areas. Figure 13 shows a compilation of the current status of parking lot dominance within some of today's cities that inhibits growth and density of businesses, culture, and pedestrian traffic. The voids they create cannot be ignored. The manifestoes previously covered, ignoring their physicality, hit on incredibly important issues and ideas that are necessary for the formulation of spaces that cater to its inhabitants.

With CIAM, though there was a complete lack of attention to culture, the designers understood the value of function. Despite their failures of built works, their ideas were not all faulty but merely lack a touch of personality and identity. On the contrary, Situationist International designed on the opposite spectrum. Their primary concerns were those of culture, social issues, art, identity, and a sense of togetherness and flexibility. The failure of this movement to build lies not in their ideas but in their radical and expansive designs that lack practicality. This lack of physical existence of projects does not make the beliefs of SI less important but rather allows designers today more freedom to examine and explore their ideas in a more profound way. The lack of built work allows Situationist International to live on as great thinkers instead of being written off by an unsuccessful physical project. In the same realm as CIAM and SI, lies Team 10. While SI and Team 10 both served as responses to CIAM, they did so in slightly different ways. SI truly was the opposite of CIAM in form, ideas, and intentions, but Team 10 held onto certain ideals that can be seen in CIAM whether it was their intention or not. Team 10's focus was primarily on the pedestrian and creating pedestrian networks. While they

claim to rid themselves of the rigid geometries of CIAM, they are creating incredibly planned, gridded structures that sit atop the current city grid. However, their importance does not lie in their likeness or unlikeness to CIAM, but in their focus on building for man, for place, and for in-between space.

The last two manifestoes, Archigram and Archizoom, speak of some more modern issues that deal with architecture in the city, urban planning, and consumerism. Both address the topic of adaptability which is a crucial component of buildings today. Archigram was the first group to begin breaking down their megastructures into parts and pieces that helped their projects gain a sense of realness despite being incredibly large. Their goal was to promote flexibility, movement, and expansion, and through their unbuilt works, they were able to lay out and articulate systems that would achieve their goals. Archizoom, on the other hand, conducts a different type of exploration that is less about the creation of a place or form and more about a critique of modern culture. While "No-Stop City" lacks architectural and urban design, it most accurately predicted the current state of urban America.

What we can learn from these manifestoes is that with the combination of functionality, personality, cultural identity, flexibility, adaptability, pedestrian networking, probability, and foresight, the voids of American downtowns, more specifically surface lots, can become vibrant, useful, desired places that promote density, business, and culture. The success or failure of a manifesto to become reality does not gauge its importance, but rather, the value of ideas does. These ideas cannot afford to be lost when redeveloping and revitalizing a city center.

CHAPTER III
ECONOMICS AND LOCAL CULTURE

Economic and Cultural Effects of Surface Parking

The Modern Architectural Manifestoes of the past left us with both radical and practical ideas for shaping automobile-centric cities. Often times, these manifestoes were based on a tabula rasa creation or a radical intrusion of a current city center. As previously stated, these manifestoes were mostly meant to call upon change and test new critical ideas about revitalizing cities. What many of them had in common was the integration of new infrastructures, such as transportation, but today, the infrastructure of a city center is difficult and expensive to reinvent. Cities must work with their current infrastructure while automobiles continue to dominate not only the streets, but undeveloped lots.

AUTOMOBILE DEPENDENCY AND ITS EFFECTS ON PARKING

Before discussing how the number of surface lots can be reduced, it is important to understand exactly how dominant vehicles and parking lots are in city centers. Within three years, from 2006-2009, there was a 92% increase in vehicle production around the world, and in the U.S. alone, 500 million surface parking spaces exist and are set to increase. According to Ben-Joseph, these 500 million parking spaces take up an area equaling 4,437 square kilometers of total space for parking. This area is the equivalent of the land area of 74 Manhattans (Figure 13). The constantly increasing production of vehicles creates a cycle of automobile dependency that will continue to cause degradation in downtowns (Figure 14).

BRIEF HISTORY OF DOWNTOWN SURFACE PARKING

Up until 1900, traffic regulations were almost nonexistent in U.S. cities, and by the early 1900's, large U.S. city centers such as downtown Chicago, had already become auto-centric areas with streets covered in moving and parked vehicles (Figure 15). After various traffic laws

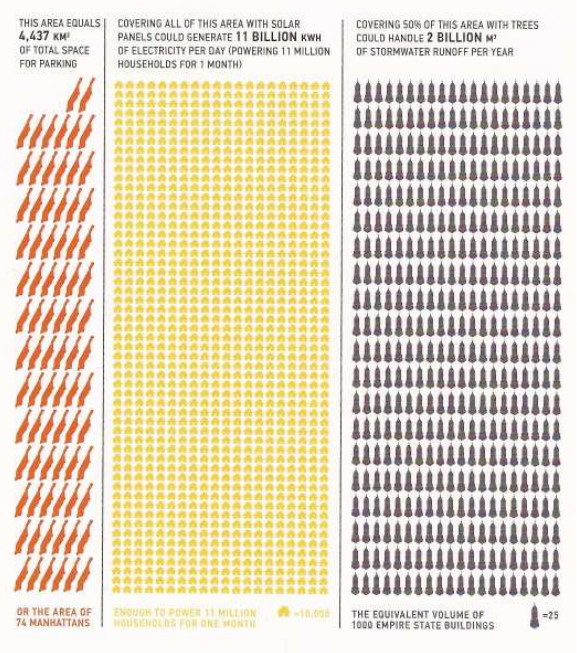

Figure 13: Comparative Space Consumption
Diagram of land utilized in the U.S. for parking cars. A conservative estimate shows that cars would occupy 1,096,552 acres or 1,713 square miles of land if they were all housed in surface parking lots.
Source: Ben-Joseph, page 18

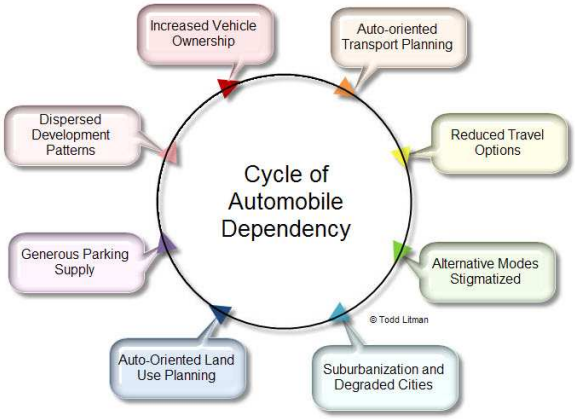

Figure 14: Cycle of Automobile Dependency
Source: cmap.illinois.gov

Figure 15: Chicago, Illinois 1929
Source: Ben-Joseph, page 64

were implemented, it became increasingly clear that order needed to be created from the chaos of cars parked along the streets. Ben-Joseph points out that in the early 1900s, traffic legislators, such as William P. Eno, predicted:

> Vacant lots will be leased to store waiting vehicles and it will become profitable to construct public garages where cars can be left during the day when people are attending to their business and during the evening when they are at the theater. Some of these storage places will undoubtedly be in congested parts of cities and others a little way out where people will leave their vehicles and proceed to their destination by street car, bus or taxi. (Ben-Joseph, 67)

At the beginning of the 1920s and 1930s, property owners discovered that surface parking lots were an economic boon due to consistent income with minimal investment. The emergence of municipal and privately owned surface lots resulted in under designed and poorly maintained parking lots within city centers. During this time it was assumed that surface lots were temporary placeholders so little to no investment was made on these lots as land owners awaited the opportunity to build. These "temporary" placeholders became widely accepted as the default program to place within vacant lots, and these placeholders are still dominating city centers today (Figure 16).

By the 1940s, municipal parking lots became one of the most dominant features of the American downtown, whether they were in the city center or surrounding it, much like William Eno predicted. As mentioned previously during the discussion of downtown history, the growth of suburbs changed the dynamic of downtowns and spurred the decline of Central Business Districts. To remedy the situation and compete with the suburbs' ability to offer parking impeccably close to a persons destination, city centers "promoted the tearing-down of vacant buildings and their replacement with surface lots, in hopes of attracting suburbanites back into the city centers with easy parking" (Ben-Joseph, 73).

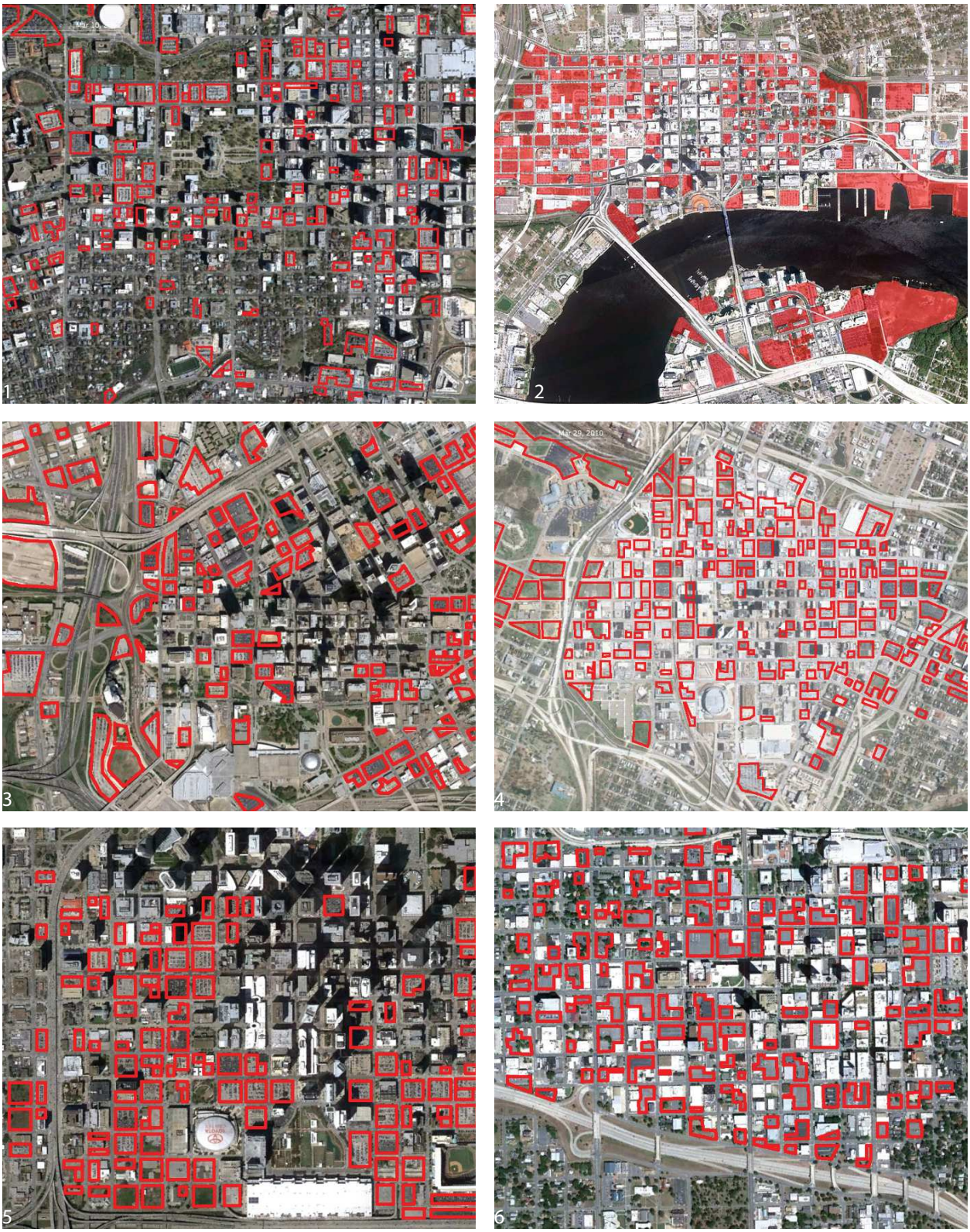

Figure 16: Parking Lots as Voids. Red represents parking lots and vacant lots.
1. Austin, TX 2. Jacksonville, FL 3. Dallas, TX 4. Tulsa, OK 5. Houston, TX 6. Little Rock, AR
Source: Metro Jacksonville, online source, July 2011

MUNICIPAL CONTROL

Downtowns municipalities have no control over the production and purchase of vehicles, but they do have the ability to control and discourage the overabundance of surface parking lots through the retooling of the property tax structure. This thesis is not about redistributing parking in garages and through perimeter parking, but is about how surface lots are not a contribution to the growth of downtowns and should be addressed by local government to help pioneer change. The surface lots function as parasites and allow surrounding businesses to grow while reaping benefits of charging for parking. The property owners bring in enough revenue to maintain their parking business and pay taxes, but their overall contribution to the city is insufficient. In reality, they are losing money for the city by not allowing or pushing for the development of a more profitable business. Blame does not fall onto surface lot owners alone. The city must re-evaluate the tax structure to allow for developers, small land and business owners, and architectural design firms to fully integrate and contribute to the downtown culture and economics.

Property Tax Structure

CURRENT PROPERTY TAX STRUCTURE

Taxes are normally levied on economic activity or assets to raise financial resources for the government. Conventionally, property taxes are the combination of two taxes, one on land and one on improvements. The more investment that goes into a building, the higher the taxes. On the contrary, a property owner could allow structures on their property to deteriorate and be rewarded with lower taxes (Rybeck, passim). Additionally, land value taxes are assessed based on non-existent income streams so empty lots are assigned values much too low. The potential profitability and developablility are overlooked which causes owners of vacant lots to hold onto their property without making any improvements that benefit the downtown area. Many vacant lot owners pave over the lot to bring in some form of revenue while continuing to pay almost nothing in taxes. There is no telling how long a property owner will hold onto this type of site considering the revenue it can generate with little investment cost. There is currently no incentive to build or sell. Changes to the tax structure must be made in order to rid downtowns of their vibrancy killers as well as bring in more revenue for the city. According to The Tax Policy Center, local property taxes account for the majority of local tax revenue (Figure 17). By implementing a Land Value Tax, also related to a Split-Rate Tax and Dual-Rate Tax structure, local tax revenue should increase due to an increase in improvements and developed land.

LAND VALUE TAX

A Land Value Tax is a variant of the Property Tax and calls for a decrease on building improvement taxes and an increase on land taxes based on potential value. Some of the benefits claimed for a land value tax are that it:

> reduces speculation in land, increases the density of urban development when it replaces a typical property tax, promotes economic development generally, encourages investment in real property, and fosters compact

Table 1: Local Property Taxes as a Percentage of Total Local Tax Revenue, Selected Years 1977-2010

15-Oct-12

Local Property Taxes as a Percentage of Total Local Tax Revenue, Selected Years 1977-2010

Region and State	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
United States	**80.5%**	**76.1%**	**73.6%**	**75.6%**	**73.4%**	**72.9%**	**73.1%**	**72.4%**	**71.9%**	**71.5%**	**72.2%**	**74.1%**	**75.1%**
New England	**99.2**	**98.9**	**97.9**	**98.2**	**97.8**	**97.2**	**97.3**	**97.1**	**97.2**	**97.3**	**97.3**	**97.7**	**97.8**
Connecticut	99.1	98.9	98.1	98.8	98.7	98.4	98.2	97.9	97.8	97.9	97.7	98.5	98.6
Maine	99.3	99.3	99.0	98.5	96.4	97.4	97.2	98.1	98.7	98.8	98.7	98.9	99.1
Massachusetts	99.4	98.9	97.0	97.2	97.0	96.1	96.4	96.3	96.4	96.6	96.5	96.8	97.0
New Hampshire	98.1	98.6	99.3	99.2	98.8	98.0	98.2	98.3	98.3	98.4	98.5	98.5	98.4
Rhode Island	99.1	99.1	98.5	98.7	98.6	97.7	98.0	97.2	97.4	97.1	97.5	97.6	97.7
Vermont	98.7	99.3	99.2	99.0	98.8	96.9	96.7	94.0	93.5	93.6	93.2	93.6	93.2
Mideast	**70.2**	**67.4**	**64.0**	**69.2**	**66.8**	**66.6**	**66.0**	**64.2**	**63.5**	**62.4**	**62.8**	**66.4**	**68.3**
Delaware	85.0	86.0	83.2	82.4	82.9	77.9	73.2	70.7	70.1	75.7	77.0	81.0	82.0
District of Columbia	22.4	27.6	28.5	37.5	26.5	24.9	26.0	26.9	26.6	29.2	32.0	35.7	37.0
Maryland	65.1	60.8	57.7	60.8	58.1	56.8	55.4	48.8	48.2	48.0	49.3	55.3	59.7
New Jersey	90.1	97.9	97.6	98.1	98.4	98.4	98.1	97.8	97.6	97.9	98.0	98.1	98.3
New York	68.4	63.1	57.6	63.0	59.4	58.8	58.2	56.4	55.5	53.7	53.6	58.3	60.7
Pennsylvania	66.2	66.2	66.8	70.8	70.4	70.1	71.7	71.1	70.7	69.8	70.4	70.6	70.8
Great Lakes	**85.9**	**83.2**	**81.1**	**82.4**	**81.3**	**81.1**	**82.2**	**82.3**	**81.4**	**80.9**	**80.9**	**81.0**	**81.6**
Illinois	81.9	75.8	73.8	79.3	82.5	82.5	82.7	81.9	81.3	81.6	81.9	82.9	83.0
Indiana	96.6	96.0	92.9	88.5	90.5	88.0	90.3	90.7	86.0	81.6	81.6	80.4	80.2
Michigan	91.6	92.1	91.9	93.2	89.1	89.8	91.3	91.5	91.9	92.3	92.3	93.2	93.4
Ohio	76.3	72.2	67.8	67.9	66.0	66.3	67.1	67.4	67.2	66.8	66.2	64.5	65.8
Wisconsin	98.7	98.5	98.2	95.9	94.6	93.8	93.9	93.1	93.0	93.6	93.8	94.0	94.8
Plains	**88.4**	**85.3**	**83.2**	**82.6**	**80.1**	**77.8**	**76.5**	**75.8**	**75.5**	**76.1**	**76.2**	**76.7**	**77.0**
Iowa	96.9	98.2	97.9	95.2	92.4	86.6	83.8	83.5	82.0	81.2	80.1	80.2	80.9
Kansas	94.1	91.0	82.8	84.2	80.9	78.0	80.6	79.7	76.8	75.9	76.5	78.0	78.3
Minnesota	96.0	95.3	95.5	95.3	94.7	93.8	92.0	91.3	91.1	92.3	92.5	93.0	93.8
Missouri	69.8	61.7	56.5	58.5	58.4	60.4	60.0	59.7	60.7	61.5	61.3	61.4	61.6
Nebraska	93.3	89.4	89.6	86.5	81.7	75.0	75.1	75.2	76.1	76.8	77.0	77.2	76.1
North Dakota	96.5	96.0	95.0	92.7	89.9	86.8	86.8	86.2	84.8	85.4	85.6	85.6	82.4
South Dakota	90.6	87.5	81.7	79.8	76.7	77.2	74.0	73.0	72.9	72.8	73.0	73.6	73.4
Southeast	**74.6**	**70.9**	**68.6**	**71.2**	**68.8**	**69.1**	**70.1**	**69.6**	**68.0**	**68.4**	**69.8**	**71.1**	**72.1**
Alabama	40.6	38.8	35.3	36.0	36.5	39.8	41.0	40.2	39.4	39.0	40.6	41.6	44.2
Arkansas	90.9	87.6	75.4	68.5	60.1	41.9	41.7	41.0	43.0	40.1	41.4	41.9	41.9
Florida	84.4	82.6	79.6	82.8	78.8	78.7	78.4	77.5	77.8	78.5	80.7	81.6	82.2
Georgia	81.3	73.6	66.7	71.6	67.5	64.0	70.2	69.0	63.2	63.6	65.2	67.3	68.5
Kentucky	66.9	55.9	50.8	51.0	53.6	54.9	56.1	55.9	53.5	54.7	55.4	56.2	57.8
Louisiana	48.5	37.9	43.8	40.1	37.5	39.5	41.8	42.1	39.9	38.8	40.1	42.8	45.1
Mississippi	94.5	93.9	94.1	94.3	91.8	91.7	92.6	93.4	92.8	92.4	92.1	92.5	92.7
North Carolina	82.4	81.6	71.4	72.8	75.2	77.0	74.5	74.4	68.8	68.7	69.8	73.3	76.6
South Carolina	93.2	92.5	91.7	90.7	86.9	84.2	84.4	83.2	84.4	81.6	79.9	80.2	80.5
Tennessee	67.9	64.2	59.9	60.9	58.2	66.7	65.1	65.1	62.6	62.1	63.1	63.9	65.1
Virginia	69.0	69.1	69.5	73.0	72.6	71.6	71.4	71.3	71.6	72.9	73.8	75.7	75.9
West Virginia	81.8	79.0	80.7	81.2	82.5	81.8	80.1	80.4	79.7	78.9	79.9	81.4	80.8
Southwest	**83.3**	**78.8**	**78.6**	**78.5**	**75.6**	**76.1**	**77.6**	**77.4**	**76.8**	**75.3**	**74.5**	**76.5**	**78.1**
Arizona	81.8	75.2	75.2	78.1	71.3	66.0	66.1	64.0	63.2	59.5	62.6	66.5	69.3
New Mexico	81.7	71.9	58.3	53.6	55.1	56.3	54.6	51.5	48.2	49.1	50.4	54.2	55.8
Oklahoma	70.0	56.4	60.9	53.2	53.0	54.3	54.4	53.5	52.3	52.6	53.1	52.9	55.6
Texas	85.8	83.2	82.0	81.8	79.6	80.9	83.0	83.3	83.1	81.9	80.4	81.8	83.0
Rocky Mountain	**82.8**	**78.1**	**77.6**	**74.4**	**70.0**	**67.4**	**69.5**	**68.7**	**67.8**	**67.0**	**67.7**	**70.4**	**72.6**
Colorado	75.9	68.8	69.6	66.2	61.7	59.7	62.7	61.5	60.8	59.7	60.6	64.5	67.3
Idaho	97.3	95.8	96.2	95.6	93.8	94.0	93.6	92.4	91.1	90.8	91.6	93.1	94.2
Montana	96.1	97.2	95.5	96.5	94.8	96.9	96.2	96.0	96.7	95.2	96.4	96.9	96.9
Utah	81.8	76.8	77.9	76.0	71.6	67.6	68.8	68.5	66.4	67.5	68.0	70.5	71.2
Wyoming	92.0	88.1	90.0	84.2	78.1	75.7	73.5	75.5	75.6	76.2	75.7	76.3	80.9
Far West [1]	**84.4**	**72.1**	**69.8**	**71.0**	**68.1**	**66.8**	**66.9**	**66.3**	**69.2**	**69.7**	**71.7**	**73.7**	**73.6**
California	85.2	71.3	68.2	70.6	67.9	66.3	66.5	66.1	70.2	71.1	73.5	75.2	74.5
Nevada	67.5	60.3	64.6	68.2	61.5	63.9	61.9	64.4	65.0	65.0	67.6	72.7	72.9
Oregon	92.3	90.5	90.3	88.4	81.2	81.3	78.8	77.2	76.4	78.8	80.7	82.8	84.2
Washington	69.9	61.4	63.3	60.5	63.5	62.9	64.5	62.0	60.1	57.7	56.9	59.9	61.9
Alaska	78.6	79.7	87.3	84.7	80.1	79.6	78.5	78.0	77.5	77.2	75.3	70.0	72.9
Hawaii	80.1	80.8	82.5	81.5	79.8	75.1	74.9	75.1	76.7	77.3	79.7	78.7	79.1

[1] Alaska and Hawaii are excluded from the Far West regional totals, but are included in the U.S. totals.

Source: State & Local Government Finance Data Query System. http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/slf-dqs/pages.cfm. The Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center. Data from U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances, Government Finances, Volume 4, and Census of Governments (1977-2010). Date of Access: (4-Oct-2012).

Figure 17: Local Property Taxes as a Percentage of Total Local Tax Revenue, Selected Years 1977-2010
Source: Tax Policy Center, online source, October 2012

> development by stimulating infill development and reducing leapfrog development. (Dye, England, 1)

A Land value tax recognizes the importance and value of land especially in downtown areas where outward expansion is not possible. "Taxing land values generates revenue that can benefit the community that provided the individual landowners with their unearned increases in land value" (Plummer, 76). If the taxes on land are increased the taxes on improvements will have to be lowered and calculated in a such a way that allows for the total taxes paid on land and improvements to remain close to the amounts paid in property taxes so those who have improved their land do not suffer losses. The key is creating a balance and effective ratio of land and improvement rates.

POSSIBLE OBSTACLES

The primary issue that will arise with the implementation of a land value tax, is fairness and distribution. The most difficult question to answer is, when is a tax fair? "Fairness is generally evaluated according to the ability-to-pay principle of taxation – the idea that people should be taxed according to their financial ability to support government activities" (Plummer, 73). Economist Elizabeth Plummer believes every tax should be evaluated on the four basic standards of revenue: sufficiency, convenience, efficiency, and equity. Equity is where the obstacles of maintaining fairness lies. In the current property tax system, everyone pays the same percentage of their property's assessed value, which is fair. In a Land Value Tax, this would remain the same, but the conflict arises with those who have little improvements on their land but are having to pay more taxes due to a higher percentage of taxes placed on the land itself. The surface lot owners will benefit the least, but in order to revitalize the dead areas in a downtown some losses will have to occur. Another obstacle lies within deciding what makes land valuable now that the improvements no longer influence the value of the land itself. Gauging the land value will be difficult but not impossible after assessing the land's proximity

to mechanical and water lines, streets, parking structures, and other building programs. The key to deciding the value of land is, potential.

THOSE WHO BENEFIT

Slight losses will be unavoidable, but with a Land Value Tax, there is potential for the overall benefits to outweigh the losses. In the best case scenario, six important parties reap the most benefits. First of all, the city becomes more valuable as a whole due to a more developed city center that brings in more revenue to the local and state government. This directly effects the Central Business Improvement District which will increase their revenue as well which means their budget to improve downtown will grow. With an increase in the CBID budget, private developers and land owners have a bigger opportunity to receive grants for their improvements, and with the combination of more grant money, lower taxes on improvements, and already accessible tax breaks such as Tax Increment Financing which uses hypothetical future gains in taxes to subsidize current improvements, private developers and land owners have increased incentive to build and revitalize downtown. With more restorations and developments downtown, more businesses have the opportunity to grow and flourish downtown, and more businesses means a larger community audience.

The community, while at the end of the development chain, plays the most crucial role in downtown revitalization. They liven the streets and fuel the businesses that drive the economy. The last important group that benefits from the change in the tax structure are the local designers whether they be architects, builders, artisans, or any other fields relating to design. The local designers ultimately give businesses their identity. A local boutique and restaurant are prime examples. Some of the qualities within these two types of businesses that give them their identity lies within their building design, interior organization, interior decorations, furniture, advertising, and products whether they be clothing, jewelry, or food. The specific design of a business is a large factor in attracting local clientele.

U.S. EXPERIMENTS

Land Value Taxation has existed primarily in theories set forth by Henry George and expanded upon by later economists. Dye and England quote Arlo Woolery, expert on land policy, in 1982 when he wrote in the introduction to Pollakowski's monograph on land value taxation (1982), "The real world is not an ideal laboratory for testing the validity of these theories" (Dye, England, 99). Despite this, there have been a large numbers of studies over the last thirty years, and some real world successes have occurred in Pennsylvania beginning in the early 1900s and Hawaii in the 1960s.

In 1925, Pittsburgh officially had different rates on land, 1.95 percent, than on improvements, 0.98 percent. The primary goal of these differentiating rates was to shift the tax burden from improvements to land to encourage development on large land holdings and encourage revitalization. The ratio of land to improvements continued to increase over the years. Due to infrequent and inaccurate assessments of land and rate setting procedures that were clumsy at best, city-wide implementation of a Split-Rate Tax came to an end. Despite this, the Central Business District of Pittsburgh decided to continue implementing a land based tax to finance the downtown, and this tax structure continues to thrive in downtown Pittsburgh today (Dye, England, 14-17).

In 1963, Hawaii reformed their conventional property tax to build up their tourist economy by lowering the tax rate on improvements and raising the tax rate on land. The process of phasing the tax started in 1965 "when the improvement tax rate would be set at 90 percent of the land tax rate; this percentage was scheduled to decrease to a minimum of 40 percent over at least a 10 year period" (Dye, England, 14). Within a few years, this resulted in thirty large resort hotels in Honolulu's Waikiki Beach. By the early 1970s, the excessive building practices damaged the character of the place. "Hawaiians began to jokingly refer to the construction crane as the state bird, and Joni Mitchell penned her famous lyric 'they paved paradise and put up a parking lot' during a visit to Waikiki during this stage of over development" (Dye, England,

17). The lack of control over excessive, tourist driven development, ultimately branded the new tax structure as inffective.

IMPORTANCE OF VALUING LAND

In 1909, Winston Churchill brilliantly summarized the importance of valuing land and contributing to the community.

> Roads are made, streets are made, services are improved, electric light turns night into day, water is brought from reservoirs a hundred miles off in the mountains -- and all the while the landlord sits still. Every one of those improvements is effected by the labor and cost of other people and the taxpayers. To not one of those improvements does the land monopolist, as a land monopolist, contribute, and yet by every one of them the value of his land is enhanced. He renders no service to the community, he contributes nothing to the general welfare, he contributes nothing to the process from which his own enrichment is derived. -Winston Churchill, 1909 (The Progress Report)

This thesis does not target the land monopolist but does serve as a criticism of land owners who let improvements occur around them without contributing to their community. As discussed previously, all parties (the city, CBID, developers and land owners, businesses, community, and designers) must participate in order to revitalize a city center, and this participation is largely based on an understanding of how valuable land is and how much potential is laced within it.

Cultural Identity

IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL CULTURE

Since the invention of the modern downtown, city centers have intended to serve as destinations. The types of destination, such as work, shopping, etc, have changed and evolved throughout the years, but nonetheless, downtown remains a destination. The most successful downtowns today cater to a large audience through a series of mixed uses while integrating local culture which is achieved through creating special places where the community feels a sense of belonging. The more vibrant, developed, and proud a downtown becomes, the more people are drawn in to work, live, and experience. According to "Business Insider", the American cities with the most potential to thrive in the next two decades are those most likely to have job growth, population and demographic growth, affordability, and livability. Additionally, these cities are those leading the way in innovative practices such as technology, culture, and sustainability, and are cities with current and future generations with great ideas (Polland). This tells us that the success and identity of a city is strongly influenced by its people, its locals.

HOW LOCAL CULTURE REFLECTS VITALITY

The primary local cultures influencing downtowns today include: food and drink, clothing, art, music, and markets. These types of local attractions bring life into the city on a daily basis and often times serve as beacons for tourists who directly influences the amount of revenue and improvements the downtown receives as well as encourage more small businesses to emerge. Local culture is a reflection of how lively and energetic a city is. A good example is a brief glance at New York City, the city that never sleeps. The local culture and identity of NYC is that of many cultures and many individuals. It is no surprise that the most lively city in the world is also one of the most culturally dense. The next section will expand on this direct connection between local culture and vitality by looking into two American cities, Austin, Texas and Asheville, North Carolina which unlike NYC, are still in the process of revitalization and have fallen victim to surface parking lots.

Austin is the state capital of Texas and is the 13th most populous in the United States but has just recently become a thriving destination for local culture. Downtown Austin is now home to numerous art, music, and film festivals that bring together locals, artists, and tourists throughout the year. Austin City Limits, a music festival, brought in $73 million in visitor spending in 2011 (Ingles) while South by Southwest, a film and music festival, brought in $190.3 million to the Austin economy in 2012 (Derczo). These festivals have turned Austin into a destination for artists and musicians who have helped shape the local culture of downtown Austin whether they reside there or simply pass through.

Asheville is located in the mountains of Western North Carolina and is home to more than 50 festivals celebrating the cultures of dance, beer, music, art, food, sports, and theater among other things. The vibrancy within these festivals lies within their merging of the previously mentioned cultures. The majority of festivals in Asheville, such as the Bele Chere street festival and the monthly Downtown After Five event, are comprised of the four things downtown Asheville is most known for, music, food, drink, and art. The every day, local culture of downtown Asheville reflects the energy brought on by its festivals and events. It is often said that no one in Asheville was born there, and most people simply stop for a visit and decide to stay. Because of this, Asheville has become a mysterious, eclectic, year round visited city.

CHAPTER IV
DOWNTOWN KNOXVILLE

Downtown Knoxville has lived through its share of ups and downs. During times of economic progress the local culture thrived, but in times of economic despair the local culture withered away and was forced to wait for the next wave of economic growth to flourish. Downtown Knoxville is currently in stage of revitalization in a time where the preservation of local and historic culture is prevailing. While Knoxville has become significantly more lively over the past few years, it still has its gaps and glitches that are not allowing the city to fully flourish. Going through a quick history of downtown Knoxville to present day will explain the cities potential that can be tapped through tax structure adjustment paired with an architectural design solution that will revitalize a dead area in a city that has begun revitalization but is in need of additional efforts.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Knoxville, Tennessee was settled in 1786 and served as a major trading center for many years. Knoxville continued to thrive during the Civil War and became increasingly important during the boom of the railroad. The city quickly became a thriving, industrial center for the south and was often referred to as the gateway to the south. Like most city centers, downtown Knoxville economy and business fell during the Great Depression. By the 1950s, Knoxville remained grim. In a 1946 volume of "Inside U.S.A." John Gunther described Knoxville as "the ugliest city I ever saw in America, with the possible exception of some mill towns in New England. Its main street is called Gay Street; this seemed to be a misnomer" (Walsh, 197).Knoxville was clearly a struggling city that was designed and built before the introduction and impact of the automobile which branded Knoxville as "a city frozen in time, out of touch with the rapidly changing world" (Walsh, 198). The railroad industry was in decline which brought huge losses to the cities revenue stream. Cormac McCarthy, in his novel *Suttree*, describes downtown

Knoxville, more specifically Market Street and Square, as it was in 1951. Although the accounts of Knoxville in this novel are often times exaggerated, they encompass the struggles of the city.

> Market Street on Monday morning, Knoxville Tennessee. In this year nineteen fifty-one. Suttree with his parcel of fish going past the rows of derelict trucks piled with produce and flowers, an atmosphere rank with country commerce, a reek of farmgoods in the air tending off into a light surmise of putrefaction and decay. Pariahs adorned the walk and blind singers and organists and psalmists with mouth harps wandered up and down. Past hardware stores and meatmarkets and little tobacco shops. A strong smell of feed in the hot noon like working mash. Mute and roosting pedlars watching from their wagonbeds and flower ladies in their bonnets like cowled gnomes, driftwood hands composed in their apron laps and their underlips swollen with snuff. He went among vendors and beggars and wild street preachers haranguing a lost world with a vigor unknown to the sane. Suttree admired them with their hot eyes and dogeared bibles, God's barkers gone forth into the world like the prophets of old. (McCarthy, 66)

While this account is negative, McCarthy does illustrate that some important aspects of the culture of the city are present. However, the economic status of the city did not allow them to thrive. For example, McCarthy mentions trucks with produce and flowers, farmgoods, musicians, meat markets, tobacco shops, and vendors, and in most American cities today, these features would be present in thriving, culturally rich city centers. After the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1923, the city began to grow and change but not until the 1960s did it bring economic relief. As the economy began looking up, the music and market cultures mentioned in *Suttree* took a positive turn and thrived once again as they did before the Great Depression. Unfortunately, by the 1970s, Knoxville had hit another lull and downtown Knoxville was left almost deserted. During this time, an increase in surface parking lots began appearing downtown. The six stages of Downtown Knoxville, inception, exclusion, segregation,

expansion, replication, and re-development can be seen by looking at historic maps which show the evolution of Downtown Knoxville and how dense it used to be (Figures 18-23).

SURFACE LOT INFESTATION

Like many American downtowns, Downtown Knoxville fell victim to the surface parking lot (Figure 24) and its revenue potential with the implementation of parking management systems that further distance the developer from his own land (Figure 25). As discussed previously, the increase in surface parking lots can be attributed to several factors, but the most common culprit of surface lots in downtown Knoxville is private developers who discovered easy profits at little cost, did not want to pay for a vacant buildings on their lots, and who made plans to develop that did not happen. For example, in 1956 developers tore down Knoxville's landmark opera house to build a new department store that was going to "change the way Knoxville shopped" (Neely). It became a parking lot. In the 1960s, the Chamber of Commerce tore down a famous theatorium for a new Chamber of Commerce building but decided to build elsewhere. It became a parking lot. In the 1970s, Church Avenue's Ross Flats was torn down to make way or an unusual modern development known as the East-West Mall that was "touted as the salvation downtown" (Neely). It became a parking lot. In the 1990s, the large Tennessee Mine & Mill Building was set to be converted into a mixed-use facility including residences but was acquired by eminent domain for a Justice Center project. It became a parking lot. In 2005, a downtown bank tore down a historic 1904, five-story apartment building and boasted about a new, attractive bank building that would take its place. It became a private parking lot (Neely). Many other lots exist due to this manner of tearing down dilapidated buildings to save money on taxes. Downtown Knoxville is rife with historic buildings that have survived destruction and filled with unnecessary surface lots disconnecting the culture and history of Downtown Knoxville that has survived. The potential of this city center to boom once more exists which makes it an ideal place to propose a change in the tax structure.

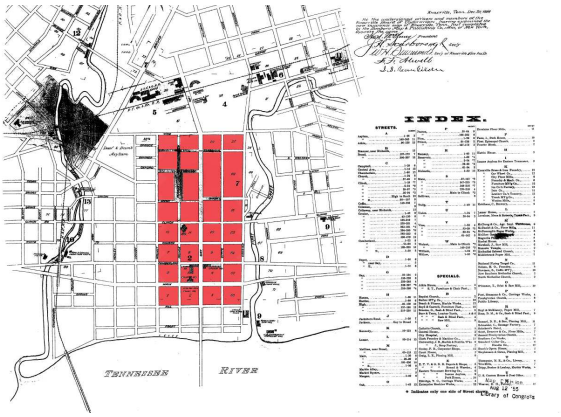

Figure 18: Stage 1: Inception
Source: Digital Sanborn Maps

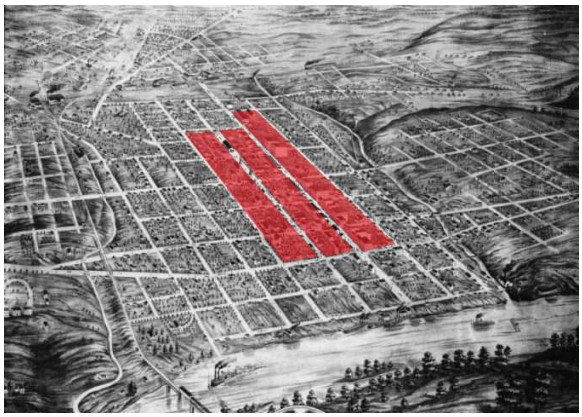

Figure 19: Stage 2: Exclusion
Source: McClung Historical Digital Collection

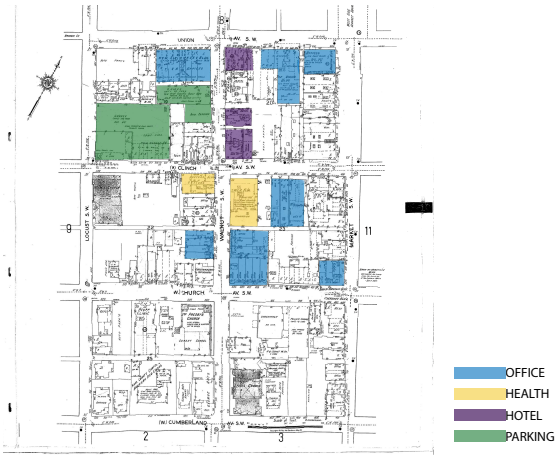

Figure 20: Stage 3: Segregation
Source: Digital Sanborn Maps

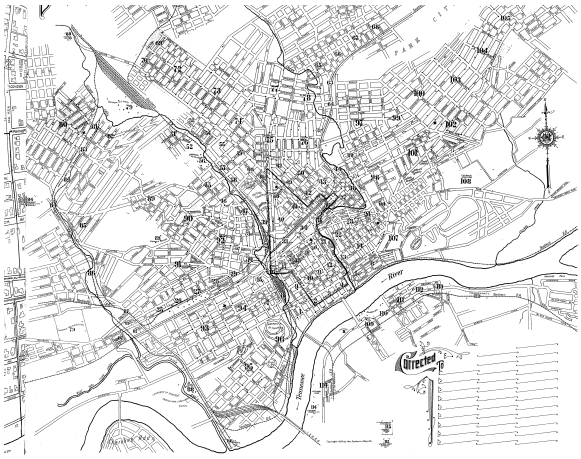

Figure 21: Stage 4: Expansion
Source: Digital Sanborn Maps

Figure 22: Stage 5: Replication
Source: Frank Kehren, Flickr

Figure 23: Step 6: Re-Development
Source: Knox News

Figure 24: Density of Downtown Knoxville Parking
Red represents surface lots and green represents parking structures.
Source: Author

Figure 25: Collage of Parking Management Systems
Source: Author

Figure 26: Market Square and Gay Street
Source: Google Earth

Figure 27: 1890s: Gay Street
Source: McClung Historical Digital Collection

Figure 28: 1890s: Market Square
Source: McClung Historical Digital Collection

Figure 29: 1930s: Gay Street
Source: McClung Historical Digital Collection

Figure 30: 1930s: Market Square
Source: McClung Historical Digital Collection

Figure 31: 1960s: Gay Street
Source: Danny Lyon, MetroPulse

Figure 32: 1960s: Market Square
Source: McClung Historical Digital Collection

Figure 33: 2000s: Gay Street
Source: Frank Kehren, Flickr

Figure 34: 2000s: Market Square
Source: Frank Kehren, Flikr

CHAPTER V
Site Selection

Initial Site Analysis

Downtown Knoxville, as discussed previously, has incredible potential to become more vibrant and culturally rich once again. The process of revival has already begun, and it is the responsibility of the city, the CBID, local developers and landowners, and architects and designers to take the necessary steps to properly revitalize the surface lot dead zones in order to create a cohesive city center. After visiting and researching several surface parking lot site downtown I narrowed down my site options to three important spots within the Central Business District (Figure 36).

Site option 1, the site I chose out of the three in consideration, is located near the entrance of South Gay Street merely three blocks away from the Gay Street bridge that crosses the Tennessee River and connect South Knoxville to Downtown Knoxville (Figure 37). This surface lot is the largest one off of South Gay Street and creates a complete disconnect between the Civic buildings and high-rise office buildings in the 900 and 800 blocks and the rest of downtown (Figure 38).

Site option 2 is located along historic South Gay Street and resides where Wall Street terminates (Figure 39). This gap cuts off the 100 Block of Gay Street from the rest of the city by creating a powerful dead space that occurs directly after lively parts of South Gay Street and Market Square. The site is so under whelming it feels as if it steals life from its surroundings (Figure 40).

Site option 3 is located within the Old City next to the railroad tracks (Figure 41). The appeal of this site is in its surrounding context which is the part of downtown with the most grit. There are no clean, modern structures nearby unlike the rest of downtown. The experience and feeling the Old City emits lies within its title, old (Figure 42).

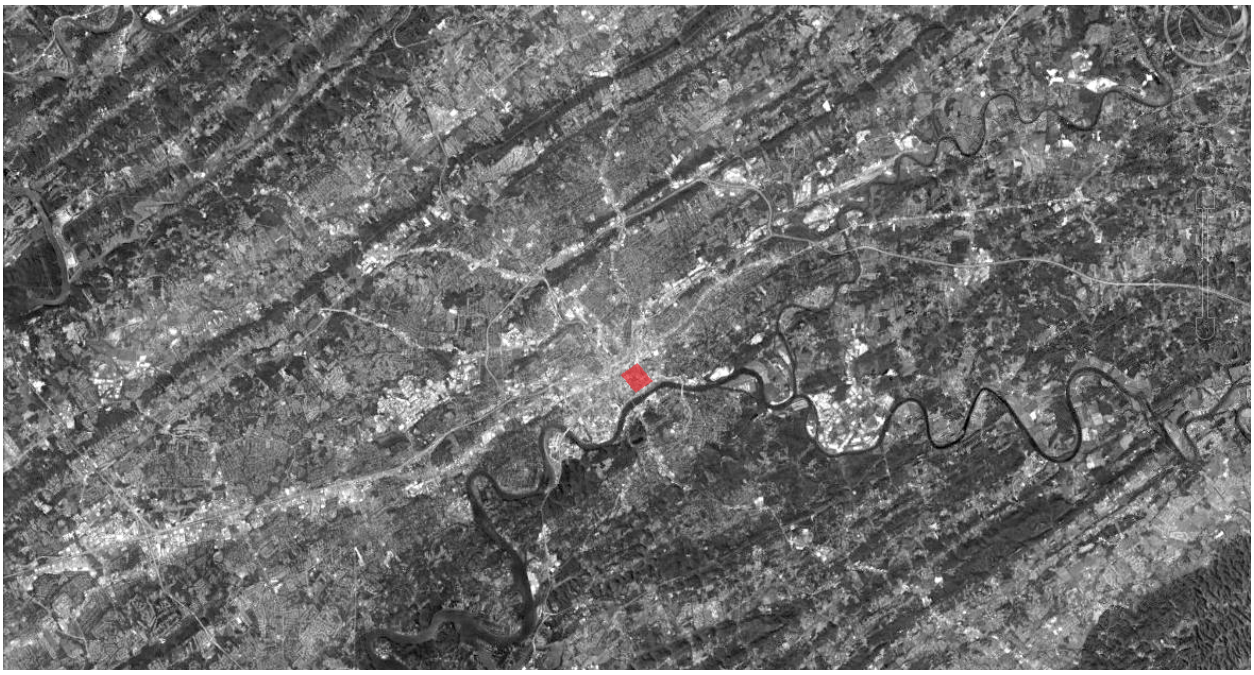

Figure 35: Downtown Presence in Knoxville
Source: Google Earth

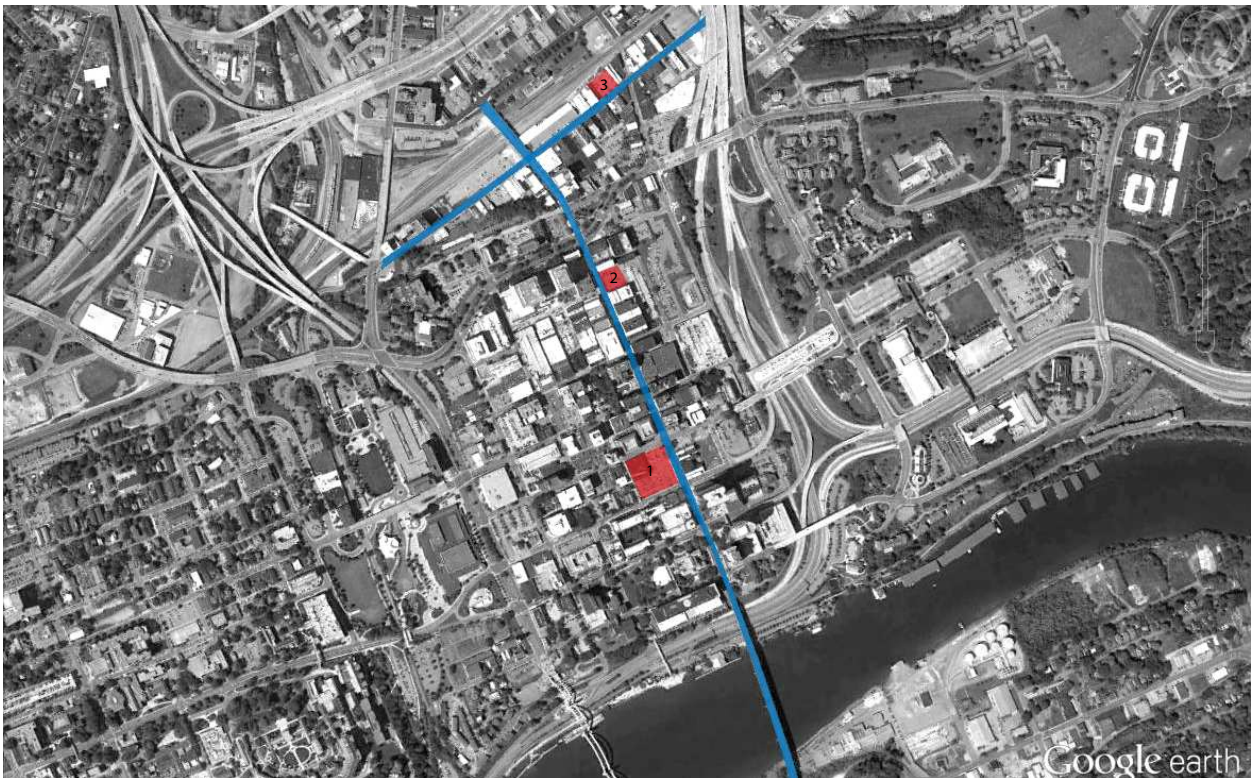

Figure 36: Three Site Options
Options 1 and 2 are located on S. Gay Street while option 3 is location on W. Jackson Ave
Source: Google Earth

Figure 37: Site Option 1
Source: Google Earth

Figure 38: Largest Gay Street Gap
Source: Author

Figure 39: Site Option 2
Source: Google Earth

Figure 40: Termination at Wall Street
Source: Author

Figure 41: Site Option 3
Source: Google Earth

Figure 42: Old City Grit
Source: Author

THE CHOSEN SURFACE LOT

Site Option 1 stood out as the biggest void with the most potential in Downtown Knoxville. The red square in Figure 43 highlights and expresses exactly how large of a gap this surface lot is creating within the urban fabric. It causes a disconnect between its surrounding building programs (Civic, commercial, residential, religious, and theater) and does not allow for smooth transitions between different types of spaces. This surface lot deadens the areas surrounding it by decreasing the vitality of that entire block and the 7 blocks surrounding it.

USING THE GAP TO DEFINE, CONNECT, IMPACT, AND REVITALIZE

The potential of this site lies within its ability to define, connect, impact, and revitalize Downtown Knoxville. As mentioned previously, this surface lot is located at the entrance of S. Gay Street. The location alone allows for the site to potentially define and characterize S. Gay Street as whole. This site, due to its 90,000 square foot void allows for the opportunity to create a structure that will connect all of the surrounding blocks together as well as create connections along intersection streets which will be expanded upon in my design proposal. The site also allows for a bold yet appropriate structure to be erected that will impact its surroundings by being seen but not overwhelming. The future structure can influence without dominating. Lastly, the potential of this site allows for the ultimate goal of revitalizing Downtown Knoxville which can be attributed to its ability to define, connect and impact buildings, businesses and the community around it.

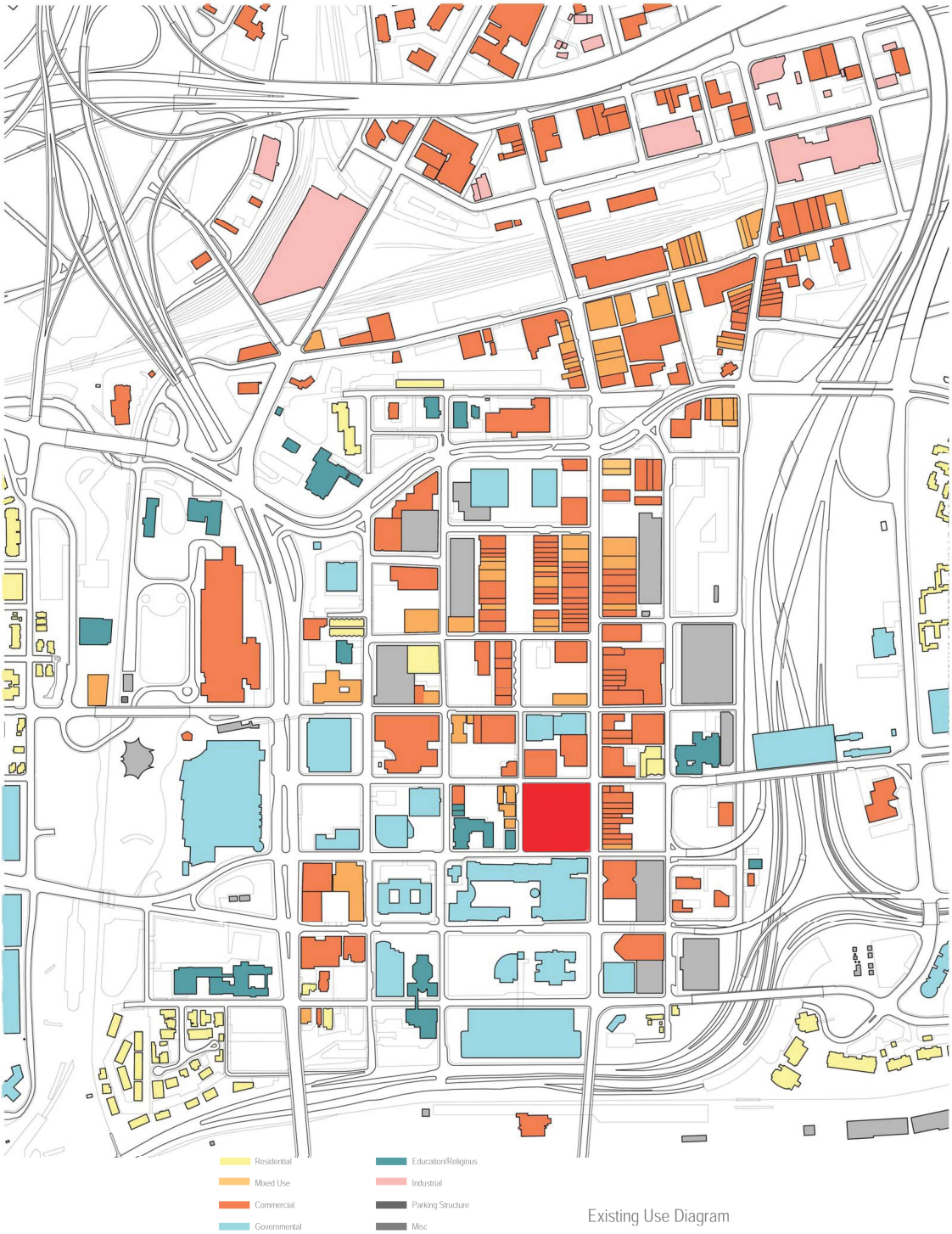

Figure 43: Downtown Knoxville Existing Land Use
Red indicates chosen site that is surrounded by various building uses.
Source: Maria Fox (Professor Mark Schimmenti Spring 2013 studio)

CHAPTER V I
DESIGN SOLUTION

Changing the Property Tax

To make my design solution feasible, I first had to think about how the process of acquiring a surface lot would occur. The first step was to look at property assessment values within the business district to discover how badly surface parking lots were feeding off of the surrounding improvements while paying relatively low taxes. Figure 44 maps the assessment values in Downtown Knoxville which directly relates to the amount of taxes each lot pays every year. Figure 45 overlays the current surface lots and parking structures within Downtown Knoxville to point out that those lots nearest the highest valued structures are benefitted with higher values. This is considered a benefit because the value of land is high enough to show that a decent amount of revenue is coming in while the cost of maintaining the site remains relatively low. This combination is the reason why surface lots are considered killers of vibrancy in center centers. The developer has no reason to build or sell.

This exact circumstance is why a shift in the property tax structure is so crucial. The point of the shift is stir up change, beyond its analytics, and cause land owners and developers to reevaluate their contribution and place in Downtown Knoxville. Shifts in the property market are necessary for vital change to take place. There are several positive scenarios, some more ideal than other, that could occur when a surface lot land owner decides it is no longer in their best interests to hold onto their underdeveloped land. The first two scenarios require an active role from the local government. In scenario 1, the government would buy the land and sell it to a private developer at a temporary loss but will receive a steady tax revenue on the land and future improvements that will eventually cover the loss. In scenario 2, the local government buys the land and begins a public/private partnership with a local developer. This gives the government control of the land to ensure that it will be developed. The possible obstacles

Figure 44: Property Assessment Values
The darker the blue the higher the assessment value and the more taxes paid each year.
Source: Author, data collected from MPC, KGIS, and Knoxville Property Assessors (2013)

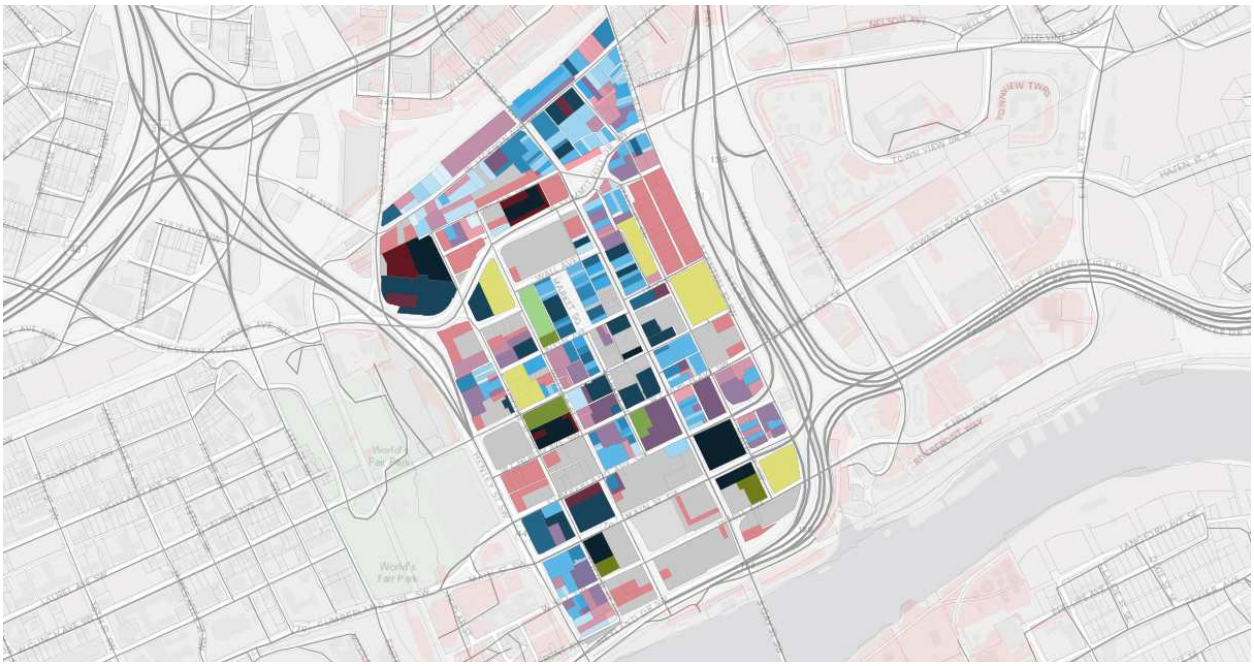

Figure 45: Overlay of Lots and Assessment Values
The darker the purple, the more that lot is gaining from surrounding improvements.
Source: Author, data collected from MPC, KGIS, and Knoxville Property Assessors (2013)

that come with public/private partnerships were touched upon previously, but if the program benefits the six primary parties (the city, developers, the CBID, businesses, and the community) the risk is worth the reward. The third scenario consists of a private developer purchasing the land and having complete control over the future structure. In the last scenarios, the lot enters bidding wars which would bring more attention to the area and further emphasize how valuable land is. The primary concerns with the last two scenarios is the potential neglect of public interests. In order for this large site to liven the area, all six parties must benefit, and the site must serve to define, connect, impact, and revitalize Downtown Knoxville.

Program

The program I chose to fuel my design proposal lies within all of the research done leading up to the final programmatic decision. After studying the anatomy of a downtown, the manifestoes meant to call upon change, the importance of local revenue, and the benefits of supporting local culture, I concluded that a dense program and a wide range of benefits is key to revitalization (Figures 46-50). In order to choose the program more specifically, I divided the program into two main categories, activators and generators.

ACTIVATOR AND GENERATOR

The focus on spaces that activate movement and generate revenue are crucial to revitalization. Activators serve as spaces that draw in the community and create a sense of place. Generators serve as the primary revenue streams that will bring in money for the city, the CBID, the developer, and local businesses. Combining activators and generators will result in a structure that is lively and well balanced.

The two primary activators within my design proposal are the courtyard venue and flexible atrium space. The courtyard venue faces Market Street which is already primarily pedestrian due to its lack of width. The courtyard venue does not only create opportunities for larger community

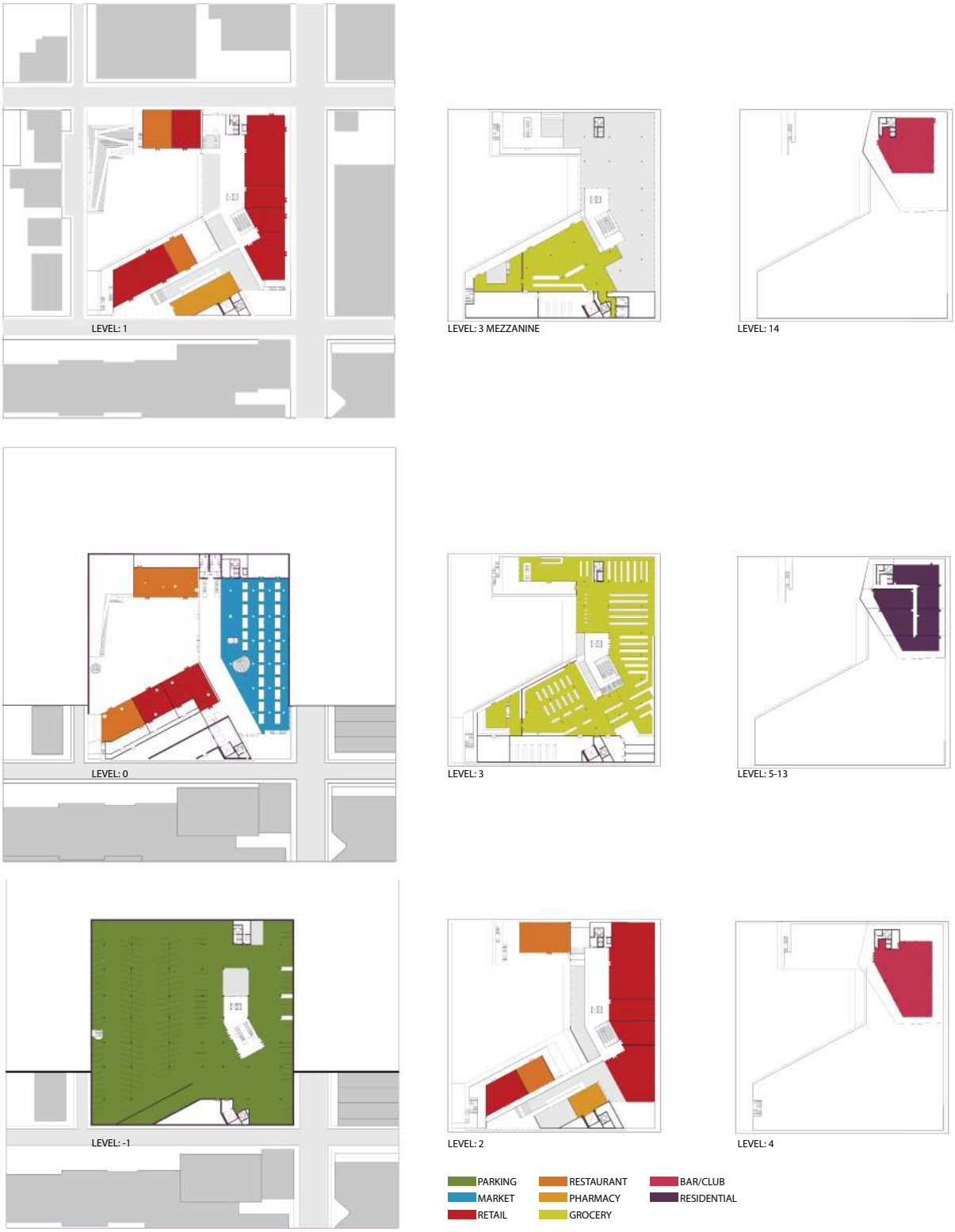

Figure 46: Floor Plans With Highlighted Programs
Source: Author

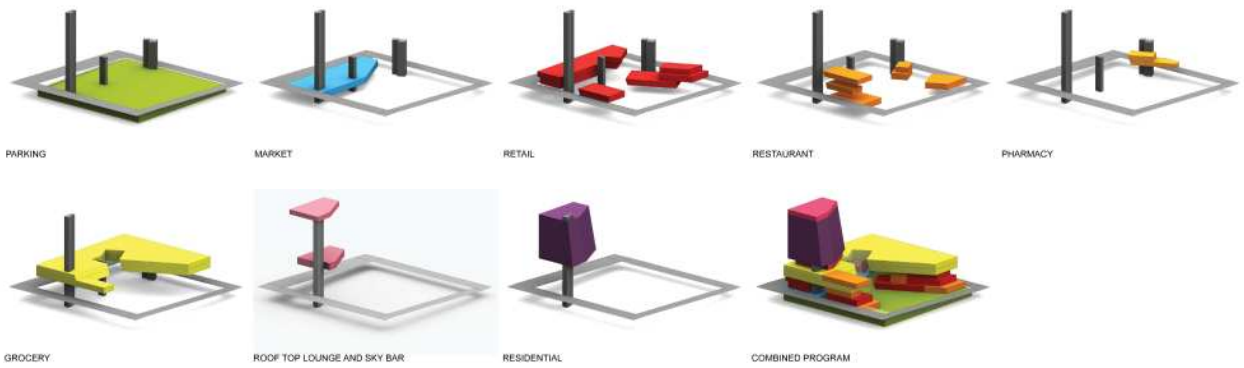

Figure 47: Program Diagrams
Source: Author

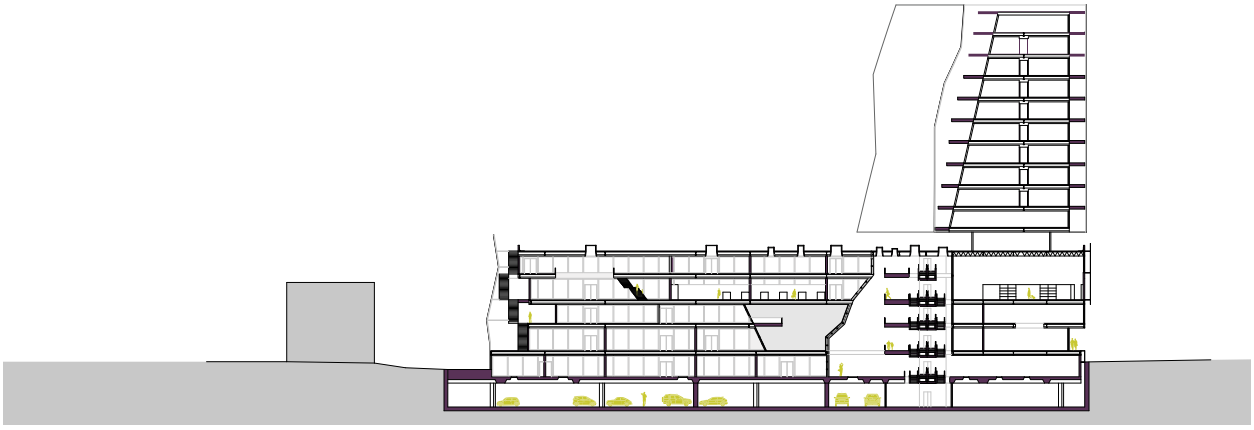

Figure 48: Building Section 1
Source: Author

Figure 49: Building Section 2
Source: Author

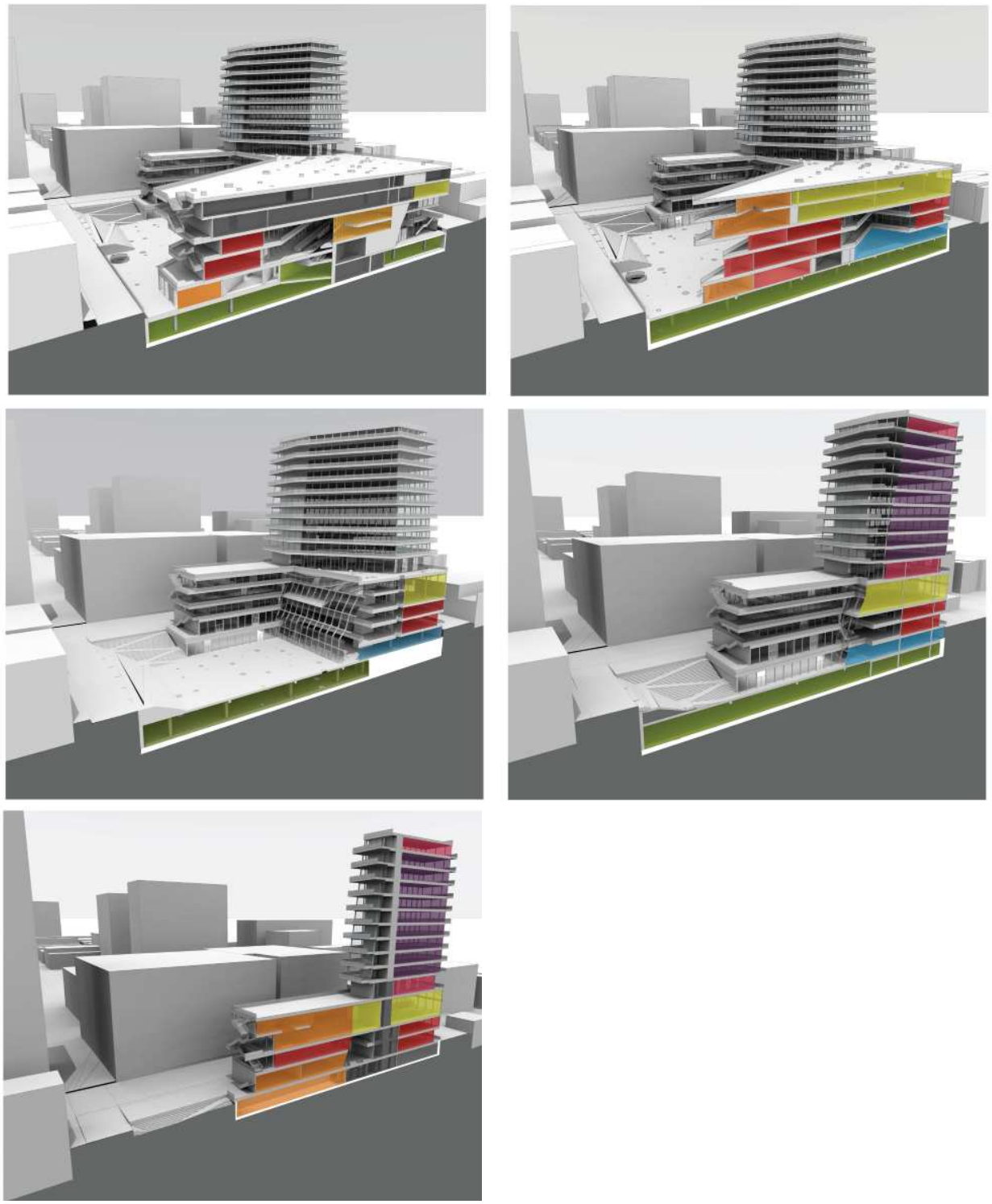

Figure 50: Program Section Diagrams
Source: Author

events but connects the string of plazas, parks, open spaces, and the surrounding buildings along Market Street together and connects my site to lively places such as Market Square and the waterfront (Figures 51-53). This connection promotes movement and pedestrian activity across a variety of building programs from the TVA building to offices, restaurants, boutiques, residences, churches, and civic buildings in a place where pedestrian movement usually halts at the sight of the block long surface parking lot. The courtyard is large and inviting, and allows for connections to occur on all building levels by allowing constant views into the courtyard from all other building programs, including the occupiable rooftop.

The second primary activator is the flexible atrium space that connects a large portion of the program within my proposal together. Additionally, the atrium serves as a flexible market space that can become event or lobby space any time of the year. The beauty of an indoor market is the ability to generate pedestrian traffic during the winter months when being outside is avoided while also serving as spill out space during the summer and connecting the interior with the courtyard venue space outside. The atrium is large and inviting and not only allows for adequate natural lighting but allows for views into other building programs at all times.

The two primary generators are a 60,000 square foot grocery store, including pharmacy and a 100,000 square feet of residential space. Both of these programs generate a steady stream of revenue. The grocery store is a desperately needed piece of program in Downtown Knoxville. Figure 54 shows the nearest grocery stores to the city center, none of which are in a 1 mile radius. The closest grocery store that focuses on organic food resides within a five mile radius. While this may not seem far, maneuvering in and out of city centers comes with its fair share of obstacles. Additionally, inconvenient grocery stores do not allow for downtown residents to make car free, quick trips to the grocery store or allow downtown workers to conveniently stop at a healthy food store before returning home after work.

The last crucial revenue generator are the residential units housed within the residential tower that sits above the grocery store. The implementation of more residential units benefits

Figure 51: Plan of Market Street Connections
Source: Author

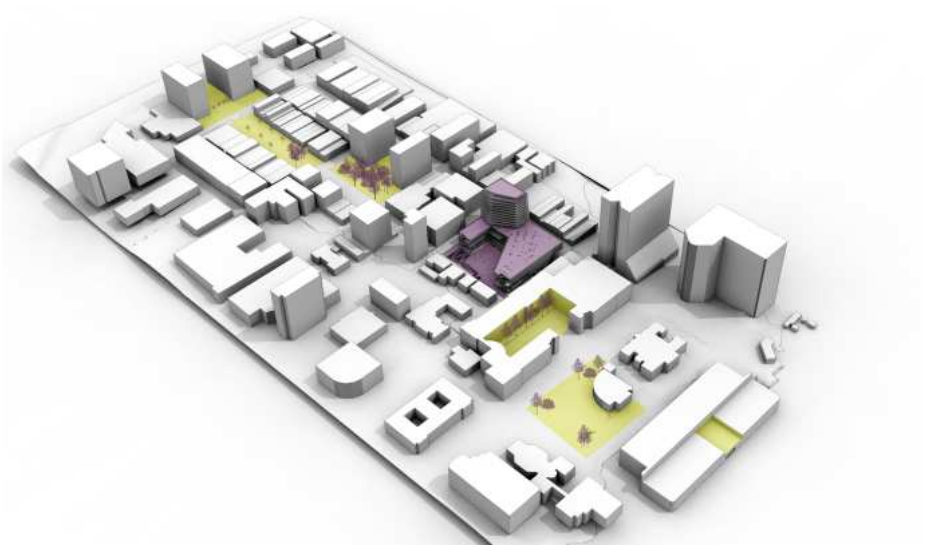

Figure 52: Aerial of Market Street Connections
Source: Author

Figure 53: Elevation of Market Street Connections
Source: Author

downtown revenue in a couple of ways. The first benefit is the revenue gained directly from property taxes. The second benefit is the introduction of more residents into a downtown that needs people living within it to help it grow. Figure 55 maps out the residential units in downtown Knoxville which only totals to 1,051 units. The state of residential units near my site is close to nonexistent.

The primary activators and generators in my design proposal are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they absolutely must work together in order for my design proposal to liven not only the block the site sits on but liven the entrance to South Gay Street and connect the open spaces along Market Street to create a more cohesive, energetic city center.

OTHER PROGRAM CHOICES

The primary activators and generators do not act alone in the revitalization of Downtown Knoxville. There are multiple pieces of program that fall in between the act of generating and activating, which include retail spaces, restaurants, bars and clubs, and below grade parking. The retail spaces are the front for South Gay street, and they encourage pedestrian visitation and street traffic as well as respect and maintain the South Gay Street culture of commercial storefronts. In order to push the effectiveness of the retail spaces and encourage pedestrian movement and interaction, I placed retail spaces that alternate and intertwine with restaurant spaces and connect into both the courtyard and atrium.

As for the restaurants, they face the courtyard and occur on every level in order to further encourage movement not only through the building but around and up. I want the community to feel like they are fully occupying and experiencing a building inside and out. Much like the restaurants, the rooftop club and sky bar are meant to create traffic above street level and on top of the building. They serve as places of entertainment as well as spots to overlook Downtown Knoxville and let the community feel like a part of the city.

The parking lot below grade caters primarily to grocery shoppers and residents but consists of general parking as well to atone for the spaces lost at street level. In order to make the

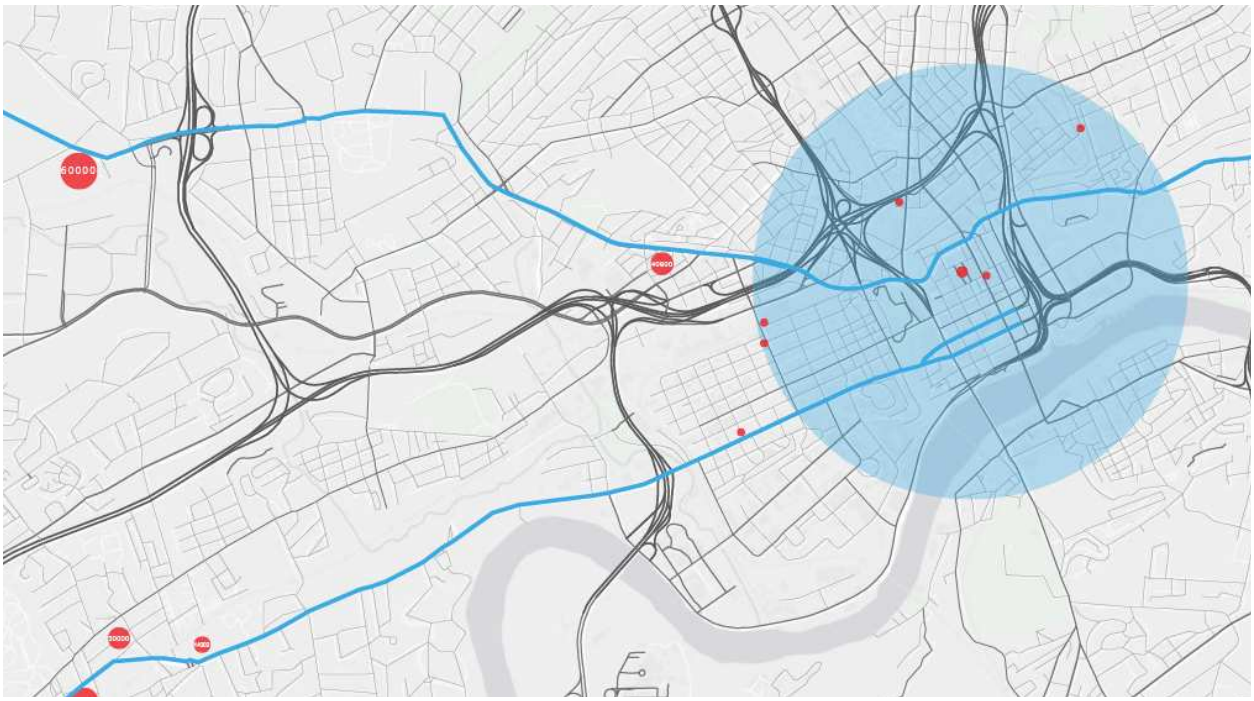

Figure 54: Grocery Stores and Markets Within 1 Mile
The blue circle represents a 1 mile radius, the size of red dot reflects the size of a proper grocery store and the small dots represent local markets.
Source: Author

Figure 55: Downtown Knoxville Residential Units
The darker the blue the more residences within a building. The lightest blue represents 1-5 dwelling units.
Source: Author

parking part of the overall experience, I connected the parking lot with the indoor market and courtyard above through light wells that light the garage during the day and light the atrium and courtyard at night.

The overall goal of the building program is to create a fusion not only of programs but people. The revitalization of Downtown Knoxville cannot happen without the community, and the more rich and diverse a community is, the more rich and diverse the businesses, cultures, and community gatherings become. My design proposal is to serve as a catalyst project that makes a bold statement about how dense new construction within downtown should be. The largeness of the site allowed for two opportunities beyond that of making a bold statement. The size of the site, which experiences a twelve foot drop from one corner of Gay Street to the other, gave me the opportunity to create unique entrances that drastically differ depending on which street the building is approached from. The largeness of the site also allowed for large, flexible open spaces, the activators.

REACTION TO SITE CONDITIONS

Beyond programs, the building form was directly derived from the surrounding conditions. The side that faces South Gay Street is purposefully conservative to respect the South Gay Street tradition of commercial street fronts (Figure 56). As you move down Cumberland Avenue or Church Street off of South Gay Street you experience a slight change in the building skin. The skin changes from sets of straight, perforated metal panels to sets of perforated and solid panels that begin to slightly undulate and draw the eye towards Market Street. As either one of those street corners are rounded, you are placed in front of sets of perforated panels that are juxtaposed from the ones facing South Gay Street. The skin facing the courtyard dramatically undulates and reflects the movement of the program within (Figure 57).

Figure 56: South Gay Street Facade
Source: Author

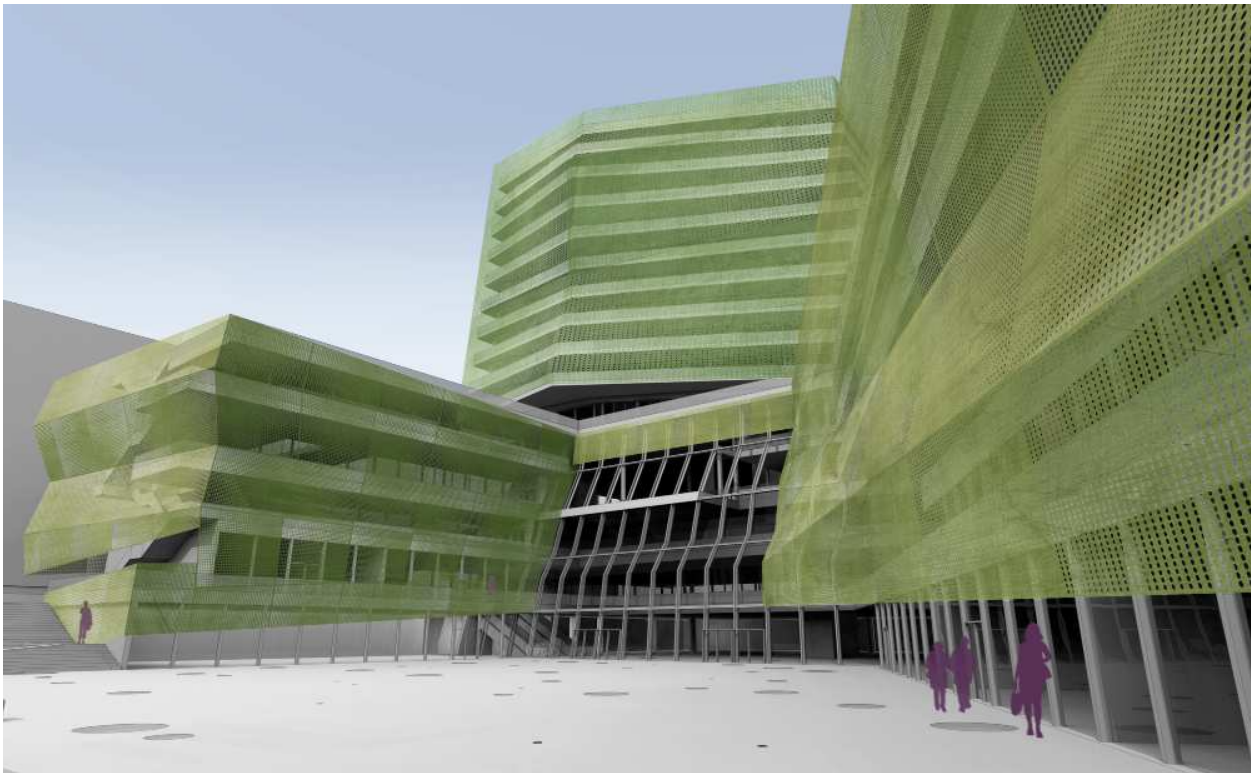

Figure 57: Courtyard Facade
Source: Author

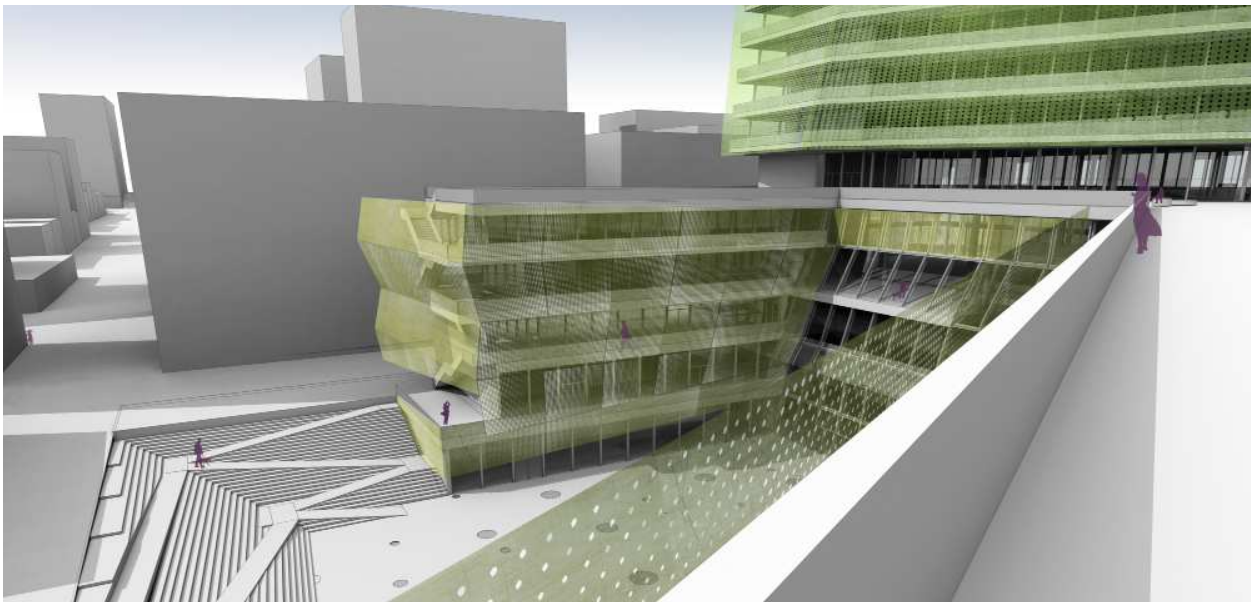

Figure 58: Rooftop View of Courtyard
Source: Author

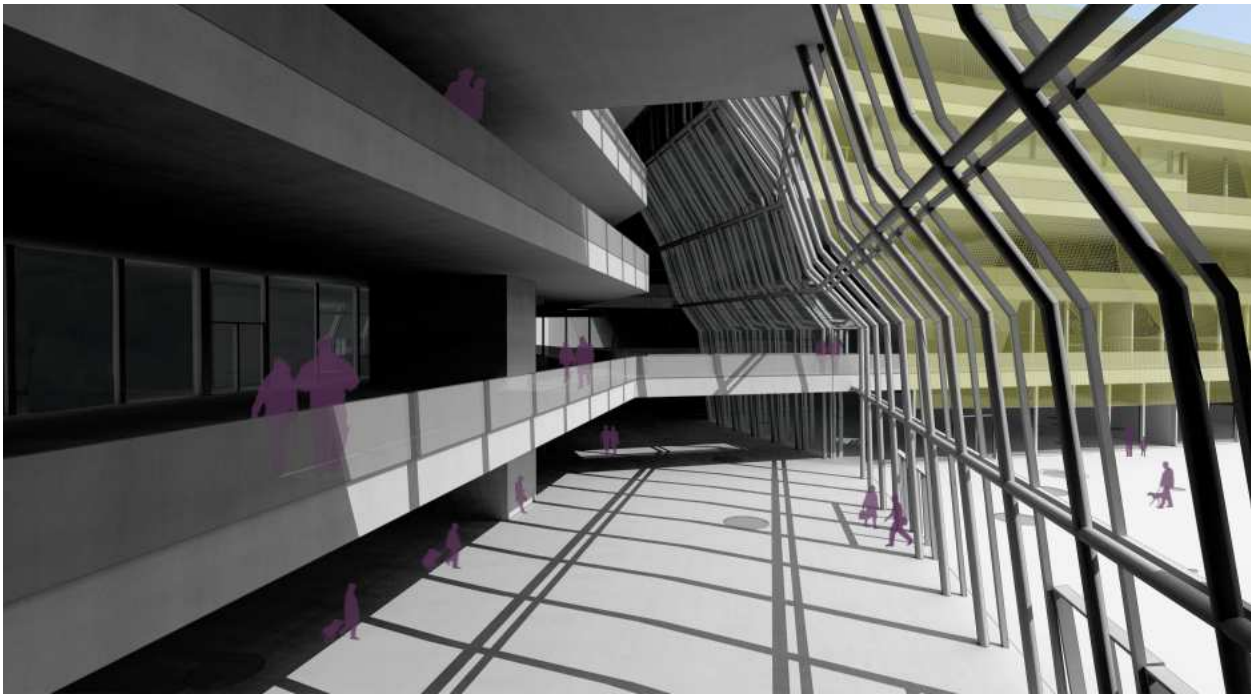

Figure 59: Atrium Space Connecting Indoor and Outdoor Spaces
Source: Author

CHAPTER V II
CONCLUSION

The history of the American Downtown, whether flourishing or struggling, directly relates to the economic status of the city a downtown resides in. The history of downtown evolution tells us that the vitality of a city center fluctuates as long as the economy suffers losses and inherits gains. Fortunately, many American city centers are in a period of revitalization but are still in need of an extra push and an extra incentive to continue development and revenue generating, culturally rich, change.

The discussion of Land Value Tax teaches us that the surface lots killing the vibrancy and local culture of downtowns do not have to remain underdeveloped eyesores because big picture options, such as re-engineering the tax structure, are plausible. The American downtown no longer has to be a victim of poor development choices and cheap, easy surface parking generated revenue that has no significant contribution to a local government.

On the topic of change, the Modern Manifestoes of the past strive for big change, often times on a city wide scale. These manifestoes have taught us the power of change and importance of all aspects of a city center (culture, functionality, identity, flexibility, and adaptability to name a few) even though many manifestoes failed to incorporate all of these aspects. The manifestoes covered previously were physically unnsuccessful but rich with ideas and commentary on the importance of density.

A downtown cannot thrive with a lack of cultural density, which includes buildings, programs, people, and businesses, among others. In order for a downtown to generate cultural and economic vitality, the current density of surface parking lots must be addressed and local government, business districts, developers, businesses, communities, and designers must work together and take action. The daily eyesores and tragic gaps in the urban fabric do not have to become part of local downtown culture.

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VITA

Aubrie Damron was born in Brownsville, TX on April 28th, 1989. She is the youngest of four children and has three older brothers. She attended high school at James Pace High School and participated on the Varsity tennis team, the Drafting Club, and NHS. After graduating high school she attended Texas A&M University where she majored in Environmental Design and minored in Art & Architectural History. In 2010, she studied abroad for a semester at the Santa Chiara Study Center in Castiglion Fiorentino, Italy. In 2011 she received her Bachelor's in Environmental Design from Texas A&M University. Later that year she enrolled in the Masters of Architecture program at the University of Tennessee. She accepted a graduate teaching assistantship in 2013 in Architectural History and Theory. She expects to receive her degree in July, 2013.