3-22-2013

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Carlsbad Downtown Revitalization

DPAC 2006
University of New Mexico
School of Architecture and Planning

Design assistance provided for New Mexico Mainstreet
It was a great opportunity for the students and faculty of the Design Planning and Assistance Center (DPAC) of the University of New Mexico School of Architecture and Planning to work with the Carlsbad community. We enjoyed hearing your stories and gaining inspiration from your visions for the downtown.

Our revitalization efforts for the downtown reflect your desires to connect the river to the downtown, make a pedestrian friendly commercial district and capitalize on the cultural assets of Carlsbad all in hopes of reinvigorating street life in downtown Carlsbad.

Five teams of graduate students from the Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Planning programs at the University of New Mexico created these designs: Dan Mallach, William Powell, Miles Cook, Dominic Duran, Patricia Grumet, Oogie Bae, James Simermeyer, Cynthia Patulski, Peter Wong, Andrew Werth, Carrie Barkhurst, Scott Cassel, Carolina Mead, Lisa Burkstaller, Susan-nah Abbey, Ian Daitz, Kristi Merdler Walcot, Ramiro De Alba, Naoko Fuji.

The faculty for the DPAC studio during this Spring semester of 2006 were Anne Godfrey and Jose Zelaya. Mark Childs is the DPAC Director. David Henkel assisted in planning strategies. We would also like to thank members of the Carlsbad community and the Mainstreet organization for their help throughout this process, especially Melissa Suggs.
The community of Carlsbad possesses many notable features and amenities in its downtown district including: the Eddy County Courthouse, the Carlsbad Museum and Library, the commercial district around the courthouse, the Pecos River, numerous historic buildings, and the Cavern Theater. These features create a strong foundation upon which to further build a vibrant and inviting downtown district.

We propose to create a vibrant, diverse, and walkable downtown district through the redesign of Greene and Canal streets. Our proposed redesign of the downtown portion of these arterial streets will improve safety and security, promote opportunities for economic development and revitalization, and enhance the sense of connection with the larger city for residents and visitors. Specific strategies will address new infill opportunities while accentuating Carlsbad’s existing landmarks, unique history and environment.
As an initial step to attract visitors to the downtown area and to create a cohesive character to the district for residents, we would create a series of public art pieces, called 'Gateway Public Art Opportunities,' at strategic points along the thoroughfares that feed into the downtown area. These pieces will initially engage the curiosity of visitors and the motifs will be repeated in the district gateways to signal a point of arrival for travelers and create a cohesive language for the downtown area.
Canal / Greene Street Redesign

Street Sections

Canal, Living Desert

Canal, Oasis

Toolkit of Rusted Steel Street Furniture

Sample Sidewalk Plan
In addition to the gateway landscaping and streetscaping features along Canal and Greene Streets will signal the transition to the downtown area. Streetscaping features such as bump outs, timed traffic signals, increased pedestrian zones, narrowed traffic lanes to calm traffic, and parking and landscape plantings that act as sidewalk buffers will provide greater safety and walkability for pedestrians across these major streets.

Landscaping will be arranged into two themed zones: living desert and oasis. The Living Desert landscaping zone corresponds to the plants and environment of the Chihuahuan Desert, while the Oasis zone references the verdant, tree-lined streets of historic Carlsbad. Trees will provide shade and comfort while diverse plantings will create visual interest. Choice of plant varieties suited to dry conditions and efficient water systems will be important considerations to create successful plantings and landscaping.

Street furnishings, light posts, and decorative planters provide both a places of repose and continue a unifying design language within the district. By liberally distributing street furniture through the oasis zone, a sense of place is created.

The infill solutions for the intersection of Canal and Greene Streets seek to establish a gateway to signal an arrival into the downtown district of Carlsbad and to draw attention to the urban opportunities that exist within the neighboring streets and the nearby Pecos River. The proposed Chamber of Commerce building expansion on the southeast corner and the NMSU Extension Campus on the northeast corner. We believe that such design solutions will enhance the social and economic environment of the Carlsbad Downtown District.
Introduction:

In our consideration of Carlsbad, we immediately considered the Museum/Library complex, with its records of the history, arts and culture of Carlsbad to be the soul of the city. The commercial area, including Canyon Street and the riverfront, we considered to be the heart of the city. What needed to be accomplished was a physical and conceptual connection of the soul of the city to the heart of the city.

Our analysis of the area revealed Fox Street to be an ideal focus of this connection. Its location is near the main access of Greene street, yet separated enough to allow a relaxed walking environment. Although Fox Street is currently underutilized, we envisioned a lively corridor of activity extending from the Museum to the Train Depot.

These anchors would be connected by a “Green Necklace:” a series of green spaces inspired by historic photographs, and ranging from the large parks of Halagueno park and the Train Depot space, to a smaller sculpture park, to even smaller green spaces of pocket parks and green entryways to stores. On an even smaller scale, street trees and planters continue the strands of the necklace. Interspersed among these green spaces, public art would contribute to this shopping and strolling area becoming an arts district.

Each business contributes to the network of the city. Stores we would expect to prosper here would include:

- Art supply/scrapbook/Beads
- Art Gallery
- Bath/body/Toiletries
- Bookstore
- Bread/Bakery/Dessert/cafe e.g. www.bakerstreetbread
- Candles/Card shop
- Candy/chocolate
- CD/music/video store/Clothing/shoes e.g. Urban Outfitters
- Cooking supply e.g Sur La Table (www.surlatable.com)
- Florist
- Furniture e.g. Zgallerie (www.zgallerie.com)
- Gaming/Arcade
- Specialty Grocery e.g. Trader Joe’s, cheese, wine
- Hair salon
- Housewares, Linens e.g. Crate and Barrel
- Ice cream (e.g. http://www.coldstonecreamery.com)
- Jewelry
- Poster shop/Framing
- Spa (www.tenthousandwaves.com)
- Sunglass/Watch (www.sunglasshut.com)
- Theatre (dance/plays) or Independant Movie Theatre
1a. Halagueno Park

Halagueno Park is a lovely public amenity. Although the existing cottonwood trees are in decline, the park is a multiuse public open space which is an asset to the community. This can be capitalized upon.

At Fox Street, the Arts District begins at the museum. Markers for this are abstract sculpture referencing a mine shaft and elevator car. Their height creates a gateway into the Arts District. Halagueno Park has retained its use as a multipurpose space.

The declining trees which have enclosed the park have been replaced, but now allees of trees create a comforting leafy canopy and direct the pedestrian to the entries of the Library and Museum. A new pathway has been added, guiding the pedestrian from Fox Street to the Museum Cafe and Performance Space. Water conserving plantings along the path add interest and color. A dedicated picnic area has been created.

An amphitheatre on the grounds of Halagueno park is a multifunctional space for outdoor performances or gatherings. A rock wall forms the back of the stage, and is low enough to see over, as well as being a place for extending a performance, or when a performance is not occurring, a space for sitting, having lunch or otherwise relaxing. Other areas in the park allow for play or picnic. At the southeast corner of the park is, just off the sidewalk is an area for a large sculpture to be displayed. This would announce the function of the museum as well as create a focal point for the pedestrian.
The entry to the Museum is similar, but not identical. A rock façade is created which redirects the focus of the entry to a path that crosses Fox street to the Museum Annex and Sculpture Garden. Wood beams cantilevered out from the façade create inviting shade, referencing the structural beams of a mine, and pointing the way across the street.

The path south from the Museum entry is broad, allowing this street to be closed off and utilized for events such as art sales. Bringing the street to the level of the sidewalk in this area and placing trees in the center of the street, delineates this space and slows traffic. This walk would also be an allee of trees that directs the pedestrian to the sculpture garden, currently a vacant lot. As the historical artifacts currently exceeds the museum’s ability to display them, the vacant building to the south of the Museum would become the Museum Annex.

1c. Museum Annex

This building would be remodeled to provide space for the Museum to expand for exhibit space, office space, and/or additional storage space. Additionally, this building would help to create a visual and perceived terminus to the western end of Fox St. through the use of architectural features that match the Museum’s existing architecture.

1d. Museum/Library Cafe and Used Book Store

We are proposing the addition of a new used bookstore, coffee shop, and gift shop to the eastern side of the museum. This addition would be overseen by the Friends of the Library & Museum organization(s). The new addition would generate funds that would be reinvested back into the library and museum. For the community, this new facility would provide a place where library patrons and the public could obtain a cup of coffee, buy a book, surf the internet, and purchase gifts. The glass façade retracts to open up the space and make it into additional outdoor/indoor seating during amphitheater performances in addition to non-performance times. The roof of the addition would provide a place for concealed lighting to highlight the new mural. Additionally, this addition would serve to

1. Increase exposure to the museum’s gift shop.
2. Provide additional seating space for the adjacent amphitheater.
3. Enhance the Library and Museum’s original Spanish style architecture.
2a. Motion Park

Motion Park acts as a clear conduit to and from the parking lot to the south, and building on this fundamental purpose, celebrates the automobile in its design. Convenient parking is essential to a vibrant downtown, and this space makes an attractive transition to a large amount of off-street parking, thereby increasing its use.

The Y-shaped path is ideally suited to allow for movement to and from eastern and western segments of Fox Street. It is a clear design, simple to navigate, and presents the easiest approach to local businesses at a minimum walking distance. It connects on a perpendicular to a path running along the entire south side of the space and adjacent office building to the east, making access to and from any part of the parking lot uncomplicated and safe.

The trees surrounding Motion Park, possibly flowering fruit trees, provide for visibility in all directions while creating the feeling of a partially enclosed outdoor room.

This architectural approach to space-making recognizes the role this spot plays as a part of, not separate from, Carlsbad’s downtown urban fabric. Such an environment is great for a pleasant lunch break, and afternoon of play, or a few minutes rest while exploring the City.

The automobile-inspired play structures on either side of the path are fun, sturdy, low cost and safe. They also provide elements of sculptural whimsy in the landscape. Plenty of seating and a drinking fountain make this a place parents and children of all ages can enjoy.

The centerpiece of this space, between the ‘arms’ of the Y-shaped path, is a colorful concrete map of New Mexico and adjacent part of Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma and Mexico. Carlsbad, indicated by a bright red star, is rightly perceived as an important geographic and cultural crossroads. This map’s durable material welcomes interaction while allowing a third, straight direction by which to walk to and from the parking lot. It embodies the themes of Motion Park: fun, travel and ease of movement.

2b. Micropark at Federal Building

This tiny green space provides visual relief from the pavement as well as a resting area. Tucked into the corner of the Federal Building, the park continues the theme of sculpture along Fox Street, as well as a shade structure derived from the structural beams of a mine. This Micropark may also be a prototype for other microparks in Carlsbad’s downtown area.
3. Retail Park

The proposed commercial amenities park is located on the east side of Jersey’s Grill, now vacant. It features an open patio for the restaurant as additional outdoor seating for dinner. The park provides an inviting green patio for the new bakery/deli that services the downtown community. The additional space is for the Carlsbad/Fox St. informational center, or new retail. The parking has been relocated to the perimeter of the buildings and is emphasized by built-in shading structures built off of the building. The bakery features outdoor seating in the form of tables with umbrellas for shade. Bicycling is encouraged through the installation of bike racks that take on the form of sculptural bikes.
4a. Serenity Park

The purpose of the proposed serenity park, located on the open grassy area adjacent to the Wells Fargo Bank drive-through, is to provide a shaded and relaxing oasis. Pedestrians strolling along Fox Street can rest on one of the benches near the fountain and canal after patronizing the shops along Fox St. and on their way down towards the river area. A low stone wall can serve as a seating wall, provide privacy from the street and because of the material act as a deterrent to skateboarders. Along with providing amenities such as trees for shade, benches for resting and sculptures for interaction (e.g. a life sized bull that children can climb), Serenity Park will have two distinct amenities; a fountain with a canal leading to a small drainage pool and several chess/checker tables. The fountain, canal and drainage pool will reflect the tradition and culture surrounding the Carlsbad Irrigation District. The water will also emphasize the oasis theme by providing a cooling effect for park patrons. Tables with chess/checker boards permanently inlaid into the surface will provide communal interaction. Individual chess/checker games can be held at the tables or community tournaments can be organized. The tables also function as places to rest or eat for patrons and employees on their break. However the park is used, for resting, communal interaction, play, lunch break or reflection, it will have a relaxing effect on the patrons.

4b. Infill (110 Fox St.)

We are proposing an infill building for the open area located approximately at 110 Fox St. between Que Suave Salon and Burnett Chiropractic. This pocket park is not an open space with a particular theme, but rather an infill building with a very special open space in front of it. The building will fill the void left by the current open space area. The design best lends itself to an eating establishment such as an ice cream parlor or a coffee and pastry shop, with an open patio dining area. A low 3’ fence will provide patrons with privacy from the street, but remain open enough that passersby will be invited to enter down the pathway to the business. Since the building will have a 25-yard set back from the street the sidewalls of the neighboring businesses provide the perfect canvas for an artistic mural sign. The murals can be abstract and related to the community or they can incorporate the current businesses. For example if the business was an ice cream parlor, an ice cream themed mural might be portrayed. While the design best lends itself for an eating establishment it will be possible to place any type of business in the building. If the building was used as office or non-eating retail space the patio can become an open seating area for the public, a place to display seasonal artwork or an area rented to small mobile food vendors. Through infill the area can bring economic as well as communal and social benefits.
The Rail Depot and the surrounding area offers Carlsbad a unique opportunity to develop a multi-use area that can link downtown with the river.

Currently there are a few commercial businesses aside from the Depot. In addition there is quite a bit of open space in this area.

The site lends itself to designs that consider adaptive reuse, economic growth, historical preservation and interaction with the natural environment.
Our area of study covers two blocks, from Green St., north, to Mermod and is bounded by Main and the railroad itself.

This area is large with plenty of open space and a number of existing buildings - some of which are occupied.

After our initial visit and further research we concluded that this site was very important due to its prime location - near both downtown and the river. We tailored our designs to focus on community and connection.

Our vision is to offer designs that enhance this area and result in the development of a focal point within the City. The site is a perfect spot to bridge the River with the downtown but also connect people - both visitors and permanent residents.
The unique location of the Rail depot and surrounding lot provide an opportunity for a lively commercial center. A place to shop, dine and stroll all in one central location.

The new buildings offer a flexible layout and plenty of windows to maintain a comfortable level of interaction. The design also considers the existing architecture already present in the area and offers a modular complementary style.

The proximity to the River and Downtown make this location an ideal place to enjoy all of the assets Carlsbad has to offer all within walking distance.

Precedence: Metal, Glass and Concrete
Proposed Main Street Pedestrian Entry

Existing - looking towards railroad tracks

Birdseye View of Depot Plaza on Main... Market Day proposed

Fireworks on Depot Plaza... Fourth of July

STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
What is carlsbad about? It is about the unexpected places. It is the river and the town that borders this amazing resource.

It is about the business people who have made this town what it is for so many years.

It is about the history that is told in the faces of the buildings.

It is about the railroad.

Most of all it is about the people. The people that live here. The people who visit here.

The River Depot Plazas provide a place for many different events: a farmer’s market, a Flea Market, or a Car show. Fireworks, a Xeric Demonstration Garden, an Art Show, Murals on Walls. This is the true gate of the city, a place for things to happen.
Rail Depot

The Rail Depot is a critical space intended to connect downtown Carlsbad to the riverscape. The Rail Depot itself is a terminus from Fox Street that should incorporate a multiuse space encouraging economical, cultural and social life of Carlsbad. Primarily, resurrecting passage via railway the Depot can once again serve as a transportation portal for passengers incorporating elements of historical significance of Carlsbad’s rail yard history. Secondly, a restaurant/dining space encouraging visitors to wine and dine outside utilizing the views of the riverscape is a reasonable solution to keep the Rail Depot space functional in the evening as well. Finally, a clock tower was added to visually bring visitors into the space.

Considering the intended goal, it is important that the architecture accomplish a unification of the spaces in the Rail Depot Plaza, utilization of forms surrounding the depot will accomplish this. The current architectural style existent in Carlsbad provides a form that should be adopted by the Rail Depot in order to unify it with other buildings like the Courthouse, Federal Building, and Library.
GOAL: TO USE INFILL AND INTERIOR SPACE IMPROVEMENTS WITHIN IMPORTANT BLOCKS TO BALANCE THE DENSITY AND QUALITY OF DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT, IN ORDER TO CREATE A BETTER UNIFIED AND MORE DISTINGUISHED TOWN CENTER.

Benefits of Infill

- **BY INCREASING THE DENSITY OF THE TOWN CENTER,** EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE IS BETTER UTILIZED AND THE NEED FOR EXPENSIVE NEW INFRASTRUCTURE IS DECREASED.

- **INFILL CAN MEET DIVERSE COMMUNITY NEEDS AND CAN HELP STRENGTHEN TOWN IDENTITY AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE.**

- **BY BRIDGING GAPS IN THE STREET FACADE INFILL CAN IMPROVE THE CONTINUITY OF THE STREETSCAPE AND ENRICH INTERIOR SPACES.**
Foot traffic from the museum will have the option of finding their way through the interior of this block. The rhythmic Italian cypresses growing on the south facing building wall, capture the line of sight and draw the visitor to an open space between the buildings that narrows to a tight corridor. The south facing wall may have a mural between the plantings, a historical narrative of Carlsbad. The planters are at sitting height and provide shaded spaces for workers or students on lunch break. A tile mural with a water motif signals passage down the corridor to the alley. The effect is enhanced by pavers, which compress in the corridor and expand into the alley. Tiered planters present a vertical wall surface to the alley and on the side of the schoolyard form pocketed sitting spaces beneath the shade of fruiting pomegranate trees.

The pedestrian is drawn to a small but sonorous fountain at the interior of the block by the signaling of vegetation and hardscape. The continuous language of rhythmic cypresses draws the pedestrian towards the enriched interior of the block which includes a proposed three storey building that adopts the architectural language of Carlsbad and offers commercial opportunities at ground level with residential above. Pedestrians are lead past this building, across Canal and down to Fox.
The challenge of fastening attention of motorists to the charms of Carlsbad is addressed with signage, ushering them into a parking plaza in the lot at the corner of Fox and Canal. This provides a connection to the businesses along Fox Street and to the river. It completes pedestrian passage from the museum plaza toward the river. A shade structure with prickly pear growing from the roof addresses the street. It offers shady sitting space, and a water motif on the parapet indicates direction of the river and its flow.

Walking through the open structure leads to a small recirculating fountain that jets up and tumbles back onto rounded stones. A seating pedestal amidst a paved forecourt that is bisected by a path leading east surrounds it. Each half of the forecourt is diagonally jointed, colored concrete. The path leads up an incline though an alley of Vitex trees that will grow to complete an arch over the path. Planters at sitting height contain the trees and creeping germander enlivens the planter wells with winter and summer color.

The path mounts the grade where it is quartered by a north/south branch that leads directly to Fox Street and to public restrooms. Continuing east, we come to an apex and descent through pew like benches, which attend a small amphitheater. This is to be a multipurpose event space. It could be used as an outdoor church, a place for public speeches, theater, music, or informal gatherings.

The parking on either side of the proposed tree lined walk is screened from view by the rhythmic tufts of alkali sacaton that grows in front of each parking space.
This block features residential and commercial infill, with orchard parking to alleviate the asphalt heat. Preservation of the CID building with use of the bottom floor as an information center and the top as loft; is suggested. Renovation of the old motel will allow for a greater connection between the museum block and downtown by providing retail spaces on the bottom floor that explore the “arts corridor” niche and artist lofts on top. The motel courtyard features a shade structure with wisteria vines a small lawn that provides a view to a contained rock garden near the wall of the present bar building and a small grove of trees that addresses the street to create enclosure. A new building is proposed adjacent to the orchard parking to the south side that continues the language of commercial on the bottom residential on the top. The idea is simply to provide living and work space that draws possible new residents to downtown and retains some of the younger members of the community who would otherwise leave for lack of opportunity.