Charm Bracelet Studios
Urban Lab 2006
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The Urban Lab studio collaborated with North Side neighborhoods and the Pittsburgh Children’s Museum in correlation with their international ideas competition, entitled “the Charm Bracelet Project,” which sought to create linkages among varied cultural, institutional and entertainment destinations or “charms.” In October of last year, Urban Lab students shared their site analysis and research with the selected professional design teams. Ten student teams within the Urban Lab also participated in the design project. While not site specific, the studio was program specific, investigating urban design strategies that included linkages through family oriented housing, cultural, and institutional projects.

The semester-long studio schedule was structured in three phases: analysis, urban planning frameworks and urban design projects, with each phase culminating in community meetings involving presentations and feedback sessions. The meetings
offered the students the opportunity to engage with community stakeholders and residents of the North Side, to assess community needs and to discuss student proposals. Community leadership skills and social and ethical responsibility are developed as meetings are advertised, planned and facilitated by the students. In this way the students served as liaisons between the professional design teams and the community, discussing the broader goals and public benefit of urban design.

During the course of the studio, students had the opportunity to interact with the following design firms and organizations: Suisman Urban Design, Santa Monica, CA; Colab Architecture, Ithaca, NY; muf architecture, London; Pittsburgh Department of City Planning; Urban Redevelopment Authority; East Liberty Development Inc.; Community Design Center of Pittsburgh; Urban Design Associates; and the Northside Leadership Conference.
The Lanterns revitalization project proposes to make connections both within and around the Northside area: uniting communities within the neighborhood, as well as reconnecting the Northside to the Cultural District of Downtown Pittsburgh.
Lanterns: Integrate, Infuse, Invite

Kimberly Eng, Samuel Espada, Randahl Matsuno
**Threading Light into Life**

Serving as the foundation for the Lanterns project, light inherently possesses many strong, universal psychological characteristics. It lends itself to emotions of hope, warmth, and welcoming. It can also be linked to the idea of a hearth: a place of community or congregation. Lanterns are perceived as beacons or way-finding devices, simultaneously evoking a feeling of safety and as guides to destinations.

Light, when creatively planned, can be experienced and appreciated as an artistic medium to build relationships between different scales of people from the individual to citywide, as well as link newly built forms to the surrounding historical context. It has successfully played a role as a renewal tool for precedents such as the Pittsburgh’s Children’s Museum and the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust’s “City of Lights” Project, both utilizing the idea of a large scale light installation to connect different neighborhoods within the city.
Knitting Communities
The Lanterns revitalization project proposes to make connections both within and around the Northside area: uniting communities within the neighborhood, as well as reconnecting the Northside to the Cultural District of Downtown Pittsburgh. Studying the successes of precedents, this project unites different aspects of previous renewal projects, centralizing the concept of light as material in renovations, restoration, and the introduction of small scale newly built forms. Utilizing existing institutions, “charms”, and the need for housing as programmatic influences, the lanterns will visually, spiritually, and programmatically reconnect once separated communities.

The East Ohio Vision
As a test case and area of concentration, the proposal examines the
intersection of East Ohio Street and Cedar Avenue, this proposal located existing vacancies and undesirable businesses, took note of unsafe places, and observed surrounding institutions and influences to create a list of programmatic infusions and their potential venues. Local institutions such as Allegheny General Hospital, Bernie’s Photography Store, the Photography Museum, the Carnegie Library, the Hazlett Theater, and the Children’s Museum, all influenced programmatic schemes including an educational performing arts hub, a photography learning center, bookstores, internet cafes, restaurants, and increased affordable housing located above commercial venues. The continuation of vendors within and along the border of the park will connect East Allegheny Commons to surrounding institutions and the commercial strip of East Ohio.
By claiming a sliver of the park’s northern edge, the potential for a formal boulevard is posited, and then formalized through a careful study of paving patterns, street furniture and tree types.
This proposal focuses on restructuring North Avenue, which serves as a main east-west connection between disparate North Side neighborhoods. By claiming a sliver of the park’s northern edge, the potential for a formal boulevard is posited, and then formalized through a careful study of paving patterns, street furniture and tree types.

Many of North Avenue’s vacant buildings are built of quality materials and evoke days of North Side pride. The re-use of these buildings will serve to renew the vitality of this corridor. In addition, proposed “green” buildings on the south side of a new North Avenue boulevard will create a dialogue with the restored buildings on the northern side. This strategy places active functions on both sides of the park, allowing for passive observation and surveillance of the park, and ultimately increasing property value.

The final phase of this project proposes the reconnection of Federal Street and Allegheny Center with vehicular access. This small gesture would create a big movement. When reconnected into the city fabric, with an abundance of public amenities and spaces, residents will have access to a true center of their neighborhood once again.
This strategy places active functions on both sides of the park, allowing for passive observation and surveillance, ultimately increasing property value.
Rather than repeating the mistakes of the past and pointedly ignoring the site's cumulative history, this project looks at both the existing physical structure of Allegheny Center and the old street infrastructure for direction.

Cracking Open the Center
Jack Bader, Burak Kilic, Read Langworthy
The construction of Allegheny Center, the ring road around it, and the closing of Federal and Ohio streets left a gaping hole in the urban fabric of the Northside. That intervention, which had no regard for the history of the place or its existing infrastructure, created a dead zone at what should have been the hub of the surrounding neighborhoods. While these districts, including East Ohio Street, Federal Street near PNC Park, West Park, Western Avenue, and North Avenue, are all successful and distinctive, they suffer by being disconnected from one another. At the same time, Allegheny Center is a dead space, devoid of the activity defining a vibrant city.

This project aims to create a new, active center for the Northside in Allegheny Center, one that can connect the positive aspects of those districts that surround it. Rather than repeating the mistakes of the past and wiping the site clean and starting over, by pointedly ignoring the site’s cumulative history, this project looks at both the existing physical structure of Allegheny Center and the old street infrastructure of Allegheny City for direction.

The project reconnects Federal and Ohio streets, recreating the old center of Allegheny City at their intersection, and extending the mall of Allegheny Center all the way through the building,
Figure 14
creating a pedestrian through-way that splits the building from east to west. On a larger scale, the project reintroduces several streets to forge connections to nearby districts, proposes new retail along Federal and East Ohio Street, and suggests new public transportation connections in the area. In everything, it aims to create busy and active spaces, which will be occupied during all times of day, in and around Allegheny Center.

The Allegheny Mall is replaced with a movie theater, organized along a new pedestrian walkway that continues through the entire building. This would not be a traditional movie theater that restricts its circulation to ticket holders only, but rather one with separate, smaller control points, so that the corridor gains some qualities of street life.

The 'Urban Park' is envisioned to be the new gathering place, following the cracking of Allegheny Center and the blending of a variety of building programs, that combine institutional, commercial and residential. Situated between the Children's Museum and the Allegheny Center, taking the new Carnegie Library to its center, the Park will serve different users for various activities that range from class discussions to public screenings of games and movies.

One Allegheny Square Building, with its towering height, provides the opportunity for great views, overlooking Downtown, Mount Washington, Hill District and North Hills. In order to accentuate the effect, the building is stripped to its structural elements, enabling its users to experience the views from various points as they wind their way to the top.

At its pinnacle, the building is home to a new branch of Carnegie Library. It is imagined that the library's move into this new icon will spark energy and activity not only in the park but in the greater North Side area as well.