

A VIEW OF THE GREEN LINE:
A RENEWAL PLAN FOR VISUAL EXPERIENCE IN CHICAGO'S SOUTH SIDE
STATIONS

BY
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THESIS

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Abstract

Elevated rapid railroads have special visual qualities. Riders can see how the city is organized, the shape of the city's skyline, city land use, and most important, how the city relates to itself. This thesis uses a phenomenological approach to visual theory that expands upon the seminal work of Appleyard, Lynch et al (1962), Halprin (1966), Venturi, Brown et al (1972) and Dorfles (1962). Chicago's metropolitan area is divided and the south and the north sides have striking differences. The city land that parallels the elevated rapid transit railroad, in particular the urban vacant land, may serve as a visual assets both to riders and neighborhoods. This speculative design project proposes sequential forms that not only shape the elevated rapid transit railroad visual experience and deepen the rider's grasp of the meaning of the South Side of Chicago, but may also retell the story of this racialized landscape. The thesis presents an analysis of visual and demographic data and projects a series of alternative speculative insertions in the urban landscape. The results have potential significance for urban design, landscape architecture, and art. By developing the experience of moving from a point of view from the elevated railroad, this thesis analyzes the value of landscape experience and suggests a new approach to urban landscape.

KEYWORDS experience of movement, the South Side of Chicago, neighborhood identity, elevated railroad, vacancy, landscape narrative

Acknowledgements

When I first told people I was going to have a look at the South Side of Chicago, all of them strongly, seriously, and nervously asked me to take the Green Line only during day time and sit in the first car of the train for my safety. They also suggested me staying on the train. However, not only did I take the Green Line several times and leave the train to have a closer look at the place, I found that this area is not like what other people told me. With my deeper study of the cultural background of the South Side of Chicago, I found much potential there. There is no need for me to add too much outside intervention in this place and I decided to use the current potentials to retell the story of the South Side of Chicago. The purpose of the thesis is to tell a new story about the South Side of Chicago through a renewal of visual experience. The realization of the untapped visual potential along the Green Line lies in the hands of the people who are trying to revitalize the South Side of Chicago. This thesis is addressed to them. This thesis not only highlights the aesthetic development of the Green Line landscape, but suggests how to make the best use of current vacant land, in an effort to help local people utilize their current land resources. Thank you for the suggestions and help from my committee and I really appreciate Mr. Chen, who went to the South Side of Chicago with me. This thesis taught me how to start and manage research and also how to deal with a feedback from others. Different people have different perspectives about the Green Line and the South Side of Chicago, so it is reasonable to have both agreement and disagreement toward the final result.

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Research Overview

Chicago's "elevated" railway (sometimes written as "L" or "el") is a very convenient form of transportation that conveys around two hundred million commuters every year (CTA n.d). Today the south part of the Green Line starts from the Loop (Downtown Chicago) and continues along the alley between Wabash Avenue and State Street. The Green Line has two southern terminals, one at 63rd street and Ashland and the other one at 63rd street at Cottage Grove. This thesis mainly focuses on the Green Line from Indiana Station to Garfield Station.

Not all of the riders enjoy the same riding experience during their journey on the Green Line. In downtown, the train runs on an elevated rail line between high buildings. The rider's viewshed is limited by the dense city. However, when the train leaves the downtown and goes south, the view outside the window become less dramatic, giving an effect of bare and open shoulders.

What riders see as they approach the South Side of Chicago reflects the current situation in that area and indexes its problems. However, reconstructing the visual experience of the elevated railroad over the South Side of Chicago could change the narrative, allows most auspicious events to happen in that area and thus contribute to the gradual revitalization of the South Side of Chicago.

An effective visual experience tells a story that may allow people to rethink a place. In this thesis, the study of the South Side of Chicago begins with the analysis of visual experience. In this case, site specific study and design are also shaped by the analysis. The final result of the thesis comes back to the re-development of visual experience, which will complete the cycle.

The structure of this thesis pursues the following four steps. First, the direct visual experience has shown by photos and video, and condition of the South Side of Chicago is described by an

exploration of the photos. Second, the analysis of visual experience is presented in two parts: the mechanical experience of moving along the Green Line and the walking experience of the pedestrian at the Green Line station. Both of them will be analyzed in terms of their visual effect. Third, a design proposal is presented in two parts (the moving the Green Line and the Green Line station), based on formal analysis, which changes the narrative of the riders` experience from the ground to the moving train. Finally, a review of the whole process will draw forth more potential significance of the design in the South Side of Chicago.

Topical Background

The South Side of Chicago is one of the three major parts of the city; it is defined as all of the city south of the Chicago River, excluding the Loop

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Side,_Chicago#cite_note-Encarta-4). The whole area of the South Side of Chicago covers hundreds of square miles and has more than a million residents.

The Green Line only cuts through part of the South Side of Chicago and so does not serve all of the residents. The “South Side” referred to in this thesis, means the area immediately flanking the Green Line tracks heading south from the IIT campus. Two neighborhoods are the main focus of this thesis: Bronzeville and Washington Park (Fig. 1).

The South Side of Chicago is less prosperous and has more vacancy than the northern area where central business districts are located. According to the 2012 U.S. Census Bureau, the poverty rate for Chicago South Side residents is around 34% and 19.5% of South Side residents did not have a job in 2012. However, although the South Side is subject to many negative impressions today, this area has a rich and colorful culture. Chicago’s South Side is the hometown of the “Chicago sound” in Blues and Jazz; and it hosts several major professional athletics teams such as the Chicago White Sox. Many of the Chicago city’s parklands are located on the South Side; the most famous one is Washington Park, which was the proposed site of the Olympic Stadium and the Olympic swimming venue for Chicago's bid to host the 2016 Summer Olympics and it now receives attention as the proposed site for the Obama Presidential Library.

There are several special nodes that the Green Line cuts through: the first one is the IIT (Illinois Institute of Technology) campus, the second one is Washington Park. Most of the land along the Green Line has not received much investment in new housing or other functions nearby.

Therefore, there is a large amount of vacant land along the Green Line (Fig. 2, Fig. 3), which

could potentially be understood as fortuitous opportunities that offer a foundation for new visual experience. These vacant lands could be called peripheral spaces which “have traditionally been considered unworthy of design attention” (Crisman 2013, 115).



Figure 1. Chicago, the Green Line, study neighborhood

Source: <http://www.mappery.com/Chicago-Neighborhoods-Map>, accessed in May 2014



Figure 2 & Figure 3. Vacant land along the Green Line

Source: Google Earth

History and culture has had a profound influence on the South Side of Chicago. Most residents of the South Side of Chicago are African Americans. After the Civil War, black southerners migrated to Chicago during the Reconstruction. This migration caused the African-American population to nearly quadruple from 4,000 to 15,000 between 1870 and 1890 (Manning 2004). In the 20th century, the numbers increased with the Great Migration, as African Americans left the South seeking a brighter future in the industrial North, including Chicago's South Side and the so-called "Black Belt" formed. The "Black Belt", where most African Americans were living, extends 30 blocks, mostly between 31st and 55th Streets along State Street, but is only a few

blocks wide (Fig. 4). In 1920, 90% of residents residing in the Black Belt were African American (Facts On File 2014). As more African Americans moved into the South Side, earlier immigrants, such as ethnic Irish, began to move out (Facts On File 2014). The “Black Belt” gradually extended as more whites left this area partly due to city housing pressures and the invalidation of laws that allowed for explicit housing discrimination based upon race (Fig. 5).

Civic unrest is a big problem on the South Side of Chicago and frequent gun violence leaves a negative impression of the South Side of Chicago. Many people, including me, form a negative impression of the South Side of Chicago since we see and hear too much negative news from social media. After a quick search online, there are two types of media appear to concern the South Side of Chicago. One is the board media that have large circulation such as *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, most of whose broadcasting disproportionately covers crime in the South Side of Chicago. For example, if you type in “The South Side of Chicago” in *Chicago Tribune*, there are 3,001 results for it; however, 2,013 of them are under the “crime” category (Chicago Tribune, access in April 2015). These types of news always have a shock effect, so that any newspaper who has big circulation likes to broadcast them. However, it results in readers` prejudice of the South Side of Chicago. If you take a look at the South Side of Chicago local media such as *Chicago Defender*; *Shorty: Your Chicago South Side Resource*; and *Bulletin*, you will find a different world. Most of the news stories are about the development of the South Side of Chicago and convey a positive feeling in that area. Therefore, the South Side of Chicago is presented as both a problematic area and a promising land where local people are working hard to revise the problems. This thesis aims to advance local efforts to improve the problematic situations and then try to reverse people`s prejudice.

In summary, portions of the South Side are different from other portions of Chicago in terms of its racial composition, economic structure, and public image. Moreover, this area has a history of change mediated through a politics of race. The large proportion of African American residents leads to clear racial and social identities. The less promising economic and political forces result in a general negative impression of that area; however, it also attracts effort from individuals and groups who want to revitalize the community. This thesis is not going to alter these forces directly, but hopes to benefit the clear community identities and current ongoing revitalization. The goal of the thesis is to create a strong narrative about the landscape along the Green Line, which can change rider's perspective toward this area.

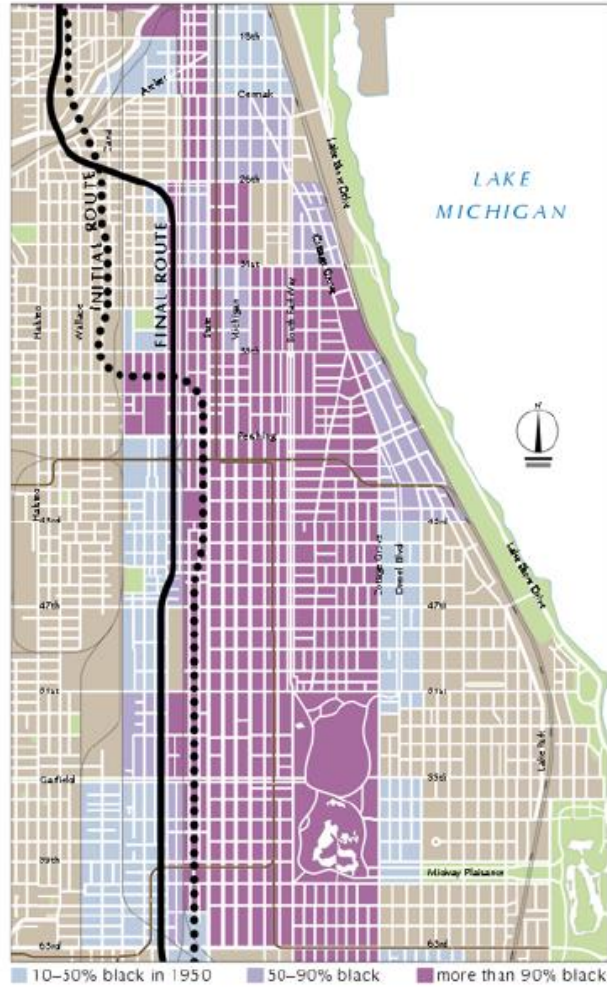


Figure 4. Chicago Black Belt, 1950

Source: <http://www.wbez.org/series/curious-city/how-dan-ryan-changed-south-side-107536>, accessed in May, 2014

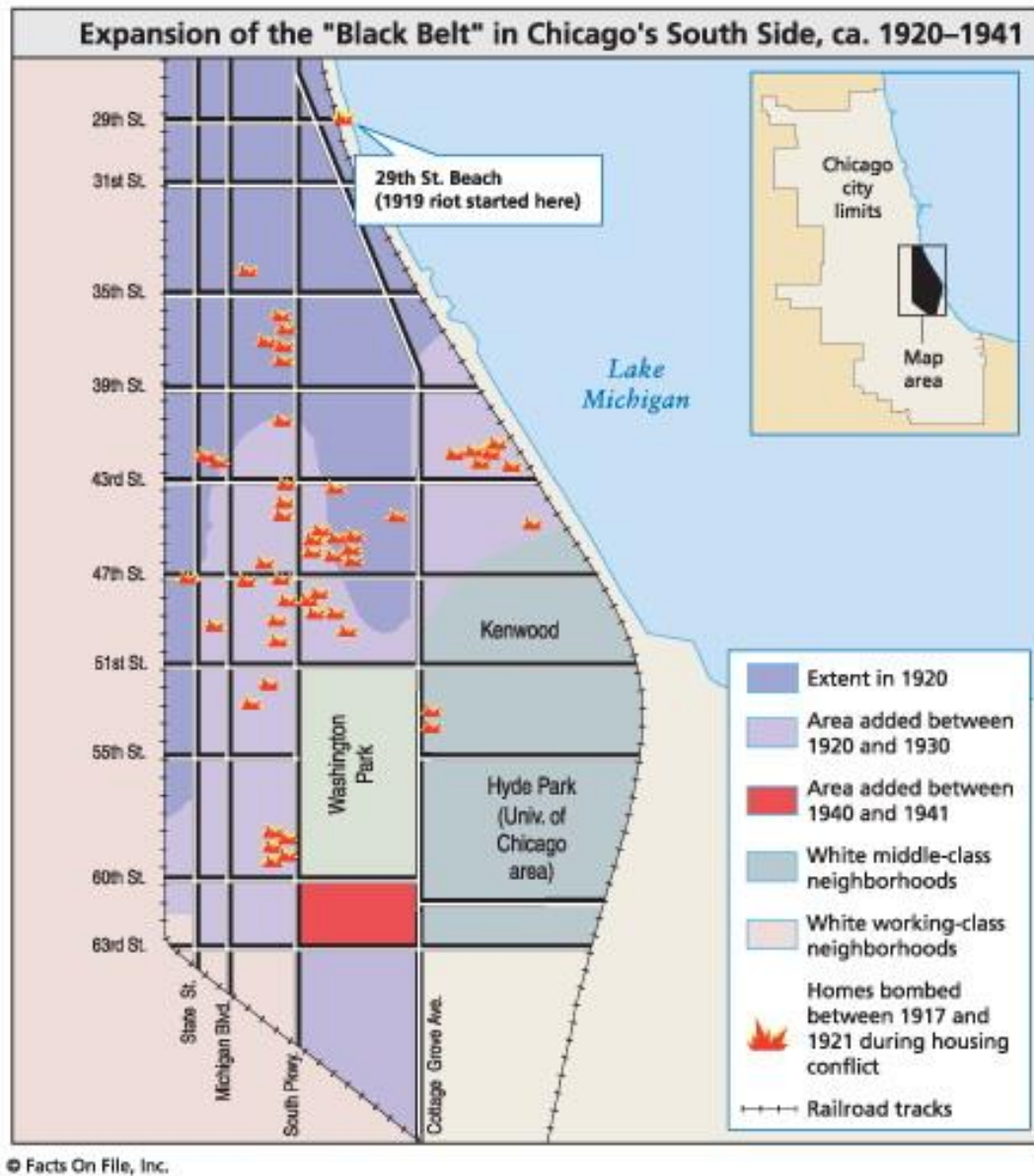


Figure 5. Expansion of the “Black Belt” in Chicago’s South Side, CA. 1920-1941

Source: <http://www.fofweb.com/activelink2.asp>, accessed in May 2014

Theoretical Context

The theoretical foundation for this thesis concerns the concept of “Vacancy”. The severe situation of vacancy in the South Side of Chicago creates a negative impression. Figure 6 shows that most of the green land on the South Side is turfed vacant land. The scale of the buildings is relatively small, most being single or double units of three to four stories, and so the distribution of buildings cannot provide a tight visual experience for riders. There are a lot of “missing teeth” along the Green Line and many of city parcels are underutilized.

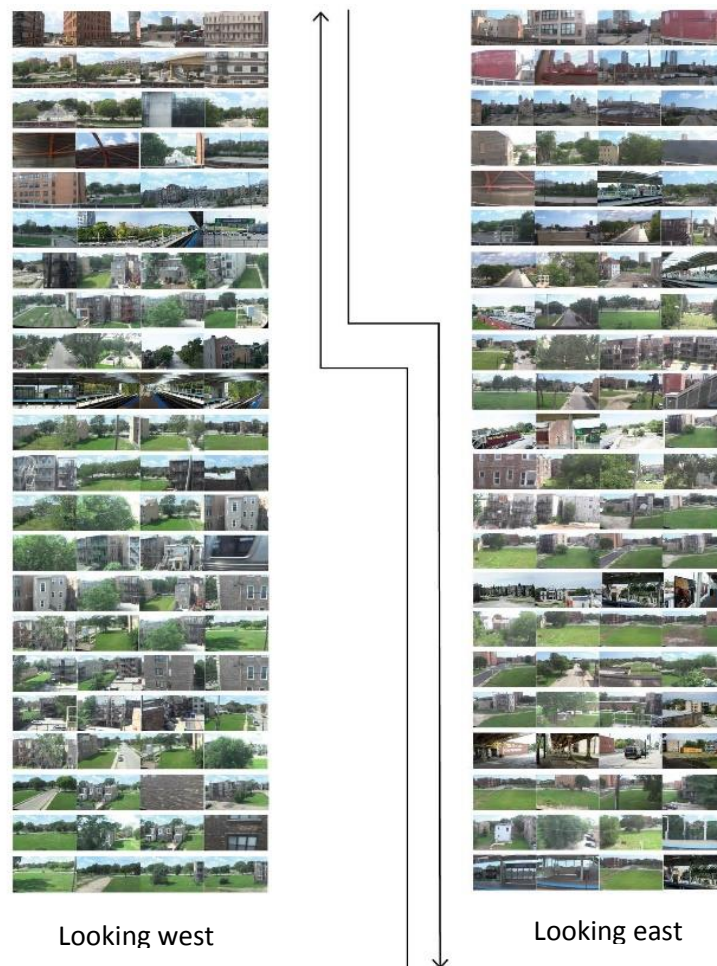


Figure 6. The south band of the Green Line has more severe situation of vacancy
(These photos all screenshot from direct video recording on the Green Line which was
shot from the window of the train in September 2014.)

The most common understanding that people hold of vacant lands are places where “there’s nothing they can see that they have a name for, or a way of thinking about” (Corbin 2003, 14). However, “Nothing” is not the right term to describe the unpleasant feeling of vacant land. This kind of space has been the subject of debate between a group of architects and Marc Augé, who is a French anthropologist. In an International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam publication (2003), a group of architects stated that “transportation spaces” are a type of public space where people could spend time but have not been utilized properly. Most of them face vacancy problems (Houben and Clabrese 2003). However, Marc Augé holds the opinion that “non-spaces” are places of transience that do not hold enough significance to be regarded as “places” (Auge and Howe 2009, 77). One of the objectives for this thesis is to consider and treat this type of vacant land as useful. As the author of *Terrain Vague* Ignasi de Sola-Morales said, “the relationship between the absence of use, of activity, and the sense of freedom, of expectancy, is fundamental to understanding the evocative potential of the city’s *terrains vague*. Void, absence, and yet also as promise, the space of the possible, of expectation” (de Sola-Morales 2014, 26).

“Vacant land” is a term typically used in Urban and Regional Planning to name a type of urban land use. However, “any fragment of land, no matter how unobstructed the view across its surface, is inhabited by its cultural or natural history” (Corbin 2003, 18). This suggests that the story behind a landscape always is the most interesting part, making the landscape a beautiful thing to think about and study. In other words, “vacancy” does not need to be a negative word. If the spatial landscape has a cultural, historical, and meaningful reason to be vacant, it may hold such promise, even if as yet unfulfilled. Therefore, the vacancy should be first understood at the historical and cultural level. For me, the unpleasant feeling from vacant land in the South Side of Chicago mainly because it is undervalued. Ignasi de Sola-Morales in his famous article *Terrain*

Vague states that abandoned areas, and obsolete and unproductive spaces and buildings, are a form of absence (Sola-Morales 1995). These abandoned areas lack the chance to create relationships with reality. Therefore, in setting vacant landscapes, Green Line riders are not invited to perceive the cultural and historical relationships of the South Side of Chicago. However, Sola-Morales proposed a method to deal with *Terrain Vague*. Some designers project their desire onto vacant land through what he called “violent transformation” that only fills vacant land by introducing a new form, but does not solve the “absence” problem. Sola-Morales argues that the transformation of vacant land should be rooted in its social and cultural background, especially in a landscape like the South Side of Chicago. People are using the land, so a designer should respond to the socio-cultural landscape by considering the position of any new design in a continuous time scale, rather than only considering the physical or formal outlook (Sola-Morales 1995).

Corbin mentioned in her article that the value of the landscape “is in changing the angle of the gaze, to position the viewer in relation to the horizon” (Corbin 2003, 17). In any landscape, different people with different backgrounds have different values. Different people will have different comprehension, as well, from talking different vantage points. Therefore, the elevated Green Line provides a fresh angle to re-value the South Side of Chicago. The elevated angle of view allows people have a more open viewshed in the horizon revealed when elevated and this changes the relationship between landscape and people’s visual experience. When people are elevated from ground level, they have the chance to perceive more of local life since they can see further from higher points. Moreover, a landscape’s superficial outlook that only reflects a limited part of its value, may mislead people and block people from understanding the real story behind its appearance. Therefore, re-telling the story of a landscape with the goal of revealing its

life story, will guide “readers” to re-understand a landscape that they already have formed an impression of. In this thesis, the Green Line works as the structure for that new story and the “readers” are the riders on the Green Line.

In the literature on this topic, architects have tended to analyze the moving experience on highways instead of railroads. Although the two types of transportation have differences, both create moving visual experience for riders and both have seen studies using some of the same visual recording technologies and theories. Therefore, much of the background theory in this thesis was generated from the study of highways.

People have prized “visual experience” for centuries. In the 1960s, the second era of “Expansion and Adjustment” of national highway construction had just finished in the USA. Vehicles became the preferred form of personal transportation. According to the United States Department of Transportation, 74,431,800 vehicles were registered on highway in total in 1955 and this number increased to 91,739,623 in 1965. Up until 1990, the number of registered vehicle increase around 20,000,000 every five years (United States Department of Transportation 2013). However, although the number of vehicles increased, the development of highway landscapes did not follow up. Taking this situation as a motivation, Donald Appleyard, Kevin Lynch and John R. Myer developed a study about “the new world of vision inherent in our speed” on highways (Appleyard, Lynch and Myer 1965, 63). The significance of their study is that they proposed new notation methods for representing motion and space and proposed a technique borrowed heavily from Philip Thiel, who works on visual notation in depth. The technique Appleyard, Lynch and Myer proposed “does not present sequence directly as in a movie, but rather symbolizes it by placing elements along a continuous line or staff” (Appleyard, Lynch and Myer 1965, 21). This new notation technique is a simple way to “allow the rapid communication

and comparison of sequence alternatives, stripped to their essentials” (Appleyard, Lynch and Myer 1965, 21). It is easy to record the highway motion sequence using these abstract marks if we understand the meaning of each mark (Fig. 7).

Appleyard, Lynch and Myer`s study can be extended for studying different kinds of transportation movement, such as subways, railroad, airplanes or boats. Appleyard, Lynch and Myer also raised the difficulty presented by the fact that the speed and mode of movement can greatly affect the characteristics of design solutions, this problem only can be solved by a deep understanding of the city. The complexity of the city results in a tough question about urban sequence. Lynch and Myer`s study points out that physical complexity influences the order of people`s observations and transportation speed also changes the time scale of observation.

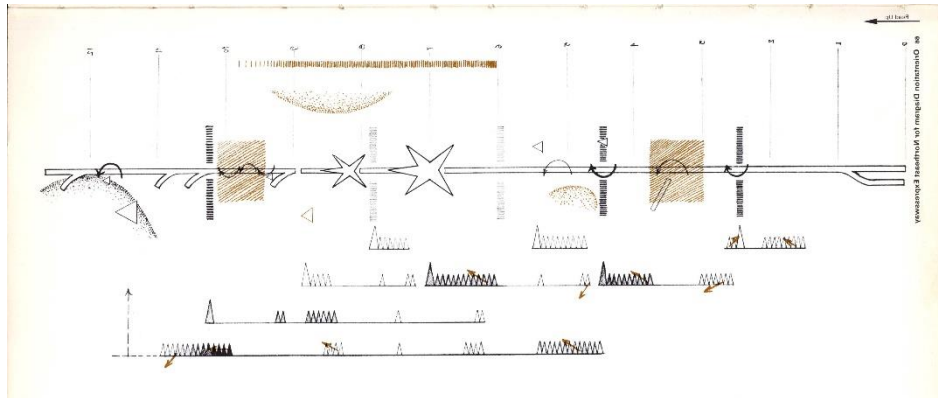


Figure 7. Orientation Diagram for Northeast Expressway

Source: *The View from the Road* page 66. Copyright 1964 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Compared to Appleyard, Lynch and Myer`s study *The View from the Road* (1965), Robert Venturi, Denise, Scott-Brown and Steven Izenour`s work *Learning From Las Vegas* (1977) focuses more on different urban orders. *Learning from Las Vegas* (1977) talks about the urban aesthetics and order of Las Vegas, an approach that combines popular art with highway, movement and speed. What makes *Learning from Las Vegas* important is that: first, it views Las Vegas as a phenomenon of architectural communication; and second, architecture could be regarded as space, symbol, and other vernacular language (Venturi, Brown and Izenour, 1977, 6-8). This challenges not only architects but also landscape architects to understand the highway landscape in a more revolutionary view. There are two main ideas that are valuable for this thesis. First, *Learning from Las Vegas* (1977), identifies two types of order on the commercial boulevard, which work as the main communication between city and people. One order is street elements and the other order is the visual composition of buildings and sign (Venturi, Brown and Izenour 1977, 20). Second, Venturi used film to record the temporal experience, which it is less static as a medium of description. Film is a convenient technology to record and present vividly the moving visual experience; however, “sketch techniques give more tempo of attention and objects of attention” (Appleyard, Lynch and Myer 1965, 27). Therefore, this thesis will take advantage of both of these techniques to record the moving journey of Green Line.

Before *Learning from Las Vegas* (1977), landscape architect Lawrence Halprin had already come up with the idea of freeways (or highways) as a form of urban art in his book *Freeways* in 1966. He argued that freeways should be thought as “a new form of urban sculpture for motion” (Halprin 1966, 5), instead of just traffic carriers. To fulfill this aim, he argued, freeways must be designed “by people with great sensitivity not only to structure, but also to the environment; to the effect of freeways on the form of the city; and to the choreography of motion” (Halprin 1966,

5). Halprin often tried to study the art of motion through space and came up with some intuitive decisions. In *Freeways*, he talked about the background of these decisions from different perspectives. What he called the “confrontation between community value and transportation” guides my design approach for this thesis. Halprin pointed out that “transportation must take its place as a form-giving rather than a destructive element” (Halprin 1966, 55) and he thought that the designer should care more about emotional events and their impact on the communities. The kind of art Halprin mentioned goes far beyond our basic understanding of art. What he meant about “transportation as a form of art” mainly is the art of how transportation can exist in the city without destruction and to generate benefits for the city.

The Green Line crosses the racial divide of the South Side of Chicago. As a social concept, race has an essential influence on the spatial landscape development of the landscape. In the foreword of *Sites of Memory-Perspectives on Architecture and Race* (2001), Craig Evan Barton wrote that “the spaces forming these landscapes were initially ‘constructed’ by the politics of American slavery and subsequently ‘designed’ by the customs, traditions and ideology emanating from the Supreme Court’s ‘Separate but equal’ finding in Plessy v. Ferguson, as well as 20th-century ‘Jim Crow’ statutes” (Barton 2001, XV). The high congestion of African Americans in the South Side of Chicago also results in the clear identity of its landscapes and provides potential to tell a new story about this area. Barton states there is an increasing body of theoretical and historical research about the role of environment working as a space of culture and memory. However, he adds, there are not yet enough cases using design methods to deal with this complex topic (Barton 2001, XV).

Landscape has the power to evoke the history and memory of place and to present the changes of local culture as well. Since most story elements have already existed in the landscape, landscape

architects should first begin their work by decoding the landscape through design analysis. Therefore, landscape architects also are cultural workers who face critical challenges. Cornel West defined critical challenges as intellectual, existential, and political (West 1993, 5). Intellectually, landscape architects need to practice with culture, history and land all at the same time, which makes it complicated to find a solution for problematic landscape. The existential challenge asks landscape architects to preserve and protect cultural identity, even after development. The political challenge is that problem arising between whites and African Americans all different from post-civil war, therefore we should think about the problems in a more contemporary and new situation. The Green Line could work as a medium to present the South Side of Chicago in a new way, working with these concepts as a starting point, then connecting all existing cultural and historical elements and decoding them.

One of the goals of this thesis is to assist communities to manage their residual, cultural and environmental resources. South Side is facing both pressures and challenges, caused by its special cultural deposits and economic and political forces. These pressures and challenges emphasis the need to rethink the potential energies and build community capacity to effectively revitalize the South Side. Building community capacity is about “assisting communities to better manage their own human environmental and economic resources” (Rogers and Spokes 2003). Community should have the ability to understand and manage its internal and external influences, it also can affect the chance to engage local people in ways that resist outside intervention in positive ways. The Green Line not only attracts commuters between the Loop and the South Side of Chicago, but may also serve as a magnet for local people`s awareness and drive to refresh their homeland.

The development of public transportation station always has a second impact. The mixed-use landscape near transit facilities needs a high-quality walking environment in order to spur economic promotion. The Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in the South Side of Chicago produces local and regional benefits and could act as the beginning of building community capacity. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the most direct benefit is “increased ridership and the associated revenue gains” (http://www.fta.dot.gov/12347_6932.html). Nowadays, most of the riders on the Green Lines are local residents. Based on my riding experience and observation, since the train leaves the IIT Station heading south, most of the riders are African Americans. The Green Line still mainly serves for the local people. However, the Barack Obama Foundation officially announced on May 12nd, 2015 that President Barack Obama's presidential library will be located in the South Side of Chicago and Washington Park, flanking to the Garfield Station, is one of the candidate sites. In this situation, there will be a growing number of riders with different backgrounds will go and visit the new library and the Green Line will become the most convenient transportation for the visitors. An innovative riding and station experience for these new riders’ presents a great new chance to retell the story of the South Side of Chicago.

Based on the literature review above, the theoretical framework of this thesis has four main parts. First is recording and notation techniques, where the thesis will borrow techniques, both from *The View from the Road* and *Learning from Las Vegas*. Second is the transitional theory, supported by Lawrence Halprin`s work, that bridges site awareness with the experience of systematic movement as an art form. The third part is to acknowledge local culture: Craig Barton`s words push the thesis to a cultural and social level rather than staying in a basic landscape site design. The final section of theory backs up the statement that the development of

the Green Line station landscape contributes to the revitalization of the surrounding neighborhood.

Objectives and Rationales

The motive to start this thesis starts mainly from recognition of design opportunity of vacancy.

The View from the Road begins with a similar motive: “we became interested in the aesthetic of highways..... one of our best means of re-establishing coherence and order on the new metropolitan scale.” (Appleyard, Lynch and Myer 1965, 2). Because the Green Line is the backbone of the South Side of Chicago, the visual sequence presented to the observer in motion provides a chance for a landscape architect to write a new story based on the existing social and cultural elements.

Research Strategy

The whole research project has three parts: First, visual experience from the moving train fixed stations, second, template design development, third, landscape performance with the template.

Visual Experience from Moving Train and Stations

In the analysis of the visual experience of moving train and fixed stations. I visited the site with my video recorder and camera. These two optical instruments act like a rider's eye would to record the dynamic journey on the Green Line. The viewshed of the rider is defined by the distances that riders can see; this means the building or tree which sits close to the track may block rider's view, narrowing the view shed and a view down a street would expand it. The zigzag-shape of the viewshed forms this thesis's study area (Fig.8). All transformative designs are limited to the space inside the viewshed in order to guarantee that the riders can perceive them. A catalogue of different relationships between the small vacant lot and building is summarized from the video and photos, helping me to study the current visual sequence.

The visual experience from the fixed station is based on the experience of three important locations: platform, staircase, and station site at ground level. In each location, I study how people look at the same landscape from different angles of view and take advantage of this to suggest a more interesting landscape visual experience that tells a new story. The platform is the place where people wait for the train and also a pause in transit for riders inside the train. The activities people do during their waiting are the key thing to record and design. The staircase is the transitional space between ground and the platform and the fence of the staircase works as a filter for people's view shed. The design of transitional experiences for the Green Line riders mainly relates to the transformation of the visual experience through the transformation of the staircase construction. The ground level site of the station does not serve to transform rider's

visual experience because the platform fence blocks it. Commerce such as shops and restaurants gathers around train stations attracting more people to come to the station and capturing them as they leave the station. The study of each station ground level sites can therefore help me to understand the characteristics of each station.

In addition to direct visual recording, the cultural factors behind the vision are critically important. Learning the history of African American immigrants and the development of Chicago South Side provides a general understanding of the local people who are the main users of the Green Line. The cultural history of the South Side of Chicago makes this area famous and provides material for designers to work with. The cultural analysis is divided by stations since each station represents different cultural characteristics. By doing this, the cultural analysis is organized in sequential order which is not only easier to understand, but also serves to clarify the future design.

Another important aspect of information about the cultural analysis is how many cultural renewal programs currently exist on the South Side of Chicago. Since the final goal of this thesis is to refresh the story of the South Side of Chicago, it is necessary to study other projects that share similar goals. Chicago's City government project proposes the official macro-planning for the South Side of Chicago, which has guided proposed use of the landscape. However, special private projects really punctuate certain parts of the South Side of Chicago and approach the final goal through various methods, inspiring me to use the landscape in a creative way.

Template Design Development

Through the investigation of different social experiences as well as ideas from the previous literature, a template is designed. This design concept follows the sequence of riders' movements and links their movements through a continuous visual experience. The design has two parts,

first is for the visual experience between the stations; the second is for the station experience.

The purpose of designing the landscape between stations is to make the riders aware that local people with positive stories are living in this landscape and trying to revitalize it. The design of the station will be adapted to the three locations and creates different ways to perceive the same landscape. The pace or scale of speed and movement of these two parts is different. The moving train landscape is designed for an urban train speed; however, station design suits the walking speed and static viewpoints.

Landscape Performance

In order to test the template and represent the new story, four perspectives are drawn as an effort to help people understand the design. These four perspectives are four possible experiences that could contribute to the new the Green Line Story. The first one is a description of the station ground level site (Fig. 9). This perspective shows that the vacant land around station become city farm land and people gather around station working, talking and so on. As the beginning or ending of the Green Line journey, the station ground level site is a hub of commerce, city farming and people movement. The second perspective describes how the newly designed staircase works (Fig. 9). The “kaleidoscope” roof reflects the surrounding landscape on it and provides a new perspective for people to perceive the station landscape. The third one shows the transformation of platform (Fig. 9). Local artists` works replace the original fence and create a new experience for people when they are waiting for the train. The last perspective is a combination of four moments in the moving train (Fig. 9). The allée of trees work as a backdrop to identify each community. The vacant land along the Green Line may become a city farm land where people are working on it. The view point of the fourth perspective comes from the inner

train, which represents how a designed ground level landscape can change riders` visual experience.



Figure 8. The zig-zag viewshed shape

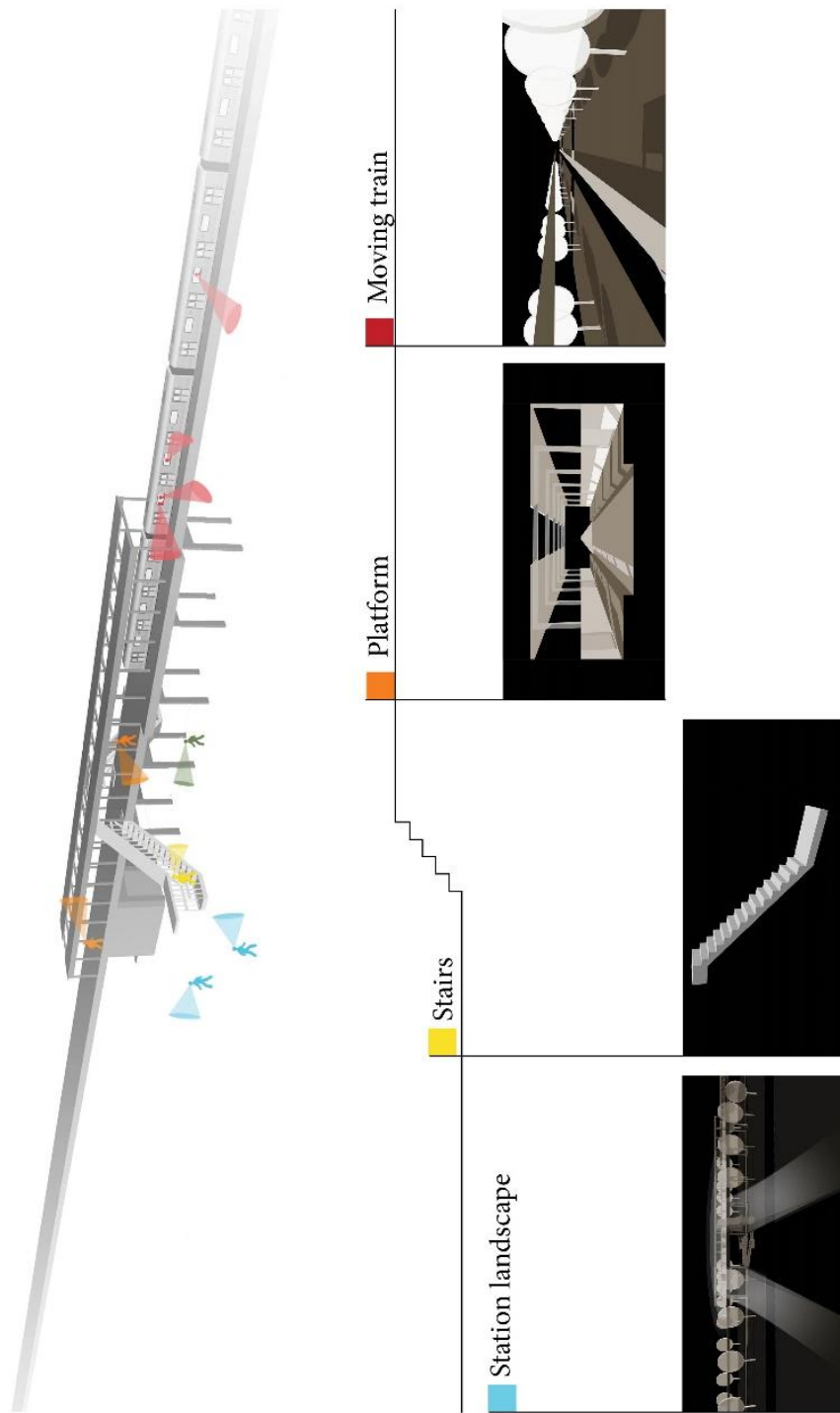


Figure 9. Four landscape components in the station design template

Research

Visual Experience

The visual experience of Chicago South Side was personally viewed from the elevated the Green Line and also recorded by digital video and camera. From north to south, the Green Line goes past several important areas that all have their special character. This local character is connected by the Green Line and has potential to form a new narrative about the South Side of Chicago. Stevenson Expressway intersection is busy and lively. Because this area functions as the southern boundary of the Chicago Loop, it also could be viewed as the beginning of The South Side of Chicago. From there, the visual field begins to open and riders can see the Chicago skyline. The IIT campus is a transitional area in the Green Line. The urban density becomes lower and there are fewer buildings that can block rider`s vision. When the train goes through the stainless steel tube shielding the McCormick Tribune Campus Center from excessive noise, it becomes the last moment riders have the compact feeling.

The Green Line makes a turn at 40th street and then continues into the Bronzeville neighborhood. The buildings are, on average three or four stories high with linear and poorly-trimmed gardens. There is no more advertisement on the Green Line station fences, much vacant land is scattered in this area and it is hard to see people. However, four points are full of lively life and they change the visual experience. These four points are 43rd Street Station, 47th Street Station, 51st Street Station, and Garfield Station. The important building near the 43rd street station is the Forum where local people gather for group activity. The jazz theme of the black and white wall painting reminds people that this area has a long relationship with music, a conjecture proved when the train arrived at the 47th Street station. The area around the 47th Street station area is lively and noisy and the boards hanging on the lighting standard show that local people are proud

of their music culture. There are more vehicles and people on the street and this gives a strong impression of the African American cultural deposits of The South Side of Chicago. When the train approaches from the north to 51st Street, more green lands come into riders` vision. The area around the 60th Street station is extended from the University of Chicago. Although it is hard to perceive the influence of this top educational institution, evidence shows that there is some opportunities for change and hope on Chicago South Side: The building are no longer shabby, instead, they remind riders of some buildings they might see in the South Loop.

Vacant land is common in the Green Line visual Experience. The shape and distribution of vacant land result in the zigzag shape of viewshed (Fig.10). The building volume is not really big in the South Side of Chicago, so single building cannot occupy a whole city parcel. There are many “missing teeth” which are staying in vacant. In this situation, even though the total area of vacant land in the South Side of Chicago is large, they are scattered as small forms. In order to take advantage of the vacant land in the South Side of Chicago, I mainly focus on how to deal with small vacant land in the design part.

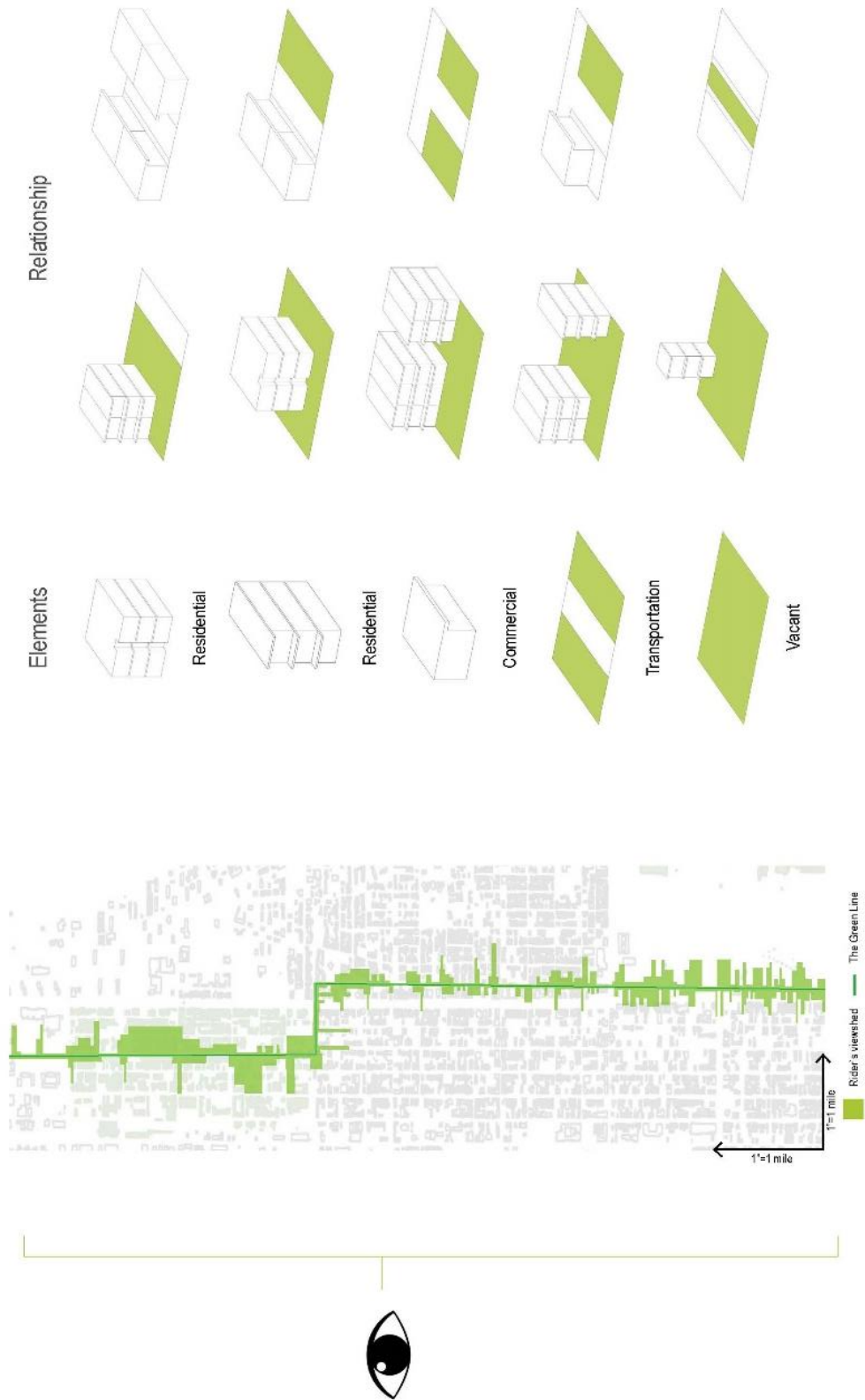


Figure 10. Vacant lang category along the Green Line

Station Experience

The station experience can be spatially divided into three parts.

1. The platform is elevated from the ground and provides a high viewpoint for riders to see the surrounding landscape. Waiting is the most common thing that people do on the platform.
2. The staircase is the transitional space between platform and ground. The space is enclosed to keep people from falling down and protect from bad weather, but it results in a narrow viewshed for pedestrian. The ground area is the space where people either complete or start their riding experience.
3. The whole station could bring prosperity to a block and this prosperity area could act as the beginning of a strategy for renewal.

Even though every station I studied has these three parts, each performs differently from each other since they have their own characters. The Figure 11 shows the diversity and variety of the four stations. The 43rd Street Station relies on the historical influence of the Forum which used to be a ballroom. When the train passes the 43rd Street Station, riders can easily see the big murals on the Forum that presents three jazz musicians. The 47th Street Station has a flourishing commercial base where many restaurants and shops line the street. It is easy to identify how local people are all proud of their music culture through the murals and elevated signs. The 51st Street Station is close to Washington Park and fewer people live in that area. There are several shops along the street, but still, riders can feel the decreased activity in that area. Riders can sense the difference between Garfield Station with the previous three, because Garfield Street connects to the University of Chicago and the Hyde Park community.



Figure 11. Visual experience of the Green Line Stations

Design Concept

Even though both the South Side and North side are part of the Chicago urban area, it is not sensible to assume they should be merged. Gentrification may not be a good way to revitalize The South Side of Chicago at the current moment. The people of Chicago South Side can best control the determination of their future homeland development because they have the full knowledge of public interest and also they can make it happen. That is what Daniel H. Burnham called “loyalty” (Burnham 1993). Therefore, the new narrative for the South Side of Chicago should be loyal to the local interest and maintain the continuity of the whole South Side. Also, even a small neighborhood may have its own character and that character needs to be clarified and displayed, rather than homogenized.

Besides the local character, people in Chicago South Side feel very proud of their community culture. Since the Great Depression, when everyone in Chicago faced a severe job market, people on the South Side of Chicago built their own union to defend against the crisis.

Comparing to fighting a lone battle, it is more powerful to take advantage of the social unity.

Today, many programs are being undertaken in Chicago South Side such as SEE POTENTIAL and REBUILD FOUNDATION, which provide chances for local people to do something together. In this thesis, the value of congregation is not only about people coming together, but also the positive outcomes that people can realize. Finally, the outcomes generate new hopes.

In the following part, many programs, buildings and so on will be discussed, since they have the potential to generate new hope.

- The Stroll

The Stroll used to be located along State Street between 40th street and Stevenson

Expressway, which was the jazz hub of Chicago South Side. African American people

gathered in this area to enjoy the music and dance at night and it also attracted some white people from the Loop. However, the Stroll was erased by IIT construction after the Second World War. What remains today is a stone tablet with simple text on it. Even though the Stroll no longer exists, it still could remind local people about a positive history element.

- The Forum

The Forum is located at the intersection of the Green Line and 43rd Street. It was built in 1889, long before the new music movement in 1920, when there was a boom in ballroom construction (Morris 2013). Moreover, it is probably the oldest still-standing hardwood floor ballroom in Chicago. Even though not currently in use, it acts as a 43rd Street neighborhood icon and there are some new and exciting plans to refresh the building. The new life of the Forum will include a cafe and art gallery in the coming years and may finally come back to life as a live music performance venue.

- The *Chicago Defender*

The *Chicago Defender* is a Chicago-based weekly newspaper founded in 1905 primarily for African American readers. It had an important role in the Great Migration because it promoted Chicago as a promising destination for African-American people in the south. Nowadays, this newspaper still records and broadcasts news about African Americans in Chicago and plays a spiritual role in their life. The office of this influential newspaper is located 45th Street near the Green Line (DeSantis 2009).

- Washington Park

During the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, Frederick Law Olmsted designed the Grand Boulevard and planned to link the main exposition site with Washington Park.

This natural style park nowadays is one of the biggest green spaces on The South Side of Chicago and it was the proposed site of the Olympic Stadium and the Olympic swimming venue for Chicago's bid to host the 2016 Summer Olympics (The Cultural Landscape Foundation, 2009).

- Art Incubator & Kusanya Cafe

Art Incubator is a small gallery for art and Kusanya Cafe right beside Art Incubator is a beautiful and well-managed cafe. University of Chicago, especially the Department of Art supports both of them and holds many artistic activities in them. They work as a good example of how African American communities benefit from art.

- \$1 Large Lots

Many vacant lots are waiting to be explored in Chicago South Side and the Large Lots program found a new way to take advantage of them. They dispose of these city-owned vacant lots by “selling” them to local residents for \$1. It is not just the \$1 price that attracts attention, but also the mission to revive these sad-looking areas locally. People outside the neighborhood cannot purchase the vacant land in it. By imposing this criteria, the program founder encourages the local people to notice, love, and rebuild their homeland. Since the program was developed as part of the Green Healthy Neighborhoods public planning process as an effort to create a better future for neighborhoods that are faced with multiple challenges (<http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs-and-resources/lta/ghn-chicago>), the program also reflects the government planning goals for this area.

In recent years, an increasing number of people, groups and organizations have started to generate more outside hope for The South Side of Chicago. These efforts mainly projects and programs that have started activities to benefit The South Side of Chicago.

- See Potential

See Potential is a community engagement project and its goal is “to enable residents, community leaders and elected officials to visualize the potential for sustainable, locally owned community development and to mobilize community support behind great ideas (<http://seepotentialchicago.org/>). Around 400 supporters and volunteers are working for this project and visual programs all starting to help the local community, such as the Forum, Bronzeville Community Garden, and Imagine Eaglewood If (IEI).

- Rebuild Foundation

Rebuild Foundation is a non-profit creative “engine that catalyzes neighborhood revitalization through artistic practices, individual empowerment and community engagement (<http://rebuild-foundation.org/>). They reused many empty buildings in Chicago South Side by refreshing them with a new look with the help of artists, architects, community activists, and educators, and provide more opportunities to local artists to practice their work (<http://rebuild-foundation.org/>).

- University of Chicago

As the most famous educational center on the South Side of Chicago, the University of Chicago looks like an island geographically on the map and it stretches its influence into the surrounding area. A number of faculty members in arts department are interested in African-American arts and practice their projects in Washington Park and other areas of the South Side of Chicago. The university has also taken care about other aspects of

Chicago South Side, because the whole campus is surrounded by problematic neighborhood such as Woodlawn which negatively influence its safety. Therefore, they definitely would like to find new ways that can refresh its surrounding neighborhood.

Many other kinds of “Hopes” are germinating in this area. People gather together, communicate with each other, share their information and help to change the narrative of The South Side of Chicago. From the government level to civilian level, more concerns focus on how to revitalize The South Side of Chicago from within the communities, rather than impose outside ideas.

The aim of the design concept is not only to make The South Side of Chicago more unified and increase the public interest as a group, but also show the local character more vividly. Since the analyses began with the visual experience along the Green Line, the proposed design scenarios will give riders a new narrative of the South Side of Chicago.

The proposed new landscape along the Green Line follows a standard repetition of station components along with its surrounding landscape (Fig. 12). Each station unit contains a station and the four blocks both north and south of the station. By taking advantage of this repetition, every unit can follow a template which guides the design of the landscape in it. The template is composed of four landscape components: station landscape, staircase landscape, platform landscape and moving train landscape; however, every unit can make many variations based on the template (Fig. 13).



Figure 12. The standard repetition of the Green Line landscape

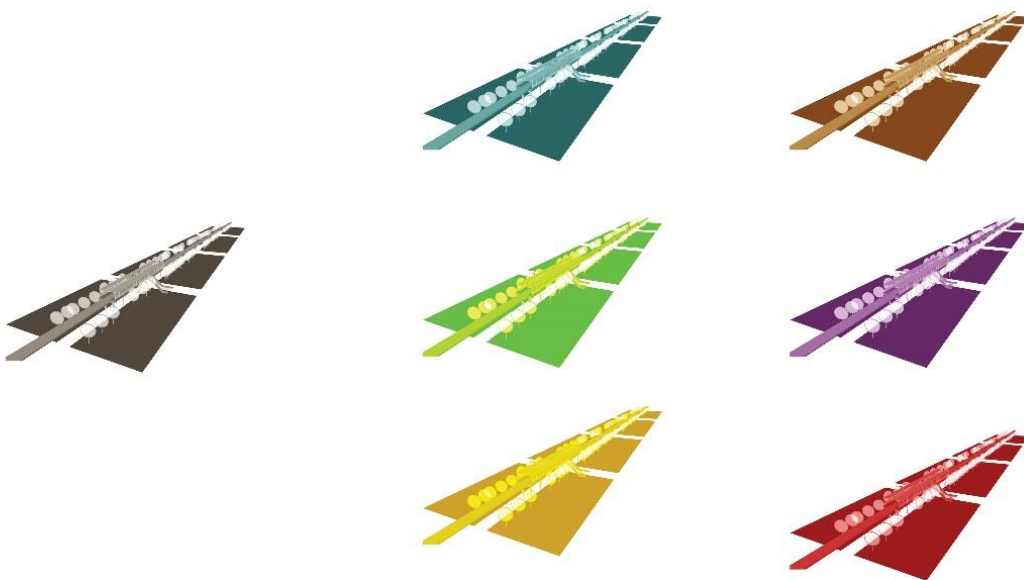


Figure 13. The design of each station is based on one template

Effect

In order to give riders a new kind of narrative about the South Side of Chicago's potential. The Green Line allows the perception of various communities with special local cultural identities. Many organizations have contributed to exploring the South Side of Chicago's potential. So the template acts as a stage where the cultural identities and investments can be represented and connected.

Component 1: Station Landscape (Fig. 14)

Every station will have directional pavement which points out the distance and direction of important places around the station. At night, the lighting system will bring safety and identity for the station area. The lighting height decreases from the station to the residential area, from the public to private. Variation in the lighting system could be a different color or different illuminator format. Variations in directional pavement would be decided by the different important place names that would be carved on the pavement. There are several examples of places that can be carved, including University of Chicago, Midway Airport, the lake shore, local church, or a famous publication office. People can read what this area has to offer just from walking on the pavement.

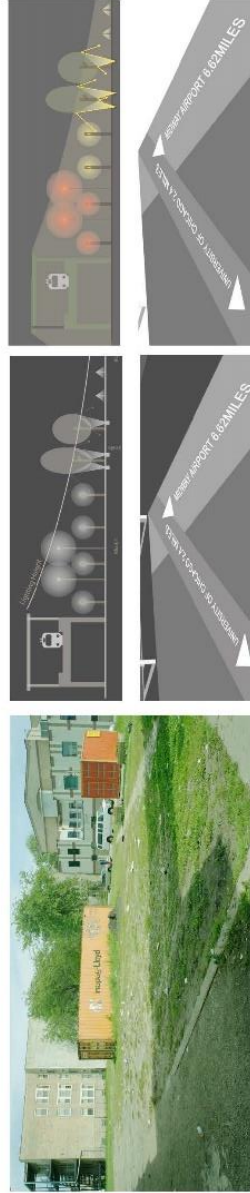
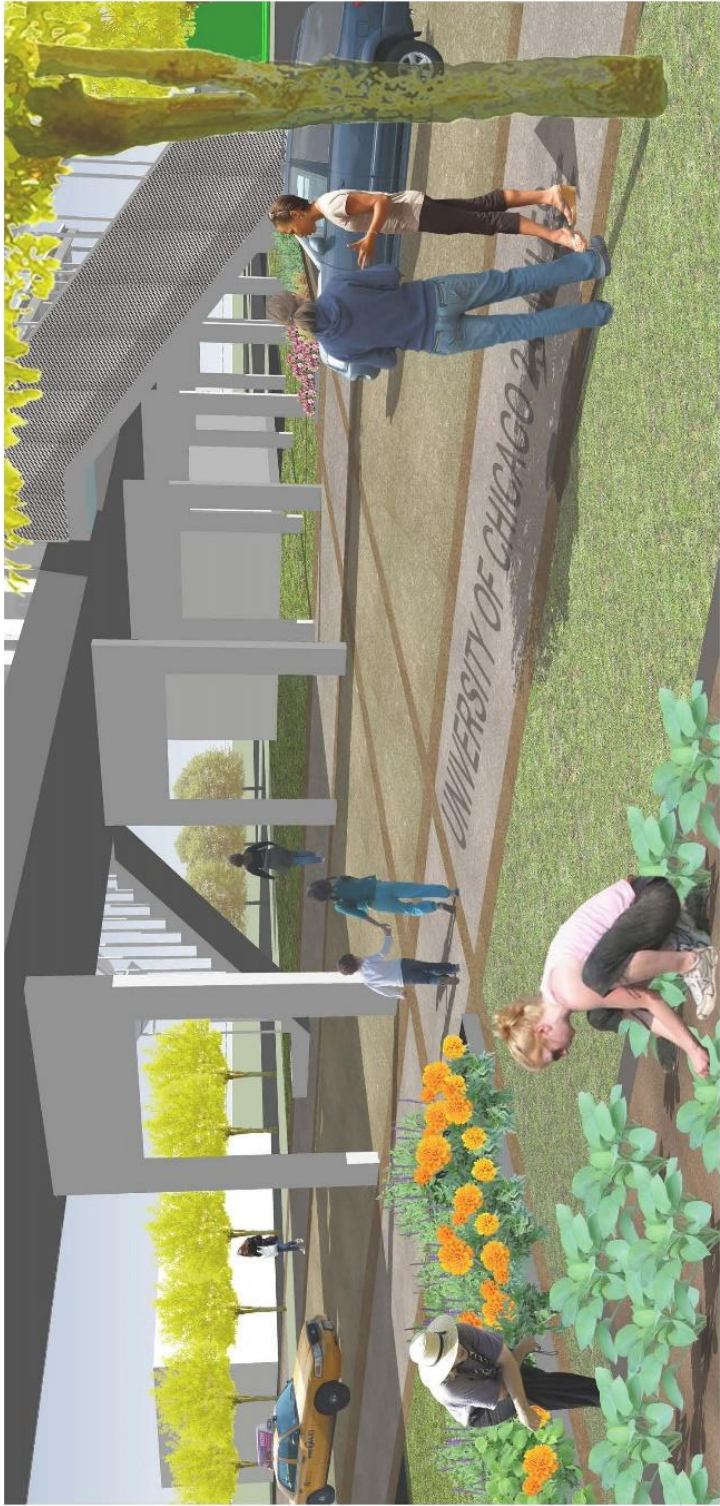


Figure 14. Component 1: Station

Component 2: Stair Case Landscape (Fig. 15)

Most of time, the Green Line riders must go down or up through a narrow staircase, which blocks riders from seeing the surrounding landscape. In order to create the connection between rider and landscape in the compact staircase, I envision a kaleidoscopic roof that consists of many mirrors set at different angles. In this way, people can see the streetscape or landscape around the station as they move up or down the stairs.

However, besides looking up, on the stairs people really need to pay attention to their feet. If you go up, leaving the home to go to the office or school, you will see the riser of the stair. When you go down from the platform from your office or school to return home; you see the tread top of the stair. The riser provides a surface on which to cheer people up when they go to work and be welcomed when they return home.

When you change the angle of the mirrors, they function like a kaleidoscope. If the angle is big, you can see farther, if the angle is small, you can see closer; maybe you can even see yourself in it. Therefore, a different kaleidoscopic roof can provide different parts of views of the station landscape. The variation on stair text could be very rich too. When you go up, you may see “carry on”, “be safe”. When you leave the platform, you may be encouraged by “good job” or “welcome home”.

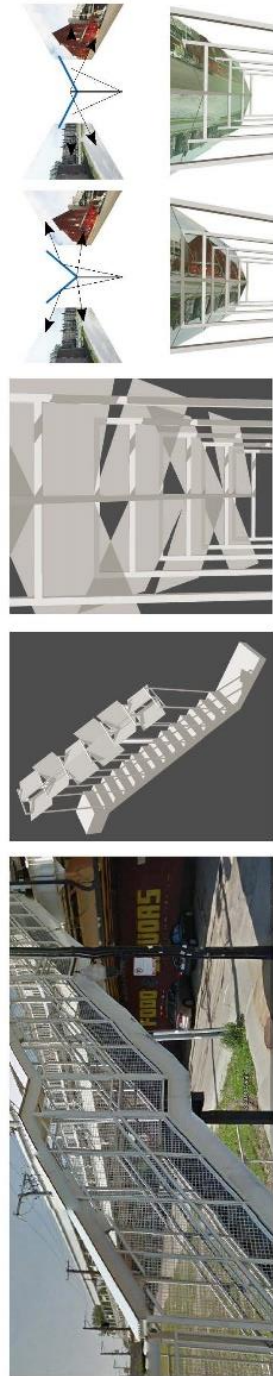


Figure 15. Component 2: Stair Case

Component 3: Platform Landscape (Fig. 16)

The platform works as a gallery where you can see local artists' work on the fence. It is both a static and dynamic gallery serving riders who are waiting for trains as well as riders who are sitting inside the train. There are many African American artists about whom community members may not be aware, so the station could become a new stage for them. Beside the art works, some windows would be left transparent, allowing people to also see the most real art of the streetscape. This conveys the positive idea that everyday life can be part of art too. According to my calculation, it usually takes around one and a half minute for train go through the station, so all riders will have a short time to enjoy an interesting and dynamic art show.



The platform works as a gallery, where riders can see local artists work on the fence when the train stop and run pass the station.

The combinations of different of art works and real street view convey a colorful life of Chicago South Side.



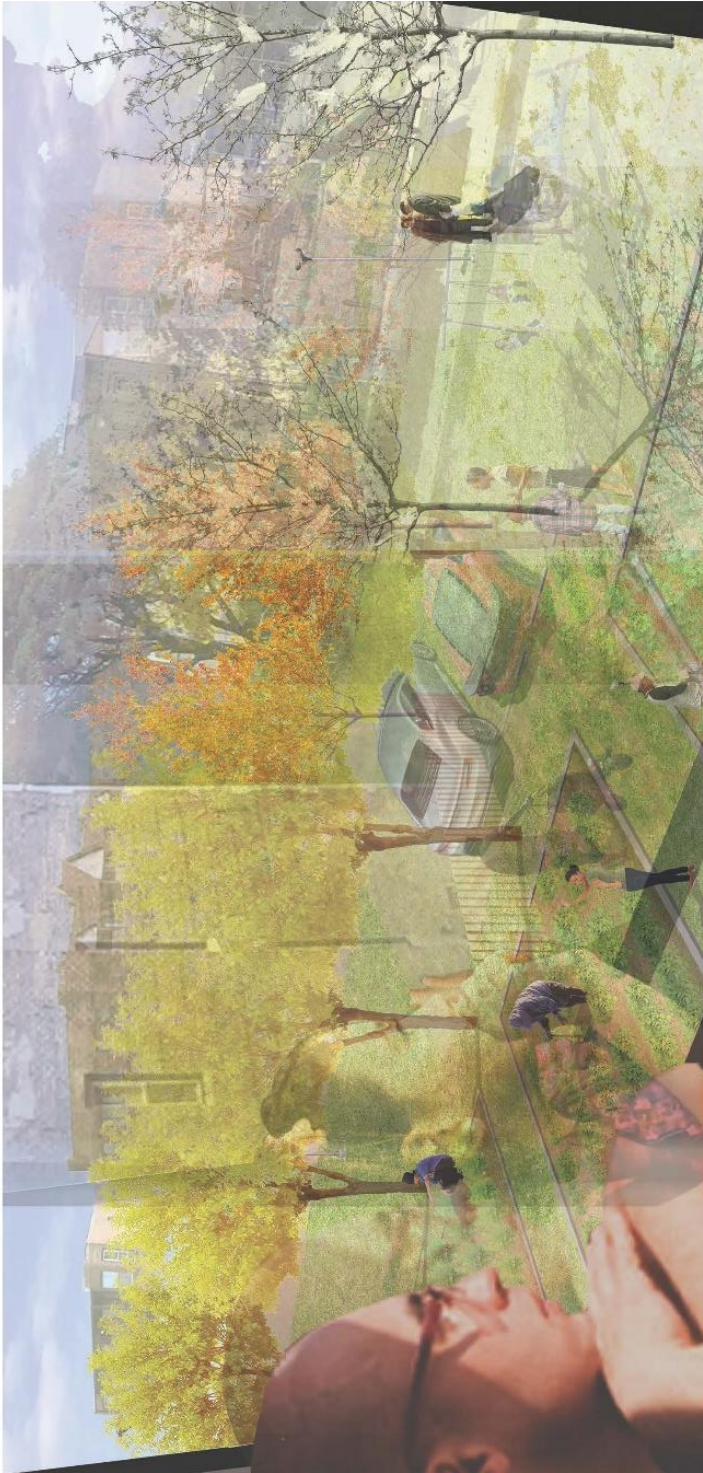
Figure 16. Component 3: Platform

Component 4: Moving Train Landscape (Fig. 17, 18)

There are many vacant lots near the Green Line track that are waiting for new life. The design scenario uses different trees to identify each different station. The tree species change from one unit to another unit to provide identity (Fig. 18). The vacant parcel between the track and the row of trees can be used as city farmland or community activity spaces (Fig. 17). Therefore, when you sit on the train, you can perceive the pattern of changing trees and the farmland provides a feeling that people living in these areas are trying to make their life better through creative and grass root activities. Filling the vacant land, providing work opportunities and creating identities for the Green Line riding experience can be achieved at the same time. Community capacity is built since this design asks more local people to effectively use these vacant land.



Figure 17. Filling the vacant land



The tree species change from one unit to another unit.

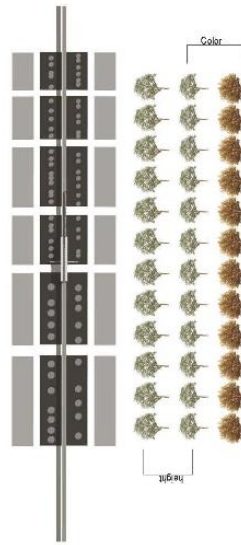


Figure 18. Component 4. Moving train landscape

Conclusion

Landscape is a stage upon which the events of life happen. Based on this study, many possibilities could happen on the South Side of Chicago and the landscape along the Green Line, given the chance. The main purpose of the thesis is to create a new narrative for the South Side of Chicago, so that riders have the chance to read the landscape from a new perspective. In this new narrative, I take advantage of the cultural and social background of the South Side of Chicago and build a connection with on-going government and private programs. The template will be repeated four times during the Green Line journey, which results in a strong impression for riders.

This thesis only focuses on part of the Green Line landscape, but it could be a pilot study for other segments of the elevated rail system. Landscape Architecture is not like mathematics, which has only one answer to a question of Chicago. There are many solutions for an issue in landscape depending on how people perceive the landscape. As an outsider who has not lived in this area very long, my impression of this landscape is different from other people who may have already lived here for a long time. The design template may also be debated. People may question whether local people can accept it or not. From my perspective, the many possible variations within this template provide opportunities for local people accept it and make it their own. What the whole design is a structure of a functional landscape, the content must be filled by local people. What they will grow in new farmland and what they want to display on the one-minute gallery, all will be decided by local people. The template is just a mode to operate their choice.

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