Cultivating Cubanidad:
Weaving a Cultural Nexus into Havana's Urban Fabric

by

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
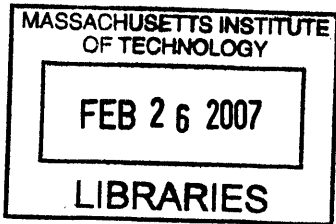**Degree of Master of Architecture**

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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abstract

City-frameworks create an underlying system of order through which individuals are able to interact within their communities. Considering the successful historical precedents of city developments like Philadelphia, Savannah, and Bolonga, these cities exemplify the three different styles of city-frameworks (infrastructure, greenway, and architecture).

Contemporary city-frameworks have increasingly embodied forms of development vocabulary, like the mega-block and the monument, which oppose the energy of present neighborhoods and oftentimes end up breaking up communities. Usually associated with these strategies is the desire to accommodate for tourism and gentrification at the expense of lower-class relocation.

Taking this into consideration, in this thesis I propose an alternative strategy of development, one that is built from the success of past while recognizing the needs of the present. This strategy is developed by analyzing strong and weak city-frameworks. The lessons learned from this set of precedence is then shaped into seven rules of city-framework planning, accompanied by a set of comprehensible urban redevelopment vocabulary. Then to test adaptability, the development strategy is systematically employed in the context of Havana, Cuba, looking at the Central Havana neighborhood of Colón, as a design case study.

Thesis Supervisor: Jan Wampler
Title: Professor of Architecture

acknowledgements

This thesis represents the culmination of my academic career. I could not have come this far without the help, love, and support of a countless number of teachers, friends, and loved ones who have helped me to get to where I am today. Without belittling the support of others, I would especially like to recognize the following people.

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Department of Architecture for affording me the opportunity to be apart of the MIT community and achieve my brass ring (or brass rat, as the case may be).
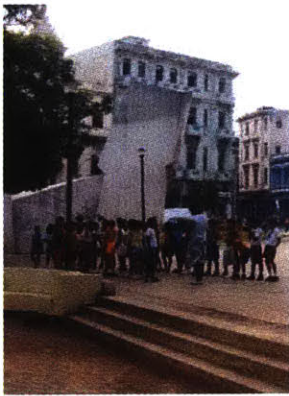
contents

Chapter 1

Introduction


1.1   Facing the New Urban Challenge

Cities, neighborhoods, and communities have grown, changed, withered, died, been reborn, remodeled, and redesigned. However, cities (and particularly certain neighborhoods within cities) have survived such transformations due to strategies of urban development that successfully fostered community and identity while strengthening the bonds of the city. While many cities attempt to articulate successful strategies, few have effectively done so. Sadly, these few successful city-frameworks have increasingly been lost in contemporary times, largely due to profit-driven strategies of development and redevelopment in cities around the world. And while many countries embrace these new growth plans, other countries like Cuba fear the implications of these new strategies of development which often destroy city-identity. Perhaps it is time consider the lessons of the past to identify a better way of building within the urban landscape.

Image 1.1
Residents in a hu-tong nieghborhood in Beijing

Image 1.2
Students gathering in a plaza in Havana

1.2   Plan and Layout

Successful city-frameworks abound. Consider two examples: cities that are from former Spanish colonies, and Savannah, Georgia. The Law of the Indies enforced development standards on the Spanish colonies creating dozens of successful city-frameworks across Latin
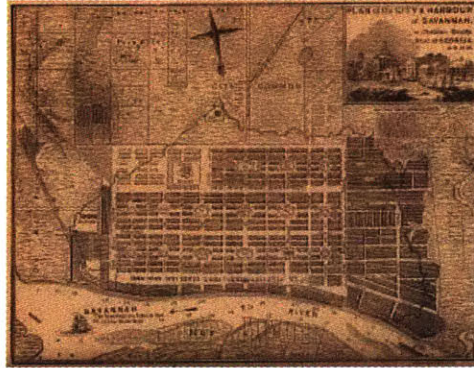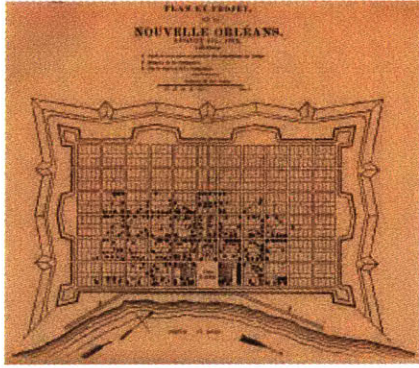
America.[1] James Edward Oglethorpe's plan of city wards created the underlying frameworks of streets and community squares that came to characterize and structure Savannah, Georgia. However, cases like these are rare; not all cities of the past were well structured. Consider the automobile age. As the car became an increasing factor in the twentieth century urban fabric, cities were expanded to an incomprehensible scale, diluting any cohesive identity. Major cities such as Houston, Texas, and Duluth, Minnesota exemplify this pattern, as they experienced a major growth during this age of the automobile. In fact, cities planned during the twentieth century were on average fifty percent less dense than their city counterparts developed a century earlier (Tunnard, 1981).

Sadly, major development strategies today, like those practiced in Shanghai, China and Los Angeles, California, have not learned from past mistakes and continue to build in the mega-scale ignoring the proportional comforts of the human body. The mega-scale of a city is a level at which the city is so large that the human body is uncomfortable in its surroundings. In such cities, other mediators such as cars, parking lots, and elevators are fundamentally required for the individual to comfortably interact with structural elements of the city. Such mega-scale cities also have large interstates, super-block stores, and monumental high-rises, which destroy "any sense

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[1] Compiled in 1573 by King Phillip II of Spain, the *Laws of the Indies* explained how New World colonies were to select a town site, distribute city and farming lots, plan and administer the city, and associate with aborigines. Although French, Pierre Le Blond de la Tour laid out New Orleans in 1722 as a series of square blocks placed within a rigid grid pattern and symmetrically distributed around the main square (the heart of the city), showing full use of the *Laws of the Indies*. Thus when Spain took over Louisiana in 1762, there was a consistent professed desire to maintain this core of the city.

(left to right)
Image 1.3
Plan of New Orleans 1728
Source: University of Texas at Austin, *Report on the Social Statistics of Cities*, Compiled by George E. Waring, Jr.,

Image 1.4
Develoment Plan of Savannah, 1818
source: University of Texas at Austin

of human relationship" between the city and its residents (French, 1978). A popular trend often associated within the developing mega-scale city is gentrification, a common cause for the relocation of individuals deemed "unworthy" of their current urban locale. In such situations, once the worth of the land outweighs the perceived worth of its residents, a higher being, be it the government, landowner or perhaps a developer, forces the residents to clear the land, allowing a more desired set of inhabitants. When associated with a historic city fabric, these actions can destroy a city's urban and cultural identity.

In this thesis, I propose an alternative method of redevelopment that considers historical precedents and trends which have come to shaped successful city-frameworks. This strategy puts the citizen first, striving to preserve local community, while fostering the expression of cultural identity. In Chapter 2, I conduct a historical analysis, considering what makes city-frameworks successful or not. Based upon previous observances, in Chapter 3 I introduce a proposed set of urban development rules and vocabulary with which to establish a framework aimed at strengthening the cohesive nature between a building's program, the community, and the city. To demonstrate the robust nature of this development strategy, I have selected the small neighborhood of Colón, located in Havana, Cuba. Colón is an ideal example case for two reasons: first, decades of historic isolation and city-wide deterioration has not waned international interest in development of this tropical paradise. Havana is indeed threatened by

the globalization movement. Second, Habaneros have a deep respect for tradition and a strong desire for maintaining cultural identity.[2] To fully craft the development strategy, Chapter 4 provides the historical context of Colón and Havana, and Chapter 5 presents the results of the strategy as applied in the case study. Chapter 6 concludes with a further discusses on possible universal applicability of the proposed development strategy. This thesis augments a growing anti-cookie-cutter movement for city planning. Instead, it proposes a city planning strategy where the city is built for individuals rather than for big business.

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[2] A *Habenero* is a citizen of Havana.
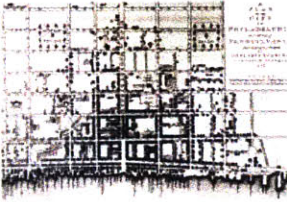
Chapter 2

Framing a City

2.1   City-Frameworks

The establishment of a city-framework, or an underlying system of order for a city, has historically been a successful practice in city development. City-frameworks have taken many shapes in the past, from the street grid of New Orleans to the amorphous greenway known as the Emerald Necklace in Boston. Although it is more common to find a city-framework embedded in the initial plan of the city, it can also be effectively inserted into the urban fabric many years later. Whether city-frameworks are developed through the use of infrastructure, city parks, or architecture, they have proven to bring a sense of order, identity and cohesiveness to the city. This section investigates the historic use of these three framework styles, highlighting their importance to the character and organization of the city.

2.2   Infrastructure as Framework

2.2.1 New Orleans, Louisiana

The Old French Quarter, *Vieus Carre*, exemplifies the oldest planned system of streets, the grid pattern. This infrastructural city-framework embodies an inherent logic in its simple order pattern which brings coherency to the city and makes navigation easy. In New Orleans, the city was developed by Pierre Le Blond de la Tour as a system of 300 by 300 foot square blocks, nine along the riverfront and six in depth,

with the main plaza and church centered along the river-edge. Today, this once wall-restricted street grid not only has extended itself further inland from its initial source but has also proliferated along the river bank of the Mississippi. The character of the Quarter rests in the mixed cultural elements which provide visual variety along the clearly organized street grid. Also associated with the city-framework are the four infrastructural focal points – Jackson Square (main plaza), Royal Street, Bourbon Street, and Canal Street – which serve as corridors of pedestrian movement, giving the town its unique sense of place. The
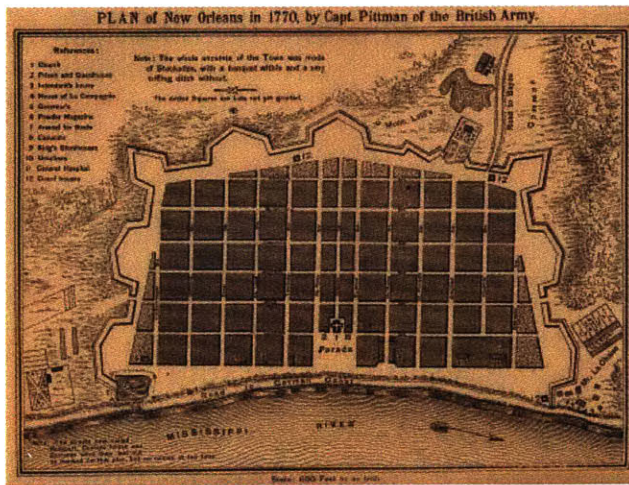
(top to botton)
Image 2.4
Map of New Orleans
**1770**
source: University of
Texas at Austin

Image 2.5
New Orleans gridiron
city-framework

Quarter also has a number of landmarks, which give reference to their surroundings, while providing orientation. These landmarks include the U.S. Mint and Customs House, the Ursuline Convent, Monteleone and the Royal Orleans Hotels, and the St. Louis Cathedral. This city-framework, a combination of an easily measurable street system with infrastructural landmarks, has ultimately given New Orleans an associable identity and a recognizable coherency (Historic District Demonstration Study, 1968; French, 1979).

2.2.2 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Philadelphia's city center, situated on a piece of land pinched by
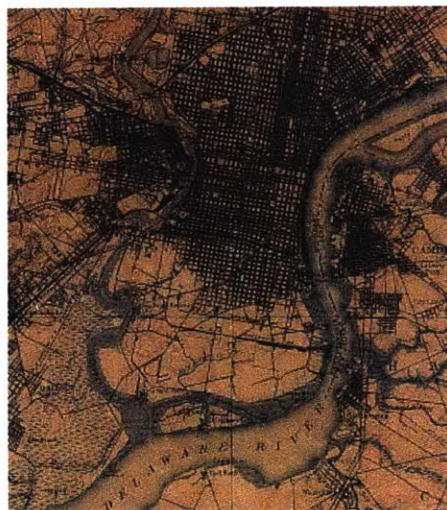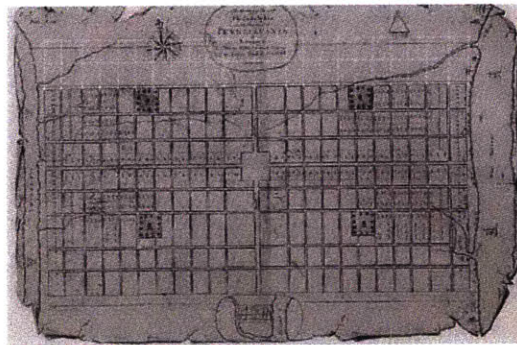
(left to right)
Image 2.6
Philaphelphia 1898
source: University of Texas at Austin, *US Geological Survey*

Image 2.7
Framework of city square, Philadelpia

the Delaware River to the east and one of it tributaries, the Skulkill River, to the west, was established in 1683 by the city proprietor and governor William Penn. With the help of surveyor Thomas Holme, Penn designed the city center as a grid street system, incorporating four eight-acre town squares with one centralized ten-acre square. Although the grid was only extended into surrounding developments

of the initial city plan, it is the combination of the grid with five civic squares (Logan Square, Ritten House Square, Washington Square, Franklin Square, and a centrally-located square now occupied by City Hall) that has proven to be a successful city-framework for Philadelphia's central district. These civic squares also divide the city into four quadrants, which brings order and character to the city while providing orientation and a place for neighborhood gatherings (Garvin, 2002; Robbins, 2004).

2.3   Greenways as Frameworks

2.3.1 Savannah, Georgia

Designed in 1733 by its founder, James Edward Oglethorpe, the city plan of Savannah is devised around a strict framework of streets and parks which produce the characteristic twenty-six wards, each composed of eight blocks with a centralized park (Garvin 2002). The weaving of North-South circulation of pedestrian with the East-West circulation of vehicular traffic is an evident and effective structuring entity. However, it is the system of park-squares that gives Savannah its undeniable character and charm. These tree-filled squares are

(counterclockwise from top left)

**Image 2.8
Development of wards in Savannah, 1734**
source: University of Texas at Austin

**Image 2.9
Savannah 1818**
source: University of Texas at Austin

**Image 2.10
Framework of city squares, Savannah**
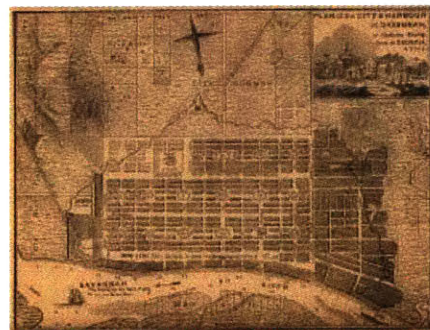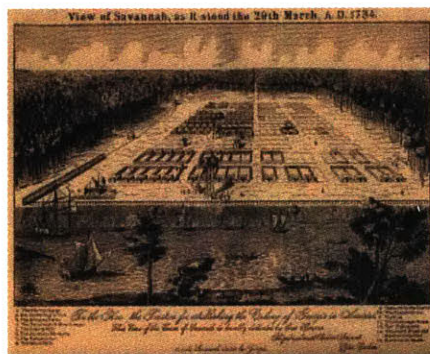
outdoor living rooms for both the micro-neighborhoods surrounding each square and the city as a whole. Located in the north, Lafayette Square provides a larger community space for the entire community of Savannah. Throughout the rest of the city south of Lafayette, a grid of smaller squares encourages close-knit communities within the vicinity of each square. This rigid framework of city streets and parks fosters and maintains Savannah's coherency and identity.

2.3.2 Boston, Massachusetts

Frederick Law Olmstead's design of the 2000-acres of linked parks extending from Downtown Boston to West Roxbury, coined the Emerald Necklace, was completed in 1895, nearly two and a half centuries after the founding of the city. What started as a mere public park project for the Fens, a salt marsh in Boston, Olmstead turned into a multi-park proposal which produced five new public parks attached to the existing Boston Common and Public Garden in the city center. Through this design, Olmstead was able to insert a framework into the already densely developed city of Boston. The Emerald Necklace proves that a single all-inclusive park system can successfully cultivate a city's needs while providing a higher standard of living and a path by which the growth and development of the city will follow. Over time, Olmstead's vision has been borne out: the Emerald Necklace has provided a means of stability in a city that has struggled through years of economic and social changes. Even today, the Emerald Necklace still provides orientation, structure and a large community space for the city (Garvin, 2002).

(left to right)
Image 2.11
Park system from Common to Franklin Park,
source: American Cities

Image 2.12
Emerald Necklace, city-framework for Boston

18
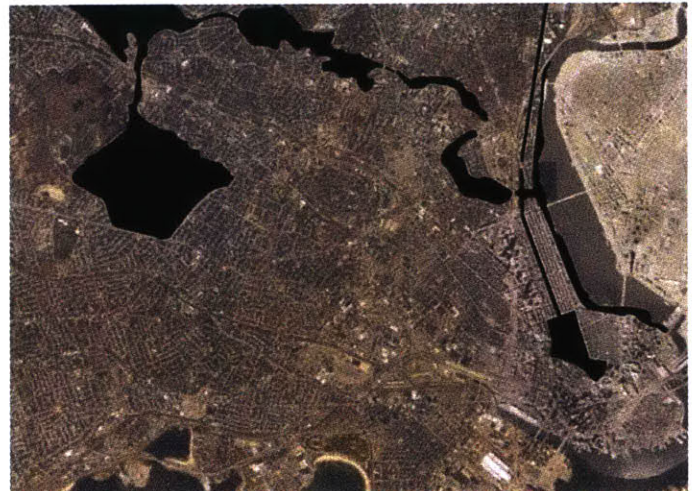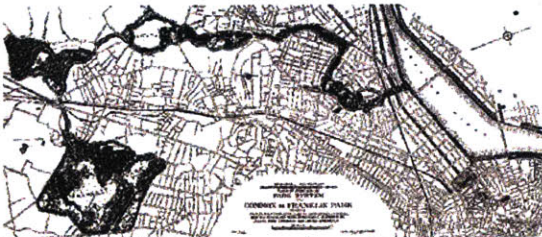
2.4 Architecture as Framework

2.4.1 Bologna, Italy

The character and structure of Bologna is not based on a planned city-layout, but instead on a singular architectural element, the portico. This defining characteristic proliferated throughout Bologna over the centuries, covering thirty-eight kilometers within the old city. However, it is the Portico of San Lorenzo – the longest portico in the world – that gives the city its unique identity.[3] The Portico of San Lorenzo was created to shelter citizens from the rain, snow, and summer sun as they made pilgrimages from the city to the Sanctuary of the Madonna di San Luca on the Guard Hill outside of the main city. This continuous arcade established the backbone around which the city later expanded. This pathway also serves as the symbol of Bologna, having both religious and civic associations (UNESCO, 2007).

(top)
Image 2.13
The porticoe of San Luca in Bologna, Italy

(bottom)
Image 2.14
The Sancturay of San Luca, 1949
source: www.miol.it/ stagniweb/tciauto.htm

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[3] This arcade, known as the Arcade of San Luca, is the longest in the world with 666 arcades and measuring 3.5 kilometers in length (UNESCO, 2007).

2.4.2 Havana Vieja, Cuba[4]

Although enforced by the Spanish regime, Havana, like all the initial townships of Cuba, did not strictly follow the organizing framework of the Law of Indies. Instead, the walled city of Havana eventually found its underlying structure in its dispersed nature of public plazas. A number of churches, monasteries, and convents were established within the old city, and with them came the inland plazas of Havana Vieja. While the layout of the churches decided the location of interior plazas, the governing center near the waterfront also created a series of plazas near the bay.[5] Although at first Havana Vieja seems to have little order, the scattering of plazas across the neighborhood provides different degrees of community space which accommodates either a micro-community (a small portion of the neighborhood) or the entire city. The plazas provide communal places of gathering, and because of the plazas' dispersed locations and ranges of size, orientation and the ability to navigate through the city is aided (Scarpaci, 2002).

(left to right)
Image 2.15
City of Havana, 1773
source: Historic Maps of Havana, *Archivo General de Indias*

Image 2.16
Havana Vieja Plazas,
city-framework for the
old city

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[4] Havana Vieja is also known as Old Havana.

[5] The original coastal *villas* of Cuba placed their main plazas along the waterfront, while land-based *villas* placed their main plaza in the center of important buildings and homes. Residential segregation was practiced in these early settlements where only the white Spanish population could settle around the plaza, and the indigenous population was forced to settle behind the Spanish (Scarpaci, 2002: 20).

2.5   Problematic Cities

There are several cities today that either lack ordering or are losing their framework. Along with the Modernist movement of the 1920s, cities were increasingly designed to accommodate the scale and convenience of the car. These city plans neglected the needs of the pedestrian, and paid little attention to the public realm (Ong, 2005). The other problematic practice happening is that present-day strategies of redevelopment are used on a number of historic cities around the world. This practice has faded out the previously established city-frameworks and leads to a loss of city identity and order. This section examines a sampling of modern-day cities which have either never established a strong framework, or are slowly losing their historic city-framework.

2.6   Poor Planning

### 2.6.1 Los Angeles, California

Los Angeles is an incoherent product of postmodernist thought. The planning of Los Angeles lacks cohesiveness and the expansive growth of the city over time has exacerbated this disjuncture. Today the city has been overrun by mega-block retailers, suburban sprawl and most notably, the overwhelming presence of the highway system. Since its inception, the civic center of Los Angeles has had little effect on city development and the city's isolated layout of structures has hindered the quality of communal activity space. Los Angeles has

(left to right)
Image 2.17
Los Angeles, 1917
source: University of Texas at Autsin

Image 2.18
**Los Angeles sprawl**
source: Robert Hanashiro, *USA Today*

Image 2.19
Aerial photograph of Los Angeles, 2006
source: Google Earth
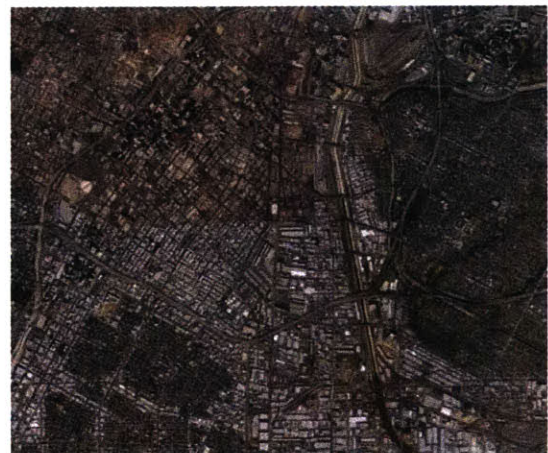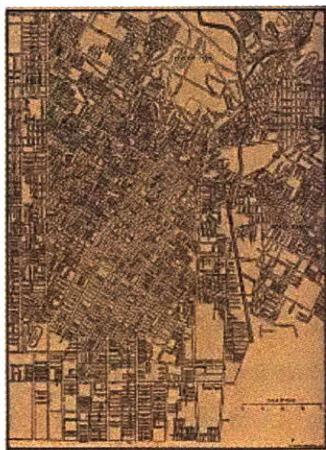
never found a clear city center and has never established any form of built- or infrastructural- identity. Additionally, without any strong landmarks to serve as a means of orientation, the city is difficult to navigate. The absence of a city-framework has resulted in the absence of any form of coherency, community, or city character (Garvin, 2002; Robbins, 2004).

2.6.2 Houston, Texas

Houston is in part a planned city; however rapid expansion stripped the city of any structure that may have once had (Fox, 1985). The rigid square grid of downtown Houston attests to the initial strict layout
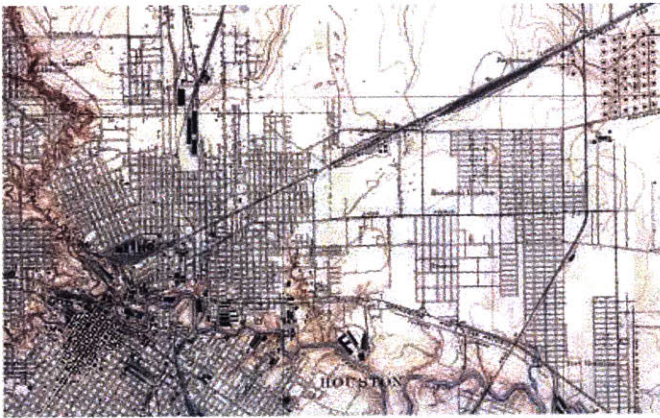
(left to right)
Image 2.20
Northeast Houston 1922
source: University of Texas at Austin, *US Geological Survey*

Image 2.21
**Aerial of Houston, 2006**
source: Google Earth

of Houston. Unfortunately though, planning in the second half of the twentieth century crippled the growth of Houston's city center by designs that accommodated the automobile and not the citizen. Thus the tragedy of this city and its lack of city-framework are bound in its misuse of scale with the introduction of mega-structures and removal of human-scale considerations. Houston's demise as a successful urban place is linked to planning in the 1960s that led to the takeover of former multi-use, pedestrian- and retail-friendly downtown, by the single-use corporate office, coupled with the introduction of the outlying freeways, in particular Loop 610 which encircled the city (Lopate, 1984; Barna, 1998). The city once filled with numerous theatres and small stores was soon replaced by gigantic freestanding towers which

lined the street with parking garage entrances and large corporate-oriented lobbies, removing almost all street life from the city center. Today, these corporate mega-monsters alternate with entire blocks of surface parking lots, over a large portion of downtown Houston. This has made the city an isolated place where businesspeople come to "park, do [their] work, and get out" (Lopate, 1984: 15). Additionally, ease and accessibility of the freeway network lured the remaining commercial centers and residents outside of the city, further making downtown devoid of human life. The proportion and scale of the 1960 planning proved to be far too large and expansive for proper pedestrian use, which has stunted city growth throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and caused the underlying city-framework to fail. In the 1990s, Houston fought to revive its dead downtown and reintroduced aspects that once defined it, such as multi-use commerce and residential housing. This new approach has slowly begun to bring life back into the city center (Barna, 1998).

2.7   Fading Frameworks

2.7.1 Beijing, China

The old city of Beijing has an underlying structure set up nearly 800 years ago; however, continual city development and redevelopment initiated during the early days of the Republic of China and persistent today has begun to destroy this once defining framework. Destruction of the city walls, demolition of *Hu-tongs* within the old city, uncontrolled
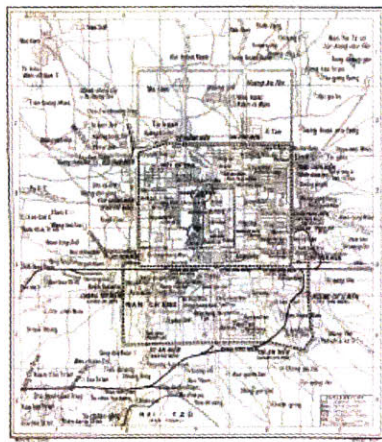
(left to right)
Image 2.22
Beijing and it's environs 1912
source: University of Texas, *Madrolle's Guide Books: Northern China, The Valley of the Blue River, Korea.* Hachette & Companys

Image 2.23
Aerial of Beijing, 2006
source: Google Earth

expansion, and a lack of an overall city plan for modern-day Beijing has led to a loss of identity and coherency within the city.[6] The rapidness of development in Beijing has led to a city filled with numerous new developments that do little to further the city's context. In addition, the common use of the competition process gives the participating designer little to no time or funds to devote an adequate amount of analysis or thought on the project. This results in eye-catching projects whose interest lie in appearance rather than substance. China's desire for modernity has led to numerous large-scale contemporary building projects that have affected the retention and maintenance of the old city structure. The urban fabric of Beijing, defined by the low-scale historic neighborhoods within the city center, is being destroyed, with the removal of an estimated sixty percent of the residential *Hu-tongs*. Thus, the strength of Beijing's old city-framework has been steadily disappearing and the city is transforming into a pincushion of high-rise trophy monuments.

2.7.2 Shanghai, China

Formally organized around the Hongzhou River and uniquely structured by its international neighborhoods, today Shanghai's old city-framework has been overrun by new developments and the city struggles to establish a unified city character. In its search for a more modern identity, coupled with the push for rapid development, Shanghai has become the breeding ground for monumental high-rises, which most often lack any relation to their city context. Like Beijing, the destruction the city's historic residential fabric, the *Li-longs*, has

(left to right)
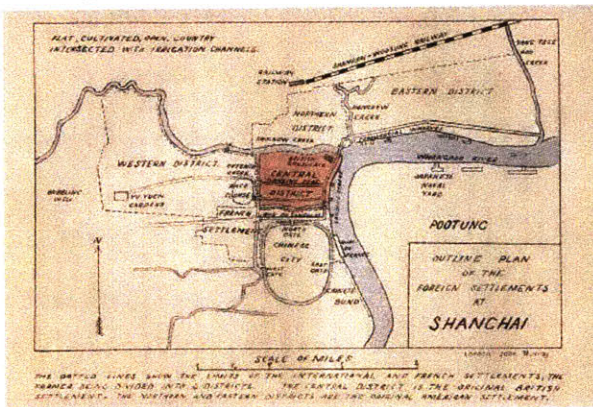**Image 2.24**
Map of foriegn districts of Shanghai, 1907
source: University of Texas at Austin, *Strategical and Commercial Aspect, with Special Reference to the Japanese Alliance*, by Colonel A. M. Murray
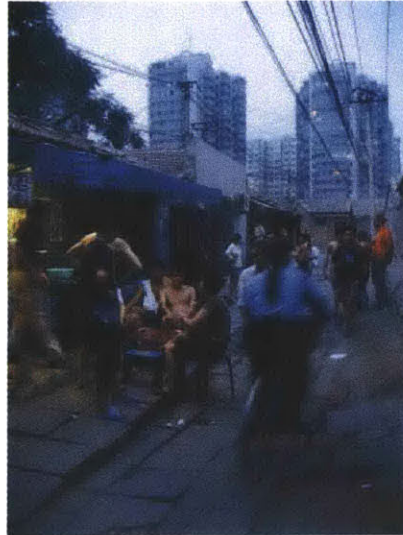
Image 2.5
Aeiral of Shanghai, 2006
source: Google earth

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[6] Hu-tongs were a form of courtyard housing that proliferated throughout Beijing.

been replaced by a city of monuments.[7] Extensive expansions have resulted in a lack of coherency, and have contributed to loss of city identity and the denial of an already-existing city-framework.

(clockwise starting at top left)
Image 2.26
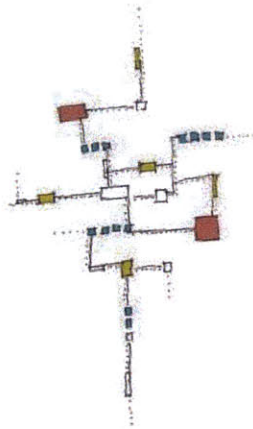**Beijing Hu-tong neighborhood with new high-rise developments in the background**

Image 2.27 + 2.28
Variation of street facades of Colon in Central Havana

[7] Li-longs are a particular form of row housing established within a fishbone distribution of streets. This housing type is unique to Shanghai and for decades gave the city its distinctive character.

Chapter 3

An Alternative Development Strategy

(top to bottom)
Image 3.1
Xintiandi development
in Shanghai
source: Architectural
Record China (archrecord.
construction.com), photo
courtesy of Shui On Land

Image 3.2
Diagram of proposed
strategy

3.1   Current Trends in Development

Many treasures are lost as a result of modern mega-developments. These developments destroy huge portions of historic city fabrics. One contemporary example is Shanghai, China. There have been few actions made to preserve the rapidly disappearing Li-long neighborhoods in the French District, and those that have occurred result in community relocation, neighborhood gentrification, and tourism accommodation. More than just the loss of built form, mega-developments oftentimes also force people to relocate. At times, an entire community is moved to an alternate site, most often in a less desirable location outside of the city. Oftentimes with relocation, these communities are broken apart and their identity is lost and, at times, forgotten.

The design of mega-blocks and monuments has become a popular solution to urban redevelopment.[8] However, these solutions frequently oppose the energy of present neighborhoods and sometimes break apart communities. In a number of American cities, mega-block development has proven to be ineffective in high density settings, being designed more effectively for the scale of the car than the pedestrian. Over time, American planners have increasingly sought to improve the pedestrian experience, to activate and enhance the public realm,

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[8] The Monument Strategy does not refer to adding monuments, but instead it refers to designing buildings which serve as global landmarks.

and to establish linkages which create neighborhoods. Unfortunately many new developments in emergent cities, like those in China, are adopting the mega-block module as a solution to urban planning today (Ong, 2005). Consider the Monument Strategy. Although successful in accommodating for large densities, this development strategy, when improperly overused and not contextualized, causes the city to turn into the breeding ground for a collection of singular architectural trophy projects that ignore one another and their context. An obvious example of this can be seen across mainland Shanghai, which is dotted with numerous skyscrapers.

Due to the threatening nature of present development procedures, an alternative approach of working within the city needs to be devised, one that does not destroy cultural identity, dismiss the idea of accommodating for present residents, or allow the takeover of aristocratic or tourist-oriented development. Ideally, a strategy is needed that will preserve and foster the expression of cultural identity, strengthen the cohesive nature of "community" and "neighborhood," and intensify the neighborhood's connection to the surrounding city.

3.2   Rules of Redeployment

This architectural thesis proposes a web-like alternative to the present urban mega-developments. When employed, this strategy creates an interconnected relationship between building program and community. Implementation of this strategy hinges on architectural compliance to a new set of urban redevelopment vocabulary and new rules of implementation. These rules are as follows:

Image 3.3
Urban landscape of Shanghai

Rule 1. Establish a program that cultivates and strengthens the communal identity or culture.

Rule 2. Conduct an investigation of the built environment to identify developable space, by labeling areas such as buildings of high-value, buildings of grave deterioration, and vacant lots.

Rule 3. Determine a number of nodes within the new patchwork-site of developable space established in Rule 2. Each node represents the intensity of key components of the neighborhood's character, circulation, activities, while considering the neighborhood's relationship to areas beyond its boundaries.

Rule 4. Disassemble the established program by breaking it up into its essential parts.

Rule 5. Reconstruct the program so that it fits into one of the following vocabularies of space and size:

Space:

    a. Through Space (Singular Transitional Space)

    b. Gathering Space (Field)

    c. Recreation Space (Field)

    d. Reflection/Individual/Quiet Space

    e. Exhibition Space (Field)

    f. Interactive/Transformable Space (Field)

    g. Privately Public Space

    h. Publicly Private Space

Size:

    i. Singular Space

    j. Couple/Small Group Space

    k. Large Group Space

Rule 6. Create a web of the pieces of the reconstructed program, dispersing them through the neighborhood. Such a strategy should create a perceived and apparent framework that unifies both the initial devised program and the community in a non-hierarchical manner.

Rule 7. Use native materials and elements of nature and construction to both strengthen the unification of the dispersed built space and to integrate the new program into its urban environment.

These rules are intentionally flexible to allow for cross-cultural application. Beyond distributing the buildings throughout the

neighborhood, the success of this development strategy relies upon the establishment of a program that reflects and cultivates cultural identity within the neighborhood. Thus, with each application the program will change, depending on the cultural preferences of the city and/or neighborhood. For instance, if this strategy were to be employed in Charleston, South Carolina, a textile factory for weaving palm baskets might be the appropriate program for a neighborhood. Alternatively, if this strategy was to be employed in Shanghai, China, a recycling center may be the best choice of program for one of the working-class Li-long neighborhoods.

The vocabulary that is set forth above purposely describes a function rather than a form. This ensures that the core framework of functional space is created and communal integration with the new program is properly established. Given this vocabulary, the architect is allowed more flexibility to assimilate and sculpt these terms to the given neighborhood and to the established building program, ultimately encouraging the architect to use creative intuition. Moreover, this flexibility allows the urban strategy to be universally adaptable, making it applicable to a large range of cities. But such a strategy can only be adopted after the architect understands the cultural and historical contours of the city.

Image 3.6
Sweetgrass basket maker, Charleston
source: National Geographic, photographed by Raymond Gehman

Image 3.7
Transportaion of used glass for recycling, Shanghai

Chapter 4

Repelling the Threat of Cultural Homogenization: Havana, Cuba

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Two showed what has historically made a city-framework successful or unsuccessful. In Chapter Three, the successful elements were articulated into a set of rules (or a vocabulary) through which to make a robust and adaptable city-framework that should be executable across the world. These rules need to be adaptable so as to best serve the unique cultures and communities of each city. This chapter shall describe the environment we plan to redesign: the Colón district in Havana, Cuba. By reviewing the political realm, cultural conditions, and previous development history of Havana, the groundwork is set for proposing a city redesign, the subject of Chapter 5.

4.2 Fear of Redevelopment

The mega-block and the Monument are two popular forms of development vocabulary commonly used to build within existing urban fabric in today's cities. As stated in Chapter 2, these solutions undermine the core spirit of a neighborhood and oftentimes split communities. Gentrification, community relocation and the loss of the public realm are thus characterizing the nature of city centers. Thus, it is not surprising that the lower-income residents of Shanghai's

Images 4.1 - 4.3
Scences from Havana

**Image 4.4
Frequent effects of
redevelopment in
the urban fabric**

**Image 4.5
Havana's fear of the
outside influence on
redevelopment**

old Li-long housing are being forced to relocate to sites outside of the city to make way for entertainment outlets or expensive new high-rise condos that accommodate for bourgeoisie and tourists.[9]

Due to present political conditions in its country, Havana, the capital city of Cuba, is almost untouched by capitalistic tendencies to redevelopment. Recently, when the Soviet Union dissolved in the early 1990s, Cuba was forced to open its markets to other world nations, increasingly exposing itself to greater international influences. This international exposure threatens Havana as the city may soon find itself on the path which other world cities are following today: towards a loss of identity.

4.3   Development of Havana

4.3.1 History of Havana

Havana is the cultural, political, and economic center of Cuba, although its beginning was much more humble. San Cristóbal del la Habana (Havana) was first established in 1514 along the southwest coast of Cuba, a site just southeast of its present-day location. It was not until late 1519 that the city relocated itself to its permanent location along Cuba's northwest coastline, on the western bank of a large deepwater bay called Bahia de la Habana (Havana Bay). Originally, Havana was a modest port, with Santiago de Cuba being the island's main city and government center. Havana was privileged by its location. The little city was the closest port to the Gulf Stream, the major highway of the Atlantic Ocean. By 1533, the government of Cuba moved from Santiago de Cuba to Havana.

With the completion of the required street grid (as per the conditions set forth in the Law of the Indies) Spain granted Havana status as a royal city by the late sixteenth century. Spain briefly lost control of Cuba in 1762 when England successfully raided and took control of Havana. Spain regained control of Cuba a year later and the city subsequently would become the most heavily fortified city in all the Americas. By 1767, the encompassing city wall was finally completed.

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[9] One example is the development happening around Xintindi, a preserved portion of the neighborhood that is now used for exclusive bars, cafes, and boutiques, whose prices are too expensive for even a mid-class Shanghainese resident.
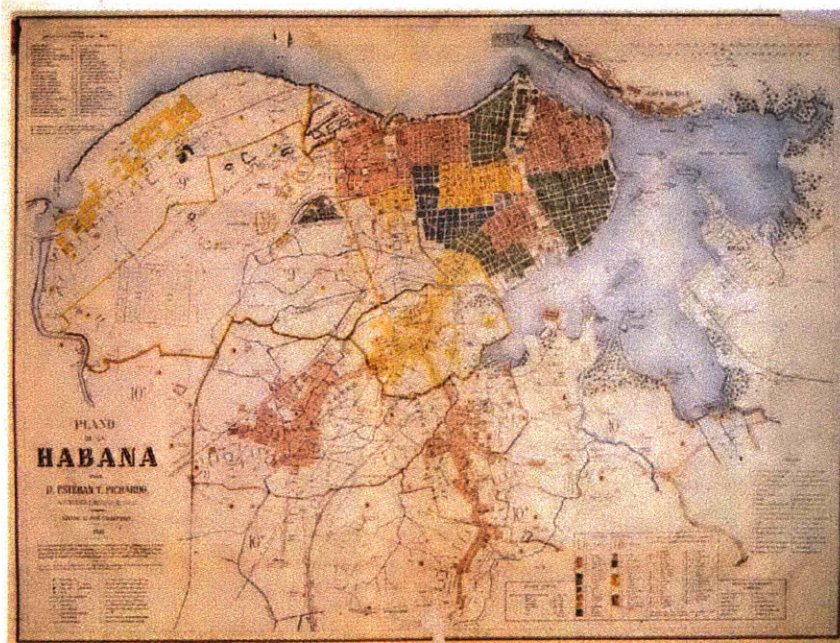
(top to bottom)
Image 4.6
Town settlements of Cuba, 1512-1528
source: Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis

Image 4.7
Havana 1829
source: Havana Vieja: mapas y planos en los archivos de España, *Museo Naval*

Image 4.8
Havana 1881
source: Havana Vieja: mapas y planos en los archivos de España,

By the nineteenth century, the city began to expand beyond the city walls as a result of the success of the surrounding sugar cane industry, and money soon flowed into the neighborhoods outside of the city walls. Soon afterwards, and only a century after its completion, the city walls were torn down to accommodate for city growth.

The prosperity from the sugar and agricultural industries led to urban and suburban sprawl with in Havana. Coupled with the addition of city parks and promenades throughout the expanding city, Havana began to achieve its visual splendor. However, there were many interruptions. The Ten Year's War (1868-78), followed by the War of Independence (1895-98) delayed city development and paralyzed the economy. Nevertheless, with the establishment of the first Cuban Republic following victory in the War of Independence, coupled with U.S. assistance, Havana's city growth and prosperity resumed and gained speed. The U.S. introduced a number of public works to spur Havana's growth as a modern city, pouring money into the city until the 1950s. During this time, affluent suburban neighborhoods (which were influenced by American design) expanded westward, greatly increasing the size of Havana. This time-period was particularly hallmarked by a large increase in hotels, casinos, and nightclub establishments throughout the city, a response to Havana's burgeoning tourist industry.

Havana's uniform cityscape began to be penetrated in the 1950s by a number of high-rise offices and apartments in the gentrified areas. Nevertheless, the overall pre-revolutionary Havana was a sprawling, low-rise city, compact to the east and spread out to the west. With

(left to right)
Image 4.9
Riviera Hotel

Image 4.10
Club Tropicana

Image 4.11
Habana Libre, formerly the Hilton Hotel
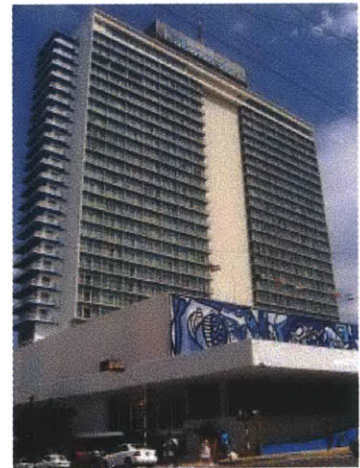
the exception of the elite neighborhoods and the growing shantytowns outside of the city, the vivacity of Havana's cityscape during the first half of the twentieth century grew as city neighborhoods became more racially and socially integrated.

In 1959, with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, a pessimism toward urban life developed. Initially, the new government's development strategy ignored the city in favor of the countryside, an effort which tried to equalize the standards of life among the urban and rural population. At this time, Cuba became a type of spokesperson for the developing Latin American countries. For example, Havana's hosting of an International Art Biennale brought global attention to the Latin and Caribbean American art scene. Notwithstanding the prestige it held among other developing nations, Cuba could not prevent its cities from physical deterioration. Economic shortages, coupled with the U.S. embargo prevented Havana from acquiring sufficient resources to reverse the decay. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba's largest financial supporter, Havana found itself turning to tourism as its main source of income. Today, major preservation efforts have finally been undertaken, and they are beginning to have positive effects. Many parts of Havana Vieja, especially the tourist areas, have already been restored and there are many more such projects that are presently underway, especially extending into the Malecon and into Central Havana (Scarpaci, 2002).
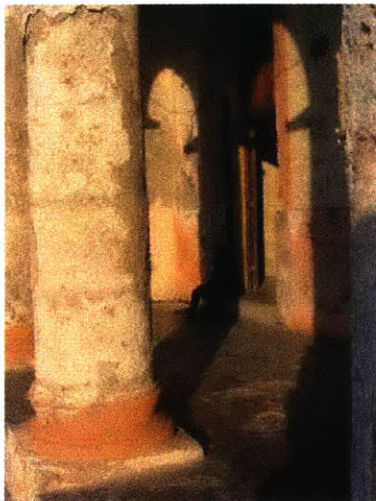
Images 4.12 + 4.13
Deteriation due to lack of maintenace

Image 4.14
China Town, Havana

4.3.2 Cultural Composition

Unlike many other Latin American countries, in Cuba there is little to no trace left of the original island natives. Forced into slavery, the island's indigenous population was treated brutality by the Spanish, but they were also exposed to a number of infectious foreign diseases. Coupled with their repeated uprisings (and the corresponding suppressions by the government), the indigenous people soon disappeared from Cuba.

The elimination of the native population forced the Spaniards to look for other sources of cheap slave labor. Importation of African slaves was the first solution to this problem. However, Africa was not the only source for cheap labor. By the mid-nineteenth century, a wave of Chinese indentured workers also began to immigrate into the country. Nonetheless since then, intermarriages and outward migration has greatly reduced the number of remaining Cuban-Chinese. On the other hand, the population of *mulatos*, a mix of African and Spaniard blood, were gradually rising throughout the island. In Cuban culture, it was customary – and even expected – for creoles (Cuban-born Spainard) and *peninsulares* (Spaniards born in Spain) to maintain an Afro-Cuban mistress within the home. The bastard children of these Spaniard fathers and their mistresses were usually granted freedom, typically assuming the fathers' surnames when they reach adulthood. With the decrease in slave importation, the white population was measured at 67% in 1899, a 25% increase since 1841.

Due to its heavy ties with Spain, Cuba has traditionally been – and remains – strongly Roman Catholic in origin. Throughout their history, Cubans have also proven to be remarkably tolerant (and even welcoming) to immigrants of other religious backgrounds. During the twentieth century, Cuba accepted many refugees from war-torn Europe and with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Cuba also accepted numerous Jewish, Greek Orthodox, and Arabic immigrants. Cuba was actually the most open and friendly country to Jews in the Americas, who entered in large numbers for the first time in 1881 (Scarpaci, 2002).

4.4   Project Site: El Barrio de Colón

In 1843, the area beyond the city walls was known as the neighborhood of Colón. Originally part of the San Larazo neighborhood, Colón achieved its own identity as Havana began to modernize. During the late nineteenth century, the city outside the walls became a desired locale, with the addition of the *Alameda de Paula* (today the *Paseo de Prado*), a tree-lined boulevard used by the elite for afternoon carriage rides, and the city Playhouse (*El Principio*). In the decades following, social clubs, art schools, recreational parks, and cultural centers, not to mention Havana's first hotels and even the first city newspaper, established themselves outside of the city wall. By 1863, the city

Barrio de Colon

walls were destroyed, strengthening the connection between Colón and the Havana Vieja. Later that century, the center of Havana had moved outside the walled city, a location which had gradually become preferred by the people of Havana (Rey, 2002). With the completed construction of the Capital Building (*El Capitolio*) across from *Parque Central* in 1929 (Sacrpaci, 2002), a significant governmental shift was added to the image of this city center.

The district of Colón is 0.5 square kilometers, and is defined by four main streets: the *Malecon* (street bordering the sea wall) to the north, *Calle Reina* to the South, the *Paseo de Prado* to the east, and *Calle Galiano* to the west. *Calle Neptuno* splits the neighborhood in half with the *Barrio Chino* (Chinatown) to the south and *Barrio de Colón* (Colón neighborhood) to the north. For the purposes of this study, only the *Barrio de Colón* was considered as the project site (Rey, 2002).[10]

Although the area outside the old city was a mixture of recreational and commercial intuitions for the wealthy and residential neighborhood for the working class, the pattern of Colón's growth is still quite peculiar. Despite being first defined by elitist homes and institutions to the east, along the Paseo de Prado, and later to the north, along the Malecon, the wealth along the neighborhood's border, minus a small number of isolated constructions, never filtered into its interior.

The origins of this neighborhood go to the sixteenth century when a number of military barracks were created outside of the

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[10] Henceforth Colón will refer solely to the neighborhood north of *Calle Neptuno*.
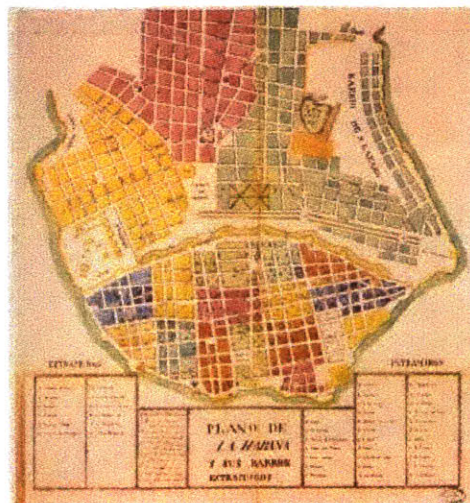
Images 4.16
Map of Havana 1829
source: Havana, Vieja: mapas y planos en los archivos de España,

Employment Spectrum of Colon Residents 2001   Concerns Held by Colon Residents, 2001
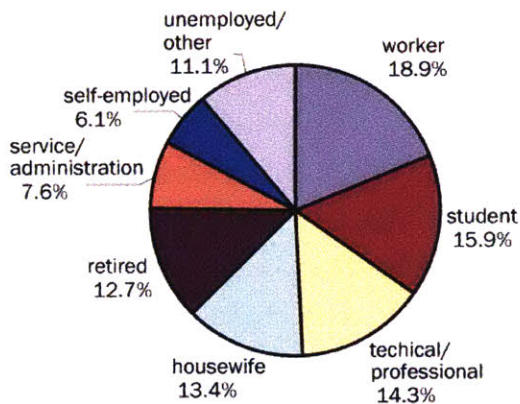
unemployed/
other
11.1%

worker
18.9%

self-employed
6.1%

service/
administration
7.6%

student
15.9%

retired
12.7%

housewife
13.4%

techical/
professional
14.3%

social discipline
14.6%

recreation space
15.0%

deteriation
53.4%

poor services
17.0%
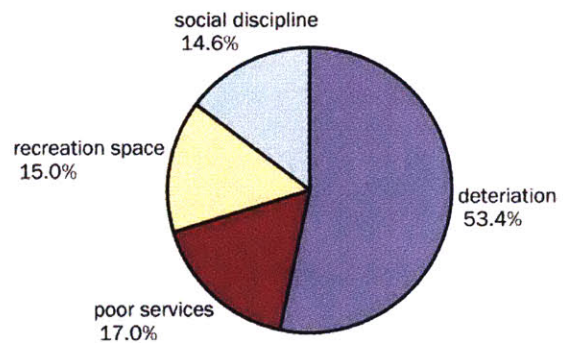
city walls. During the Cuban War of Independence, this area again served as housing for the military, but this time for American aides, a phenomenon which gave Colón a good reputation. The interior of Colón would eventually become a working-class neighborhood (Rey, 2002).

The interior of Colón is made of buildings from a variety of styles, differing in floor height and volume, and creating an eclectic and playful mix to the street-lined facades of the neighborhood. Neoclassical design is the dominant style found in the neighborhood; however, certain areas of Colón are quite assorted, a response to modernity that looked to American and European styles instead of Spanish. There are also various isolated examples of buildings designed in the decorative and organic fashion of the Art Nouveau. Most of these homes occupy small and medium dimensions, integrating by proportion and height into the urban context. Art Deco is another isolated form commonly found within Colón. This style is easily integrated into the neighborhood fabric since its characteristics harmonize with the randomness already established (Rey, 2002).

With the growth of tourism, in addition to poor education and a large class gap, Colón had transformed by the 1950s into the most notorious prostitution district in Havana. However, this was soon to change with the establishment of the Castro regime in 1959, which suppressed the trafficking of prostitution. Also during the early years of the regime, availability of education and work opportunities

increased within Colón, but it could not escape the reality that the physical conditions of the neighborhood were rapidly deteriorating. Subsequently, due to its prime location and cheap rent, Colón soon became the destination for many legal and illegal migrants from the countryside (Rey, 2002).

With the increase of tourism in the 1990s, following the demise of the Soviet Union, prostitution returned to the streets of Colón. Correspondingly, the neighborhood's crime level has increased and drug trafficking has become more apparent. Today the neighborhood suffers from infrastructural deterioration, poor maintenance, and chronic service shortages, and a glaring lack of any open recreational space. However, unlike the early part of the twentieth century, the population of Colón is generally well educated and includes a range of respectable professionals among its residents (Rey, 2002).

Colón is void of an underlying organizational structure and a strong cohesive community. It lacks an original planned framework, like the garden squares of Savannah, or even the plazas of Havana Vieja, which bring coherency to the town and foster a sense of community. Like the insertion of the Emerald Necklace into Boston's cityscape in the late nineteenth century, Colón would benefit from the integration of some form of community-cultivating framework which brings order to the neighborhood.
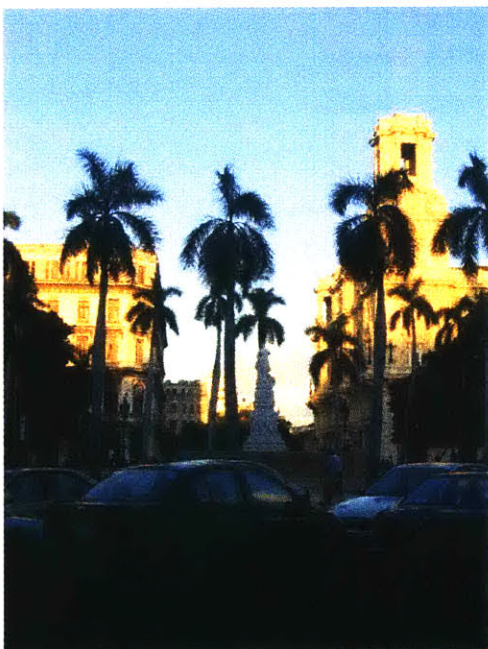
4.5   The Three "P"s of Havana's Public Space

Public space is highly valued throughout Havana. Plazas, parks and promenades – three types of public space in Havana – are filled with people during most hours of the day. The popularity of outdoor public spaces is largely due to good weather and tight living conditions within the home (especially in central and old Havana). The three types of public spaces are manifested in a number of different forms throughout Havana, all providing some form of service to the people.

Havana Vieja has a number of open street plazas (like *Plaza Catedral*) as well as tree-filled plazas (like *Plaza de las Armas*). Located on the border of Havana Vieja and Central Havana are two popular tree-filled parks, *Parque Central* and *Parque Fraternidad*. The oldest promenade is the quaint tree-lined road with a pedestrian walkway running down the center, the *Paseo de Prado*, immediately bordering the east edge of Colón. The most impressive promenade, however, is the *Malecon*. This open public space hugs the coast stretching all the way from Havana Veija westward to Miramar. The tradition of building plazas continues in modern Havana. While a number of them represent new contemporary designs, others have innovatively used the open space within the ruins of collapsed and deteriorated building to create a new type of public space.

(left to right)
Image 4.17
Plaza Central

Image 4.18
Plaza Fraternidad

Image 4.19
Plaza Vieja

Each one of these public spaces at the basic level serves as gathering space for the local residents. However they are more than that – they are in essence extensions of the home, a type of outdoor living room. Due to the city's high density (especially in Old and Central Havana) and lack of living space, entire families find themselves living in small apartments, inadequate for any form of real privacy. *Habaneros* are forced to find private places in the public realm, hence the sea wall of the Malecon becomes a private space for two lovers, or the park benches of *Parque Central* become the table for a game of dominoes between two old friends. They also serve as places of commerce. *Plaza de las Armas*, for example, is used every day by locals to sell and buy new and used books. Another importance aspect of public space in Havana is that they provide the needed space for recreational activity. Even the relatively narrow width of the *Paseo de Prado* serves as a safe place off the street for children to play games.

The problem facing Colón is the lack of any form of public space within its interior. The neighborhood is certainly large and populous enough to warrant the need for its own park or plaza. The installation of a well-placed public outdoor area should help unify, strengthen, and order the neighborhood.
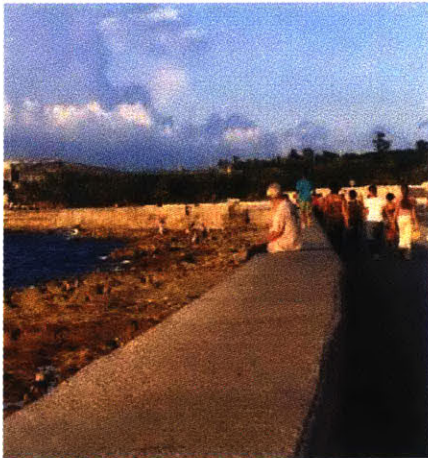
(left to right)
Image 4.20
The Malecon

Image 4.21
The Paseo de Prado
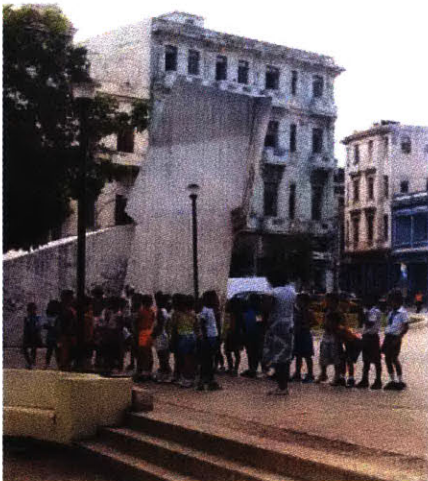
(left to right)
Image 4.22
Contemporary plaza
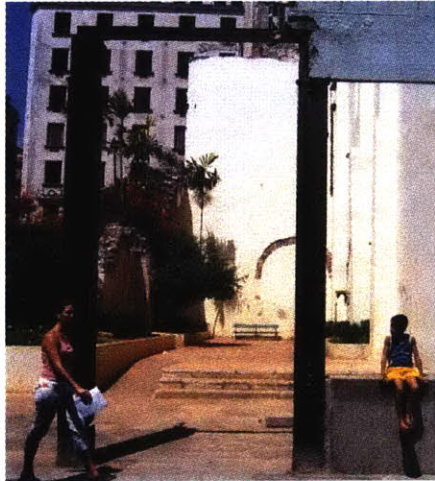
Image 4.23
Contemporary plaza
using part of former
building facade

(left to right)
Image 4.24
Book sale in the Plaza de
las Armas
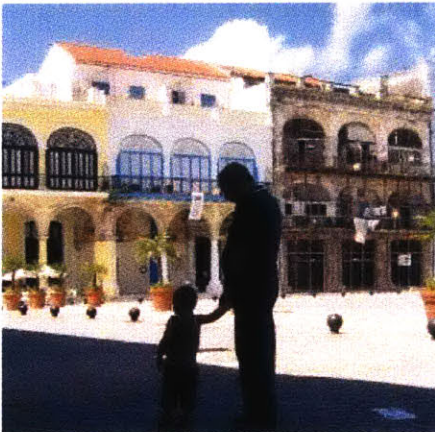
Image 4.25
Plaza Vieja

Chapter 5

Case Study: National School of the Arts, Urban Campus

5.1 Qualification

The fear of international redevelopment, coupled with the lack of framework in the neighborhood, makes Colón a qualified case study for the development strategy put forth by this thesis. The following breaks down the process of design development as it relates to the rules of execution established in Chapter 3.

5.2 Developing a Cultural Nexus in Colon

5.2.1 Rule 1: Establishment of Program to Strengthen Community Identity

Program for Colón = National Art School

Over the past few decades, international art exhibitions have traveled to once-neglected developing countries, allowing for a successful addition of an alternate level of criticism and interpretation to the once-elitist world of international art. A prime catalyst to this international acceptance was the Havana Biennale, founded in 1984. Artwork shown in these exhibitions, like *Marquilla Cigarrera Cubana*, produced by Los Carpinteros, shown in 1994 during the 5th Havana Biennale, expressed an assertion of artistic critique of the state through the use of metaphor and double meanings (Figuero, 2001).

(top to bottom)
Image 5.1
Art Installation on Havana's Fort,
1, 2, 3 Probando

Image 5.2
Trocadero Street in Colon

By provoking critical thought of political and social issues through the use of metaphor, Cuban artists of late have been able to bring their critiques front and center, even evading censorship from the present government (ibid).

Moreover, the cultural and critical debate concerning the nature of Cuban identity, *cubanidad*, has been a key component to Cuban art and society for over a century, arising as early as the late nineteenth century during Cuba's War for Independence. By the 1920s the Arts – themselves an important venue for the expression of identity – fully embraced *cubanidad* as a central theme. With the Socialist victory of the 1959 Revolution, the new government policies and the growth of nationalistic expatriates has further intensified and challenged the character of *cubanidad* and the characterization of Cuban nationalism (Loomis, 1999). Art today still plays a large role in the everyday life of a *Habanero.* Art galleries are spotted throughout the old and central city, and public weekend art exhibitions in community spaces like along the Paseo de Prado are not uncommon. Whether it be through plastic arts, music, film, or performance, the world of art has been an important source of Cuban expression, cultivating a national identity, *as well as* an individualized identity.

Image 5.3 *Marquilla Cigarrera Cubana,* **by Los Carpinteros**

The current buildings for the School of the Arts, while revolutionary and exciting, have inadequately served the modern needs of the Cuban artist community. Following years of neglect, lack of maintenance,

and vegetative overgrowth, the facility is far from adequate to serve as Cuba's international stage, the role it was originally intended to fill (Loomis, 1999). Additionally, the School cannot remain solely outside of the city, as it must play a more integral part in the Havana community. Furthermore, the emergent fields in the contemporary art world are finding traditional art galleries and studios inadequate for the cultural commentaries and explorations. Artists such as Carlos Garaicoa, Ezequiel Suárez, and Ernesto Leal have begun to draw on the urban fabric as their laboratory.

These factors together lend support to the notion of relocating Havana's National School of the Art from the suburbs to the city and provide proof that an art school would be the ideal program for the neighborhood of Colón. This urban campus will weave itself into the city fabric while facilitating students, citizens, and even the occasional tourists. Housing formal and informal galleries, studios, classrooms and living spaces, the art school will strive to provide a new type of civic and cultural framework that will help intensify communal identity and culture.

Present location Art School   Plan of Old Art School   Move Art School to Urban Center

Diagram 1

5.2.2 Rule 2: Determine Developable Space through Investigations of Built Environment

Through information gathered from Georgina Rey's published study on the neighborhood of Colón, a graphic charting of the neighborhood's built environment was obtained. Looking at foundational stability, degrees of building importance, and structural stability, a more comprehensive understanding the neighborhood was composed. Through comparing these categories a patchwork of developable space was determined, allowing development to take place on vacant lots, and in areas of where building were in grave fear of collapse however avoid all lot that contained building of high value to the neighborhood.

structural foundation of city block

high   medium   low

value of building

very high   high

buildings' level of deterioration

very high   high   observed

zones of structural stability

buildings to preserve
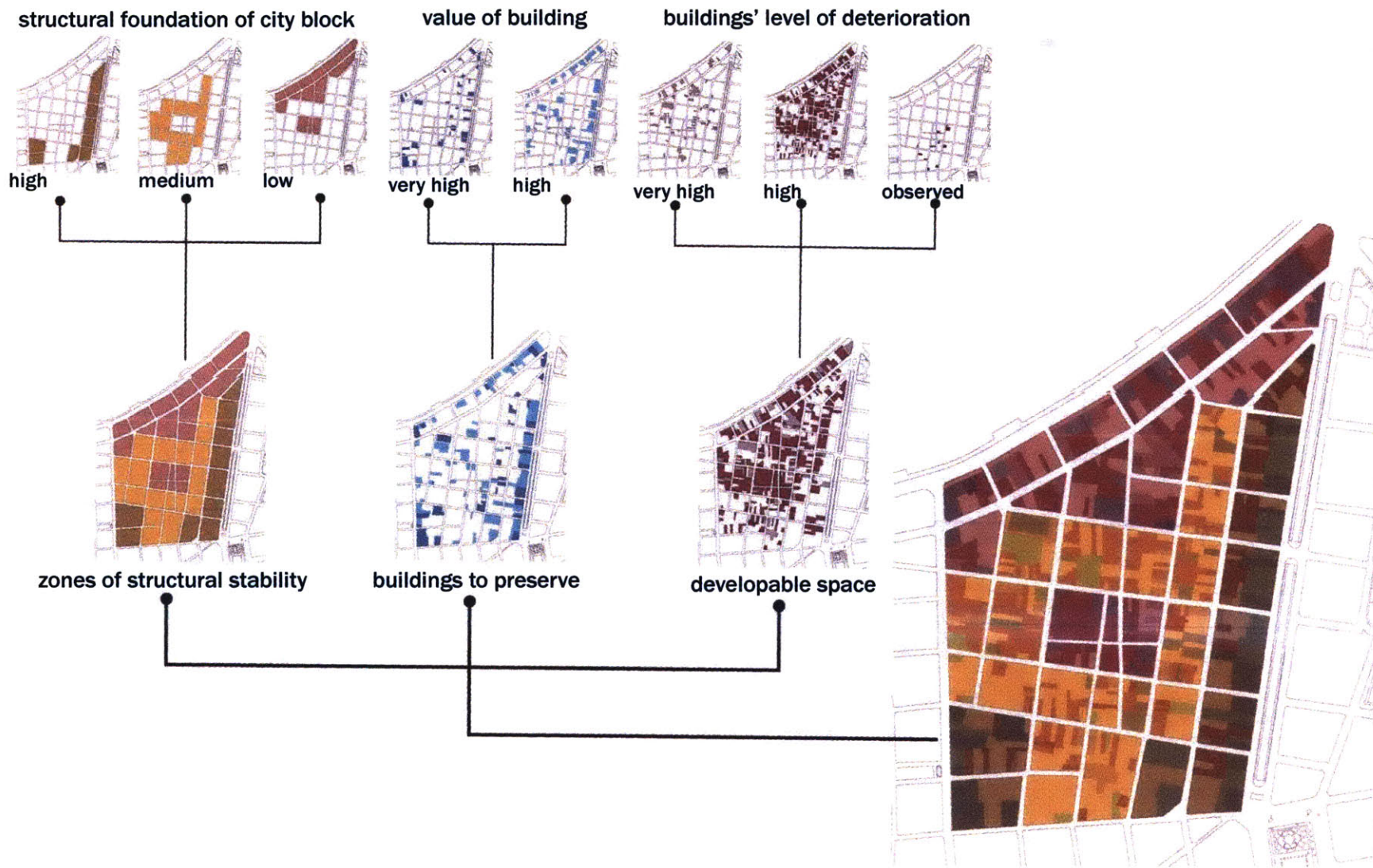
developable space

Diagram 2: Anaylsis of the Urabn Fabric of Colon which helped to determine developable space

5.2.3 Rule 3: Determine Nodes

Physical exploration of the site, combined with a mental map of the neighborhood allowed for the construction of post-visit diagrams based upon intensity nodes. Through visual and experiential understanding of circulation, changing street activity and neighborhood character became a means by which to capture spatial recollection of the neighborhood. On an aerial map of Colón, the strategic placement of pins in locations deemed developable in Rule 2, as well as on street corners and at entrances into the neighborhood, laid out a set of points from which the nexus would evolve. A string was then tied onto a pin located at an entrance to the neighborhood. Through observance of other people interacting in Colón, preferred circulation routes through the neighborhood were developed. The string was wrapped around a sequence of neighboring pins, creating a path that enters and exits the neighborhood. This action was performed several times starting and stopping at a combination of different entrances into Colón.

The exercise revealed four intense nodes of activity and circulation in the neighborhood. This information was then reevaluated and translated into second diagram, where the density of paper strips was used to represent the potential character and activity level within the identified nodes.

(left to right)
Image 5.6
Detain of Node in
Diagram 3

Image 5.8
Detail of Node in
Diagram 4

Diagram 3

Diagram 4

5.2.4 Rule 4: Disassemble Program

In the proposed program, the Art School was divided into four categories: academic, housing, urban garden, and a program category. The program category includes all the studio-based classes within the art school, including Mass, Surface, and Performance. The Mass component refers to the study of any form of art that involves the composition of three dimensional objects. The Surface component involves any media that is exhibited in a two-dimensional format. This includes the emerging art of digital media. The Performance component includes theatre, music, performance art, and film. The academic category (Thought) includes the classroom-based portion of the curriculum, including courses in History and Theory.

These main components were then further disassembled into loose categories of function, such as display, workshop, tools, exhibition, research, work, technology, history, theory, reflection, gathering, eating, practice, transformable, open, public, and private.

MASS work
WORKSHOPS
DISPLAY
MACHINES
TOOLS
INDIVIDUAL

SURFACE work
MEDIA/ MEDIUM/ STORAGE
EXHIBITION
IT TECH PRINT
STUDIOS
INDIVIDUAL

THOUGHT info./ reflection
FOOD
LECTURE
GROUP REFLECTION
CLASSROOMS
GATHER

Garden relax/desplay
PUBLICALLY PRIVATE SPACES
REFLECTIVE (individual)
GATHERING (group)
OTHER (exhibition, recreation)

PERFORMANCE work
IT
PRACTICE
FORMAL DISPLAY
RESEARCH

HOUSING home/ studios
PRIVATELY PUBLIC SPACE (courtyard for housing)
TRANSFERABLE INTERIOR SPACE
OTHER (gathering, exhibition, tranferable, recreation)

5.2.5 Rule 5: Reassemble the Program

With help from the information gathered on nodes of circulation and activity in Rule 3, a series of collages were used to weave the program back together within the context of the neighborhood. Using a range of scales of photocopied strips of contemporary Cuban Artwork, the intensity of the nodes was reestablished through the distribution and boldness of color. Comparing the collages to the distributed spaces deemed developable in Rule 2 and thinking about how the disassembled program of Rule 4 might fit into one of the eight vocabularies of space (listed under Rule 5 in Chapter 3), three proposals for the distribution of the program were developed.

The first proposal shows the establishment of three campus plazas around which the program categories of Mass, Surface and Performance are assigned. Elements of the Thought component of the program were found dispersed within each plaza as well. Housing and Urban Gardens were then used as extensions from the plazas into the neighborhood creating the linking web that connected all three plazas and reached out to the rest of the city. The second proposal maintained the establishment of the three campus plazas of Mass, Surface and Performance, but used the combination of Housing, Thought and Urban Gardens in more definite linear fashion that solely the separate plazas together. The final of the three proposals highlighted the possibility of assembling the program into four plazas centered on Mass, Surface, Performance and Thought. However in this proposal, elements of these program components extended beyond the plaza and into the neighborhood's fabric as well. Housing and urban gardens were again used as a means to connect the four plazas to each other and to the rest of the city.

The three proposals were fused together to create a final reassembling of the program. In this layout the four components of Mass, Surface, Performance and Thought are maintained within four separate plazas located in the pre-established nodes within Colón. The studios and classrooms of the four program components spill out into the open public plazas that serve as public plaza for Colón and learning environments for the students. The plazas are connected to one another and to the outside city through definite
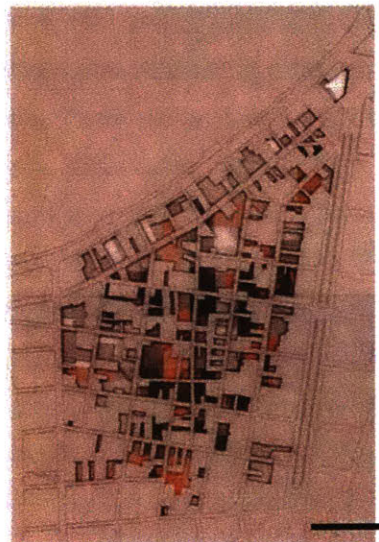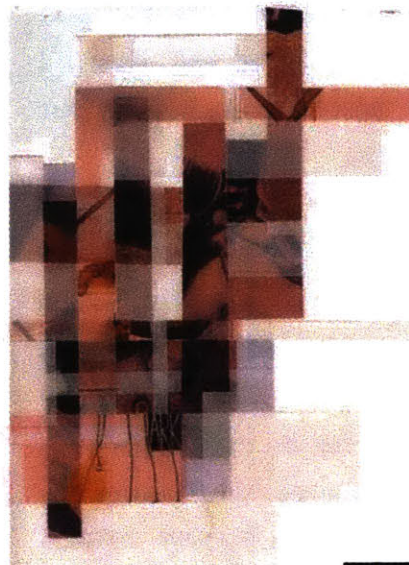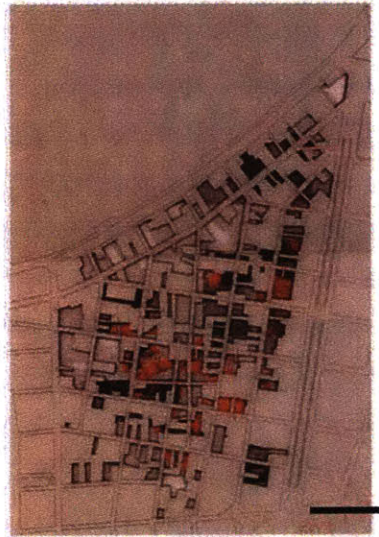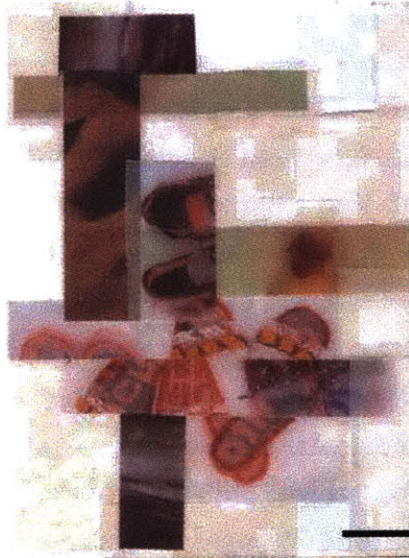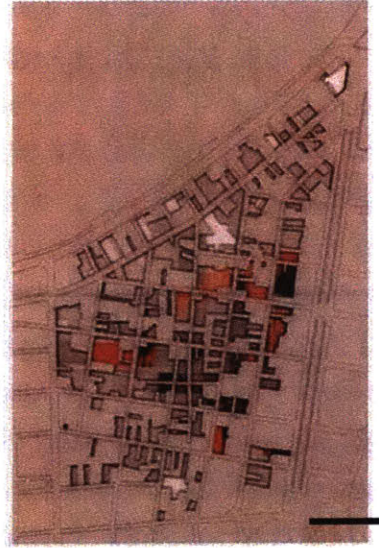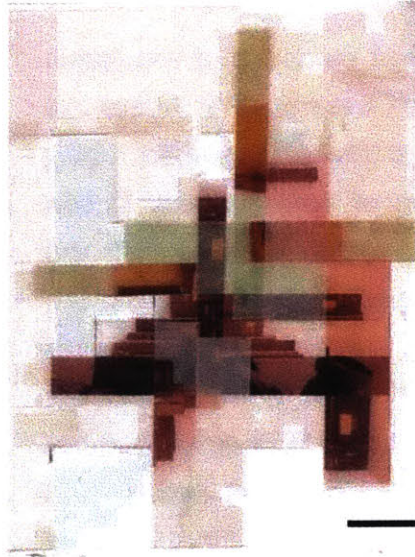
Sculpture Studios
Plaza attached to Sculture Studios
Surface Studios
Plaza attached to Surface Studios
Performance Studios
Plaza attached to Performance Studios
Thought Classrooms
Plaza attached to Thought Classrooms
Housing and Urban Gardens
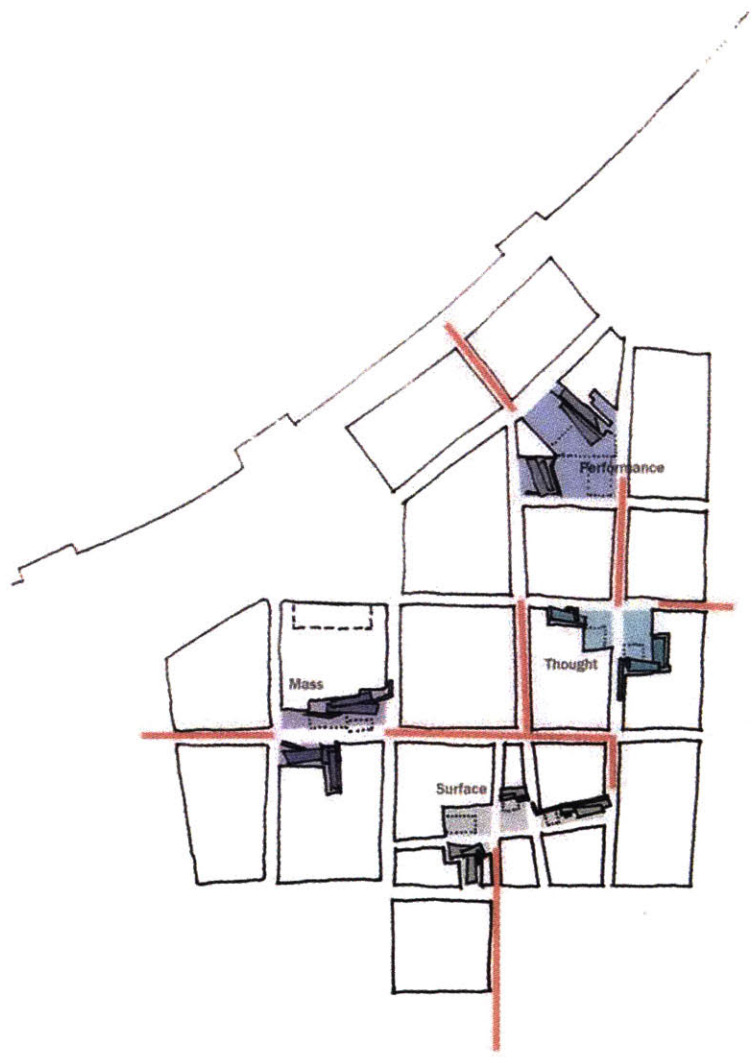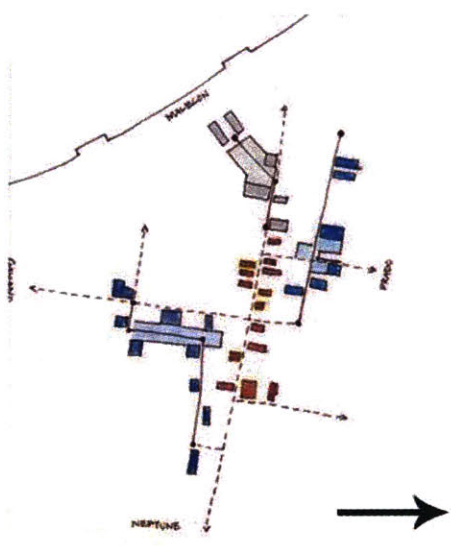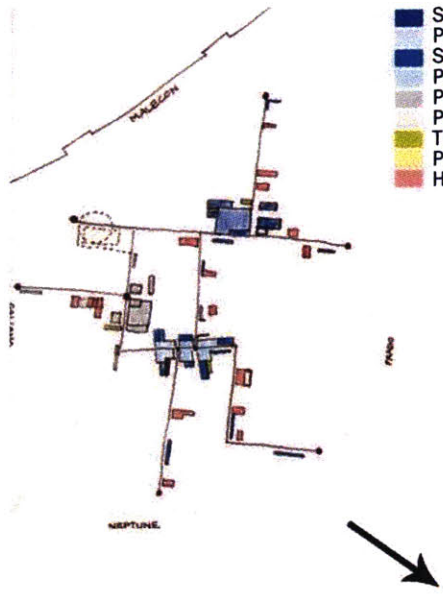
linear patches of Housing and Urban Garden that weave themselves into the neighborhood's fabric. The public spaces created throughout the art school's reassembled program create a mediating space that connects the school with the neighborhood and serves as a public area that encourages local expression and the strengthening of neighborhood identity and cohesiveness.

Vocabulary of Space
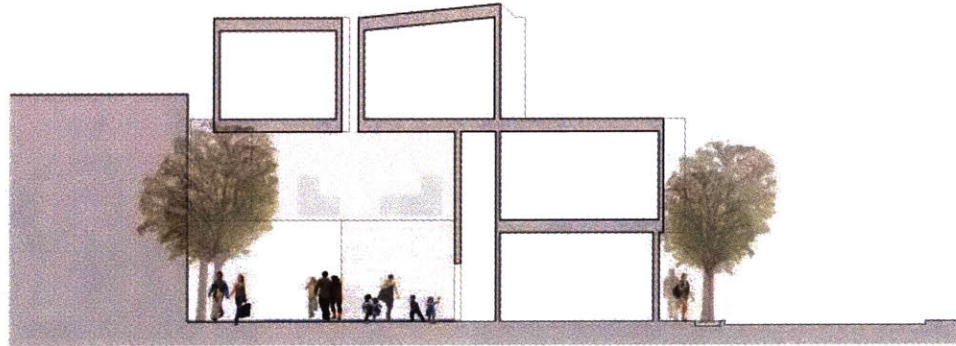
Through Space
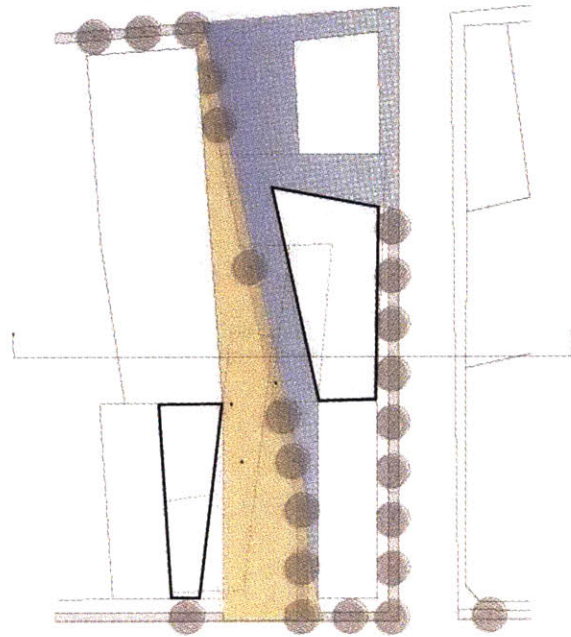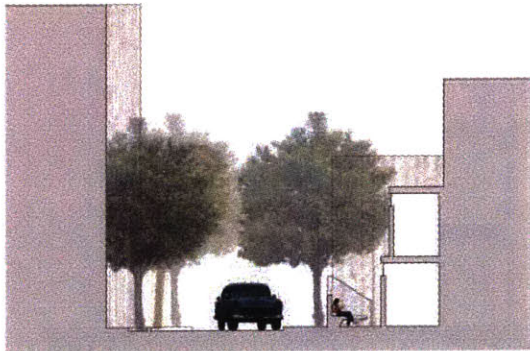
Quiet/Recreation Space
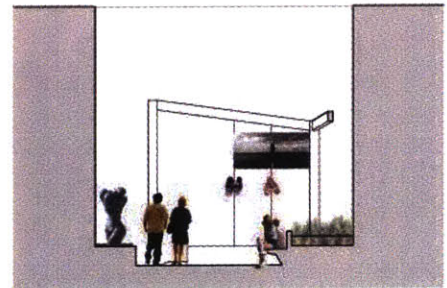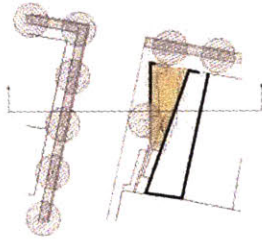
Exhibition Space
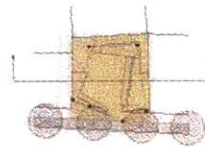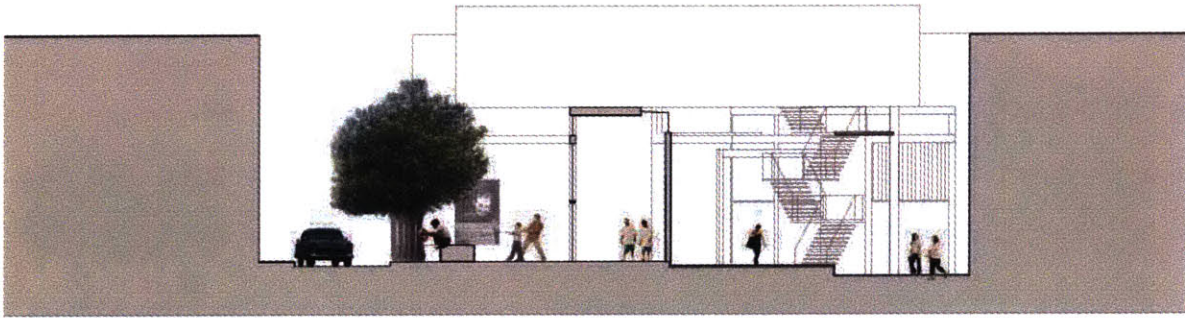
Interactive Space
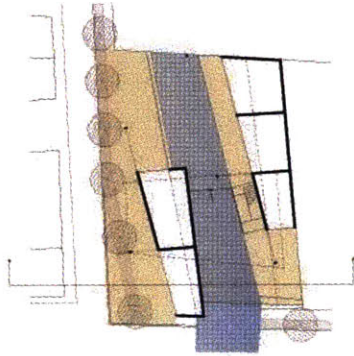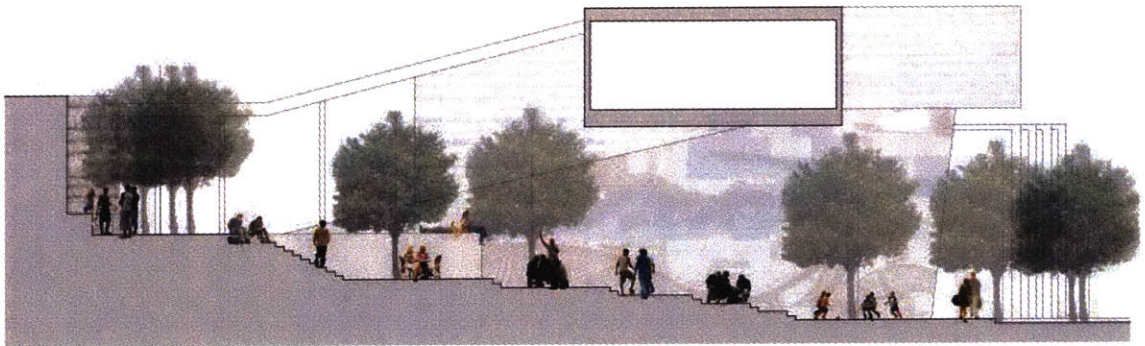
Gathering Space
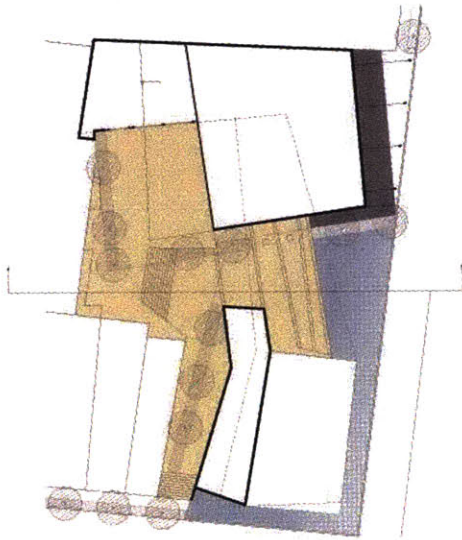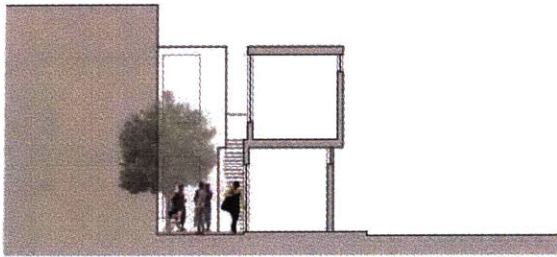
Privately Public Space
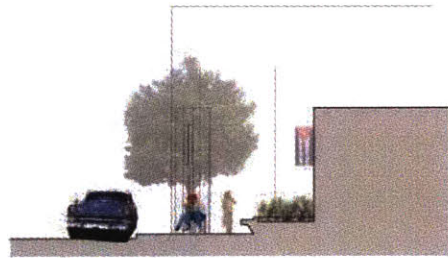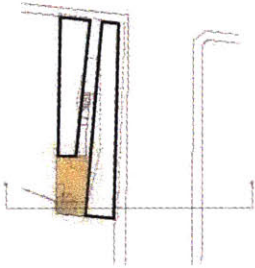
Publicly Private Space
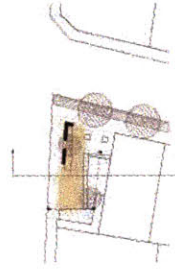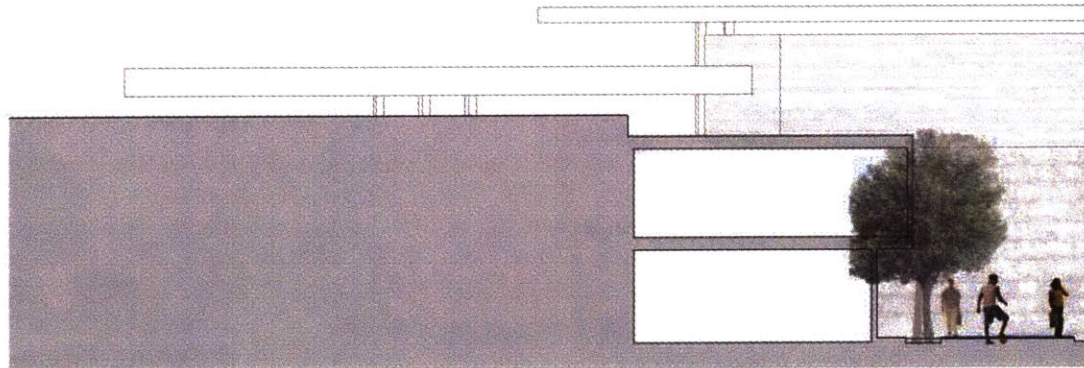
Recreation Space
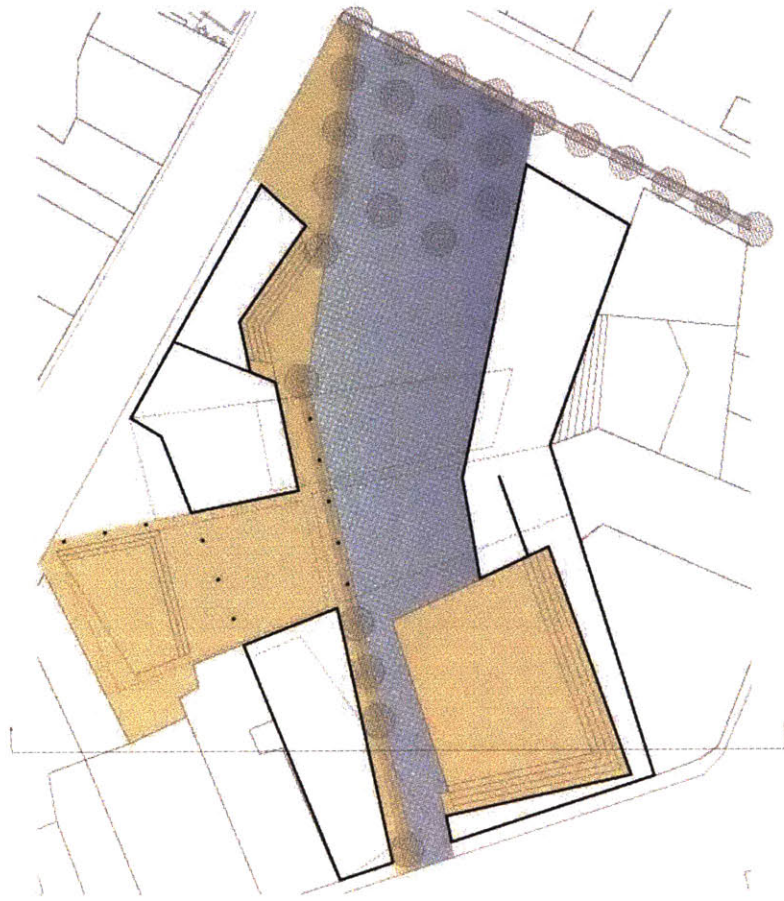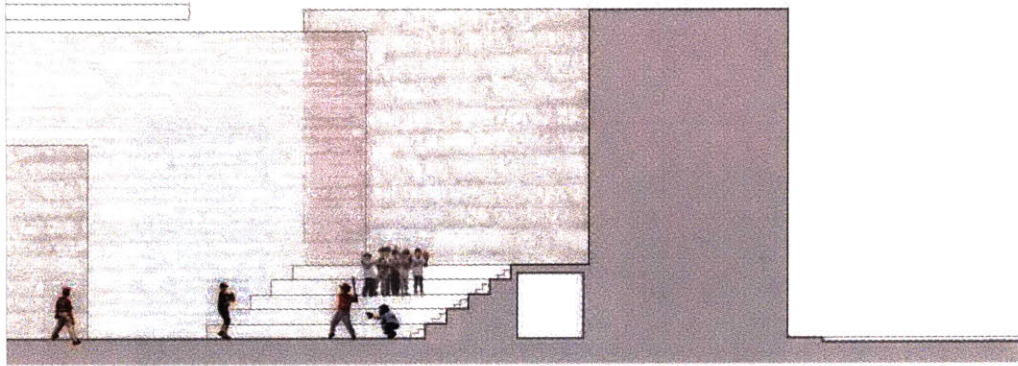
Size Range
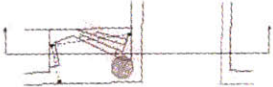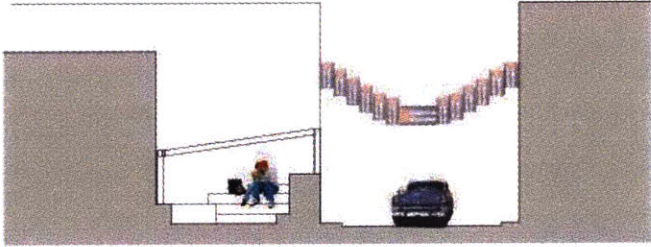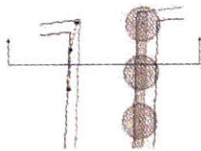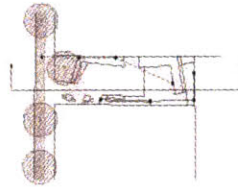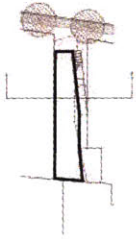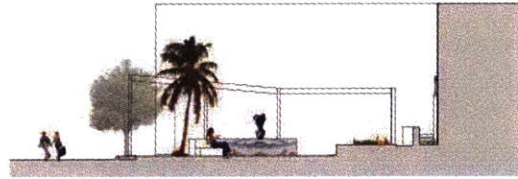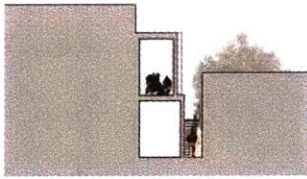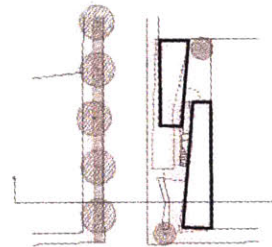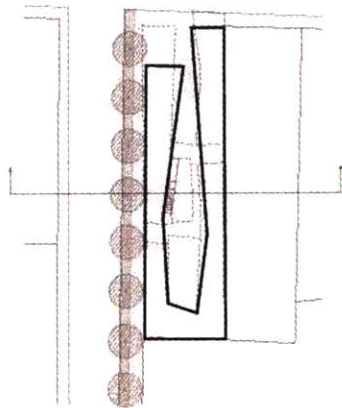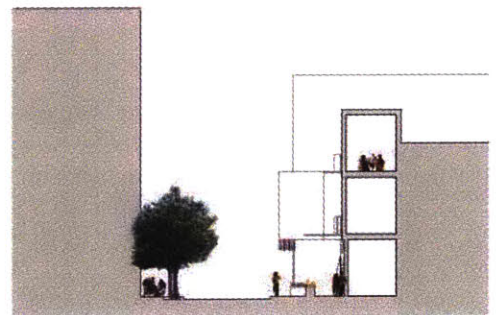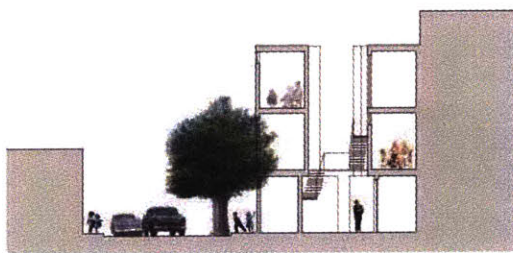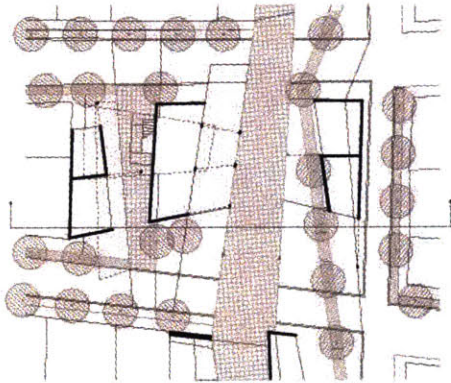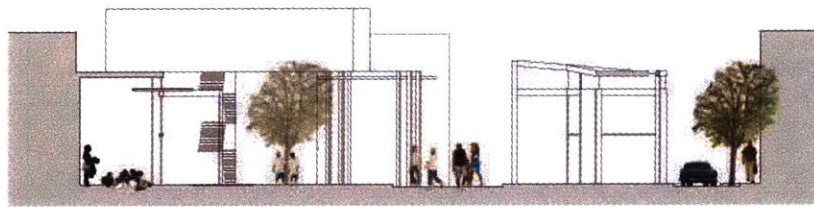
5.2.6 Rule 6: Create a Web of Program

The final urban design proposal for the School of the Arts creates a web-like framework that extends throughout the neighborhood, uniting the neighborhood's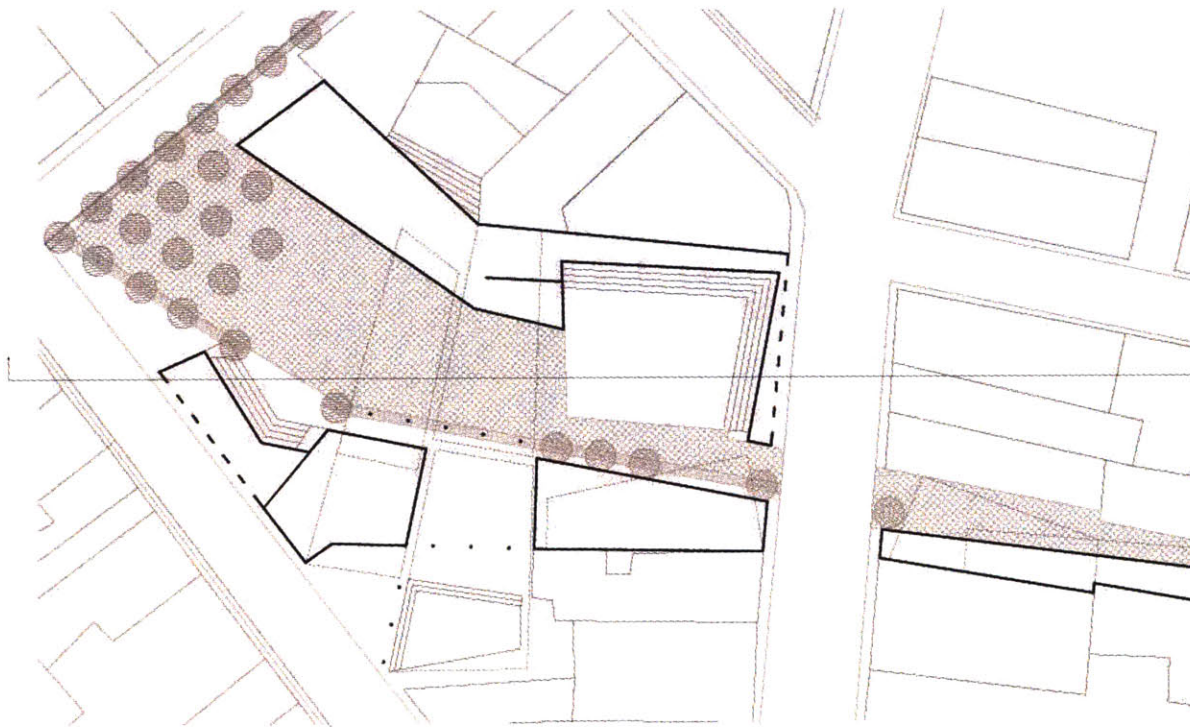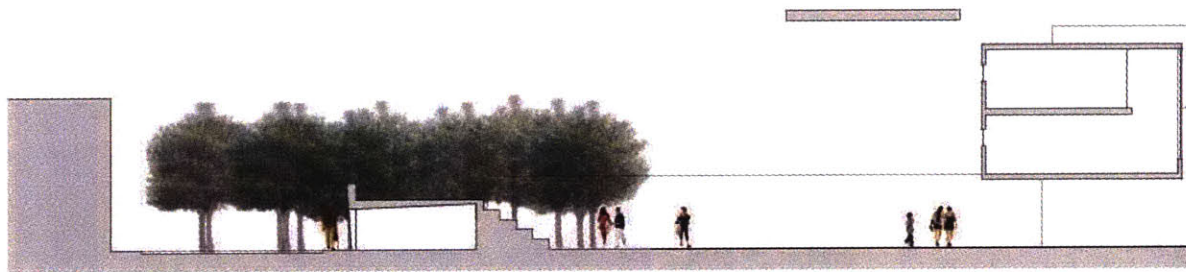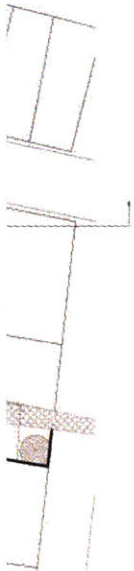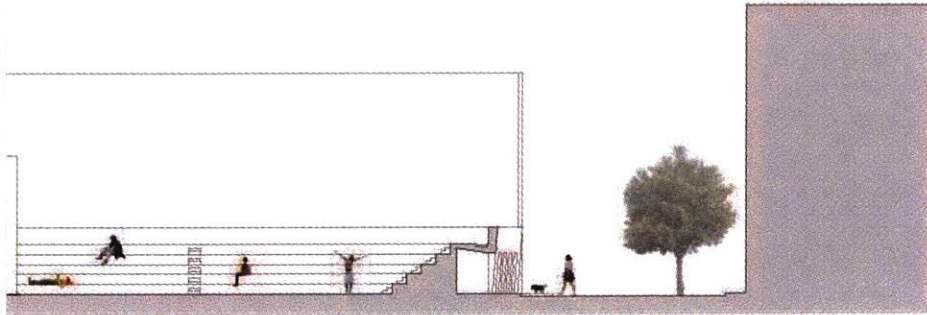 inner fabric and connecting it to the surrounding city. The incorporation of tree-lined streets emphasizes the presence of the structural web.

5.2.7 Rule 7: Integration through Native Material and Elements

In the proposed construction of the Art School common building materials local to Havana, in particular concrete and steel, were used. The construction concept of "building for the ruin," an understating that the building has a lifespan and thus is built for its inevitable decay and transformation over time, was adapted from the experiential
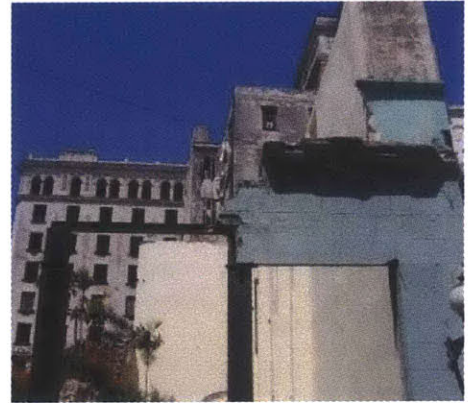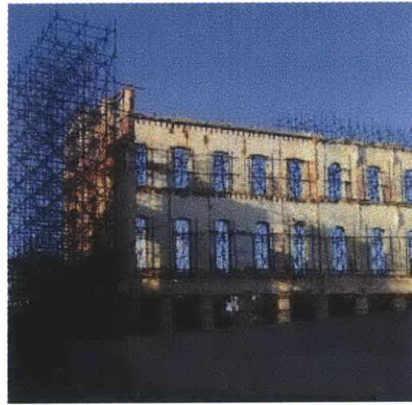
nature of Havana's present built environment. As a result, the inner structure of the buildings will be made of two separate components: a steel structure and a load-bearing concrete wall that are independent from each other, but together structurally support the building.

concrete wall   steel structure
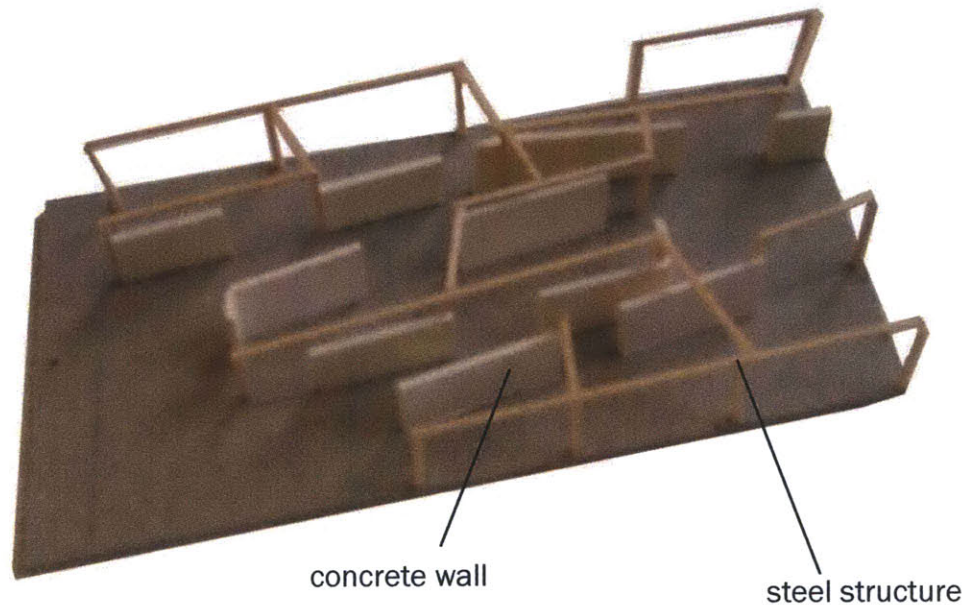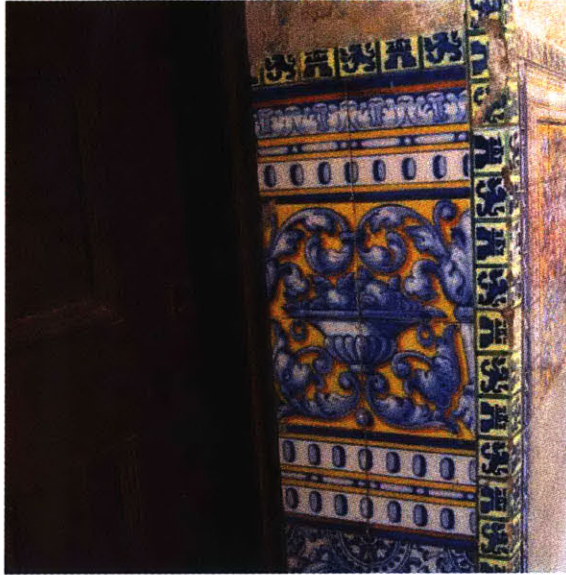
Additionally, elements of the Cuban built environment, such as tiles, ironwork on windows and stained glass, were used to bring character to the individual building and the plazas as well. Each plaza has a tiled floor surface that winds itself throughout the open space. However, these same tiles can be found on wall surfaces in housing, or as accents within the urban gardens. Local plants were used in all the Urban Gardens and along the streets. Fruit-bearing trees, in particular orange, grapefruit, and *guanabana* trees, were proposed for street-lined trees, so as to not only provide shade, but food as well.

(top to bottom)
Image 6.1
Use of tile in Havana
Image 6.2
Stained glass and iron work in Havana

exhibit scuplture

performance stage

study space

display surface art

game of dominoes

Housing and Urban Plaza

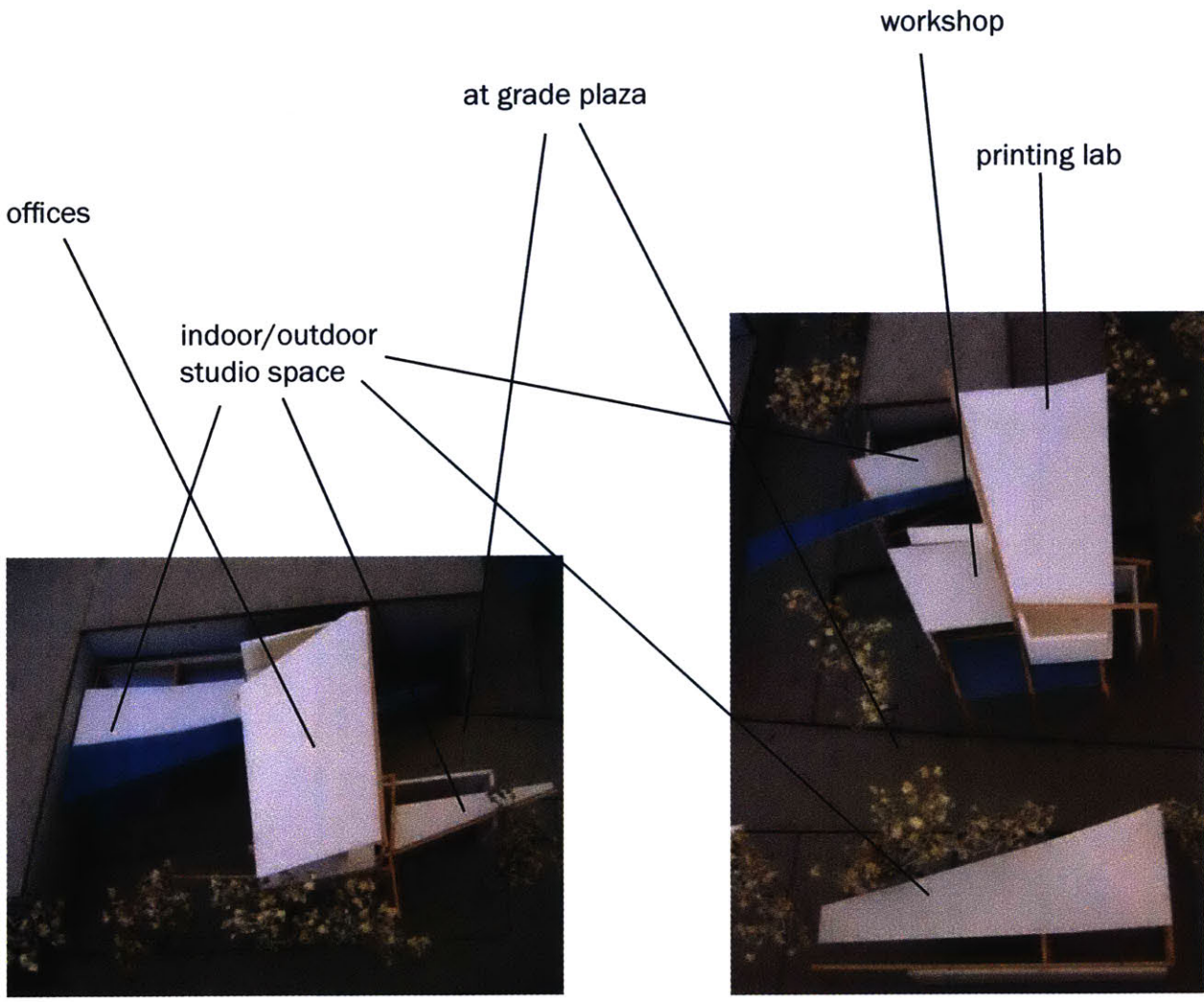workshop

at grade plaza

printing lab

offices
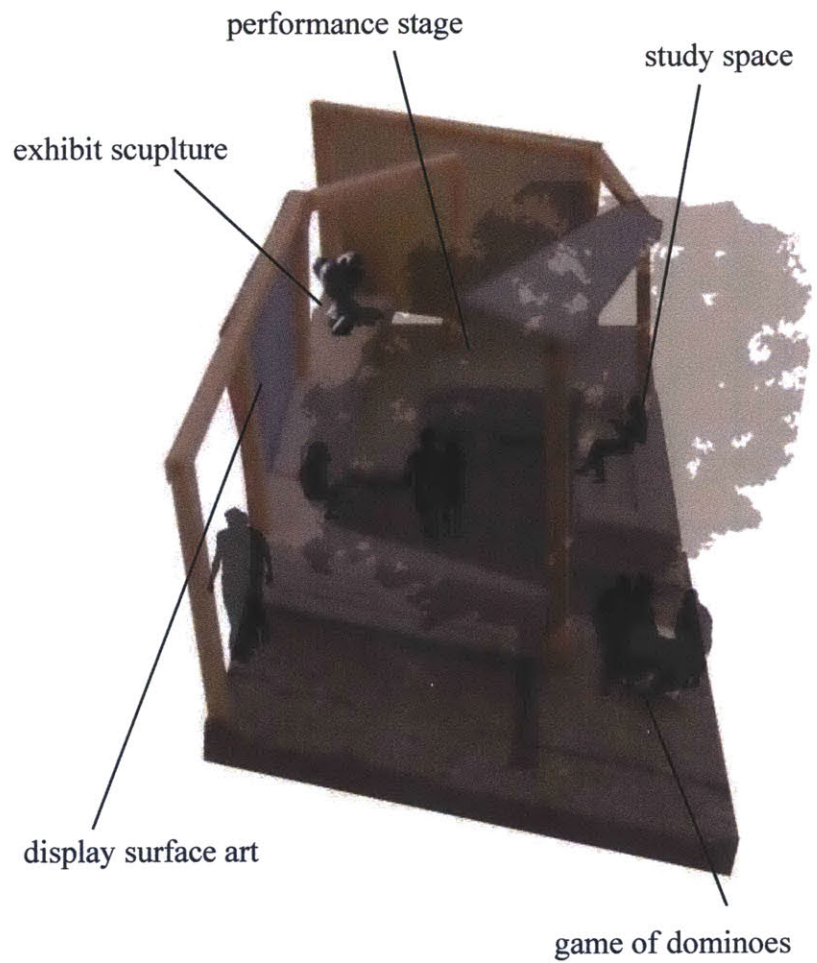
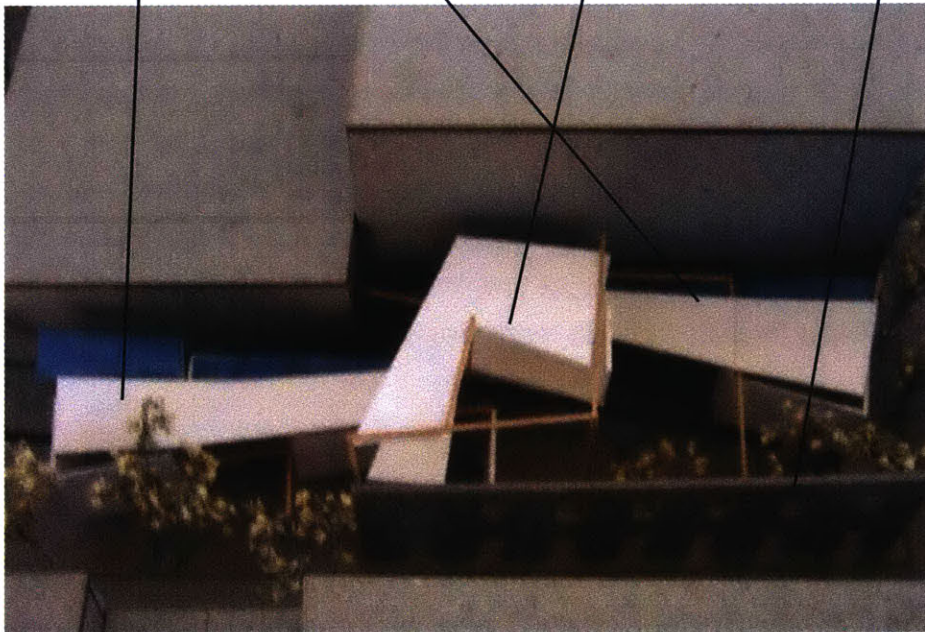indoor/outdoor
studio space
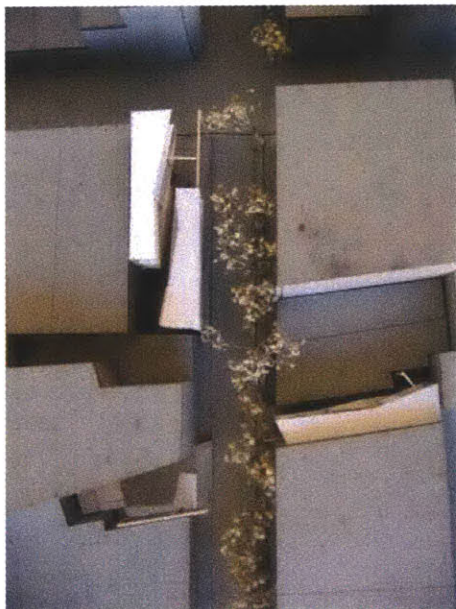
Interactive Plaza / Surface Studios

indoor/outdoor studio space

retention of existing facade

neighborhood
cafeteria and IT Center

Chapter 6

Reflections

6.1 Summary

City-frameworks serve a central role in bringing identity, order, and a heightened sense of community to urban locales. Open spaces of varying sizes provide a forum of neighborly communication, a place of recreation and even a private getaway. These spaces effectively tie together a city. At the other extreme, there is the building force of the mega-development, a force that tends to break apart cities and communities. In many instances, and most clearly seen today in Chinese cities, the abusive nature of these developments destroy large blocks of intricate urban fabric that in some instances had served as the framework of the city for decades and sometimes, even centuries. What is left is an urban fabric of disassociated monolithic edifices. The desire for world developers to build accommodations for tourism and gentrification, usually at the expense of lower class relocation, is a rising popular trend in many developing and redeveloping cities around the world.

Municipal governments must realize the importance of preserving cultural identity and community ties. Especially in today's modern global economy there is a rising need to protect a nation's culture from homogenization, an effect heightened by the ease of international migration of people, ideas, and lifestyles. Outsiders are less likely to put the cultural needs of a struggling community at the forefront of their design intent. Thus the government will need intervene to

prevent neighborhoods of cultural and historical significance from being completely overtaken or broken apart by foreign forces whose primary, if not sole, intention is to increase their capital earnings. This situation is especially threatening in Havana, Cuba, whose present restricted economy may soon find itself opening up to greater influences from international forces and tourist developments as their economy changes.

As this thesis cogently demonstrates, development within an urban fabric can be just as beneficial to the neighborhood as it is to the inserted enterprise. One solution put forth by this thesis is to incorporate an institution into the urban fabric, using it to create a stabilizing framework for the neighborhood that provides community support and does not result in the relocation of current residents. This is achieved by (1) finding an institution that stimulates economic and/ or cultural growth for the current residents, (2) by creating a series of public community spaces of various sizes, and (3) by not concentrating a program in a singular mega-space, but instead extending pieces of the program throughout the neighborhood, thereby creating a strong city-framework. Importantly, such a solution strategy is also adaptable across cultures and borders, providing a robust recipe for success. The flexibility of the proposed vocabulary allows this development methodology to be universally adaptable, making it applicable to a large range of cities. Future developers should consider the positive and beneficial elements put forth in this alternative strategy so that development does not weaken or break apart urban communities, but instead helps structure and heighten the character of the city.
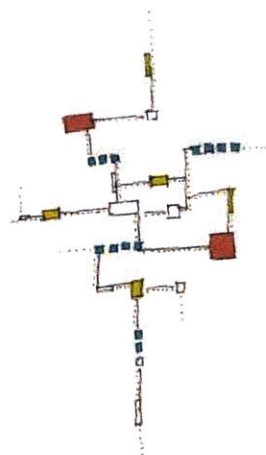
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