COMMUNITY
At 4:30, bingo begins quietly, intently, and with lots of hushes. Each person gets one card and extras are 25 cents—some players play quite a few extras. “B13, B13... B11 - chopsticks, B11...” Numbers come marching out of the caller’s mouth in regiments and are checked off on the display board. We barely hear the tumbling of numbers in the round cage over the fans at the top of this small gymnasium, one of which has a noisy balloon stuck in it. The bingo players are dwarfed by the tall cream colored walls and the basketball hoops. Each table is set with plastic bouquets for the community dinner which happens immediately after bingo and fills the room with almost ten times as many people. “G59, G59...” Fifteen minutes into the game, one winner shouts “Bingo!” in a gruff voice, takes his card to the caller to have the bingo verified and claims his bag of potato chips. Preparation for the evening’s meal begins and so does clanking of pots and pans in the kitchen. After another winner who claims a box of microwave popcorn, people approach the snack cart next to the caller to get a muffin and a coffee and return to their seats chatting—and get reminded “You all gotta be quiet.” A woman and her son sit away from the crowd. Bored, he plays with his slinky while watching the rest of the group. The first winner wins again and assertively claims a bottle of fabric freshener. The caller ends his shift and joins the group, another takes his place; the numbers come faster because he does not repeat them. “N42. B8. O66.” People emerge from the kitchen to watch the quiet spectacle as the meal comes together. The smell of chicken and gravy fills the room. The first winner shouts “Bingo!” again and other players get frustrated. He claims a package of toilet paper and exchanges his potato chips for a bottle of detergent.
The Agape Community Center
is a gathering place for people in Berryland, Thurston Woods and surrounding neighborhoods. The small gymnasium is a perfect flexible space for different activities throughout the day that bring people together. Summer school classes, free lunches, evening dinners, basketball, elections and neighborhood fairs are hosted in this gymnasium. This room is functional and flexible because it is large and open and can be put to many uses. It is a place that many people use and a place that brings together many people in the community.
REMAINDERS AND REMINDERS

SILVER SPRING & 35TH ST.
LOOKING WEST
1950

SILVER SPRING & 35TH ST.
LOOKING WEST
2012

McGOVERN PARK
CIRCA 1950

McGOVERN PARK
LOOKING SOUTH
2012

VILLARD & 35TH ST.
LOOKING EAST
1958

VILLARD & 35TH ST.
LOOKING EAST
2012
SENSE OF PLACE CREATES SENSE OF COMMUNITY

For many, the word community implies some sense of cohesion or group identity.

As time and economics rearrange the spatial and physical markers that represent and support community cohesion, how do residents of Thurston Woods maintain their identity? What has change meant for the construction of community identity?

We have chosen several prominent locations, which either no longer remain or have been repurposed, to examine their effect on the sense of community in Thurston Woods. These chosen places have changed significantly and now exist only as remnants of what was once a place where people could walk or bike to a local entertainment or recreational space.

The entertainment and recreational places inside Thurston Woods have been reduced to a small percentage of what once existed.

It became clear when interviewing residents of Thurston Woods that commercial, recreational and other communal spaces were important to the building of a community identity for the Thurston Woods neighborhood. Today, there is a desire for those once-present spaces such as McGovern Park swimming pool, local entertainment on Silver Spring and shops along Villard Avenue to return.

These spaces, as physical and social constructors of community, reveal that local places matter in the creation of pride and belonging. When pools are closed, schools are abandoned, or retail shops leave the area, everyone must leave the neighborhood to fulfill basic needs; the sense of place will begin to decline. The neighborhood becomes a bedroom community on the outskirts of an urban area where no one feels invested.

Is that what we are seeing here?

With heightened mobility comes a geographically dispersed social and spatial network. What would once take hours to reach by bus, trolley, or foot now takes minutes by car with little to no waiting. Many claim that this makes the world a smaller place. People can “get out” and see more things, but at what cost? Large, multi-use consumer parks draw large crowds to commercial centers, but what happens to the places left behind?

For there to be pride in a neighborhood and a strong community identity, people must stay in the area. There must be economic investment as well as emotional investment. Thurston Woods neighbors are emotionally invested in their community, but they still leave to find social and recreational venues. Traces of these once popular venues and places act as mementos of social experiences, but they no longer function as spaces that construct contemporary community identity.
COMMUNITY ACTION:
Creating a Greater Public Sphere

Thurston Woods may be small, but it faces many of the same concerns one would find in other urban neighborhoods. Among them are issues surrounding safety, neighborhood pride and resident participation in the betterment of their neighborhood. Various groups are active and are founded on an informal level or by larger, more “official” organizations such as the Havenwoods Economic Development Corporation. The more official groups tend to have access to established structure, resources and pre-existing lines of communication with institutions such as the Department of Neighborhood Services and the Milwaukee Police Department. Beyond the official, individuals, small informal associations and groups of neighbors work toward transforming streets and blocks. Although the structures may be different, these official and unofficial groups tend toward the same goals. Among these groups there exist “world makers” who take charge and lead the way forward in bettering their community. But these residents often find barriers to their common goals. The resilience of these people and their ability to overcome obstacles is crucial for continuing to move the community forward. Can these world makers be unified to promote a stronger neighborhood? One thing is for sure, all agree that it is the residents of Thurston Woods, and no one else, who can and must be the force behind continuing change.

The Agape Community Center

What role should the community center located within the bounds of Berryland play? How can it achieve a central role in unifying the broader Thurston Woods community into a greater public sphere where residents can network and support one another in their efforts to achieve common goals for the future of Thurston Woods? Tanya Fonseca, neighborhood coordinator and planner at Agape, hopes to help support the broader Thurston Woods community. She knows, as do many others, that the future must be envisioned and molded by the residents.
Long before the arrival of the official block watch groups, Mavis and Tom were among a community of residents who kept an eye out and reported issues to the police. They contribute to the creation of a stronger neighborhood through many informal methods. Whether it was a campaign to save old trees or an effort to gather neighbors to oppose a store from acquiring a 24-hour license, the McCallums maintain the importance of being active within the community. They have seen an influx of renters into the neighborhood but believe strongly that all residents, whether renter or owner, can and should contribute to the high standards of the neighborhood. With the wisdom of the past and determination to maintain a bright future, perhaps it would be beneficial for other world makers of Thurston Woods to develop a connection with these longtime residents. But who can connect them?

"You are your neighborhood."

~Mavis
John and Mary are former block watch captains on 41st Street. Their story brings to light the “official” form of community action, working with liaisons to the police district and educating neighbors with standardized material. Not only did their leadership role help foster lasting relationships with other block watchers, but it also helped them connect with their neighbors, something that continues to pay dividends after they ended their involvement as captains. Although they were part of a more structured and organized system, they struggled with getting involvement and turnout. They continue to keep in touch with their neighbors and promote block watch activities. Forty-first Street needs John and Mary.

“What brought us closer to our neighbors was that we started the block watch.”

~Mary

“I don’t think I have ever lived anywhere where I went to everybody’s door and said ‘hi’. Like I have here.”

~John

“We’re glad they’re here...their expectations and values match ours and that’s important to feel like you’re not alone.”

~Mary
Elaine Jackson moved to Thurston Woods in 1996 when many of the residents on her block were original owners or in owner-occupied homes. Since then she has seen much change, including a major turnover in residents and a shift to renter occupied properties, most likely the result of the housing crisis of this past decade. Elaine Jackson is not part of one of the official block watch groups, but has participated in informal associations in the past and plans to help lead the way with another soon-to-be formed block association. Like other world makers, she struggled to get and maintain involvement. She attributed this problem to the changeover of residents. Who can support and help sustain her faith in the future?

"We need the people to fall in love with this community..."
~Elaine Jackson

"It will get better... but it takes everyone to get involved. I know we can ask the city to do so much but money can only do so much. Money is not the answer to everything. We need the people to fall in love with this community and have a love affair with this community. And I think it will blossom."
~Elaine Jackson
PLACES OF FELLOWSHIP: Gathering Places in Thurston Woods

Past
Prior to its closing in 1992, St. Albert Parish and School was an integral part of the Thurston Woods community, a nurturing environment that focused on the community and promoted togetherness. It was a public space where the community came together to share what they had in common. After its closing, the neighborhood environment changed. Over the course of ten years, many residents of Thurston Woods chose to relocate.

Present
The loss of the church is still very much present within the community. Today, St. Albert Parish and School is the Thurston Woods Campus Elementary School. The face of the gathering place is no longer one based on religion, but it retains its role as a site of fellowship. Although no longer a church, the new building is still a location where the community can gather and share experiences.

Access
Many Thurston Woods residents have been forced to look outside of the area for places of worship. Some walk, some drive, and others take public transportation in order to reach their destinations. Churches that were once rooted firmly in Thurston Woods have now moved farther away creating a more dispersed and regional network of parishes.
"For 14 years ... we went to Sherman and Douglas where we could walk if the car wasn’t working. Now we go to Eastbrook Church. Another reason for those particular churches is it’s in the area. It’s a feasible amount of distance, it’s not something that use a lot of gas, takes a lot of time to get to.”

— Patricia Weber

“I went to church at Holy Redeemer because St. Albert's disbanded. We were the first Catholic church in the city to start consolidating, so it was St. Nicholas and Holy Redeemer and then we turned into Blessed Trinity. They just now sold it. Now we have to go to St. Catherine’s on 51st and Center.”

— Jean Devlin

“St. Albert’s Church had a very big draw in the neighborhood. A lot of kids went to school there... The families went to church there. When the church closed, you could just see a definite change in the neighborhood. People just started moving out.”

— Lorie Koehler

“I had my kids baptized, first communions, confirmations. My oldest son got married there. This was the front of it. Upstairs is where the school was, the downstairs was the church, and then in the basement they had an auditorium. That’s where the parties and different functions would be.”

— Jean Devlin
**Chicken & Grill House**

The world opens up to us in a small restaurant like the Chicken & Grill House. Jamaican chicken, Greek pizzas, gyros and curries, all take the customer on a culinary journey across the world. A bite into the shish kabob or chicken teriyaki allows us to conjure up alien lands and exotic cultures. The Chicken & Grill House not only satisfies our hunger but takes us on a cultural adventure without leaving Thurston Woods. In a matter of seconds, the sights, smells and tastes give us a glimpse into global cultures. The Chicken & Grill House brings people together to eat. This place not only provides balanced nourishing food but also enhances the neighborhood economy.

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**SANDWICHES**

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**Ratb’s Journey**

Ratb Abunaj was born in Palestine and moved to Jordan along with his family at the age of four. He grew up in Jordan and also traveled to France, Germany, Spain, Morocco, Egypt and Syria before coming to the United States fourteen years ago. Ratb studied in Ohio and opened Chicken & Grill House in Thurston Woods in 2010. It is Ratb’s mission to take his customers on a culinary journey and provide them with healthy food. In the future, Ratb plans to add kofta kabob, shish tawook and shawarma kabob to his food menu.