
Acknowledgments

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This book is dedicated to the many people who have contributed ideas, information, and insight during chance conversations on the street, from telephone calls made in response to radio announcements, and in discussions at the neighborhood meetings. It is dedicated to the people of the Lower East Side.

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How to Use This Catalogue

The problem of the Park East freeway corridor provides residents of the Lower East Side with a unique opportunity to define neighborhood needs and priorities. The Neighborhood's Catalogue has been designed to support this process. The only healthy way to repair the hole in the Lower East Side caused by the decision to construct a freeway there is to redevelop the land slowly, over time. Redevelopment alone, however, does not guarantee the health and stability of the neighborhood. In order to conserve the diverse social and historical continuity of the area, new uses for corridor land must be measured against the needs of the existing neighborhoods.

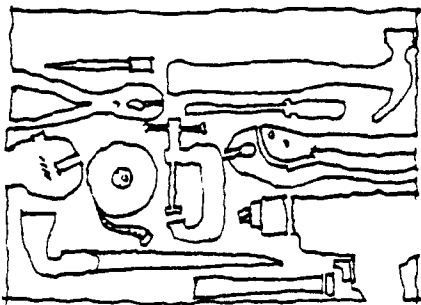
The Catalogue has been assembled to promote this idea by:

- providing a vocabulary that will help foster neighborhood participation in the complex process of redevelopment;
- highlighting the underlying potential of the entire community, particularly in relation to downtown Milwaukee;
- assembling for discussion many issues that relate exclusively to the history and experience of the Lower East Side;
- identifying and ordering the patterns of the neighborhood in order to encourage compatible design and redevelopment as well as the conservation of existing neighborhood assets;
- organizing a comprehensive file of local resources that will help ensure neighborhood access to decision-making and policy;
- establishing the basis for a common "neighborhood language" among residents, public officials, elected representatives, private developers, bankers, architects, planners, and others who may influence the future use of corridor land.

Although the Catalogue advocates neighborhood participation, supportive design, incremental planning, and phased redevelopment, it contains no "master plan." Its recommendations instead demonstrate how land would best be used to enrich the whole community. Residents are encouraged to use these recommendations as the basis for generating and guiding alternative proposals that clearly support the needs of the Lower East Side.

The best way to use this resource is to change it, beginning now. It has been arranged in open-ended sections that move roughly from the general to the specific. Unlike conventional planning and design documents the Neighborhood's Catalogue is meant to be added to, subtracted from, modified, and adjusted to include new ideas and information over time.

The Neighborhood's Catalogue



is a tool box for neighbors.

Architecture...has no spectators,
only participants.

--James Marston Fitch

For the past two decades, many practicing designers have been working to establish a new vocabulary of strategies intended to redefine the fundamental social role of the urban architect. Their effort has emerged as an international response to the dehumanizing consequences of pervasive "bash-and-build" renewal policies enacted to remedy the post-War abandonment of central city neighborhoods. These new policies were uniformly unsympathetic to old buildings, neighborhood history, and the delicate network of social relationships that were most threatened by the economic decline of downtown residential districts. It was strongly believed that modern, inexpensive, high-rise complexes would provide a better standard of living for city dwellers and replace deteriorated 19th century housing with a clean, antiseptic urban profile. The justification of these modern practices has all but collapsed.

Housing projects, super-highways, and other programs of the 1950's and 1960's exacerbated the very problems they hoped to solve. Rather than renewal, cities incurred new blight, alienation, increased crime, and the disintegration of the physical texture of historical neighborhoods that enjoyed virtually no protection from the wrecker's ball or from ill-advised zoning policies. Recently, however, the tide has turned. Slowly, the urban neighborhood has resurfaced as the primary building block of healthy cities. Its successful conservation, however, still requires the overhaul of all modern urban planning principles and the consolidation of many disciplines, not to mention innovative legislation, supportive financing packages, and a deep respect for the right of residents to participate in all processes that affect the quality of their home environment.

Since its inception in September of 1980, the Park East Design Study has been guided by three primary objectives: to generate and document design/development strategies that support neighborhood stability and growth; to identify and conserve existing physical and historical assets in the Lower East Side; and to promote direct neighborhood participation in decisions that will affect the future use of Park East freeway land.

The Catalogue contains material that relates to a community of neighborhoods forming the southern portion of Milwaukee's Lower East Side. The following sections concentrate primarily on an area demarcated by Brady Street to the north, the Milwaukee River to the west, E. Kilbourn Avenue to the south, and the lakefront to the east. The Park East freeway corridor, which cuts a swath roughly through the middle of this community, extends from N. Milwaukee Street to N. Franklin between E. Lyon and E. Ogden Avenue. The eight-block strip was cleared of buildings ten years ago to accommodate the construction of the northeastern leg of Milwaukee's much-debated freeway system. A moratorium on plans to complete the freeway was instituted in Commission (SWRPC). Until the moratorium expires in 1988, any construction or development which would impede the completion of the freeway is prohibited.

Team members of the Park East Design Study began a seven-month residency in the Lower East Side community on October 1, 1980. A month later, nearly sixty local residents attended a walking tour of historical buildings and an open house sponsored by the Park East Neighborhood Studio (701 E. Pleasant St.), headquarters and resource center for the project. Between January and April of the following year, the Design Study team conducted a series of three neighborhood meetings at the Lincoln Center for the Arts, an adapted public high school located directly across from the vacant land of the corridor.

Each meeting was well-attended and each invariably added new insights and awareness to a broad range of neighborhood issues. As ideas, information, and experiences circulated, it became evident that no single architectural scheme could satisfy the difficult problems that revolved around the disposition of freeway land. The political and economic dimensions of a much larger system of values and expectations began to crystallize. All original notions of detailed architectural proposals were therefore abandoned in favor of an open-ended and highly accessible planning and design tool. Many comments and concerns expressed during the three meetings also helped to clarify two of the most important goals of this new strategy: firstly, any design and planning guide must act to deepen the involvement of residents in a neighborhood based design-review process; and, secondly, the process itself must help to strengthen

the influence of the local community in the evolution of both policy and physical development, particularly when city-born policy and private development affect the quality of neighborhood life.

Following the last meeting, new strategies were discussed, tested, reviewed, and revised, resulting finally in The Neighborhood's Catalogue. It has been designed to become a means and not an end, assembled to support a process and not a product. Its first and last job is to assist over time an on-going, entirely self-generated neighborhood action.

The Park East Design Study was inaugurated in the spirit of a wholly democratic vision of American city life. The Study views the neighborhood as a bene publico, a "public good," a commonwealth of diverse interests and a vital plurality unified by many shared values. The Study begins and ends in the service of a larger participation of citizens. Its work is designed and offered as a tool, not as a portfolio of imposed solutions.

The Park East Design Study, the Park East Neighborhood Studio, and the Neighborhood's Catalogue are parts of a public-service design project supported by the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal agency. Work conducted in conjunction with the project has been submitted as a graduate thesis to the School of Architecture and Urban Planning, The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Masters degree in Architecture.

Nine Principles

1. Participation

The desire to participate is the principle strength of self-determining neighborhoods. Participation stimulates the discovery of shared values, sustains local identity, and engenders a unifying spirit of neighborhood place.

2. Neighborhood Voice

Broad participation in neighborhood affairs leads to a common recognition of local problems and assets. In turn, these shared recognitions help to generate a neighborhood consensus. Even with the power of consensus, however, neighborhoods do not always enjoy direct access to government. A strong neighborhood organization is often needed to augment the services of elected representation. It can act to enunciate important local issues, broadcast information to residents, and lobby for municipal reform consistent with the expressed priorities of its membership.

3. A Balance of Powers

In the worlds of finance and government, influence is the chief prerequisite for meaningful cooperation. Lending institutions, elected public officials, and private developers all recognize the influence of numbers. The Lower East Side, for instance, contains nearly 10,000 votes, as many or more bank accounts, over 15,000 consumers, and roughly 30 acres of highly marketable vacant land directly tied to the future of Milwaukee's central business district. With the help of numbers like these, a well-organized bipartisan neighborhood constituency will no doubt acquire considerable economic and political visibility. Numbers amplify the voice of the community.

4. Whole Neighborhoods and Healthy Parts

Once the neighborhood organization has secured the cooperation of policy-makers and the banking community, residents can begin to act on their own behalf to ensure that new developments and city plans support the whole neighborhood by helping to protect and preserve its parts. Neighborhood parts are made up of patterns that signify the relationship between man-made urban elements and basic human needs. If new development intends to support the integrity of the Lower East Side, it will yield its form and location from the existing patterns of neighborhood streets, blocks, yards, houses, apartment buildings, and green open space, among other important social and environmental considerations.

5. Conservation of Historical Assets

The Lower East Side neighborhoods embody the presence and future of Milwaukee's past. Older buildings--whether houses, schools, churches, or simple storefronts--contain the intangible flow of time and events that enhance the sensation of a special place. To disregard or undervalue the link with history offered by older buildings is to jeopardize an irreplaceable community treasure. Continuity with the past enriches human experience; it is a basic, life-giving nutrient. Neighborhoods are not neighborhoods without it.

6. Rhythm of Repair

Like all urban neighborhoods, Milwaukee's Lower East Side contains some areas that show signs of neglect or deterioration, others that express great care and prosperity. Small local acts of repair implemented wherever and whenever necessary work to stabilize the neighborhood streetscape. A sense of on-going regeneration favorably influences the perception of neighborhood security and promotes a safer, healthier environment.

7. Flexible Zoning

The best available legal medium for rezoning the Park East corridor land is described in Section 16-11 of the Milwaukee City Ordinance, entitled "Planned Development District." This zoning ordinance contains language that maximizes the potential for flexible, piecemeal redevelopment and mixed primary use (the opportunity to live, work, play, shop, learn, and worship in the same general area). As it stands, however, the ordinance is little more than a collection of well-meaning words. If the corridor is successfully de-mapped and re-zoned under the provisions of the City's Planned Development District--and if the neighborhood undertakes the responsibility to monitor new development proposals intended for corridor land--the ordinance can be used to nurse the full revitalization of the Lower East Side by helping to guide new life onto vacant lots.

8. Alternative Ensembles

Flexible zoning works best when it employs design proposals that reflect the existing patterns of Lower East Side community life. The traditional practice of building "large-lump" developments, whether over-sized condominium towers or stale garden apartments, can be replaced by a variety of smaller development ensembles. These "ensembles" are groups of compatible parts that may be located to contribute to a desired neighborhood totality. Small units of development are less traumatic to adjacent blocks and far easier to manage; small ensembles also offer inves-

tors a comparable margin of profit without disrupting the integrity and residential scale of the existing neighborhoods. If the neighborhood community is presented with a sufficient range of alternatives for each proposed development ensemble, it increases the likelihood of cooperation, good judgement, and fit.

9. Incremental Growth

The carefully fitted and phased development of a variety of small design ensembles can be modulated over time to reduce the rate (and therefore the adverse side-effects) of neighborhood change. In this manner the tendency of the older edges to "reject" newer developments is significantly diminished. Only time has the power to weld an association between physical settings and social events; slowly phased construction ensures that old and new neighborhood life will grow together with time, a new set of parts in the flow of local culture.