TURNING THE LIGHTS ON

THE IMPACT OF THE CINEMA ON SMALL TOWN PUBLIC SPACE,

By

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B. Arch. Studies

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ABSTRACT

Even with the vacating of major chain movie theatres from small towns across North America, the small town cinema continues to persist. As a gathering space it still has the potential to influence people's experiences in many different ways. In light of this, can the presence of a cinema activate public space in a small town?

In order to explore this question each component of the question is analyzed: cinema, activation and small town public space. Framing these different components is the design exploration site located in Brockville, Ontario, Canada (population 24,000). Through these different studies it is concluded that a cinema alone cannot activate public space in a small town. In order for the full social, economic and spatial impact of a cinema to be exercised on small town public space there must be spaces that mediate between the cinema auditoriums and the street. As the most important public space in a small town, there must be a connection established with the street.

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INTRODUCTION

The act of public assembly in a public place such as in a movie theatre allows citizens to participate in a public social event. The experience of seeing a movie extends far beyond the boundaries of the theatre proper, with the surrounding environment playing as much, if not more of a role in the experience. This surrounding environment is often not regarded in either the placement of architectural program, in the city, or in the effect it has on the quality of the surrounding public exposure and the cinema experience itself.

A dense mixed use streetscape, like an urban downtown, is one environment that people may engage with when going to see

a movie. However, in small towns like Brockville, Ontario, downtowns (Figure 1) are underused and discarded for newer areas where it is perceived to be more convenient to shop. These new areas include strip malls, indoor shopping malls and more recently box malls or power

centres. With the lack of money and population to support many disconnected areas, older areas are often abandoned. Small town downtowns have lost many of their physical and social anchors including hotels, major department stores, well maintained living spaces, cinemas and with it the life that made it an engaging place to be. Single use zoning, which guides recent development like big box malls reduces the potential for

Figure 1: King Street West Looking East from John St., Brockville, ON.

social interaction by diminishing or eliminating the accessibility and hence the impact of public space.

Recent commercial movie theatres exhibit many similar characteristics to big box stores including perceived maximum selection and the lack of interstitial space: space is reduced to only those spaces containing product and minimal circulation. Nevertheless, going to a movie has always been a social experience and one of the more accessible public gathering activities (Figure 2).

With a cinema's ability to attract a diverse range of people to a space, this thesis questions the ability of a cinema to activate public space in a small town. To answer this question the following words need to be defined: cinema, activation and small town public space.

Cinema refers to the physical environment where people watch movies

in the public realm. Recently, there has been more written on the subject of cinemas focusing on physical spaces, cultural processes and memories of people who visited them as scholars and laypeople, alike, question the role of the movie theatre in twentieth and twenty-first century society. One cultural process associated with cinema is cinemagoing which expands the study of cinema to include the spectator and their experiences associated with going to a movie. By expanding the notion of cinema to cinemagoing it is possible to study the impact of associated physical spaces, social interactions and

Figure 2: Line-up in Front of Brockville's Capitol Theatre in the 1940s.

memories which people encounter during the process. To illustrate issues related to cinema, two case studies, the UFA Palast in Dresden, Germany and the Orleans Town Centre 6 in Orleans, Ontario, Canada which exhibit different approaches to public space and the involvement of its surroundings are studied.

The opportunity for both architecture and citizens to participate in the life of the city is critical. This participation can be active or passive, but all modes of participation impact public space. However, I suggest that it is through active participation that public space becomes activated. A major role of architectures is to encourage and enable the interaction among people.

Within a small town, the definition of public space often begins with architecture, but this thesis reveals that public space is further defined and 'activated' by key characters. This human character based approach is in direct contrast with the theme and brand focused large retail businesses which lack a personal involvement with any specific place or town. These local characters have a considerable impact on how space is used and how it is remembered. To understand how people interact with space and characters, numerous interviews were undertaken.

To further explore the thesis question of activation of public space in a small town, a site in downtown Brockville, Ontario is used as a vehicle to test this as a design proposal. With its central location, both physically and

Figure 3: Site on the South East Corner of King Street West and Home Street, Brockville, ON.

experientially, in the town, the physically vacant site provides the potential for establishing a new central node for the downtown. This thesis proposes a socially layered program including a cinema in addition to other programs that mediate between the street and the cinema auditorium. In order to help guide the design process two characters named John and Laney Cooper act as mediators between the public and the cinema spaces. The thesis layers the architecture, both physical and social, which plays a role in defining public space. By looking at many different facets of cinema as a building type through both theoretical and design based explorations, it will become clear as to the potential role of cinema in activating public space in a small town.

PUBLIC SPACE IN A SMALL TOWN: DOES IT MATTER ANYMORE?

As with many larger cities, small towns like Brockville, Ontario, have had to deal with single use zone development in the form of housing tracts, shopping malls and arterial streets. Previous patterns of development persist in the form of Main Streets and their associated environments, but these are often left to decay in favour of what is new. With these single use zones, public space itself becomes a zone that is set aside from other uses. People are required to make a special trip to use public space instead of participating in what Jane Jacobs calls ‘casual public life’ potentially present on streets and sidewalks. In order for a public space to function, there needs to be many different layers of space, time and people.

As one of the most important public spaces, the street, displays the value people place on public space in a small town. Unfortunately, multi-laned arterial roads (Figure

4) that exist to connect different zones

disregard the importance of people by exclusively serving the automobile.

Streets must be scaled and framed to encourage people to occupy the space.

People are the most important element of

public space because without them the

space becomes a shell. Author Richard Sennett writes, “in a private automobile, for

freedom of movement, one ceases to believe one’s surroundings have any meaning save

Figure 4: Multi-laned Arterial Road, Parkdale Avenue, Brockville, ON.

as a means towards the end of one's own transportation.”¹ In order to sustain public space people need to care for it. The most important public spaces are the connections and mediations linking different uses.

In order for a space to function as a public space it needs to encourage social interaction. The space must make people feel safe enough to socialize. Safe, in this case applies to both physically and personally. Physical scale's importance, as Richard Sennett writes, is “People are more sociable, the more they have tangible barriers between them, just as they need specific places in public whose sole purpose is to bring them together.”²

Public characters are more often important to small town public space than the physical space they occupy. They facilitate a more direct level of interaction between people and space while contributing to the social life in a town. As Jane Jacobs writes numerous times in her book The Death and Life of Great American Cities, ‘there is a clear line drawn by public characters between private life and public life. Characters do not involve themselves in people's private lives making people feel less vulnerable’ and therefore more comfortable in public space.

Cinemas, like other businesses, construct specific relationships with their community and associated spaces. Currently, the megaplex model lacks the social and spatial interaction required to create an activated public space. However, this is only its current stage in evolution. Throughout its brief history the cinema played a major role in small town public space. This concept is displayed in books like Michael Putnam's Silent Screens (2000) (Figure 5) or movies like Cinema Paradiso (1989) and The Last

¹ Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) 15.

² Sennett 15.

Picture Show (1971). In each case the cinema embodies the condition of the street.

When the cinema closes, the street closes as well. By providing an affordable popular entertainment during the first half of the twentieth century, movie theatres acted as landmark destinations. Connecting the theatre back to its surroundings was the externalization of many of its social functions. The street was an extension of the theatre which allowed people to interact with other people and other spaces during the process of going to see a movie.

Figure 5: Excerpt from Silent Screens, Jefferson Theatre, New York City , NY, 1986.

Although the street has been relegated to a transport only zone in many small towns, there is still reason for optimism in the creation of an activated public space. Instead of streets being used as ‘casual public’ spaces, single use public spaces exist in the form of parks, recreational pathways and community centres. At the very least, these spaces acknowledge that public space in a small town matters, even though it lacks many of the layers necessary for an activated public space. Another reason for optimism lies in the remnants of previous public space arrangements such as a main street fabric. Although their potency has been reduced, as uses and layers are stripped away from the street; evidence remains. While the way people live their lives has changed since the creation of main street, it still has the potential to provide hints for creating activated public space. This ingrained potential is one of the issues that this thesis explores. As a starting point for the thesis the question

needs to be asked, does public space in a small town matter? The answer to this question is that yes it does. Single use public spaces may be difficult to sustain, but their existence illustrates that public space matters.

CINEMA

THE QUESTION OF PARTICIPATION: CINEMA AS CINEMAGOING

In order to explore the issue of cinema it is necessary to give its definition.

Cinema refers to many different aspects that have to do with the viewing of film and a variety of different environments in which this may occur. For this thesis, cinema is defined as the primary space for viewing film in the public realm. During its more than one hundred year history, cinema has undergone significant changes with respect to its relationship to its surroundings. Since cinema's earliest incarnation as the nickelodeon, at the end of the nineteenth century, it has been a social space. By attracting large numbers of people to a single destination the possibility exists for the creation of spontaneous social interaction and public activity thereby contributing to the surrounding public realm.

Cinemagoing is a term used to describe activities that are involved with seeing a movie. According to communications scholar Charles Acland, "Part of cinemagoing's specificity is the way in which it is folded into other practices of sociability. It is frequently an occasion for meeting people, for conversation and for organizing an evening or an afternoon."³ Events associated with

Figure 6: Famous Players Paramount, Rue Ste. Catherine Ouest, Montreal, PQ.

³ Charles Acland, "Haunted Palace: Montreal's Rue Ste. Catherine and its Cinema Spaces," *Screen* 44.2 (2003) 133.

cinemagoing occur both inside and outside the cinema, therefore to fully understand the space of the cinema, this thesis will study its surrounding environment as each space enhances the experience of the public realm (Figure 6). Whether the cinema is located on a major commercial street, inside a shopping mall, or in the middle of a parking lot it addresses its surrounding environments in specific ways. In order to explore the relationship between the cinema and its environment two recent case studies are presented with a focus on the spatial sequence between the street and the cinema auditoriums.

SPATIAL SEQUENCES IN CINEMAS: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

While the movie palace was not the first stage in the development of cinema, it is one of the early stages in the development of the movie theatre as a unique element in the urban landscape. The era in which movie palaces were constructed was during the 1920s prior to the stock market crash in 1929. With capacities often over 2000 and in some rare cases eclipsing 5000, these theatres allowed large numbers of people to congregate in a reasonably nondenominational space.

Both the interior and the exterior of the movie palace had an impact on the event of cinemagoing. Architecture played an important role in both the presentation of films and social events in the movie palace.

The theatre's façade and entry sequences allowed it to play an active role in the urban realm. Typically the large auditorium spaces were built behind a commercial street façade with a narrow street frontage linking the street to the auditorium. Signage in the form of a marquee turned the street facade into a billboard with the goal of attracting as much attention as possible (Figure 7). With regards to the marquee author Maggie

Figure 7: Radio City Music Hall Marquee, New York City, NY.

Valentine writes, “The marquee created a visual landmark, extending from the façade so that the building stood out physically and aesthetically from all others on the street.”⁴

The exterior of a movie palace made a direct physical impact on the public realm while attracting people inside to interact with its spaces.

The movie palace typically contains a series of social spaces mediating between the street and the auditorium. The size and quantity of the spaces is dictated by the size of the theatre and the size of the site. A ticket booth is the first stage beyond the projecting marquee between the street and the auditorium. The sheer size of most movie palaces necessitates the creation of a series of gathering spaces between the ticket booth and the auditorium (Figure 8).

These spaces are meant to be used before the start of a show, during an intermission and after a show. A staircase is often used

as a dramatic architectural element in the main lobby spaces as existed in palaces from Ottawa’s Capitol Theatre (1920) to New York City’s Radio City Music Hall (1932). With many balconies in a theatre, the staircase was necessary to access the different

Figure 8: Radio City Music Hall Main Lobby, New York City, New York.

⁴ Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts at the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) 97.

levels of the auditorium in addition to additional social spaces like the washroom vestibules. These interstitial spaces separating the public lobby from the private washrooms were designed with socializing in mind. For the men it was a smoking room and for the women it was a powder room, but in both cases these spaces were larger than the washrooms themselves. By providing spaces with different architectural characteristics and at different junctions in the path in and out of the theatre different types of social interactions are encouraged. This allows more social interaction to take place and as a result creates a more activated space. These spaces contribute to a patron's experience of the event itself and may at times be more important than the events within the auditorium itself.

While movie palaces acted as landmarks on downtown streetscapes, the majority of cinemas during the first half of the twentieth century were neighbourhood theatres. These theatres were located in both small towns and neighbourhoods that are part of larger urban centres. They acted as the social centre of the community and people often developed relationships with owners and managers of these facilities. "Wherever the cinema was situated the population from the surrounding streets adopted the cinema as their own."⁵ It was not uncommon for parents to leave their children at the theatre on a Saturday afternoon while they ran other errands. The theatre building provided a receptive environment of security and trust between people in the community. Most importantly, "As cultural institutions,...they helped to define people's sense of place and served as anchors, or reference points, for urban neighbourhoods."⁶ Unfortunately, these

⁵ Annette Kuhn, *Dreaming of Fred and Ginger: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 42.

⁶ Ross Melnick and Andreas Fuchs, *Cinema Treasures: A New Look at Classic Movie Theatres*, (St Paul: MBI Publishing Company, 2004) 34.

theatres often suffered the same fate as their larger downtown counterparts with the majority of them closing. This is especially true if the theatre was owned by a chain theatre in Canada, like Famous Players or Cineplex Odeon, who divested themselves of most of their small town and neighbourhood theatres during the 1970s and 1980s. In some cases smaller exhibitors bought the building and maintained it as a movie theatre.

Due to the relatively small size of the neighbourhood theatre the street was very important to the spatial sequence of entry. The mediating space between the street and the auditorium was compressed in the neighbourhood movie house and the entry sequence was generally linear. A patron would first buy a ticket from a ticket booth located on the street under the theatre's marquee. Once a ticket was purchased, there was often only a small lobby and a small flight of stairs that lead up to the auditorium. The washrooms are accessed off the small lobby. During the 1940s concession stands began to occupy the small lobbies as well. In some theatres the washrooms contained small lounges or powder rooms between the lobby and the washrooms to allow for social interaction during breaks in movies. By compressing the mediating space in a cinema the street played the role of the lobby proper. In many cases, since these theatres were located on a main commercial street there were often adjacent businesses that complimented the role of the movie theatre including a barber, restaurants and possibly a convenience store to purchase treats. Allowing the street to function as an extension of the theatre the surrounding environment becomes more active.

By the 1960s movie theatre attendance was in decline due to changes in living patterns and competition from television. In order to respond to the changing marketplace the multiplex format was introduced. The basic concept behind the

multiplex was the introduction of choice and variety to customers by showing many different films at the same time at the same location. Economically the multiplex formula is less costly as it reduces the quantity of staff since there is only one ticket booth, one snack bar and at times one projectionist running several theatres.

Purpose built multiplexes spend little, if any, energy on spatial or social arrangements; they are as cost effective and revenue generating as possible. While the nature of the cinema changed it did so in response to a change in its surroundings. Most multiplexes exist as part of suburban shopping centres and office complexes resulting in the cinema being moved off the street. By moving away from the street the impact of the movie theatre on the surrounding environment is considerably diminished. Since the theatre is simply one of many mall tenants and no longer a landmark, it is difficult to attribute value created by memory to the space. According to the authors of Cinema Treasures, “By naming a theatre after the shopping center or mall it serves, the theater ultimately becomes an appendage of the larger complex, a profit center for a large enterprise. In many ways it ceases to be a distinct entity and instead becomes just another tenant.”⁷ With the multiplex there has been a loss of permanence in the architectural expression that allows people to invest memories into a space.

The spatial sequence of the multiplex remains reasonably consistent from location to location. After obtaining your ticket at a ticket booth you enter into a lobby space. The interior space is reduced to allow for snack bar purchases and to accommodate traffic flow to the cinema auditoriums. The result is a space that is designed for efficiency rather than for lingering and socializing. Having the snack bar as the central focus of the primary space illustrates the importance of the snack bar to a cinema. In fact “by 1989,

⁷ Melnick and Fuchs 126.

[the concession stand] was the main source of income for theatre operators, accounting for 80 percent of profits.”⁸

The more recent megaplex is a self-contained destination containing more than just cinemas (Figure 9). Spatially the buildings differ slightly but the scale and technical superiority separate these theatres from their multiplex predecessors. It is not uncommon for one location to contain more than twelve stadium seating cinemas.

Spatially, the megaplex is larger than the multiplex and has internalized more of what used to exist on the street, but the basic sequence of space is similar to the multiplex. You arrive by car to a suburban megaplex, pass through the entrance and get a ticket from the ticket counter which is no longer a defined space, but more like a customer service desk in a shopping mall. In the megaplex, there is little mystery, layering or sequencing of the spaces between the parking lot and the auditoriums. The relationship between the street, the multiple different paths, the interior social space and the cinema auditoriums remain left out of the equation. Located at the heart of most megaplexes, is the snack bar or concession area which may contain a snack counter or a series of fast food restaurants. Essentially, the megaplex is the internalization of a main street programmed with many cinemas, shops and restaurants. The cinemas are smaller but the basic idea remains the same. However, since the space is

Figure 9: Famous Players Silver City Megaplex, Gloucester, ON.

⁸ Valentine 176.

heavily controlled and edited there is little opportunity for spontaneous events and interactions making the space less likely to become animated.

Employees have an important role to play in the way that patrons receive a particular space. In order to improve its cost effectiveness it is common practice to hire teenage workers that have little desire to make a serious commitment to the space. This is similar to other big retailers like Wal-Mart or McDonald's. "Along with the standardized look comes the Disney treatment of customers, a contrived, caramel-coated, "have-a-nice-day" that follows patrons right into the auditoriums."⁹ With preprogrammed responses and a constant turnover of employees it is difficult for clientele to develop meaningful relationships with the employees. This is in direct contrast with one of the neighbourhood theatre's most important characteristics: the relationship between the community and a theatre's owner or manager.

Only time will tell what will happen to the existing theatres and how new theatres will manifest themselves in relation to social space. "When *Boxoffice* asked cinema architects about the future of theater design in 2000, they referred to reducing the size of the megaplex, creating more adult-orientated environments, continuing the extension of lobbies, and most prominently, the shift to digital projection and delivery."¹⁰ Each of these changes has the potential to alter a cinema's relationship with its surrounding environment and social space. For instance, if a new theatre were constructed in an urban area like a downtown with an internalized 'extended lobby' the result would not increase the potential for the theatre to engage in a dialogue with its surroundings. Megaplex

⁹ Alain Miguélez, *A Theatre Near You: 150 Years of Going to the Show in Ottawa-Gatineau*, (Canada: Penumbra Press, 2004) 338.

¹⁰ Charles Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) 216.

structures are designed to maximize the profit of the owners with little concern for the relationships that exist with its surroundings. It is interesting that a downsizing of the Megaplex was being considered as early as 2000.

CINEMAGOING IN CONTEXT

Cinemagoing is banal, it is erotic, it is civil, it is unruly; it is an everyday site of regulated and unregulated possibility... In other words, public film viewing must be apprehended as a cultural practice. The term “cinemagoing” conveniently captures the physical mobility involved, the necessary negotiation of community space, the process of consumer selection, and the multiple activities that one engages in before, during, and after a film performance.¹¹

This excerpt from Charles Acland’s book, Screen Traffic brings to light the many different elements of cinemagoing. As previously mentioned, expanding the definition of cinema to the concept of cinemagoing allows for the exploration of many other associated experiences and spaces that impact a person’s relation with the built environment. When you go to see a film your experience is different every time you go. The difference may be temporal or spatial, large or small, but it is still different. A few elements impacting this overall experience include when and where you had dinner, who you go to a movie with, where the movie is playing, how you get there, how noisy the crowd is, the quality of the cinema’s space, the quality of the popcorn and so on. All of these are associated events rather than the actual film which is sometimes inconsequential to the experience. Just like watching a movie, the resulting experience can be surprising and unexpected.

The basis of the cinemagoing concept is the interaction between people, the urban environment and the movie theatre. Without all three of these elements there can be no cinemagoing. It should be noted that this interconnected approach to looking at activities in the urban environment is not new. Kevin Lynch discusses the importance of the interrelated nature of the events that occur in the public realm in his book The Image of

¹¹ Acland, Screen Traffic 58.

the City first published in 1960. “Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences.”¹² It is interesting that the role of memory is mentioned here.

Memory is an important component of cinemagoing. The way a person remembers a particular event or space contains many layers. First of all, the fact that a memory was created indicates an importance or at the very least influences a person in the future. According to author Annette Kuhn, “Every place has its own inherent features, its own character; and these are independently instrumental in informing memory.”¹³ Attending the cinema had the ability to construct memories because the experience was different from other experiences people encountered in their daily lives. Highlighting the uniqueness of the cinemagoing occasion was the ritual of getting dressed up to see a movie. With the change in attire came a change in behaviour and in turn a change in status. The early cinemas (movie palaces and neighbourhood movie houses) encouraged these behaviours and the creation of memories because the architecture and spatial sequence of the building reinforced one’s preconceived notions of luxury. A cinema’s spatial quality, whether Art Deco or a Revival style, was executed with the intention of uplifting people. This thesis proposes that, if inserted sensitively, cinema can continue to play a role in public space and build a collective memory and identity.

A movie theatre is a piece of architecture that occupies space within the city. By comparing the impact of the movie palace with the impact of the multiplex on people’s memory it is clear that architecture plays a role. As Maggie Valentine points out:

¹² Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1960) 1.

¹³ Kuhn 16.

The real lesson of the movie theatre is that space matters. *Where* something happens affects how it happens. The family-room VCR is cheaper and more convenient than the theatre, but the film is different in that format and that environment. Architecture and design shape our experience and memories, our values and attitude, and influence our sense of style in other matters. They enhance or destroy the activities housed therein. Going to the movies is different from renting a video. Going to the mall shoe box [multiplex] is not the same as going to the show. Architecture matters.¹⁴

¹⁴ Valentine 184.

THE URBAN FABRIC OF THE CINEMA

Urban movie houses with street presence are the theatres that best lend themselves to the richest cinemagoing process. By existing as part of a dense multi-use urban fabric the cinemagoer has many potential spaces to engage with. Every theatre exists as part of the spatial construct of its surroundings, but some surroundings contribute more to the cinemagoing process (Figure 10). One of the ways an urban theatre does this is with a

large marquee announcing the theatre's presence on the streetscape. A theatre marquee, due to its scale and its placement – jutting out into the space of the street, has the ability to make an impression on people's memories and act as a landmark.

A theatre marquee also extends the space of the cinema to include the street. When

this occurs, the surrounding shops and restaurants are invited into a relationship with the cinema. This relationship benefits the public space of the street because more people will use it. For long term urban survival a cinema must exist in an environment in which it can contribute to its surroundings.

Figure 10: Bytowne Theatre and Context, Rideau Street, Ottawa, ON.

CASE STUDIES

ORLEANS TOWN CENTRE

Although it is a bit of an anomaly, the Cineplex Orleans 6, located in Orleans, a suburb on Ottawa, ON, illustrates many of the negative tendencies of the multiplex while creating the potential for a meaningful contribution to the street. According to author and urban planner, Alain Miguelez:

The theatre was part of a town centre development aimed at giving Orleans a downtown core. Centrum Boulevard was designed with buildings fronting along the sidewalk, terminating at Cumberland's new City Hall, across the street from an open plaza beside the cinemas. Unfortunately, all the pedestrian activity ended up at the rear of these buildings, where the parking lots were located, and not along the Centrum Boulevard sidewalks [Figures 11, 12].¹⁵

Figure 11: Orleans Town Centre 6 Street View, Orleans, ON.

Figure 12: Orleans Town Centre 6 Parking Lot View, Orleans, ON.

It is difficult to introduce a downtown-type core into a suburban area like Orleans, because it opposes the overriding usage patterns that create suburban landscapes. At best

¹⁵ Miguelez 326.

they may function as self contained destinations that are not able to integrate themselves into the fabric of the area. Employing a theatre in this kind of scheme recognizes the potential that a theatre has to create and define public space. Unfortunately, as this case illustrates, a theatre is not capable of activating an environment where the built environment does not allow it to establish a spatial and experiential dialogue with it.

Mediating between the parking lot and the cinemas are a few shops located on the ground floor of the building including a pizza place, hair salon, real estate agency, a sports store, a restaurant and a video game store. Many of these businesses have occupied these spaces since the block was constructed in 1989. In the centre of the block the cinema's entrance allows access from both the front and the back of the block serving as a passageway with a ticket booth. Flanking the ticket booth are two staircases that rise up to the second level where the snack bar and the cinemas are located. The space is not big but it is larger than many of the lobbies in typical mall multiplexes. One reason for this is the elimination of hallways to access the cinemas. All six auditoriums are accessed from the main space on the second level.

The Orleans Town Centre Cinemas contain many spatial characteristics of the multiplex while illustrating many of the tendencies of the urban megaplex. By moving the cinemas to the second level, the street level is liberated to allow for uses that are more sympathetic to the surrounding fabric such as shops. Famous Players Paramount in Toronto and Montreal utilize similar strategies by locating many cinemas on top of other programs that act as mediators between the street and the theatre. The Paramount Toronto is located on top of a parking garage and book store, while the Paramount

Montreal (Figure 6) is located on top of an historic department store building on Rue St. Catherine, one of Montreal's busiest streets.

In summary, the suburban Orleans Town Centre attempted to use a typology transplanted from an urban environment and was unsuccessful at the level of creating a 'street' environment. It did however, successfully contribute to the activities at grade by moving the theatre to the second level. If located in a more sympathetic urban environment the impact of this model could be considerable. Unfortunately, the Orleans Town Centre 6 proves that a movie theatre can't create street life on its own.

UFA PALAST, DRESDEN, GERMANY (CO-OP HIMMELB(L)AU)

The UFA Palast is a cinema that fulfills its role as a commercial entity while making an urban gesture by including a public urban square in downtown Dresden, Germany. As Edwin Heathcote, author of Cinema Builders points out, “Rather than presenting a monolithic block spread over a large floor plate consequentially killing off a large section of the city, Coop Himmelb(l)au have piled up the cinema centre into a sculptural mass which both defines and creates a public space.”¹⁶ By stacking the cinemas to one side of the site, the

remainder of the triangular shaped site is left to be occupied by a large public space. With urban public space at a premium in the area in Dresden where the cinema is located, the Palast allows for a pause in the dense streetscape. At the same time it employs different elements necessitated by the stacking of the cinemas to visually animate the public space. While the concrete cinemas anchor the project, the

Figure 13: Exterior View of Crystal Public Space, UFA Palast, Dresden, Germany.

primary focus is the crystalline form containing the public space (Figure 13). Critic Frank Werner describes the impact of the architectural gestures on the inside of the crystal as, “Inserted ‘sculptures’ work like editing cuts’, with the effect that the spatial sequences constantly intersect and dissolve into each other like video clips. This

¹⁶ Edwin Heathcote, Cinema Builders, (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2001) 90.

completely eliminates any experience of the space from a central perspective.”¹⁷ It is quite fitting that a cinema would possess these types of cinematic characteristics since film is its reason for being.

The UFA Palast contributes to the urban environment of Dresden, Germany more than just being an enclosed public space. The materiality of the spaces is considered as expressions related to the city since, “we are meant to feel a strong sense of the “hardness of the urban space as it thrusts its way inside.”¹⁸ In the movie palace model of cinema, there often was a linear procession from street to cinema with various mediating spaces occupying the interstitial space, but that cinema model has long since been eclipsed by the multiplex model. In the multiplex or megaplex model of cinema there are many cinemas and therefore many different possible destinations. With this in mind, there is an opportunity to exploit the path between the street and the cinema due to the increase in destinations. Coop Himmelb(l)au puts forward a proposal

Figure 14: Interior of Crystal Public Space, UFA Palast, Dresden, Germany.

allowing the paths between street and auditorium to play a leading role in animating the public space within the building (Figure 14). By enclosing these paths in a glass crystal it allows for the a visual relationship to exist between the urban fabric and the building

¹⁷ Frank Werner, *Covering + Exposing: The Architecture of Coop Himmelb(l)au*, (Berlin: Birkhauser Publishers for Architecture, 2000) 53.

¹⁸ Werner 53.

itself. People moving through the space in three dimensions on the multiple pathways provide just one level of animation on the interior. Media projections are used to provide another type of animation both on the interior of the building and in the adjacent environment. “As the urban surroundings work their way into the glass crystal space itself – above all at night when film trailers are projected in the urban space – works on the city, then the borders between stage and auditorium, between action and response are blurred.”¹⁹

By making the initial gesture of stacking the cinema boxes and accepting them as volumes, the architects opened up the possibility of creating the spaces that exist in the UFA Palast in Dresden, Germany. Like a movie, or at least a good movie, there are many different layers that make up the UFA Palast in Dresden that are not completely apparent at first glance.

¹⁹ Werner 161.

ACTIVATION

Activation, in the context of this discussion means to bring to life. This thesis specifically focuses on the elements that allow social life to exist in public spaces. The three most important elements that lead to the creation of a lively public space are time, space and people/inhabitants. Without all three of these elements a public space cannot support a lively environment, or at the very least be occupied as a public space. This definition of the necessary elements in creating public space is rooted in the theories of authors Richard Sennett, Kevin Lynch, Aldo Rossi, M. Christine Boyer and Richard Francaviglia. While each of these elements must be present, each may be present in different proportions depending on the public space in question. Public space can take on many different forms including streets, parks and public squares; each with inherent characteristics. It is necessary that different proportions of time, space and people exist in a lively environment.

SPACE AS SITE FOR ACTIVATION

Activated environments occur within the city at different points for many reasons. One of the primary public spaces in the city is the connective space of the street. The street has almost always served a dual function by allowing for travel between different points and social interaction and human gathering. These two uses may seem to be contradictory, but they have existed together for thousands of years. Travel and gathering are two functions of the street, but the buildings and their associated uses also dictate the nature of a particular street. For instance, if the street is lined with mixed-use buildings then the nature of the street will be mixed.

Layering many different uses onto one public space is essential to the creation of life within that space. By segregating different uses, even if they are complementary like residential and small commercial; there is a loss of dynamism in the associated environment. When discussing single use zoning in cities, Richard Sennett writes, “The atomizing of the city has put a practical end to an essential component of public space: the overlay of function in a single territory, which creates complexity of experience on that turf.”²⁰ Mixed use allows for unplanned events and new possibilities over totally planned space, necessary for maintaining a vibrant social life. The street is the ideal public space because, when framed properly, it contains many different uses creating a complex matrix of relationships.

A complex street is characterized by many different uses housed in buildings that form an appropriately scaled frame for the existing interstitial space. A Main Street still processing many of its early twentieth century usage patterns including apartments, houses, shops, restaurants, entertainment and light industrial, exhibit the characteristics of

²⁰ Sennett 297.

a complex street. Different uses allow for a balance to exist in the associated public space because it is not as dependant on a particular use. For instance, if the shops and restaurants on a street all close at 6pm, then without the presence of another use that space does not get occupied. However, if people lived in the area, their existence forms a customer base for the shops and restaurant which may allow those businesses to remain open longer. As more shops remain open, there is greater convenience for the people who live there, meaning that they are more likely to remain there. The presence of these different uses set up the potential for a lively public space, but without people using the public space and frequenting the different uses there it is highly unlikely that the space will become activated.

Adding another layer to the public space in a main street environment is the presence of civic buildings. Obviously, not every public space in a city can contain a civic use, nor should they, but they can form an important part of their surrounding environment. Civic buildings (Figure 15) have the ability to attract large groups of people to a single location which can benefit uses near by.

Figure 15: Brockville Courthouse Looking North from King Street West.

Combining different crowds allows for the public space to become lively based on the fact that there are many people. The presence of people allows a space to seem less alienating and therefore an individual is more likely to occupy the space.

THE ROLE OF TIME IN ACTIVATION

Time impacts special areas and how they get used. It is highly unlikely that a particular space has allowed for lively public interaction from the beginning of its existence. A space that allows for public interaction needs to have evolved over a period of time to gain different layers of meanings, uses and stories before it can become a lively public space. Time adds complexity and depth to the use of a particular environment. In The Architecture of the City, Aldo Rossi defines time as, “both the historical process, in which phenomena of a permanent kind are present with all their implications, and a purely chronological process, in which such phenomena can be measured against artifacts of successive periods.”²¹ Spaces exhibit markers of the passage of time that are crucial to the experience of that space and the city of which it is a part. In fact without the presence of time the city ceases to exist as Rossi states, “an inherent characteristic of the city is its permanence in time.”²²

When a space is frozen and incapable of responding to time it creates a barrier to its users to build up meaning to associate with that space. A space without the impact of time is a space that exists for, as M. Christine Boyer writes, “just looking.”²³ In a space that is built around passive interaction the danger is that the interaction between people becomes passive as well. While these spaces may be initially interesting spaces to visit, they are empty spaces because the life that exists in them is a simulated life and not one that is the product of a complex series of forces. Disneyland’s Main Street USA and New York City’s South Street Seaport are two environments which exhibit these

²¹ Aldo Rossi, The Architecture of the City, Trans. Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982) 96.

²² Rossi 126.

²³ M. Christine Boyer, “Cities for Sale,” Variations on a Theme Park, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992) 192.

simulated characteristics. Both of these environments will be discussed later in this thesis. Because they are frozen in time, the presence of this element is constantly combated through artificial maintenance of the space. These include the constant washing of a façade surface to maintain a desired appearance and mix of uses and the removal of additions and deletions to the urban fabric. Primarily, these spaces exist as part of an economic model designed to make people consume more. They are single use spaces that contain only commercial uses thereby exclusively relying on transient traffic to sustain the area, rather than being used by people from within the area.

Another way that time impacts the activation of space is via the amount of time people inhabit these public spaces. Single use zones require people to drive between different locations to accomplish different tasks. The most extreme type of these environments is the power centre, or ‘big box’ model of commercial usage. These spaces are characterized by large warehouse-like structures separated by large parking lots. Public space has been eliminated from this commercial model including the removal of pedestrian paths. Power Centre parking lots are the exclusive realm of the car and as such there is an adversarial relationship between the car and the pedestrian. The sympathetic relationship between the pedestrian and the car found in the ‘street’ model is now lost. People feel unwelcome in these spaces so they choose to go between the stores in their car. By reducing the amount of time people have to spend in public space these areas cannot become activated.

One of the primary arguments made in favour of the power centre is the level of convenience created by the existence of so many goods located in one location. At first, it appears that this is true, if we are measuring convenience by volume and variety only.

In the big box model, the space devoted to parking and space between the different stores actually reduces convenience when compared to other environments. Using a five minute walking radius as a unit of measure, a power centre development (Figure 16) can be compared to a small town downtown environment (Figure 17). The five minute walking radius, according to the New Urbanist doctrine, characterizes the size of a typical urban neighbourhood. As shown by the two figures, the downtown actually contains considerably more uses within the five minute walking radius. According to a Brockville commercial real estate agent there are over 300 businesses located in downtown Brockville. Almost all of downtown Brockville is contained within the five minute walking circle. In addition to the business uses contained in this circle there are also entertainment, leisure, light industrial, civic and residential uses. Occupying public space is a byproduct of visiting any of these different uses. On the other hand, there are only two businesses contained within the five minute walking radius in the big box model with mostly associated parking. There are no other uses contained in the area meaning that the only way to get to other types of space is to drive or walk a considerable distance.

Like getting to a power centre, a person must drive to get to public space in a single use environment. Since it is a special trip it is less likely that people will do it with frequency. Single use spaces are impoverished spaces and at the same time rob people of precious time.

Figure 16: Five Minute Walking Radius, Power Centre, Brockville, ON.

Figure 17: Five Minute Walking Radius, Downtown, Brockville, ON.

THE ROLE OF PEOPLE IN ACTIVATION: INHABITATION

Within the concept of activation the presence of people cannot be overlooked. People are the most important part of public space in that they are actually adding life to the street. The purpose of public space is to allow people to both gather and interact. It is difficult to determine exactly how people will interact in a particular space and to what degree life will be created, but when a multiplicity of uses exists there is a greater chance for activation. A space should not be dependent on one use or on one group, but rather it should encourage many different uses, thereby allowing it to become interdependent and to sustain life. Sustaining and enhancing life is or at least should be the goal of every public space.

For public space to function it needs to engage different types of people. These people may be occupying the space for different reasons, but they all play a role in activating public space. One type of person that is crucial to activating public space is that of the character. Jane Jacobs discusses the role of the public character in her book The Death and Life of Great American Cities. For Jacobs, characters are not necessary people with unique characteristics, but they play a crucial role in creating ‘casual public life.’²⁴ Without the existence of this type of interaction the public space of the street loses some of its effectiveness. Store owners in small towns are often characters due to their location within the life of the town. They interact with many different people on a daily basis and therefore can influence people’s experiences.

As stated before, for a public space to sustain and create life it must have a mixture of time, space and people. All of these elements are important, but different

²⁴ For more information on the concepts of casual public life and public characters see Jane Jacobs The Death and Life of Great American Cities Chapter 3.

vibrant public spaces contain different mixes of these three elements. Urban streets which have well defined edges and different uses create a level of complexity that is necessary to maintain activated public space. Richard Francaviglia writes:

Everywhere on Main Street we see *time* (change or stasis and preservation) and *space* (patterns of local, regional, national, even international traits interacting). These help individuals create and sustain social networks as they in turn create *place* in America.²⁵

This is why a main street is such a potent space in its physical manifestation and in memory. Only spaces with a complex mix of time, space and people can sustain life in public space.

²⁵ Richard Francaviglia, Main Street Revisited: Time, Space and Image Building in Small-Town America (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996) 192.

ARTIFICIAL ENVIRONMENTS

MAIN STREET USA, DISNEYLAND AND SOUTH STREET SEAPORT, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Once the use of the artificial spectacle is established by visual media defining public space, the next stage in the surrender of public space to artificial stimulation, is the creation of an artificial space. One of the earliest and most influential of these spaces on a large scale is Walt Disneyland's Main Street USA in Anaheim, California (Figure 18). This space is not an actual Main Street, but representative of a Main Street as a construct. In satisfying the reason for its existence (for consumption of both space and goods) it is very successful, especially concerning the disorientating qualities of the space.

Main Street USA is artificial because the street is merely visual like a two dimensional stage set. In such an environment the element of time as described by Aldo Rossi, is eliminated. Kevin Lynch also acknowledges the importance of time by stating, "Like a piece of architecture, the city is a construction in space, but one on a vast scale, a thing perceived only in the course of long spans of time."²⁶ Main Street USA is part of a theme park and not part of an urban fabric, but

Figure 18: Main Street USA, Disneyland, Anaheim, California.

the question remains as to what happens when these spatial consumption principles are

²⁶ Lynch 1.

applied to an environment that is part of an urban environment. The answer to this question has been answered, “Since Disneyland’s opening, the use of commercial private space as public property has become so commonplace that themed commercial districts and shopping malls are preferred over outdoor plazas and streets for public activity.”²⁷ As a result environments like South Street Seaport exist.

South Street Seaport in New York City (Figure 19) is one urban space in which the principles of Disneyland’s Main Street have been applied. Before its transformation, the Seaport was part of an active harbour on the edge of the island of Manhattan with many layers of history, but it was often considered dirty and unattractive. With a goal to improve the aesthetic appearance and the fortunes of the area, a major remaking of the area was undertaken. The new South Street Seaport functions in a similar way to that of Main Street USA because it has become a self contained destination with its previous usage patterns completely altered. Many of the

Figure 19: South Street Seaport in 1981, New York City, NY.

elements that defined the area’s original character including various seafood restaurants and seafood markets were removed in favour of chain restaurants and stores. Frozen in time, the formerly historically and socially layered space has been removed from direct participation in the urban fabric of New York City. The alteration in use created a

²⁷ Chuihua Judy Chung, “Disney Space,” *Harvard Design School: Guide to Shopping*, eds. Judy Chuihau Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas, Sze Tsung Leong (Köln: Taschen, 2001) 280.

disconnect in the evolution of place which causes the affected environment to go into shock. The more incremental the change, the more likely the space will be sustainable.

By commodifying a pre-existing urban space South Street Seaport's creators market the space as authentic even if it is really not. Many of the buildings were 'restored to a previous appearance' while previous uses were eliminated including critical characters which defined certain spaces. These people participate in the public space thereby increasing the potential for active space. By eliminating spontaneous interactions with characters, what remains is often a simulation. According to Christine Boyer:

We seem to be witnessing in the contemporary city a proliferation of fictions and simulations. The nostalgic art of preservation on display at historic developments like South Street Seaport borrow heavily from the nineteenth century genres of the exhibition hall, the panoramic spectacle, and the tableau vivant... Late capitalism has simply replaced the boulevard with historicized street malls and the department store with "festival" markets, which offer the same mix of image and illusion as the nineteenth century spectacle. This is spectator art, meant to be quickly scanned, not analyzed in detail, where the pleasure of the view suspends critical judgment; it is commercial art as well, expected to entertain for a profit. And now, as in the nineteenth century, a feeling of social insecurity seems to breed a love of simulation.²⁸

After World War II, there has been a shift in how people live and work. With the shift, many small towns struggled to find a means to sustain a struggling downtown. This

²⁸ Boyer 186

resulted in towns reconstructing their existing Main Street into a simulated environment similar to Main Street USA at Disneyland. The goal of this approach is to attract tourists who come and spend money in the area in return for the opportunity to occupy a simulated space. Altering an area in a small town employing this approach is not a sustainable solution since it fails to address the underlying problems that caused the street to fall into a state of underuse in the first place. Another negative to this approach is in order to cleanse an area, the street is often purged of uses that are frequented by people living downtown. As people leave, an area becomes even more reliant on tourist income to sustain its existence, making it less of a public space for people living in the town. During this process, it becomes a space constructed for viewing and not for direct interaction since the crowd is transient with little vested interest in the condition of the space. In order for an area to survive it needs to be cared for.

SMALL TOWN DOWNTOWNS

CONDITIONS IN SMALL TOWN DOWNTOWNS

Small town downtowns exhibit a host of unique characteristics which they have acquired through the passage of time. While the image of main street has become universal with Main Street, USA, real main streets reveal the passage of time. The buildings are constructed at a scale related to the size of the community when they are constructed. The result is an urban fabric with buildings and spaces from various periods of development.

As a focus of activity, the main street is the location of choice for the most important buildings in the community such as city hall, courthouse, post office and customs house and churches of different denominations. However, along with the shift of other uses away from main street, some civic institutions have left the area for single use zones. Most importantly, “As seen through the eyes of the people who created them, Main Streets are, above all, creations that symbolize both individual and collective human energy, aspirations and dreams.”²⁹ The creation of the buildings was a matter of civic pride as symbols of the community. Whether consciously or unconsciously done, the creation of the spaces exhibited the desire to uplift a particular

Figure 20: Downtown, Carleton Place, ON.

²⁹ Francaviglia xxvi.

community by providing well appointed buildings designed to frame and contain human activity.

Buildings, like the spaces they occupy, evolve as a community changes and grows. Buildings were designed with their community in mind. This is in direct contrast with the 'one size fits all' approach of contemporary commercial structures where the same size store is built in a town of 24,000 as in a city of 200,000 people.

In addition to civic buildings there are many additional structures and spaces that contribute to a main street environment. A hotel or multiple hotels provide spaces to house transient visitors, while at the same time provide spaces for local residents. A main street hotel, built between 1900 and 1925, typically contained a restaurant and ballroom that both visitors and the townspeople could use. The hotel's public spaces often served as space for community meetings, business interactions and club meetings in addition to social engagements. While the hotel may have contained one of the best restaurants in the area, there did exist other restaurants and shops that created more social destinations in the main street environment.

Intermixed with the civic spaces were numerous shops and services. Their contribution to a main street may have been the ability to attract large groups of people or in other areas it was about a single person, mainly the store owner who enriched life in the town. As Kevin Lynch points out, "Moving elements in a city, and in particular the people and their activities are as important as the stationary physical parts."³⁰ Even more so, store owners play a necessary active role in the creation of public space in a small town. However, they were not alone in contributing a human element to public space on Main Street. Above many of the shops and restaurants lining the street were apartments

³⁰ Lynch 2.

rented or lived in by the store owners themselves. These people provided bodies and illumination on the street; most importantly they used it at all times during the day and night.

Shop owners who actually live in the same town in which their store is located have a vested interest in the maintenance of the community. Community in this context applies to both physical and non physical attributes. The non physical attributes apply to relationships between people and the well being of other people. In order to support local entrepreneurs businesspeople are likely to buy needed goods from people in the community.

The condition of many small town main streets is mixed depending on many different factors. One of the major factors causing changes is a shift in people's living and shopping patterns. These two patterns define the function and facilitate the existence of the main street environment. The condensed multi-use fabric of Main Street has been vacated in favour of single use developments where residential, commercial and industrial uses are separated. With single use space it becomes more difficult to sustain public space due to a lack of interstitial space where public activity can occur. According to James H. Kunstler, "You might say the overall consequence is that we have lost our sense of consequence. Living in places where nothing is connected properly, we have forgotten that connections are important."³¹ In some cases public space may be eliminated all together.

Residual spaces are those that are most likely to form the basis for public space in a small town. There is little money to allow for the creation and maintenance of large

³¹ James H. Kunstler, Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape (New York: Touchstone, 1993) 246.

designated public spaces beyond a few parks and other recreational spaces. As the primary residual space, the street is an important public space. In fact Jane Jacobs argues that “streets and their sidewalks, the main public spaces of the city, are its most vital organs.”³² Unfortunately, streets are no longer defined spaces as they rarely contain clear edges. Without definition it is difficult to sustain focused public activity that is necessary for activated space. Focus is created by framing a space with appropriately scaled edges. Many main streets contain appropriately scaled edges relative to the street while larger traffic arteries designed for the efficient movement of automobiles do not.

It is difficult for a main street to accommodate the scale of multinational retailers, like Wal-Mart, as so many streets focus on niche shops, entertainment venues and restaurants. By using entertainment venues, there is recognition of the area’s purpose as a place of public activity. As Derych Holdsworth points out, “The traditional use of the street a social space, a meeting ground, defined the importance of Main Street.”³³ When adapting a main street the social space of the street must be respected.

³² Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Vintage Books, 1961) 29.

³³ Deryck Holdsworth, Reviving Main Street (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) 4.

IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTERS ON SMALL TOWN PUBLIC SPACE

Store owners are important people for small town public space; they provide destinations and also a social function. In some cases, over time these people achieve the status of becoming vivid characters within the town. Each character plays a role in the creation of an activated public space since he/she plays an active role in defining it.

While architecture helps to define public space, the need for characters to complement the architecture cannot be overlooked. When talking to people who have experienced a space like a main street it is more likely that they remember a specific person rather than a specific building. This thesis recognizes the importance of characters in a small town.

For instance, one of the characters that many people identify with downtown Brockville, Ontario is Mr. Tom Dailey. Mr. Dailey's family owned a sporting goods store, and a leather goods and travel agency at the same location downtown while they were in business from 1918-2000. Adding to his character was a full size paper mache horse that stood in the window of his shop. This horse was popular with children who enjoyed sitting on it and in later years they remember the experience quite clearly. Ultimately one of the functions of space is the creation of memories and characters feature prominently in them.

Characters help define the way people interact with others and approach everyday tasks like shopping. The way a character operates his/her business and interacts with patrons has a direct impact on the way people receive a space.

One of the things that many main street business owners once did was to allow store credit. Issuing store credit was just one of many ways a business owner character developed a relationship with his/her customers. Today, some stores still offer credit, but

they often do not operate in the same fashion. Because many businesses are now part of larger chain stores it becomes more difficult to develop personal relationships that are necessary for these types of interactions. It is possible for it to happen with larger businesses, but the store must have at least one person who functions as a character. People ultimately come to identify a business with a particular character.

BROCKVILLE: DESIGN EXPLORATION SITE

BROCKVILLE'S LOCATION

Brockville, Ontario was the first incorporated town in Upper Canada in 1834. It is located approximately one hundred and twenty kilometers from Ottawa, Ontario along the banks of the St. Lawrence River. Brockville's location is crucial to its development since it was the midpoint between Toronto and Montreal, playing an important role as a railway depot. Brockville is the site of the first railway tunnel in North America, built in 1862. Although the railway tunnel closed in the 1960s, Brockville is still an important point for rail transportation in Eastern Ontario. It is the junction of the Quebec City-Windsor corridor and the Ottawa-Brockville line. Its railway station is still in the same place as it has been for over a century.

Due to access to both water and rail transport Brockville's waterfront was home to major industries such as the James Smart Novelty Works. These waterfront industries provided many jobs for Brockville's citizens from 1860 until 1940. After this period many of the industries had difficulty competing and were forced to close. After the closing of

these industrial plants there were large portions of the waterfront being underused.

Coinciding with a shift in development involving the decentralization of Brockville's

Figure 21: Brockville Waterfront (Hardy Park to the Right), Brockville, ON.

population during the 1960s the majority of the waterfront was turned into parkland (Figure 21). New industrial parks in the west and north end of Brockville now house the industrial uses. It is quite ironic that the reason for the creation of industrial parks was to separate industry from commercial and residential and now in Brockville commercial has rejoined industrial uses with a big box retail outlet located in the north end industrial park.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BROCKVILLE AND ITS DOWNTOWN

In order to fully understand the nature of the public space that characterizes Brockville's downtown it is necessary to look at the history of Brockville. Originally Brockville was settled as part of a land grant for United Empire Loyalists after the American War of Independence towards the end of the 1780s. The location of the St. Lawrence River made the current location of Brockville's downtown ideal for settlement. Three of the earliest families that settled in the area were the Buells, Sherwoods and the Joneses, although William Buell Sr. is credited as the founder of Brockville. These families played a role in local politics and the politics of Upper Canada. Locally, members of these families engaged primarily in business and service occupation serving as some of Brockville's earliest lawyers, judges and business owners. William Buell Sr. opened the first general store near the waterfront around the end of the eighteenth century which gives an indication of the age of the business economy of the community.

The original Brockville courthouse was completed in 1810 and was replaced in 1843 with the current structure at the top of Courthouse Avenue. The market was not far away, two blocks east of the courthouse. The market building is now part of the Victoria Building that houses Brockville City Hall. In addition to these civic buildings many churches were built. In fact there used to be churches on the four corners flanking the courthouse similar to the layout of a British town square. Over a hundred and sixty years later the courthouse square is still one of the most important spaces in the entire city of Brockville.

Along King Street, Brockville's original main commercial street began to take shape in the first half of the nineteenth century with some of the earlier commercial buildings dating to the 1840s. For instance, the "round corner building" on the south side of King Street between St. Andrew and Apple Street (73-85 King Street West) was constructed in 1842. Its round corner and the hip roof over 73 and 75 King Street West give it a unique architectural appearance, while being a three storey building which remains the typical height of much of the downtown fabric. A great deal of the downtown fabric is stone similar to this building while brick is the other primary material. Two of the most prominent commercial buildings on King Street, are located at the intersection of Courthouse Avenue and King Street West on opposite corners in the form of the Comstock Block and the Fulford Block. These buildings bare the names of two of the wealthiest businesspeople in Brockville's history. While much of the Comstock Block has been demolished, the Fulford Block still acts as one of the anchors on the streetscape.

MORPHOLOGICAL HISTORY OF DOWNTOWN BROCKVILLE

Figure 22: 1908 Aerial Photo of Downtown Brockville.

Figure 23: 1974 Aerial Photo of Downtown Brockville.

Figure 24: 1994 Aerial Photo of Downtown Brockville.

DOWNTOWN BROCKVILLE'S SOCIAL LOSSES

Complementing the downtown's role as the social centre of the community were many socially important locations. These include numerous hotels, movie theatres, shops, restaurants, dwellings and an arena. As with any space, there needs to be people using the space in order for it to be sustained. While it was losing its residential and industrial component the downtown was able to remain reasonably sustainable with the majority of social spaces remaining in the downtown. Three key social locations downtown are the Old Brockville Memorial Centre, the Capitol Theatre and the Manitonna Hotel. All of these important social gathering spaces have disappeared and with them the crowds accompanying these spaces. The three previously mentioned locations all disappeared between 1978 and 1996, but it could be argued that in at least two out of three cases the end was much earlier. Making these losses worse is that in two out of three cases there are no buildings on the site; they remain vacant like open wounds in the downtown fabric.

OLD BROCKVILLE MEMORIAL CENTRE

The old Brockville Memorial Centre ("Mem Centre") was much more than just an arena; it was a community centre both from a facilities and social standpoint. The Mem Centre was located at the western most end of King Street, Brockville's Main Street, acting as a primary destination for Brockvillians interested in attending diverse events including swimming at the Rotary pool, bingo in the large hall located at the southern end of the building overlooking the ice surface, or going to a hockey game. With a capacity of around 3000 people, the rink, built in 1951 generated a great deal of traffic for the downtown as many people arrived before games to visit stores and eat at nearby restaurants. The local Brockville Braves, currently a tier 2 Junior "A" team, was a major draw as the Mem Centre saw many sell-outs from 1951 until its roof collapsed early in 1978. After the collapse, it was a matter of considerable debate as what the appropriate course of action should be since the arena was built on unstable soil and required upgrades to its foundation. It was clear to some that the city was most interested in constructing a new 1800 seat facility in the north end of town near recently developed residential areas. With many factors conspiring against simply repairing the collapsed roof's damaged skin, the old Mem Centre was demolished, with only the original ice pad, ice plant, and the former Rotary pool building remaining. With the loss of the Mem Centre the western end of downtown lost a major social draw that will probably never be replaced.

CAPITOL THEATRE

The Capitol (Figure 25) was one of two movie theatres on King Street, but it survived the longest. Originally named the Brock, the theatre actually remained in use as a movie house from 1913 until 1987. There are many factors that contributed to the closing of the theatre in early 1987

including an ownership that was known for selling off its larger theatres and declining movie attendance as a result of more competition for people's leisure time. Also contributing to its downfall was the existence of the Parkdale Cinema two-plex, in

Figure 25: Capitol Theatre in 1947, Brockville, ON.

Brockville's north end. The Parkdale was built in 1977. While the final show was well attended, few if any opposed the closing and demolition of the Capitol. "Instead of protest, local fans of the silver screen are channeling energies towards a Capitol Theatre farewell party,"³⁴ It is fitting that the Capitol was celebrated since it was a big part of many people's lives growing up. There are many people in Brockville that can remember going to the Capitol with their friends or on a date. If they were on a date the balcony was a popular place to sit as an added degree of privacy existed there.

Architecturally, the theatre was reserved much like the majority of the architecture on King Street. The majority of the façade (facing onto King Street) from

³⁴ Dan Black, "We'll Soon Bid Farewell to the Capitol Theatre," *The Recorder and Times* [Brockville] 26 Dec. 1986: 1.

the Strathcona Hotel which burned down on the site in 1911, was reused for the Capitol. In order to allow the theatre to stand out on the streetscape the entrance of the theatre was announced by a gable front with an arched window located above the entrance. Later additions further identifying the theatre include a twenty seven foot high marquee added in 1927. Due to its architectural characteristics the theatre was a physical and social landmark in the downtown. "Once a history, a sign, or a meaning attaches to an object, its value as a landmark rises."³⁵ For seventy four years many people visited the Capitol attaching personal meanings to it. Even when people did not go see a movie they would meet their friends in front of the Capitol.

A cinema needs to be considered in its environment and not by itself. Each adjacent and associated space contributes to a particular experience of seeing a film. The Capitol Theatre in Brockville illustrates this point, as many downtown restaurants received increased patronage as a result of the cinema's location.

Located across the street from the Capitol, Diana Sweet's Chinese Food Restaurant

Figure 26: Capitol Theatre Interior circa 1986, Brockville, ON.

was popular with movie goers before and after going to see a movie. It was not uncommon for shops and restaurants near the cinema to reopen after people exited from a movie. Other restaurants that cinemagoers frequented included the Relax and the 1000 Islands Restaurant located within a few block radius of the Capitol.

³⁵ Lynch 81.

The environment around the cinema's former location seems to be missing a major element which is apparent by just walking by the site. This is not entirely due to the loss of the cinema, as the vacant site across the street, changing shopping patterns and the presence of buildings which fail to contain the street nearby also contribute to this feeling of loss. According to the author of *The Community of Cinema*, "we discovered a relationship between the health of a street and the condition of the movie houses on the block."³⁶ It follows that if the cinema is removed from its former location it will impact its former surroundings. The cinema provided people, not just to visit nearby businesses, but to activate the street. The activation occurs when people congregate in a space with a purpose governed by a series of loose guidelines that allow for spontaneous activity to occur. Lining up in front of the cinema was one way the cinema contributed to the surrounding environment and in fact the impact of a line up can be quite substantial. For instance, if someone walked by the cinema and saw a long lineup in front of the theatre they may think about going to see the movie since it appears to be popular. Lineups may be considered a negative in some instances like waiting to get on an amusement park ride,

Figure 27: Headline from Brockville Recorder & Times, December 26, 1986.

but it is one way that a cinema's spatial reach is extended to include the street.

Essentially the street becomes the cinema's lobby.

³⁶ James Forsher, *The Community of Cinema: How Cinema and Spectacle Transformed the American Downtown* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003) viii.

MANITONNA HOTEL

Another major contributor to the King Street environment during the twentieth century, for better and worse, was the Manitonna Hotel (Figure 28) at the southeast corner of King Street East and Market Street East, next to city hall. There are many reasons why the Manitonna is such a crucial building to the downtown, even as it currently sits vacant. The hotel was built in 1929 in order to provide a first class hotel for travelers and businesspeople. At the same time it afforded additional spaces for the community. In fact the community was a major part of its creation as the Manitonna was built with funding from the community. One hundred dollar shares were issued in order to raise part of the capital required to build the hotel. “It was called boosterism... People felt that their community meant something. They would pool their resources in a collective kind of way.”³⁷ So from the start it was recognized as an important location in the community.

Architecturally, the building was quite imposing and made a statement about how people felt about their community. At six storeys tall, it is the tallest building that has ever been constructed fronting onto King Street. It was even taller than the cupola of City Hall. In the ground floor of the hotel were a series of commercial spaces in addition to the lobby of the hotel

Figure 28: Manitonna Hotel in 1929, King Street East, Brockville, ON.

³⁷ Andrew Philips, “Community Pride Built Manitonna Hotel,” *The Recorder and Times* [Brockville] 14 June 1996.

and the Wedgewood Room, the hotel's main dining room. The Wedgeroom Room was especially important to the community as it was a place where the service clubs like the Lions Club or the Oddfellows or the Legion held the annual dinners. In addition to regular dining, the Manitonna hosted many charity balls and other social events. Like going to the cinema once was, it was an occasion when people dressed up in their best clothes and went out in public.

Unfortunately, by the 1990s the hotel was falling apart and the hotel's final occupant, the Wonderland Strip Club was shut down in 1991, leaving the hotel completely vacant. Numerous ideas were considered and an updating was even started, but never completed when the price was found to be too high. In 1996 the city had finally had enough and ordered that the hotel be demolished for safety reasons (Figure 26). With no tenants, the vacant building was allowed to deteriorate beyond repairs. It is unfortunate that a building with such a community focus, at the beginning, could end its life in this manner. Currently all that occupies the site is an empty hole and chain link fence.

SPATIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN DOWNTOWN BROCKVILLE

Downtown Brockville is a Main Street environment characterized by a fabric that has evolved over time by adapting to the needs of the community. As the oldest part of the city, it contains a remarkably intact collection of pre-twentieth century commercial and residential structures that speak of a rich history and the potential for a continued importance. “Each Main Street is unique because it was developed gradually from within, not imposed suddenly from without.”³⁸ By developing as part of the community the area is a reflection of Brockville’s size and therefore is more likely to contain spaces for people to interact.

While downtowns may be characterized by commercial uses, they also contain other uses that contribute to other layers of activity. These other uses include residential, civic and recreational. Residential uses include different types of dwelling units from apartments above stores, townhouses and large detached

**Figure 29: King Street West, late 1930s
(Central Block on the Left of the Image),
Brockville, ON.**

homes. Civic and residential uses include city hall, post office, schools, courthouse,

library, churches and parks; all of which contribute to creating destinations in the downtown. Architecturally, many civic buildings have the ability to express in built form a community's faith in the town's presence. To this end many of these buildings are visual anchors on King Street and help to create a hierarchy of buildings.

Binding this diverse collection of buildings is a series of residual spaces that are used for different purposes by different people. The street is the primary residual space and it is used by both automobiles and pedestrians through the existence of a slight grade separation which delineates each zone. This model allows for both pedestrians and automobile traffic to coexist in the same space. Main streets, often predate the invention of the automobile, but many were designed as wide streets defined on the edges by buildings that were proportional in height to the street or at the very least proportional to the size of the community. Another factor in the width of many Main Streets was that they are part of early highway systems as is the case of King Street in Brockville.

A second level of residual space is the alleyway which provides separation between buildings and allows for deliveries to the various buildings adjacent to the alleyway. An alleyway also may serve as an extension of the sidewalk if there is a shop, restaurant or residential access that is located off the street at the rear of the building. As an extension of the sidewalk, alleys have the potential to serve as niches adjacent to the street where many different activities can occur. At the same time these spaces assist in

activating the street. One such use is as an outdoor dining room for a restaurant. The existence of people dining on the street adds an activity to the street that people watch or participate in.

Similar to an alleyway, the carriageway provides access to spaces located off the primary space of the street. The primary difference is that an alleyway is often a space that separates two buildings while a carriageway is carved through a building. In Brockville there are many examples of carriageways throughout the downtown whether it is a commercial or residential building. The Sheridan Mews is located on King Street West and is a collection of commercial buildings that contain an inner courtyard. Inside the courtyard at the Sheridan Mews there is an old mill which is now an art gallery and an ice cream shop. In order to increase the number of people who visit the Mews, the owners are working with many of the festivals in Brockville by allowing some of them to stage events in the courtyard space. Making the courtyard space even more intriguing is the presence of apartments located on the upper floors of the buildings that face onto King Street. It is not uncommon to see people's laundry drying on a sunny summer day or just seeing people sitting on their balconies. By allowing for multiple activities to occur in a contained space like the Sheridan Mews courtyard it becomes more visually layered. Since it is visually animated it becomes a more interesting space to visit and in turn is more likely to continue to be an animated space.

Without the existence of many different uses the King Street environment would not exist. There is a dynamic relationship that exists between the different uses and spaces that allow them to mutually support each other.

CINEMA SITE

WHERE IS IT AND WHY WAS IT CHOSEN?

For the design exploration component of this thesis a site in downtown Brockville, Ontario was chosen (Figure 30). One of the primary criteria used for selecting the site was that it had to be a vacant site large enough to accommodate a cinema. By choosing a vacant site, of which there are two large sites on King Street, the focus is on repairing the fabric instead of creating another disruption in the fabric. The chosen site is the approximate geographical centre of downtown and it occupies an important location on the street. It is also the block, both on the north and south side of the street that causes the greatest amount of disruption in the continuity of King Street. The gap exists from two major fires in the 1960s. The disruption creates a disjunction between the area to the east of the site and to the west of it. The eastern portion is in much better condition in comparison to the west end. While economic problems play a part in the differences, the gap places the differences in clearer focus.

Figure 30: Site in 2004, King Street West, Brockville, ON.

Figure 31: Site in the Middleground, in 1956, King Street West, Brockville, ON.

The site's exact location is 109-131 King Street

West on the south side of the street. It extends back along Home Street to occupy slightly more than half of the block (3350m² of the 7560m² block) bounded by Apple Street to the east, Home Street to the west and Water Street to the south. Only one remaining building fronts onto King Street occupying 15 metres of the

frontage (Figures 32 and 33) while the 42 metres of the street frontage is vacant. Along Home Street the site occupies 89 metres of the 119 metre street frontage. The proximity of the St. Lawrence River influences the site characteristics as the site drops a considerable amount from the north to south. In fact, the sidewalk bordering the north end of the site is at street level; the site itself is actually one and a half metres below that level. There is a six to seven metre difference in height from the level of King Street West to the north and Water Street to the south. This significant grade change presents some unique opportunities for exploring sectional relationships between programs within the proposal.

It also allows for both physical and visual connections to be established with the river

Figure 32: Remaining Building on Site (101-105 King Street West) in 2004.

Figure 33: 101-105 King Street West in the 1950s.

that are currently underexploited. Although King Street is located approximately two blocks north of the river there is very little to draw people's attention to the river as the facades fronting onto the side streets are given little architectural attention especially on the corner buildings. Another reason for the disconnect is the closely packed nature of uses that once characterized the area.

As a waterfront community, industry was an important part of Brockville's economy. Brockville's waterfront had both rail and water access making it the ideal location for factories, of which there were many. While all that remains of the heavily industrialized area is a park, one light industrial building and a couple of sheds, the residential component associated with the industry still remains. At the south end of the cinema site there is housing dating back to the nineteenth century. Judging by the size and detailing it appears that most of it was workers' housing associated with one of Brockville's largest factories, Brockville Novelty Works (Figure 34). As part of the city's desire to clean up the area and a downturn in the fortunes of some of the companies operating factories on the waterfront, the industrial uses were shifted away from downtown into business and industrial parks located in the west and north ends of town. Until the 1960s, a great deal of stigma was attached to the area south of King

Figure 34: Smart's Factory Stack Coming Down, Early 1960s, Brockville, ON.

Street. Because of the industry, it was an area that parents warned their children to avoid when they went to a movie at the Capitol Theatre or visited the shops along King Street. Since the sequence of spaces on the street was created before the creation of a more publicly accessible waterfront there is a need to create stronger linkages between King Street and the waterfront. This is not to be confused with an effort to remove people from the Kings Street space, but an attempt to create another destination for the street and to create a mutually beneficial relationship between public spaces in downtown Brockville.

TOM DAILEY AS HISTORIC CHARACTER FOR DESIGN EXPLORATION SITE

As the longest continuous user of the site, Tom Dailey made a crucial impact on the site's history. Not only was his store a local landmark but he was an advocate for the town of Brockville. After meeting him only once at his home in Brockville, overlooking the St. Lawrence River, he handed me a business card that read "You have a friend in Brockville, Ontario." He hands these cards to virtually everyone he meets (Figure 35).

In recognition of his efforts, Mr. Dailey was awarded the President's award from the East Tourism Association in 2000. When Dailey's burned down in 2000, it was an event that hit the community hard. "One could easily have believed the whole

Figure 35: Business Card from Tom Dailey.

city came out to see the heritage building at the corner of King Street West and Home Street go down right after sunset two Mondays ago. And since it's impossible to know Brockville without knowing Tom Dailey, the city's one-man PR department, it's not hard to believe the whole city is wishing him well.”³⁹ This quote from the Recorder and Times perfectly sums up Mr. Dailey's impact on Brockville.

If it is difficult to know Brockville without knowing Tom Dailey then it is difficult to know Tom Dailey without knowing his horse, a life size paper mache horse figure that survived both fires. The horse has many names including the Cornwall horse after the place of its origin and Smokey, an appropriate name since it survived two fires. In both fires the horse was carried out in two pieces from burning stores. The second time Mr. Dailey actually went back into the burning store and with the assistance of

³⁹ Ronald Zajac, "Tom Dailey soldiers on," The Recorder and Times [Brockville] 31 Mar. 2000: A3.

firefighters carried the horse to safety. It is difficult to fathom that a life size model horse made of paper mache could be so important, but it is part of the lives of people who grew up in Brockville for 75 years.

Figure 36: 35 Home Street Throughout Its History with Horse Inset, From Tom Dailey's Personal Collection.

ARCHITECTURAL PROPOSAL

In order to further explore the question of whether or not a cinema has the ability to activate small town public space in 2005, a design exploration was undertaken on the previously described site. By working on the theoretical work and the built project at the same time, the concepts in the theoretical work inform the built project and vice versa. At the outset of the project there was an idea of how the cinema would function on the Brockville site given its context, but the idea became a starting point and not the end point for the exploration.

There are many reasons why a cinema was chosen for this particular site and its context. My parents live in Brockville, and I lived there for a short period. For the first time in more than ninety years Brockville did not have a movie theatre after the Parkdale Cinema closed early in 2002. It was not due to a lack of interest in the community, but to a leasing issue that caused the closure of the cinema. When it was announced that a new multiplex would be built at the 1000 Islands Mall in Brockville in 2005, Pat Marshall, VP of Communications and Specialty Marketing for Cineplex Galaxy, stated in a press release that, "The residents in this community have been so supportive of our theatre plans here and I have received dozens of telephone calls and emails encouraging us to build here."⁴⁰ In addition to a lack of a movie theatre in the community, the condition of the downtown was a major concern. According to one downtown businessperson, the downtown needs a major draw that gives people a reason to come south of the highway to visit the downtown area. A cinema would give the downtown a major draw while giving

⁴⁰ "New Galaxy Cinemas to Open in Brockville, Ontario Fall 2005," Cineplex Galaxy Press Release, 8 June 2004, Cineplex Galaxy Cinemas, 15 Sept. 2004
http://www.cineplex.com/media_support/press_release/03-06-08_BROCKVILLE.htm.

Brockville a movie theatre. To begin exploring the built work, two characters were developed to assist in guiding the project.

CHARACTERS AS GENERATORS FOR CINEMA: JOHN AND LANEY COOPER

As previously stated, the existence of characters is important in a small town and with this in mind two characters were developed for this project to act as mediators between community and architecture. One role of the cinema is to act as a meeting place for the community making it necessary to respond to the conditions that exist.

As an example, in Gananoque, Ontario, a small town of 5000 near Brockville, there is a small two-plex cinema called the Boulevard cinema (Figure 37). From the outside it is inconspicuous with little or no street presence since it is located near the fairground in Gananoque down a side street. The building was not constructed as a cinema. It has been used as a lumber warehouse and a dinosaur museum before becoming a cinema. Much of the interior

Figure 37: Boulevard Cinema Entrance, Gananoque, ON.

is composed of collected pieces from old cinemas that have closed or have been renovated. The significance of the building itself is of secondary importance to the cinema's owner, Paul, who the townspeople identify with the theatre.

In order to increase the impact of the cinema Paul developed a series of community programs to engage youth in the area. Like many small towns there is little opportunity for entertainment for teenagers which often leads them to participate in destructive activities. The Boulevard is a piece of community infrastructure because its

focus is on this age group. One program encourages children to read. As a reward for reading a certain number of books an entire class may get free movie passes or their own private screening in the theatre. In addition to the reading program it is not uncommon for Carol, the manager, to act as a confidant for the teenagers who frequent the cinema. By interacting with the people who visit the cinema there is a personal relationship that is developed that is necessary to any small town business. Small town businesses rely on their community to survive so they need to establish connections. Architecture has the ability to organize space in a way that promotes interaction, but without inhabitation and acceptance by the community a building is little more than an object.

The two fictional characters developed for this proposal are named John and Laney Cooper. Laney is the manager of the cinema while John is the projectionist. Laney is a native of Brockville and has lived there all her life. Before becoming the manager of the cinema she worked as a reporter for the local newspaper. It was at the newspaper where she developed relationships with people in the town. Community involvement was also important for Laney as she volunteered with many organizations in Brockville such as the Arts committee and with the downtown business improvement association.

While Laney was very involved in the community, John was far more reserved. He was born in Brockville, but lived there for only a short period of time since his parents moved to Kingston a short time after he was born. In order to get a change of scenery John took a job with a chemical company just outside of Brockville since he is a chemical engineer by training. John was not involved in the community at all since he had not

lived in Brockville for a long time and he was shy. In fact it is only by chance that John and Laney met.

Their relationship centres around the movie theatre. The first time the two of them met was on the closing evening at the old Parkdale cinema early in 2002 when Laney bumped into John causing him to spill his drink. This meeting lead to very little, but after meeting for a second time at the Brockville Arts Centre during a movie showing they hit it off. Since movies are so important to them they became involved in Brockville's push to get a cinema. Laney was on the city committee, but it was John's idea that really got them thinking. The committee was fixated on the concept of just having a movie theatre, but John proposed more of a mixed use building where the functions would be mutually supportive. John reasoned that by including things like a restaurant, different types of residential units and a couple of shops in addition to a cinema, the cinema would be more viable. After some consideration, that proposal was designed and executed. To recognize the contribution of John and Laney the committee decided that the two of them should manage the cinema and have an apartment in the building. To further recognize their contribution to the project's creation they named the cinema The Cooper.

PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGY

By combining various programs into one location it is possible to create enriched spatial sequences, while allowing the actual creation of uses that would be difficult by themselves. Brockville is in need of a cinema, but it is a market that is small by the standards of major chain cinemas. By locating the cinema in the downtown core it is hoped that the attraction of this multi-use project will allow people to interact with the surrounding fabric thereby enlivening the area. The project is not meant to be a self contained destination; rather it is designed to create relationships with the adjacent environment.

In order to facilitate the relationship between the surrounding environment and the cinema additional programs occupy the interstitial spaces. It is these programs that mediate between the cinema and the street. Like Tim Foster's cinema the Tricycle (Figures 38 and 39), built in 1981 in England, the creation of mediating spaces allows the building to contribute to

the surroundings. Edwin Heathcote, author of Cinema Builders, remarks:

Figure 38: Tricycle Cinema, Entrance, London, England.

Figure 39: Tricycle Cinema Lobby Space, London, England.

The cinema is part of a programme of development for the site and is a way of supplementing the revenue of the theatre as well as opening up the building to a wider cross-section of the local community. Its construction allowed for a rationalization and expansion of the front-of-house spaces and provided a cool new bar and foyer which serve as an antidote to the garish popcorn and hot-dog approach of most modern cinema foyers.⁴¹

Expanding the program introduces new uses to the cinema building, but the additional programs need to be selected with care. Each program must contribute to the surrounding environment and be sympathetic to the existence of the cinema.

The cinema even as a semi-public space has, from its creation, contained an element of social importance. According to Charles Acland:

The motion picture theater is a heterogeneous space in which the possibilities and limits of personal and social existence are encountered, assessed, and articulated to other practices, remembered and immediate. This implies that cinemagoing is a nodal point for meaning, memories, and activities.⁴²

Any additional programs inserted into a cinema proposal need to respond to this characteristic of the cinema. These programs need not be confined to the operation of the cinema as they can and should function more as part of the surrounding environment rather than exclusively for the cinema. By doing so, they increase the impact of the building in the community. Ultimately, the cinema is only successful if it engages the community in a meaningful way. Meaningful engagement can be characterized by

⁴¹ Heathcote 115.

⁴² Acland, Screen Traffic 59.

responding to the needs of the community by allowing community groups to use the cinema space, or as in Gananoque, not scheduling R rated movies because the majority of the clientele are children and teenagers.

The cinema is not merely limited to a built construct, but addresses a temporal element that needs consideration when programming the cinema space. Many larger Canadian city cinemas today operate on what is called a grind schedule where movies are shown from around noon until midnight. However, in smaller cities, like Brockville, there is not the population base to justify this type of movie scheduling policy. In response to this, many small town movie houses schedule movies only at night on weekdays and in the afternoon and night on weekends. This scheduling leaves the cinema dark for more time than it is actually in use. Issues of economy need to be addressed both with respect to space and finances. By limiting the usage of the building, cinema operators miss a financial opportunity to gain added revenues to offset the costs of operating the cinema. The spatial consequence of this policy removes a part of the city's social infrastructure from the city while it is not in use. While the physical presence of the cinema remains on the street the lack of usage removes the draw of people to the area thereby reducing the interaction with the cinema spaces. By expanding the cinemas uses to include programs that would benefit from the cinema's spatial and temporal organization, the impact of the cinema on the community is increased. A cinema must not be considered in isolation in a small town.

PROGRAMMATIC ELEMENTS

Cinemas form the core program for this project. They are used to organize spaces on the site, but at the same time are moved back from the street. Fronting onto both King and Home Streets are a series of additional spaces which mediate between the street and the cinema auditoriums. The program for this design, after much research is as follows:

Program	Area (m²) unless noted
Street Related Space	
Coffeeshop (Storefront)	140
Restaurant (Storefront)	210
Restaurant (Dining)	290
Leasable Storefront Commercial Space	130
Tourism Storefront Space (Existing Vacant Storefront)	110
Tourism Office Space	160
Existing Commercial Storefront	180
Expanded Sidewalk Space	475
Concert Stage Space	85
Exterior Space	
Interior Courtyard	810
Middle Terrace	210
Upper Terrace	310
Community Space	
Youth Centre	435
Unprogrammed Community Space	380
Cinema Related Space	
Cinema Courtyard Level Entrance	16
Courtyard Level Social Space	145
Courtyard Level Men's Washroom	30
Courtyard Level Women's Washroom	35
Cinema Entrance Space	55
Entrance Social Space	45
Main Social Space	385
Screen Social Space	25
Concession	115

Vestibule Social Space	80
Vestibule Men's Washroom	25
Vestibule Women's Washroom	30
Street Cinema with Stage (180 Seats)	
Main Cinema (250 Seats)	
Terrace Cinema (150 Seats)	
Tourist Cinema (100 Seats)	
Courtyard Cinema (100 Seats)	
+1 Interior Courtyard Cinema Space	
Dwellings	
Live/work Space	170
Architect's Live/work Space	245
Townhouse (3)	154 (each)
Two Storey Apartment (6)	106 (each)
Manager's Dwelling	350 m ³

The question of how many cinemas to have is an important one. At the time of this writing, Galaxy Cinemas, now part of Cineplex Galaxy, is in the process of designing a new 6 screen, 1000 seat cinema complex at the 1000 Islands Mall in Brockville. Six screens is the lowest number of screens that Galaxy will entertain for any new cinema, although it is not necessarily representative of the movie audience in Brockville. There definitely is an audience, but the question is how large? In Cornwall, Ontario, a city with twice the population of Brockville, Galaxy opened a cinema complex with seven auditoriums. Once again it is the 'one size fits all approach' to commercial structures that seems to be employed.

In order to justify a larger number of cinemas it is necessary to consider expanding their uses. For this proposal, there are three stadium seating auditoriums in addition to two sloped floor auditoriums. The capacities of the three stadium seating

auditoriums are 250, 200 and 150 seats. These are the primary auditoriums with the two 100 seat sloped floor cinemas serving as supplemental spaces. These smaller cinemas are designed to allow for longer run movies and less popular movies to be shown. One of the sloped floor cinemas is located at the rear of a tourist bureau which is accessible from both the cinema's gathering spaces and the tourism office allowing use to be expanded. The street level auditorium is accessed off the King Street level and serves a dual function since it is equipped with a stage that is connected to a large public multipurpose room on the courtyard level often used as rehearsal space. This auditorium is able to show live performances, but is not meant to directly compete with the larger Brockville Arts Centre which is nearby.

In order to access the two other primary auditoria it is necessary to ascend a flight of stairs encasing the dwelling unit of the manager and projectionist of the building, John and Laney (Figure 40). By placing them in the centre of the

Figure 40: Manager's Dwelling from Main Social Space Level.

staircase patrons are constantly aware of their presence in the cinema. It also allows them to easily enter into the space of the cinema. Once you reach the access level for the main cinema (250 seats) you are presented with the primary interior social space of the

buildings. Adjacent to this space is the building's façade screen which serves as a visual mediator between the public space of the street and the semi public space of the cinema (Figure 41). At the same time, it frames the activity within the space for people on the street to view. Also adjacent to the main social space is a smaller gathering space and a snack bar. The snack bar can be concealed behind two large swinging panels when it is not in use.

From the main social level you ascend another three metres and you enter into the vestibule lounge. This level contains washrooms with a lounge area mediating between the access point from the stairs and the washrooms. It is similar in purpose to the vestibule lounges in many movie palaces as they provide a different and more intimate space for socializing. Different spatial characteristics allow for different types of social interaction.

From this level, you ascend another three metres and arrive at the top floor of the cinema which provides access to the terrace cinema (150 seats) and one of two terrace levels. The two terrace levels occupy the roofs of the street level cinema, and the main cinema. While the terraces are accessible from different interior

Figure 41: Looking East from Chase Street.

levels they are also accessible from the inner courtyard. The primary visual element for these upper terraces is the St. Lawrence River which is in clear view from both terrace levels. The upper terrace also contains private space for three of the six two storey apartments in the corner of the site.

In order to increase the number of people living in the area different types of dwelling units are used. There are six two storey apartments located above the street and three townhouses. The townhouses are used to help reintegrate the site into the urban landscape of the area and to complete the frame for the inner courtyard. Two more dwelling units are included in the project, but these also contain work spaces on the ground floor on Home Street. One of the live/work spaces is open to anyone interested in living and working in such an arrangement, while the second is the dwelling and workspace for the architect of the building.

Expanding its role in the community, there is a youth centre located under the main cinema. Access to the youth centre is encouraged from both the inner courtyard as well as from Home Street. On Home Street, the rake of the main cinema's seating extends out past the outer volume of the cinema to shelter the entrance of the youth

Figure 42: Looking West from Apple Street.

centre. This entrance also contains a living room space fronting onto the street which allows it to interact with the townhouses down the street.

Below the

inner courtyard

there is one level

of parking that is

accessed off of

Home Street.

While parking for

a cinema of this

size may be

considered a

problem, there are

well over 400

parking spaces

located within a

five minute

walking distance

of the site. By

showing movies

Figure 43: Carriageway Entrance to Cinema and Inner Courtyard.

at night during the week and all day on the weekends the adjacent parking lots are put

into use during a period when they are not usually occupied. Another added bonus of

using parking nearby is the potential for people to pass by restaurant and shops enroute to

the theatre. This is important to the area because these businesses are necessary for the continued existence of the cinema.

Mediating between King Street West and the cinema volumes is a series of different occupants. There is one existing three storey building located at the eastern end of the site which currently contains a pizza place and a vacant commercial unit (Figure 42). The Brockville Tourism office will be relocated to this unit to give it more street presence and to allow visitors to see not only the physical locations but also life in Brockville. At street level of the new building adjacent to the existing building is a retail space.

Near the centre of the block, next to the retail space there is a carriageway-like space (Figure 43) that allows people to access the inner courtyard. It is also part of the entry sequence for the cinema. To begin the entry sequence people line up to the west of the ticket booth, located adjacent to the passageway and under a vertical marquee element. Once a person gets a ticket he/she enter into the passageway under the manager's dwelling towards light coming from the interior spaces of the building. The

Figure 44: Street Level Entry Space.

main entrance to the cinema is located in the passageway and is identified by glass doors.

After passing through the entrance you are presented with a gap between the street building and the volume of the street and terrace level cinemas (Figure 44). From this space it is possible to get a glimpse of the majority of the spaces contained in the buildings that separate the cinema volumes from the street. A lightwell in this space allows natural southern light to enter into the building by using a light well. You can choose to enter the street auditorium, visit the tourist bureau, eat at the pizza place or ascend the staircase to access other spaces.

The next two spaces fronting onto King Street West contain a high end restaurant and a coffee shop. In order to animate the street the restaurant's spatial organization was reversed by placing the kitchen on the street façade so passersby can watch the food being prepared. On the street level of the restaurant there is a bar and a staircase that leads up to the main dining level above the street. On this level there is both an indoor dining area which infiltrates the interior space of the cinema and an outdoor dining space which presents itself to King Street West. The outdoor dining space extends out from the buildings façade to act as a canopy for people waiting in line. On the face of this level is a ribbon video display board which extends from the marquee to an area around the corner of King and Home Street.

At the north side of King and Home Street (King and Chase Street) there is a large open space because the two buildings occupying the edges do not use their entire site. From this space it is possible to clearly view the public stage space located three metres above King Street West at the corner of King and Home Street. With these two facts in mind a stage area is provided above the coffee shop for concerts and other festival related events that occur nearby. By providing a space like this the site presence is extended to

include adjacent urban spaces. Concerts and other performances also have the ability of attracting large numbers of people to an area while animating the street.

The temporal aspect of cinema is acknowledged by expanding the use of the cinema's space. For many years Brockville has wanted a downtown conference centre, but up until this point in time it hasn't happened. It is difficult to justify a single use building like this due to Brockville's size. However, by using the cinema auditoriums and its associated social spaces as auditoriums, there is space for conventions and meetings. Once again, by using spaces that many Canadian cinemas underuse, the building becomes more important to the community.

Many of the spaces contained within this proposal are designed in direct contrast to the typical suburban insulated cinema. In these types of cinemas all of the spaces are accessed from the interior. All that is presented to the street is a large unpunctuated wall that may be decorated with flashing lights and a corporate logo. By occupying spaces typically underused or not used at all, the cinema has a greater potential for making a contribution to its community. These underused spaces are located on the edges and under and above the auditoriums. In the case of this project the edges are occupied by shops and restaurants with various interior social spaces and exterior street animation spaces above (Figure 41). It is important for an intervention into a Main Street fabric to recognize the importance of the street as a public space. For Dolores Hayden the street is important because, "A world of shared meanings build up, couched in the language of small semi-private and semi-public territories between dwelling and the street that support certain kinds of typical public behavior."⁴³ It is this behaviour that allows public

⁴³ Dolores Hayden, The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995) 35.

spaces to become activated. So by disregarding the street, one of the primary public spaces is disrupted.

Other underused spaces in most Canadian cinemas are under and above the cinema auditorium. By viewing the auditoriums as articulated masses rather than just boxes, it is possible to occupy spaces under and above these volumes. These spaces can be programmed as community spaces which allow the cinema to engage the community. Articulated auditoriums also allow for a clearer reading from the exterior and the intertwining of different spaces. These typically underused spaces can contribute to the activation of the public realm.

CONCLUSION

There is more to the experience of cinema than what is experienced inside the auditorium. Activities and interactions that people engage in during the process of going to see a movie, in the public realm, are central to the experience of a movie. This process, called cinemagoing, is crucial to understanding the potential impact of a movie theatre on its surroundings. No cinemagoing process is the same as variables like when, where, why, how and with whom one attends a movie influence the experience. As a public process, cinemagoing occurs in public space and therefore impacts it.

For a public space to become activated it needs to respond to space, time and people. As the most important public space in a small town, the street needs diverse associated uses to create activated public space. Buildings with their varied uses frame the public space of the street and inform its nature. With many uses it is more likely that the space will not become reliant on one group of people to sustain it at all times of the day. Mixing different uses in the street environment also allows for the creation of new possibilities resulting in a complex matrix of relationships between the different uses and the public space. Occupying public space happens as a byproduct of different uses which leads to what Jane Jacobs calls 'casual public life'. This is in direct contrast with single use zones where even the public space is its own zone; people have to make special effort to occupy the space meaning that it is anything but casual.

Time adds another layer of complexity to a public space and complements the diversity of uses. In fact, often the passage of time creates this necessary diversity of uses. The passage of time allows a space to build up historical layers, visual, social or

otherwise, thereby establishing a connection to history and a temporal mixture of uses and environmental characteristics. Artificial environments like Disney's Main Street USA and South Street Seaport illustrate the importance of the presence of time. Time allows people to interact with a space and if the marks of the passage of time are eliminated, as is the case with these two spaces, then the environment is reduced to a passive space meant to be only looked at and not engaged with.

Most importantly, people need to use a space for it to be activated. Public space exists to be occupied by people whether they actively or passively interact with it. Similar to space there needs to be a mixture of people occupying public space and different uses help this happen. In the case of a small town, one group of people is crucial to the creating an activated public space: characters. Characters are people who involve themselves in various social processes in the town while acting as personal embodiments for a particular location or business. Characters act as mediators between the users of public space and the space itself while adding to the complexity of the people using the environment.

With the decentralization of living patterns in small towns, like Brockville, Ontario, the small town downtown's impact as a public space has been diminished with the loss of some of its uses. Many upper floor apartments have been left vacant or turned into office space thereby reducing the quantity and diversity of people on the street at all times of the day. With the loss of people the space has become more dependent on a less diverse group of people to sustain it and as a result many storefronts are left empty. While the destructive force of large retailers in small towns is a large part of the continuing

deterioration of small town downtowns; it is not the originator. The lack of users has had a more permanent effect.

The cinema, since its earliest incarnations, has acted as a focal point because of its ability to attract people to an area. For the full impact of the cinema to occur in a small town it must occupy an urban location. This urban location in turn enriches the cinemagoing process. In order for a cinema to contribute to the activation of public space in a small town it needs to respond to the spatial, temporal and inhabitation characteristics of the surrounding environment. A cinema auditorium cannot accomplish this by itself, so there needs to be a mediating space between the street and the auditorium. By inserting a mediator that engages the space of the street, the cinema is connected to the spatial, temporal and inhabitation characteristics of the street. Only then can cinemas activate public space in a small town.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX I: DESIGN EXPLORATION VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

- 1 Coffeeshop
 - 2 Restaurant
 - 3 Passageway
 - 4 Commercial Space
 - 5a Tourism Storefront Space (Existing Vacant Storefront)
 - 5b Tourism Offices
 - 6 Existing Commercial
 - 7 Ticket Booth
 - 8 Cinema Entrance
 - 9 Youth Centre
 - 10 Live/work Space
 - 11 Architect's Live/work Space
 - 12 Townhouses
 - 13 Unprogrammed Community Space
 - 14 Lower Level Cinema Entrance
 - 15 Men's Washroom
 - 16 Women's Washroom
 - 17 Manager's Dwelling
 - 18 Concert Stage Space
 - 19 Main Social Space
 - 20 Concession Space
 - 21 Screen Social Space
 - 22 Two Storey Apartment
 - 23 Vestibule Lounge
-
- A 180 Seat Street Cinema
 - B 250 Seat Main Cinema
 - C 150 Seat Terrace Cinema
 - D 100 Seat Tourist Cinema
 - E 100 Seat Courtyard Cinema
 - F Inner Courtyard (+1 Outdoor Cinema)
 - G Middle Terrace
 - H Upper Terrace

Figure 45: Courtyard Level Plan.

Figure 46: King Street Level Plan.

Figure 47: Restaurant Level Plan.

Figure 48: Main Social Level Plan.

Figure 49: Upper Level Plan.

Figure 50: Section AA.

Figure 51: Section BB.

Figure 52: Section CC.

Figure 53: King Street West Elevation.

Figure 54: Home Street Elevation.