Perceptions Through Architecture-Its Role in Creating a Healthy, Socially Interactive, and Safe South Memphis

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“PERCEPTIONS THROUGH ARCHITECTURE”- ITS ROLE IN CREATING A HEALTHY, SOCIALLY INTERACTIVE, AND SAFE SOUTH MEMPHIS

By

Aaron P. Campbell

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Architecture

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ABSTRACT


In today’s society, many urban communities continue to suffer from extreme disinvestment. It is primarily because of this lack of investment that many of our urban centers suffer from negative perceptions and lack the resources needed to live. These communities are often plagued with crime, social isolation, and lack healthy food resources. Also communities such as these are often deteriorated and aesthetically hindered.

This trend can be reversed. This thesis will show that creating spaces that promote physical activity and social interaction can change the negative landscape of a community. It will also demonstrate how urban design principles as well as a farmer’s market community district implemented can change the social, mental, and physical state of residents residing in South Memphis. This thesis will reveal that careful planning and architecture can serve as the catalyst for bringing together people and communities.
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INTRODUCTION

Introduction of Situation

After spending a few terms working with the planning department in conjunction with anthropologists and the architecture department, I have realized the importance of interdisciplinary work for the overall benefit of good design. Since city building is the primary focus of the University of Memphis architecture program, I have gained more insight on what constitutes city building. City building deals with the improvement of the city through appropriate design which responds to the needs of the people while creating a sense of place.

The continual efforts of the architecture and planning department to revitalize and improve the South Memphis area have revealed a strong need for further research. This area in general has experienced significant decline in not only population, but also in basic services that are needed to live. Over the years, South Memphis has become a blighted community in which crime, poverty, drug abuse, and other social ills have taken their toll. South Memphis, once a prominent community, has become a place that is crying for revitalization through public policy as well as efforts from the design community to change the perception that South Memphis has developed into a dying neighborhood.

In South Memphis, there are many factors that have contributed to the negative perception that the neighborhood has experienced, but the area of focus that I feel has contributed greatly to the decline of South Memphis is the lack of a sense of place. Research has shown that communities that create a sense of place are more thriving, viable, and have more successful neighborhoods. There are multiple ways to create this
sense of place in urban neighborhoods. Actively involving yourself into the community to identify the factors that truly contribute to the overall decline is the initial step to rectifying the situation. It is impossible to factor create a sense of place without first identifying what makes a place special. This is discovered by interviewing the people, the culture, the social makeup, and other aspects that are present in communities. In older neighborhoods such as South Memphis, the historical significance can become vital in revitalizing the sense of place. Urban design and architecture that reflects the character of the neighborhood can successfully change the perception of a place and give people that sense of place that is so important for communities.

The effect of disinvestment into a community ultimately leads to urban decay. Urban decay is caused by the inability to create a sense of place. In the book, Defensible Space, Oscar Newman mentions the importance of creating viable safe places for the success of cities. Newman talks about the “broken window” theory which states that crime and negative activity is drawn to areas that appear to be undefended and not maintained. It is important to stop the affects of decay before it reaches a level that makes it impossible to remedy. In South Memphis, the “broken window theory” seems to be prevalent. In areas where it appears to be a lack of maintained buildings, there is an increased level of negative activity. This view of negativity ultimately affects how people from outside the neighborhood perceives it as well as changes the way in which residents feel about their neighborhood.

Thesis Objective

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate architecture’s and urban design’s role as a catalyst for improving social conditions in South Memphis. This thesis will also
demonstrate how a neighborhood’s perception is directly related to the success of the physical environment. More specifically as an architectural research, it is my desire to understand the role a farmer’s market district can play in influencing the social conditions and health issues in an urban context.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study is to determine the role of architects and designers in creating safer, healthy, social responsible successful communities. For far too long, the designer has only been seen as the individual who creates floor plans and beautiful buildings without taking into consideration the role he has on the social environment. The architect has an important responsibility in assuring that his designs are socially responsible and appropriate for a particular place. Whether it’s designing a building or an entire neighborhood, priority must be given to assuring that the design will promote social interaction, safety, and community. If the architect fails to accomplish this, his or her role as a responsible designer has not been met. If it is recognized that their role is more than one of aesthetics, more input can be given in developing blighted neighborhoods from a social aspect. This research will also allow me to study the effects of “Social Architecture”. Social Architecture is the conscious design of an environment that encourages certain social behavior that leads to an overall goal. It will be determined if certain community design projects have a better chance of contributing to social behavior than others. This research will study and reveal if there are currently urban design models that promote social interaction and interactive communities such as New Urbanism. If so, such a model can be implemented in other blighted neighborhoods to change the perception and outlook of these areas. Lastly, this thesis will look at the
limitations of the architect to promote social change through design. Design alone cannot completely change the public perception of a place, but must be combined with other interventions to successful change the overall nature of a neighborhood.

Areas of Study

Environment and behavior. I am researching the connection between environments and the behavior of the people. Studies have suggested that a person’s physical environment can affect the pattern of behavior that a person follows. This behavior can be physical, mental, social, and even spiritual behavior. I want to determine if designers play a role in positively altering behavioral traits. There is plenty of research available that will give me insight on how different environments affect behavior.

Social architecture. This area of study deals with architecture that is built specifically for the social interaction of people. This research will allow me to find the correlation between types of architecture and how people use and inhabit them. This will prevent me from designing useless spaces that people will not enjoy using to enhance their social interaction.

Delimitations of Study

This study will deal with the conditions of South Memphis based on data from 2008-2009 obtained through surveys, census tracks, and local data. It will focus on a specific region, and not include the entire area known as South Memphis. This thesis will also focus on urban design principles that could be implemented and typology of structures along with determining what type architectural implementations could immediately address the need of residents in South Memphis. I will focus on the inter-relationship of spaces as well as the character of the architecture that is deemed
appropriate from a holistic view. The program of my design will deal with developing public spaces that will depict South Memphis as a more vital, social, safe, and proud neighborhood. In addition to designing a signature piece of architecture for the community, suggestions will be made about what combination of steps can be taken from an urban design standpoint that could truly benefit citizens in an underutilized community.

*Project Overview*

The University of Memphis has made an agreement with the South Memphis neighborhood to work on a collaborative revitalization plan to improve the quality of services, housing, and social connectivity of the community. The design project I plan to embark on deals with working with a specific portion of the South Memphis district in which I will design and develop a plan that focuses on Social Architecture. The concepts of New Urbanism are a step in the right direction at promoting the social integration that is needed to improve the condition of a neighborhood such as South Memphis. My point of interest will be developing and housing along the corridor of South parkway to create a more holistic community so residents would feel safe, proud, and have a changed perception of their community. My design will also deal with creating defensible spaces that contribute the aesthetic of South Memphis while also acting as a medium to promote the social interaction and chemistry that is needed in South Memphis. The heart of my project includes developing a Farmer’s Market district as well as a community center that would act as a catalyst for more revitalization. The market and community center will serve to address the issues that have been pointed out ranging from the lack of social
involvement, healthy food choices, healthy food preparation, resources for job training, education, and public space for community gathering, art displays, and public meeting.

As of now, South Memphis has not benefited from this type of development in which these types of services are readily available. Based on the research conducted through surveys, charettes, and public meetings, I feel South Memphis residents will not only benefit economically from a centralized market district development, but I also feel that socially the residents will develop stronger relationships and pride, become more healthy citizens, and become more active in their communities.
RESEARCH

Methodology

The methodology used for research of the thesis started with research of previous examples of blighted communities that have benefited from urban revitalization projects. Hope VI and other case studies were used as precedents for communities that have been changed through New Urban planning. My methodology also included building upon existing research on the topic of urban design’s affect on behavior and determining the gaps that were present in the research. The South Memphis Revitalization plan was used as a reference to determine potential project suggestions and how to successful incorporate the suggestions of the plan and people into my holistic design.

My methodology also involved visually studying the people in the study area. I observed the amount of people using public spaces, walking the streets, and the amount of social interaction that occurred in public spaces. I also analyzed and observed the types of spaces that were present to determine if these were the most appropriate usages. One aspect of my research was to assess the effectiveness of multiple design policies and their effect on different communities to determine which policy or design solution was most suitable for the study area.

I studied the relationship between the public realm of communities which include parks, streetscapes, lighting, landscaping, etc and the private realm which includes housing, business, and retail to analyze how they work together to improve the overall condition of a neighborhood. Along with academic research I conducted surveys with residents in South Memphis to determine firsthand possible design solutions they would
like to see implemented to improve the quality of life in their community. This primary resource gave me first hand information that helped me design appropriate elements to strengthen the whole concept of Place Making. After collecting data through surveys, interviews, and academic research, I constructed a preliminary program that detailed types of spaces and urban design principles I thought were appropriate to the area of study. This preliminary program developed into a schematic master plan that was further revised to design a specific space that would support the thesis idea. Lastly, the final design was compared to existing studies to determine if I had indeed been responsive to the needs of the residents while avoiding the negative contributions that were present in the case studies.

History of South Memphis

South Memphis was once an area that was dominated by small vegetation and dairy farms. It was used primarily to serve the rapidly growing population of the City of Memphis. Development of the area began in 1801 with the construction of Fort Pike. Under the direction of John Christmas McLemore, the area quickly became a commercial area (Memphis and Shelby County Office, 1999). In the 1870s and 80s, Memphis became a major railroad hub which increased the need for housing for workers. In the second half of the 19th Century, South Memphis was incorporated as the region’s first planned industrial suburb that was home to a growing number of manufacturing and warehousing facilities as well as a mix of working and middle class housing for individuals laboring in these industries.

At the end of the 19th Century, Cornelius Clancy’s family recognizing the need for additional housing to support the industrial workforce, created building lots along the
curvilinear streets that followed the region's topography. When the city of Memphis annexed South Memphis, the new development was connected by the parkway system designed by landscape architect George Kessler in 1909 (Memphis and Shelby County Office, 1999).

In the 1910s and 1920s, bungalow style houses, small apartments, and commercial centers were located along the major artillery of South Parkway East. With the construction of a few large scale manufacturing facilities, South Memphis became one of the city’s most stable and desirable middle and working class white neighborhoods. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, World War II-related manufacturing activity produced a vibrant residential housing market and neighborhood-oriented retail sector in South Memphis.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, South Memphis became a cultural landmark with the creation of the STAX Records label. The extraordinary pool of talented Gospel, Rhythm and Blues, Country, Jazz, and Rock and Roll artists present within the neighborhood and city established STAX as the leading producer of the Memphis Sound, challenging Berry Gordy’s Detroit-based Motown label for national dominance during the pre-Beatles (British Invasion) period of Rock and Roll.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, South Memphis’s stability was affected by a combination of social and economic forces including a collapse of the cotton industry, the growth of the interstate highway system which prompted manufacturing firms to relocate for business purposes, and a move from railroad to truck transportation. This shift reduced employment in what was once a thriving railroad and warehouse sector. Federal mortgage assistance for World War II Veterans eager to purchase homes was
unfortunately restricted to new homes typically constructed beyond the city limits. Finally, the mechanization of Southern agriculture displaced millions of African American farm workers and tenant farmers who migrated to the central cities of the South and North, including Memphis, in search of living wage jobs, prompting many white families, who had grown up under the segregationist ideology and practices of the Jim Crow era, to flee to the suburbs. White flight was exacerbated by unscrupulous realtors, who managed to convince white families to sell their homes at huge discounts under the perception that the neighborhood was declining and becoming ethnically predominantly African American. Banks were also reusing to lend money for mortgages to people moving into South Memphis, further declining the community. The mandatory integration of the school system also caused whites who protested the move leave the neighborhood due to bus route changes, and school changes.

By the mid-1960s, these processes had served to destabilize significant parts of South Memphis. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the balcony of the nearby Lorraine Hotel in 1968 as he waited to go to dinner at the home of the South Memphis pastor, Reverend Billy Kyles, caused shock waves throughout the city, prompting large numbers of Memphis’ remaining white population to flee to the suburbs in fear of urban riots. During the late 1960s the expanding African American population experienced employment challenges due to the decline of the cotton, railroad transportation, industrial, and retail sectors. The quality of life within South Memphis was further compromised in the 1980s and 1990s by the City’s escalating financial problems, which resulted in significant spending cuts for core municipal services.
including education. Presently, areas such as South Memphis continue to experience hard decline due to a lack of government intervention and public policies.

South Memphis Analysis

South Memphis Assets

South Memphis is a historical neighborhood that benefits from multiple community assets that can allow it to become a thriving community. Its Parkway System was designed by iconic landscape architect George Kessler during the “City Beautiful” in 1909. The parkway system features a gently curving boulevard, mature landscaping, wide street widths, and street lighting. This system acts as a major corridor through the South Memphis area and opens up many opportunities to create a vibrant street life in the South Memphis area. By borrowing from the historical significance of the Parkway system and its original intent, today’s South Memphis can achieve some of the historical charm that once made it a prominent place to live.

South Memphis also benefits from a collection of historical craftsman style homes along the parkway system that are in excellent condition. These homes, originally built in the early 1900s reflect the high quality of architecture that was prevalent during the 1900s. These beautiful homes serve as a starting point in revitalizing a South Memphis that has been plagued with disinvestment over the years.

There is also a strong history of African American culture in this area ranging from schools to arts. The Lemoyne Owen College, formed in 1968, was a merger between Lemoyne College and Owens Baptist Seminary. This historical black college has served the community for decades including the formation of the Lemoyne Owen Community development Corporation (LOCDC), which has played a major role in
revitalizing the South Memphis area. Stax is also an important historical landmark in South Memphis. During the 1950s and 60s, Stax record label emerged on the music scene that helped create the Memphis sound in Rock and Roll. This label featured artists such as Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, Aretha Franklin, and others. In 2002, the formation of the Stax Museum, Academy, and School were formed. This local landmark has hosted over 200,000 visitors annually. This is an important part of the African-American history of South Memphis.

**South Memphis Weaknesses**

South Memphis suffers from a lack of community identity. It is so often associated with negativity, that it is easy to overlook the positives of the community. This lack of identity often leads to residents who lack pride in their community because of continual disinvestment. This also results in a lack of participation into the community to improve the overall negative conditions that are present. Crime is a weakness that needs to be addressed. It is important to pinpoint the cause and root of the criminal activity to determine effective solutions to dealing with it. The lack of community involvement is indirectly related to the crime rate. Residents fear their community and therefore aren’t excited about getting involved. This lack of involvement creates a cycle in which relationships aren’t formed amongst residents and therefore strengthening the fear of criminal activity. A lack of healthy retail and food is another weakness that is often times seen in urban African American neighborhoods. Healthy food choices are often too far to obtain and therefore residents tend to eat the unhealthy choices that are available. Interviews with multiple residents and stakeholders indicated that a huge problem for them was the lack of healthy food and noticed that it has caused health issues
such as heart disease, high blood pressure and obesity. Residents in South Memphis suffer from a lack of destination places that require walking. The sedentary lifestyles of some residents also contribute to their health issues.

Another weakness that I found while studying the South Memphis data was a lack of maintenance in buildings’ appearances. Research shows that a neighborhood’s appearance gives the first perception of the condition of a community. While a portion of the buildings in South Memphis are well maintained, many of the areas have buildings that are boarded up and vacant. A high percentage of these are located in the southwest quadrant of the community and at several former commercial nodes along South Parkway East. The poor condition of this latter group of buildings located along the neighborhood’s most visible corridor presents an especially negative image of South Memphis for those visiting or traveling through the community.

Case Studies

To determine the effectiveness of certain urban design principles as well as the implementation of a farmer’s market in South Memphis, different case studies were obtained to determine their effectiveness in different neighborhood contexts. The following case studies reveal the strengths and weaknesses of having a farmer market. With these case studies, it can be determined the feasibility of trying to incorporate a farmer’s market in South Memphis. The studies also revealed the social implications that having a farmer’s market possesses. They demonstrated how a market acts as a gathering space and community center for the interaction of a diversity of people.
Lynchburg Community Market
Lynchburg, VA (2004)
Client: City of Lynchburg, Parks
and Recreation Department

As one of the oldest Community markets in the country, the Lynchburg market serves as a social gathering space. The current revival of downtown Lynchburg is largely centered around the market. The lynchburg market has given identity to the city while providing an economic boom to surrounding businesses Figure 1 illustrates the multiple types and locations for seating making the market a comfortable and enjoyable destination. As seen in figure 2 and figure 3, the market’s open pavilion style covering creates a vibrant atmosphere for shoppers and visitors.

Figure 1. Seating arrangement at Lynchburg market
http://www.pps.org/

Figure 2. View of side of Lynchburg market
http://www.pps.org/

Figure 3. Vibrant entrance of Lynchburg market
http://www.pps.org/
Flint Farmers Market
Flint, MI (2006-2008)
Client: Uptown Reinvestment Corporation,
with support from the Ruth Mott Foundation

Although Flint has suffered financial hardship over the last two decades, the farmers market as seen in figure 4 has proven to be a strong community treasure. The market consists of a year-round indoor fresh food market as well as a seasonal farmer’s shed market as seen in figure 5.

In Phase 2 of the project, PPS prepared a five-year revitalization plan positioning the market as a catalyst for the larger district with more commercial and public uses. Goals identified included increasing sales and patronage — especially in the winter; incorporating green design practices; and developing partnerships within the community to address pressing issues such as health and economic development. PPS recommended increasing the number of vendors, specifically vendors with a more diverse array of food products. Other recommendations included altering the market’s design to improve its connection to the Flint River and the creation of an indoor gathering space. As seen in figure 6, 7, and 8, the market’s space can be used for multiple functions ranging from dining functions to musical performances. Figures 9 and 10 indicate that the market’s variety in food and people create a vibrant atmosphere for the city.
Figure 6. Table arrangement at market indicating potential uses.

Figure 7. Interior of Flint market

Figure 8. Musical entertainment at Flint’s market

Figure 9. Large variety of different foods

Figure 10. Entrance to Flint’s outdoor market
LITERATURE REVIEW

This review will discuss the critical points of current knowledge and or methodological approaches dealing with urban design from a behavioral standpoint. The goal is to inform the reader of the body of knowledge that has been written dealing with this topic so that the reader may be aware of current practice, knowledge, and strategies for implementing architectural and urban design principles in deteriorated communities such as South Memphis. The goal is furthermore to build and expound upon the current literature and discover the pros and cons of how different practices have been implemented. The review will focus on the areas of study that directly are affected through design intervention. Thematically divided into concepts believed to have the greatest impact on urban neighborhoods, the concepts are crime prevention, social interaction, neighborhood identity, neighborhood perception, and public health. It is my belief that these areas are all directly affected through the use of urban design principles and architecture.

In Defensible Space, Oscar Newman (1972) researches how environment affects behavior. He examines how crime in urban areas cannot be remedied alone by additional police force but rather through the implementation of better designed spaces. Newman’s theory is based on the idea that residents that have a personal right or ownership of a space are more likely to maintain the space. This theory based on Newman can apply to streets as well as buildings. He points out that certain building types or residential types allow for the user to have a sense of ownership over the sidewalks and street that surrounds him. He calls this area semi public and therefore the owner will have more involvement in surveying the area and being knowledgeable of who enters this space.
(Newman, 1972). It is important to note that this ownership of space is what causes residents to be more involved in the safety and maintenance of their communities. Newman further explores how the typology of buildings can greatly affect the lifestyles of residents. The appropriate combination of building types must be present in order to successfully serve a community. According to defensible space, the factors that contribute to crime and stability are physical and social.

*Crime Prevention Through Urban Design*

Many authors contend that there is a strong relationship between crime prevention and urban design. This relationship is helpful in determining ways that the South Memphis district can benefit from good design while deterring the ongoing presence of crime. For many years, architecture has been looked at as a method for crime control in communities. It is thought that conventional law enforcement can only do so much to deter crime and that conventional methods only solve one fifth of all reported crimes (Katyal, 2002). The architectural profession, in many instances, has implemented design strategies in communities to reduce the likelihood of crime and increase the awareness of crime. CPTED (Crime prevention Through Environmental Design) was created for the purpose of finding design solutions to reduce the occurrence of criminal activity. Crime can be prevented by manipulating the placement of items such as doors, bus stops, and benches (Katyal, 2002). Occurrences of crime can be dramatically reduced by modifying landscaping, increasing visibility, and creating patterns of usage. In the article, Architecture as crime control, Katyal illustrates that traditional law enforcement has focused on the characteristics of criminals and ignored the location that crime occurs. By studying the location of criminal activity, researchers have found that there is a strong
correlation between the incidences of crime and the built environment (Cisneros, 1995). The built environment, from parks to multifamily residential units can all affect our perception of negative activity and the ability for criminals to behave a certain way. By altering the physical environment, it is quite possible to alter the way that criminals may feel in a particular environment (Newman, 1972). Particular types of building are prone to more criminal activity than others. It is up to the designer to determine how these higher risk building types are implanted into the communities overall scheme to create an area that is safe and minimizes criminal behavior.

There are four architectural concepts that should be implemented while designing for crime prevention (Katyal, 2002). “Design should create opportunities for natural surveillance by residents, neighbors, and bystanders; instill a sense of territoriality so that outsiders feel deterred from entering private space; build communities and avoid social isolation, and protect targets of crime” (Katyal, 2002 pg.1048). These principles, however are not a one size fits all solution. Every community will have a unique solution based on other components such as the culture of the place, traditions, and specific needs. In other words, design principles cannot be detached from the context of its implementation and should have some flexibility in its adaptation.

Another important aspect of creating communities that deter crime is the idea of surveillance (Katyal, 2002). Natural surveillance refers to the use of architecture to create spaces easily viewed by resident, neighbors, and bystanders. There are multiple ways to achieve this. One example would be creating a mixed use district in which there is constant activity at all hours of the day. This allows for the natural surveillance of areas that are immediately surrounding the mixed use area and can act to deter criminal
activity while also providing density and diversity of the community. Jane Jacobs argues that if people could be brought onto city streets, the crime rate would drop. Crime is more likely to occur in places with poor visibility and few to no building across the street (Jacobs, 1961). Through planned design, these desolate places that offer little surveillance can become great places that attract people and create social networks that weren’t initially perceived.

There are three principle mechanisms that architecture can achieve to facilitate natural surveillance. The principles are diversity of building use, building design, and lighting (Newman, 1996). This principle can also be applied to urban spaces in which the three principles would be diversity of space usage, design of public spaces, and lighting (Newman, 1996). A well defined community which offers a sense of place will often times have a diversity of buildings that serve more than one primary function at different times of the day. This assures that activity is present all times of the day and gives natural security and surveillance to the area. Design and public space design should both be compatible to the nature and culture of people that will use them (Project for Public Spaces). In order for these spaces to succeed as natural surveillance, they must be used by the residents in a manner that contributes to the vitality of the neighborhood. One step in affecting behavior through architecture is creating events that alter a person’s normal activities. This can be as simple as creating seating in public spaces or designing park space to maximize usage by the local residents. Whatever the event or design implementation, it must either attract users or deter strangers successfully.

The key to successful communities is finding ways to implement crime control while creating a sense of place that allows for social interaction, street activity, and a
sense of pride amongst residents. While the above information clearly defines ways to
deter crime, it lacks the principles of creating spaces in which people would want to
inhabit. Through further research and observations, discovering how to bridge the gap
between crime prevention and designing successful social spaces will be essential.

Environment Perception

South Memphis has also been plagued with negative perceptions that have added
to its decline and disinvestment. The physical condition of buildings and public spaces
has also added to the negative perception of South Memphis. One way to change the
perception of a place is to change the appearance of a place. The relationship between the
physical environment and perception of illegal activity is investigated to determine how
the social makeup and connectivity is lost due to negative perceptions placed upon a
place just by appearance. James Q. Wilson remarked that "predatory crime does not
merely victimize individuals; it impedes and, in the extreme case, prevents the formation
and maintenance of community". This research shows that when a perception of crime
persists in a community, the fear of crime often times leads to a lack of community and
formation of social networks. The research also indicates that persons who were not
integrated into such networks were more likely to express concern over allowing their
children out of the house, felt that they were vulnerable to strangers, felt unsafe on the
street at night and that children in the neighborhood were out of control (Hartnagel,
1979). This is in part due to the perception a neighborhood has possessed due to criminal
activity and the physical environment that promotes the perception of negativity. This
supports the hypothesis that the physical environment can affect behavior. In this case
the negative physical environment negatively affected the residents. The design solution
will show though how a positive environment that promotes community can positively affect behavior and perception. Communities are built upon the social connections that are created along with the ability to sustain and maintain involvement amongst residents. When a community’s physical characteristics reflect a negative image, often times the perception of negativity is escalated. The broken window theory as expressed by James Wilson suggests that in urban communities when the physical environment is defected, it sends a message that there is no order in that community (Kelling & Coles, 1997). One broken window unrepaired leads to a whole building with broken windows. When urban decay is present, the first phase is the decay of the environment (Kelling & Coles, 1997). This includes cracked slabs, graffiti, broken fences, weed growth, and unpainted walls. What appear to be simple conditions can send messages that criminal activity is present when not dealt with immediately. Frank Lloyd Wright said: “People can’t have beautiful souls if they live in ugly surroundings” When a community doesn’t take the time to beautify itself, it sends messages to residents and outsiders that it doesn’t care and lacks the community involvement needed to make changes. Respondents who perceive more of an increase in crime and/or who are more fearful of crime will be less integrated into their neighborhoods, will engage in less social activity, and will be less satisfied with their communities (Hartnagel, 1979).

A second phase of deterioration includes the innocent breaking of bylaws. This ranges from begging on the street, illegal posters to rummaging through dustbins. This phase is directly related to the first phase (Kelling & Coles, 1997). When the physical environment is allowed to deteriorate, the attitude is carried throughout the community in other forms. By implementing physical changes, the attitude of residents often times
change. If these two phases of deterioration aren’t addressed, the last phase of the defiant breaking the law occurs. This phase involves the deliberate breaking of laws and is a step away from full blown criminal activity. This phase happens when there is no evidence of community involvement and the physical environment isn’t addressed at the source. The solution to prevent these phases of decay is to fix the small problems before they escalate into criminal issues. The perception of a community dictates the actual involvement that that community will obtain. It’s nearly impossible to create a sense of place in neighborhoods where the negative perception is perceived as truth. By improving and redesigning the physical environment, the perception of a neighborhood can severely change.

*Design for Social Interaction*

The importance of social interaction in small communities cannot be overstated. Social connectivity is one of the most important aspects of creating a sense of place. Behavior to some degree is influenced by the environment. By this nature, alterations to the environment can create certain types of behaviors (Porteous, 1977). It is this type of thinking that gives the impression that social interaction can be promoted by altering the environment to foster it. Sociopetality is the quality which encourages the development of interpersonal relationships (Porteous, 1977). By looking at specific environments, it is seen how environmental redesign can change how these interpersonal relationships are strengthened and weakened. In environment and Behavior, Porteous (1977) expresses that on a neighborhood level, children’s’ needs are not sufficiently considered at the local level and adult designers are insensitive to children’s preferences. He gives the example of children playground areas that often segregate and isolate the children from the social
life of the neighborhood and therefore are not appropriately designed to allow for true social interaction. Jane Jacobs emphasizes that city streets and sidewalks are often more interesting to children than designated play spaces. Finding ways to appropriately design for social interaction comes from observing existing patterns of behavior and making determinations as to what will be best utilized if implemented (Jacobs, 1961). Urban design has played a major role in influencing social behavior and interaction. Places that promote interaction should follow four major principles. They should provide comfort and image, uses and activities, access and linkages, and sociability (Placemaking for communities). By using various data that can be measured it is possible to determine if a place has these characteristics. By looking at the crime statistics, building condition, and environmental data, it can be concluded if a place possesses comfort and image. Your design of that place can then correlate with the existing cultural and local influences, creating more successful places. Likewise, by examining the street use, social networks, usages of spaces, and diversity of people, a determination of sociability can be achieved.

In the Death and Life of American cities, Jane Jacobs (1961) discusses the importance of social interaction and how it can be achieved through the use of parks, sidewalks, and plazas. She also discusses how community streets are generators of activity and interaction. There are many ways to facilitate interaction ranging from creating sidewalk activity to the creation of community plazas. The PPS research indicates that Public markets create vibrant public spaces while also having broader social impacts: as microcosms of their communities, markets contribute to job creation, the improvement of health issues, and the creation of safe public spaces. Most important is the way markets serve as public gathering places for people from different ethnic,
cultural, and socioeconomic communities. As one of the few places where people comfortably gather and meet, markets are our neighborhoods’ original civic centers (Project for Public Spaces). So how do markets foster this type of community involvement and interaction? It is important to determine what underlying factors allow markets to flourish as social centers. The design of markets typically allow for open communication, casual conversation, and diversity of activities. Based on the PPS, having multiple activities in place allows for spaces to become more active and successful. Properly designed markets have shown through research conducted by the PPS to increase social inclusion amongst community members. They have also shown to increase community pride and loyalty. Through an improved sense of community, many community members move toward more community participation and less isolation.

Lastly it is shown that markets also increase the civic capacity. An increased civic capacity increases community’s collective capacity to solve problems. Designing for social interaction is a process that many critiques argue is impossible due to the fact that people behave how they want to behave regardless of the influence of design. Anti new Urbanist would argue that only in a utopian society could design implementations directly affect the behavior of people.

*Design and Public Health*

In addition to the correlation between social interaction and design, there is also theory that examines the relationship between public health and design between urban design and public health. Public health is directly related to behavior. A certain behavior dictates whether a person will walk, drive, or be active. Determining how behavior is influenced by environmental factors allows for more socially responsible
implementations in urban communities. There is strong evidence that indicates that neighborhoods that promote walking are healthier and more active (Pate, 1995). Inner city neighborhoods often times suffer from a lack of public health. This is due to a lack of physical activity that often times are contributed to a lack of walkable places. When the convenience of traveling to potential destinations by foot is absent, many residents will choose to not leave the house. Often times, the fear of walking to even close destinations leads to residents taking the car even in short distances. In Behavioral Architecture, Heimsath explains the static nature of buildings. He further explains that the “tragedy of architecture is seeing people as static too”. Too often, spaces and buildings are designed to dimensionally accommodate a person without taking into account the behavioral patterns of people (Heimsath, 1977). When people in a built environment become static, this leads to inactivity and often times a lack of satisfaction in their environment. Research indicates the urban form plays a major role in influencing physical behavior and activity. By creating a sense of place, streets that promote walking, bicycling, and other active transportation is formed. Increasing foot traffic is a great way to give lifeless communities new vitality and presence (Granot, 1971). The health benefits cannot be overlooked as well. More walking and outside activity directly relates to less obesity, less heart diseases, and overall healthier individuals (Pate, 1995).

Communities such as South Memphis that suffer from a lack of meaningful public spaces are often times dominated by a lack people actively walking to places. The built environment’s role in allowing for this type of activity is vital. The environment often presents important barriers to participation in physical activity, including a lack of bicycle trails and walking paths away from traffic, inclement weather, and unsafe
neighborhoods (Pate, 1995). Through the design of more active and people friendly public spaces that support surrounding activity, it is believed that more people will use active transportation to experience the community.

Returning to the more traditional planning principles such as New Urbanism which aims to create higher density communities, mixed used zoning, open public spaces, and walkable streets is a desirable option for South Memphis and other neighborhood that suffer from a lack of meaningful places. From a public health perspective, Pate found that people living in high walkable neighborhoods spent almost twice as much time weekly walking for local errands compared with those living in low walkable neighborhoods (Pate, 1995). In creating more meaning and healthy communities, it is also important that the physical architecture support the community’s needs. In a community such as South Memphis it is important that healthy food choices are made available through farmers markets, healthy grocery stores, and even community gardens. It is important that the design of these elements support the concept of placemaking and they are visually and aesthetically attractive to maintain the notion that the perception of South Memphis is changing for the better. The physical design of public spaces such as parks should be reflective of the desire to create healthier sociable spaces (Giles Corti, 2006). People are attracted to places with more flexible activities (Project for Public Spaces).

With thoughtful design, it is possible to design and redesign public open space for multiple users: sports people, walkers and passive recreational users. Public open space landscaped with trees and shrubs selected to create interest and maximize visibility is likely to increase their use. Well designed public open space is an important component
of the recreational mix providing opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and potentially a restorative environment providing some relief from the rush of life in the 21st century (Giles Corti, 2006). This notion that architecture affects and influences behavior can be seen from a public health perspective. The current behavior of residents is South Memphis as it relates to public health is to use the resources available. What’s not available is high quality fresh foods, walkable desirable destinations, user friendly public spaces that promote active participation and social interaction, and the opportunity to experience the sense of place that makes communities special. By making these experiences available, a more positive desire to experience the community through actively participating and walking the streets can be achieved.
**DESIGN PROJECT/ PROPOSAL**

*Design Rationale*

My design program will consist of a masterplan that rethinks how the Parkway corridor between Kerr and Lauderdale could be redeveloped to create the sense of place that hopefully will promote activity and create a positive perception amongst residents and visitors of the South Memphis district. The design program should reinforce quantitatively and qualitatively my mission and intent for the study area. As stated earlier, my intent for this project is to positively alter the perception of South Memphis neighborhood through design that encourages social interaction, healthy living, crime deterrent strategies, and strong sense of place. My method of achieving this goal is through a combination of urban design principles as well as architectural principles that work together to form a holistic community that has the physical resources to support the residents. The immediate design calls for the design of a public space that houses an outdoor farmers market, indoor market/ pavilion, and community center. After looking at multiple projects, choosing a farmers market/ community center seemed to address some of the most pressing issues that residents dealt with. The benefits from a farmers market from an economic as well as community point of view would greatly benefit resident. A farmers market would provide a destination in which residents could interact and start to socially integrate with each other as well as start to develop relationships with one another. The direct benefit of the market provides fresh food and resources to people who do not conveniently have these types of resources.

The rationale for also involving the community center was twofold. Firstly the community center provides resources to residents who need them such as training,
education, and social services. It also provides a centralized community gathering space that will be used for community activities. Secondly its proximity to the farmers market will hopefully attract people who really need the services to take advantage of them on days that the market is open. I believe working together, the market and community center will create a destination place that attracts residents and creates a safe and visible environment.
Neighborhood Site Analysis

The overall analysis of Parkway indicates that there are multiple zoning districts in close proximity to each other. Within a couple of blocks, you have residential, commercial, and open park zones. This allows for the opportunity to develop a vibrant mixed use community that promotes walkability and social gathering. In its current state, this portion of Parkway lacks the physical resources and urban design principles to truly make it an attractive social space. Figures 11-20 indicates the current context of the area.

Figure 11. Aerial view of South Parkway

Figure 12. South Parkway vacant lot

Figure 13. Dilapidated car wash
Figure 14. Abandoned club along Parkway

Figure 15. Vacant commercial property

Figure 16. Monumental Church

Figure 17. Marcus Garvey academy

Figure 18. Auto repair lot on Parkway

Figure 19. Deteriorating retail storefront

Figure 20. Southside Park

Figure 21. Citgo service station
The neighborhood analysis indicated a potential need at certain points along Parkway for development that would not only improve the aesthetic value of the community, but had safety, health, and social implications as well. One resident stated, “If something looks better to me in my neighborhood, I’ll start feeling better about my neighborhood, which means I may respect my neighborhood a bit more.” This shows that implementing strategies that would beautify the neighborhood would also change the perception that residents had for their community. As seen in figure 22 above, an analysis of the site was performed to determine points that could be revitalized. Figure 23 is a site plan sketch suggesting certain usages along South Parkway.
Urban Design Implementations

Figure 24 and figure 25 below demonstrate how this portion of Parkway can be dramatically improved through the addition of the green median, street improvements, and developing the vacant lot across from the park into a senior citizen home. This action will have the affect of creating an edge for the street, allow for interaction between elders and youth, as well as provide constant surveillance of the park which will create a feeling of safety and defensible space.

*Figure 24. Existing vacant lot adjacent to Southside Park*

*Figure 25. Potential design of vacant lot near Southside Park*
In figure 26 you will notice that the corner market store does not address the street very well. This is the first corner that visitors will see when they come around the curve. As seen in figure 27, by increasing the height and bringing the building closer to the edge of the street will not only provide a defined node when entering Parkway but also serve as another potential development for mixed usages. Retail on the lower level and residential up top will create a social gathering space that provides multiple usages of activity throughout the day. This will improve the street surveillance as well as provide walkable destinations for residents. The added median improves the streetscape aesthetic as well as slows down incoming traffic.

Figure 26. Existing In & Out corner store at the corner of South Parkway and Kerr

Figure 27. Conceptual mixed used development at corner of Kerr and South Parkway
Parkway has great potential for developing into a main street thoroughfare. Its historical context as well as natural curves allow for opportunities to transform it into an urban street with storefronts along the edge. By developing the core of South Memphis which is South Parkway, a domino effect will occur causing revitalization throughout the secondary streets. Figure 29 proves how urban design principles such as the median, bike lanes, and street light banners can completely change the image of South Memphis. The addition of new commercial and residential along the street will give residents more opportunities to interact with each other as they walk the streets. As mentioned earlier, increasing the variety of usages throughout the day will provide surveillance along Parkway decreasing the risk of criminal activity.
Farmer’s Market/Community Center Site Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the addition of a farmer’s market will add greatly to the aesthetic and creation of a sense of place. The potential site for the market is located at the corner of Kerr and South Parkway as indicated by figure 31. It is the former location of a car wash and is also now a breeding ground of illegal activities such as drug use and prostitution. The location has been flagged for multiple code violations and is a constant eye sore to the Parkway. To the immediate east and south are residential districts that are served by the commercial node along Parkway. Immediately to the north of the site is a commercial node consisting of a small grocery store and liquor store. By converting this area that has been associated with negative activity to a beautiful social gathering space that promotes healthy living is symbolic of the impact that positive intervention can have on negativity. As seen by figure 32, it was important to maintain a strong edge to the street. Taking advantage of the views to Parkway was also a consideration when designing for the site.

*Figure 31. Existing site map*
Analyzing the site made it easier to determine the design of the entire site. The program of the design called for an outdoor farmer’s market, an indoor multifunctional pavilion, a community multipurpose room, game room, classrooms, aerobic space, computer lab, and offices. These spaces all work in conjunction to form a holistic site that is capable of meeting the physical, social, and health needs of the residents in South Memphis. The building should also represent sustainability and act as a learning tool for residents to become more educated in sustainable principles. Figures 33-60 illustrates the final conceptual design for the farmer’s market and community center.
Figure 33. Space study diagram

Figure 34. Conceptual site sketch

Figure 35. Figure ground site plan
Figure 36. Second level of the community Center

Figure 37. First level of community center

Figure 38. Space diagram

Legend
1. Lobby/gallery
2. Multi-purpose room
3. Office
4. Kitchen
5. Storage
6. Pavilion
7. Computer lab
8. Game room
9. Classroom
10. Exercise Room
The west elevation of the community center features a artistic mural that not only gives the building a strong contextual identity, but also provides building art work for pedestrians and visitors passing through. The murals would ideally be done by local young artist in the area to get them more involved in community events and planning. This can provide a great opportunity for getting community input and involvement from residents who are normally disconnected from their community.

*Figure 39. West elevation showing painted mural*

*Figure 40. North-south section through building*

*Figure 41. East-west section through community center*
Figure 42. View of existing car wash from east

Figure 43. Perspective of new community center and market from east
The farmer’s market and community center’s location will serve as a great first impression to people coming into the neighborhood. By replacing the car wash with a market and center that promotes community involvement and healthy living is the first step in changing the negative perceptions of South Memphis.
As seen in Figures 46 and 47, the hardscape of the existing car wash has been converted into a pocket park that can be used by residents as well. The park can be used as a gathering space or simply as a place to rest while shopping at the market. There is a stage located in the green space that will be used for outdoor musical functions and concerts. Its proximity to South Parkway allows for different interactions to occur between residents walking down the street. Also by converting the hardscape to a grass, you reduce the heat island effect and ultimately make the space around the market cooler during summer months.
In addition to designing a community that focuses on physical health, social interactions, and safety, sustainable principles should also be incorporated into the design. Sustainable design principles will educate residents about the importance of maintaining our planet’s resources and reducing the unreasonable usage of energy. As seen in figure 48, the west side of the building features a green wall which is used as an artistic gesture and also to reduce the indoor temperature of the building this reducing energy usage. The green wall is also symbolic of the urban agriculture nature of the farmer’s market. In addition to the green wall, active solar technology is used. The solar hydronic coils will heat the pavilion space in the winter time allowing the usage of the space all year round. Also the garage doors provide cross ventilation, reducing the need for conventional cooling systems. Lastly, the rain water harvesting tanks will be used to irrigate the grass reducing the need to rely on water from the aquifer.
Figure 51. Indoor market and pavilion

Figure 52. Solar panel example

Figure 53. Solar Hydronic Coils

Figure 54. Rain water harvesting system

Figure 55. Section through pavilion showing usage of cross ventilation and natural light through large upper windows and skylight
Conclusion

Although crime, social conditions, and the physical health of people in urban neighborhoods cannot be directly blamed on a lack of architectural and urban design implementations, there is a strong correlation between communities whose physical design promotes community interaction, walkable streets, and urban design and the behavior of the people who live there. The ability for designers to affect social conditions has been understated due to the lack of hard evidence that suggests the correlation. In this thesis, the objective was to prove that the perception of a community, rather it be internal perception or external perception could change for the better if the built environment and urban design worked together to create a sense of place. The data collected would point out that a community which fostered a true identity and had a sense of place had residents which took better care of their community, better care of themselves, and developed a sense of ownership and accountability in their neighborhood. My key objectives were to develop South Parkway into a safe, socially interactive, and healthy destination. What I hoped to prove from this thesis is that South Memphis can be revitalized and become one of Memphis leading examples of good urban design and architecture working together for the social needs of a community.

So what’s the next step? Hopefully the next step will be developing a plan that would put the design ideas discussed into action. The plan demonstrated that both small and large implementations could effectively change the complexion of South Parkway. Eventually, policy makers and stake holders will understand that starting with small projects such as landscaping improvements can cultivate larger changes such as adding developments along the Parkway to make it an attractable destination. My goal was only
to show the possibilities that exist and demonstrate that South Parkway has the potential to redefine its image and perception. Ultimately, when the community does come together and start believing that it can be redefined, you will see a stronger sense of community development.

Recommendations

It is my recommendation that a plan that focused on revitalizing South Parkway be implemented to address the issues as discussed above. It is vital that these suggestions are taken seriously and that planning efforts are initiated between local citizens, architects, planners, and city council officials in order to bring revitalization of the Parkway to fruition. The Unified Development Code should be a starting point for determining how a revitalized South Parkway streetscape will look. This is the legislation that will guide future growth in Memphis and Shelby County. In addition to other guidelines the code looks to “Protect the character, and the social and economic stability of all parts of the City of Memphis and the unincorporated area within Shelby County and to encourage the orderly and beneficial development thereof”. It also encourages originality and flexibility in design to ensure that development is properly related to its site and to surrounding development patterns. With the assistance of the UDC, South Memphis can reclaim its original urban street character, beautiful urban design principles, and still have context sensitive architecture that will ultimately make South Memphis a Socially Interactive, Healthy, and Safe destination.
References


