Common Space Analysis: Cedar East Block 49
A study of the PUD common space and how it is used

August 5th, 2009
Introduction

The shared common yard in the center of block 49 is a unique opportunity for community interaction, experiencing nature, and play, all right next door to Downtown Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota. Although the common is used well, there is far more potential to this space.

This report attempts to set a starting point to release this potential. By breaking down and identifying the various components and functions of the common yard, as well as examining how it is used, it is hoped that the community can better identify the strengths and weaknesses the common yard has, and express what could change for the better.

The following pages look at the common yard through a variety of different questions: where is the common in relation to other points of interest? How do people access it, pass through it? Where is the light? Where is the shade? What do people do in the common? Where do they gather? How many people use it throughout the day? It is hoped that these questions will be the starting point for a meaningful discussion of what the purpose of the common is, and what it should be in the future.
Site

Block 49 is located on the block between 19th and 20th avenue and 7th and 8th street. This location affords easy access to both Downtown Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota. There is a park across 19th avenue, and Augsburg College is across 20th avenue. The location is further defined by Highway 94 and 35W as well as the Mississippi River to the Northwest.

The diagrams, from top left to bottom right, are a map of block 49’s context in relation to Downtown and other landmarks, an aerial photo of block 49 from the East, and a site map of block 49 from the same orientation.
Common Space

The common space on this block is diminished by the adjacent businesses to the west and by the parking lot to the north. It is also separated from most of the private back yards by fencing. There are no amenities.

= Common
Paths and Parking

The nature and use of a space is affected by how it can be accessed, both by car and by foot. This diagram shows the relationship of the commons to paths of access and parking.

- **Yellow** = Paths
- **Orange** = Parking
Shade Diagram

The positioning of trees affects the microclimate of public spaces by creating shade, reducing wind, and protecting users from inclement weather. This diagram shows the position of trees in the common and how shading is distributed across the area.

= Tree shade
Usage Diagram

Public spaces’ success and can be judged by the number of users it attracts, and their tendency to linger there. This diagram shows a condensed picture of the number, position, and activity of users in the common during the hours of 10AM and 6PM.

The Block 49 common space was rarely used; the only activity came from the central parking area.

- green = child
- blue = adult
- red = stranger
Use and Users

The common space on block 49 is hardly ever used. The few times people were present occurred when they were walking between one of the daycares and the parking lot.

The following data were collected by both the WBCDC and residents during the summer of 2009. The pictogram shows the average number of users as well as the typical ratio of children to adults. The graph at the bottom expresses the total number of users present in the common during the day.
Public Space Quality Index
(From Jan Gehl Architects)

**Enjoyment**
- Human Scale
  - Buildings and other build features are in proportion to human scale

**Comfort**
- Visual Contact
  - Coherent way-finding
  - Unhindered views
  - Interesting views
  - Lighting
- Audio/Verbal Contact
  - Low ambient noise
  - Public seating, conducive to communicating

**Protection**
- Against Vehicular Traffic
  - Traffic accidents
  - Pollution, fumes, noise
  - Visibility

**Positive Aspects of Climate**
- Sun/shade
- Warmth/coolness
- Breezes

**Play, Recreation, Interaction**
- Space/equipment for physically active play
- Temporary activities (puppet show, farmers’ market)
- Optional activities (resting, meeting, social interaction)
- Create opportunities to interact

**Standing and Staying**
- Attractive and functional edges
- Defined spots for staying
- Objects to lean against, stand next to

**Against Crime**
- Well lit
- Passive surveillance from nearby houses
- Overlap functions in space and time

**Aesthetic and Sensory Quality**
- Quality design, fine detailing, robust materials
- Rich sensory experiences (plants, gardens, etc.)

**Day, Evening, and Night Activity**
- 24 hour activity
- Variety of functions throughout day
- Light in the windows

**Varying Seasonal Activity**
- Seasonal activities (skating)
- Extra protection from weather

**Sitting**
- Defined zones for sitting
- Views, people watching
- Resting opportunities

**Against Weather**
- Wind
- Rain/snow
- Cold/heat
- Pollution
- Dust, glare, noise