Common Space Analysis: Cedar East Block 50

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 50 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 50 is located on the block between 19th and 20th avenue and 6th and 7th 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 50’s context in relation to Downtown and other landmarks, an ariel photo of block 50 from the East, and a site map of block 50 from the same orientation.
Common Space

The common is located in the center of the block, continuing seamlessly from the residents' individual back yards. It consists of a grassey square surrounded by a sidewalk and a playground with two benches nearby.

= 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.

![Diagram with annotations]

- 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.

- Green = child
- Blue = adult
- Red = stranger

↑ riding a bike
↑ soccer
↑ playing on playground

↑ riding a bike
Use and Users

The following data were collected by both the WBCDC and residents during the summer of 2009. The pie chart shows that the common space is most often used for the playground, biking, and other outdoor play. 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

Visual Contact
- Coherent way-finding
  - Unhindered views
  - Interesting views
  - Lighting

Audio/Verbal Contact
- Low ambient noise
- Public seating, conducive to communicating

Comfort

Walking
- Room for walking
  - Accessibility to key areas
  - Interesting facades
  - No obstacles
  - Quality surfaces

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

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

Protection

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

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

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