

Re-envisioning Danville

Downtown Riverfront

School of Architecture

Department of Landscape Architecture

Department of Urban and Regional Planning

College of Fine + Applied Arts

University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

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Scott Eisenhauer, Mayor

Danville is a community of over 32,000 resilient citizens, and is undergoing an incredible renaissance. As has been experienced elsewhere across the Midwest, many of Danville's once thriving industries abandoned the city leaving the community to endure the affects; high levels of unemployment, poverty, and crimes rates. Danville's reputation in the region suffered greatly and many longtime residents wondered if their beloved city would ever resemble the charming community of their youths.

When our administration came into office, it was clear that we were missing out on a great opportunity to not only promote our community, but to reveal our natural assets.

In hopes of changing both attitudes and economic outlook, we formed a partnership with the University of Illinois in an effort to utilize and involve graduate students in the planning and design of our riverfront area. While I hoped involving students from our state's flagship University would provide some positive results, I was overwhelmed at the benefits and successful results achieved by the relationship. The partnership brought a young energy and perspective to the project, as well as incorporated culturally-diverse plans, making this riverfront development very unique. I wanted fresh concepts that pointed us to the future rather than designs that had over-used in the past. I am very impressed and even more energized by the work, and the way in which they recognized this is more than just about the banks of a river, but rather how to utilize the natural assets to benefit the surrounding area as a whole.

I want to thank everyone involved in this planning process. This project would not have come to fruition were it not for the very talented members involved. We are so fortunate to have dedicated, knowledgeable, skilled, educated, and enthusiastic individuals who have been involved.

Again, thank you all for the time you have given to be a part of this project. As we move forward, remember we are not just changing the look of a small area of our city, but genuinely changing the outlook of our community forever.

Sincerely,

Scott Eisenhauer

Scott Eisenhauer
Mayor
City of Danville

Introduction

The City of Danville grew up along its river but in recent decades that river has become less and less a part of Danville's identity and the community has grown more disconnected from that riverfront. Today, the river itself is mostly inaccessible and the riverfront is vastly underutilized. The City of Danville and its community partners have worked diligently for more than thirty years to develop and implement a successful revitalization strategy for Downtown, yet the adjoining riverfront is barely used. The public value of this cherished resource has long been recognized, but the City has struggled to find this resource due to limited access and lack of planning. The Downtown Riverfront Focus Area, which is the part of the riverfront this project is concentrated on, is centrally located. The site is city owned and the majority is in the hundred-year flood plain. Connectivity across the site and adjacent properties is limited as in public access.

When the City of Danville approached University of Illinois for revitalizing downtown by developing the Vermilion Riverfront Park, it was recognized that a multi-disciplinary effort was required with input from planning, landscape architecture, and architecture. Student teams from three units—School of Architecture, Department of Landscape Architecture, and Department of Urban and Regional Planning---collaborated in Fall 2015 in collecting data, going on a field trip to observe the sites first hand, working with the community in a daylong charrette, reviewing design proposals on the drawing board, and exhibiting them in downtown Danville. They analyzed historic photographs and maps, GIS data, and Google earth images, studied environmental reports on Vermilion County and previous master plans of Danville downtown, and attended lectures on historic preservation of downtown buildings and health issues in low-income communities. Community input was sought through an online survey, ethnographic interviews, and participatory design exercises during the charrette held in Danville.



Vermilion Street



Main Street



Vermilion River

It was apparent that Danville residents believed that the new riverfront park would play an important role in refurbishing the image of downtown. Design proposals in this project are grounded speculations in re-envisioning downtown and riverfront as a cohesive and vibrant landscape connected by walking and bike paths, activated by imaginative programming for social events, and supported by economic investment. Vermilion Riverfront Park linked with other nature preserves and state parks through greenways will situate Danville as a 'city in nature' and will reclaim landscapes scarred by mining and other industrial activities. The Riverfront Park, new infill development, and adaptive reuse of historic buildings in downtown should be a catalyst in reversing Danville's economic decline. They will contribute to an improved quality of life for the City's residents. Benefits from this Downtown Riverfront development will include increased park and other public spaces while also providing health and wellness benefits to the community. The project will help to reenergize the Downtown and make it a destination. It will spur additional development near the riverfront and around the downtown and improve the image of Danville. Possible funding for realizing the preferred Downtown Riverfront vision will likely come from a combination of sources including Tax Increment Financing District funds and other local Tax Revenues, as well as State and Federal grant opportunities.



Field Trip to Danville - Aug 28, 2015



Charrette with Danville Community - Sep 19, 2015

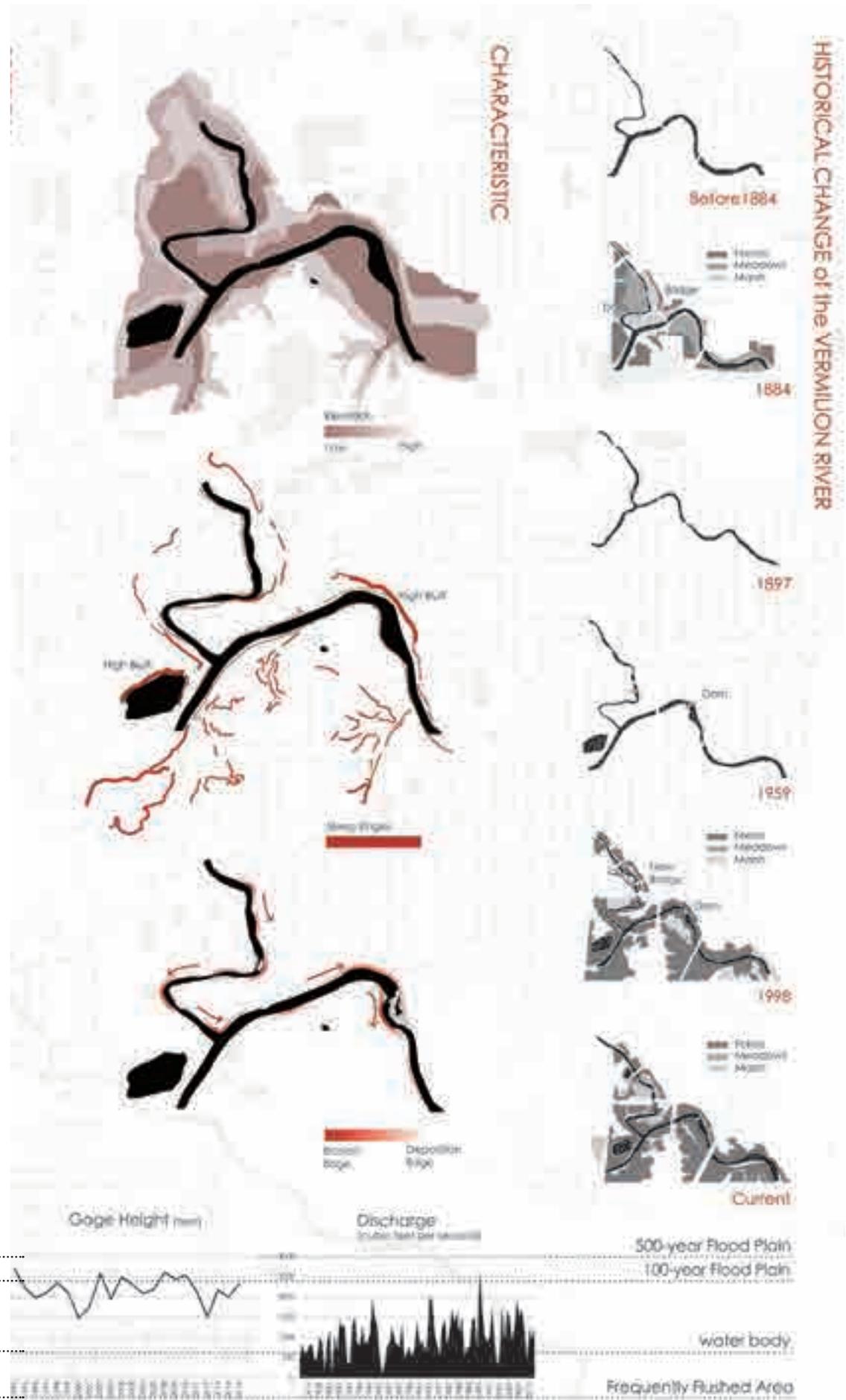


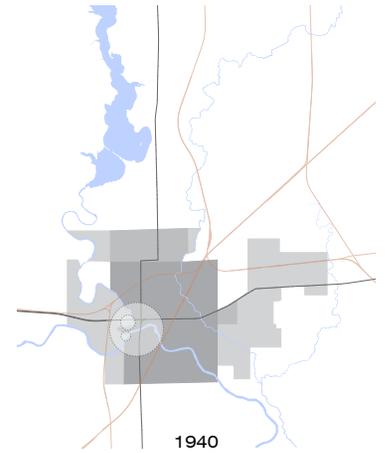
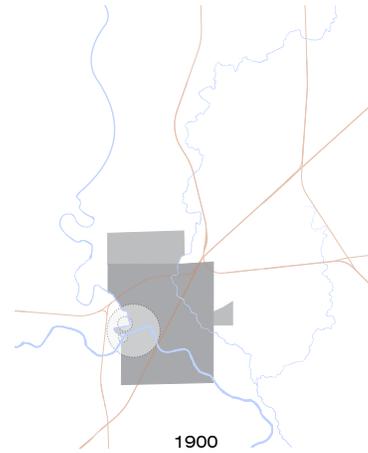
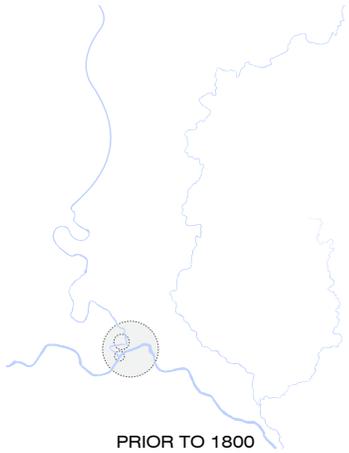
Exhibition in Danville Downtown - Dec 9, 2015



Natural Heritage

Vermilion River is salient in the environmental history of Danville and its surroundings. Wildlife in the river basin brought the Miami, Kickapoo, and Pottawatomie tribes of Algonquin Indians to this region. Danville was founded at the confluence of River and its tributary, North Fork, in 1827 by European settlers who were attracted by the abundance of lumber and salt deposits. When the Wisconsin Glacier receded 13,000 years ago, the glacial till was perfect for prairie and woodland and later high yield farming. The pre-settlement native vegetation was tall grass prairie with groves along watercourses and on moraine ridges. With the draining of swampy land over time and timber harvesting, agriculture dominated the land cover. Forest preserves and park on the North Fork Vermilion River were established beginning in the 1900s for conservation of tall grass and wetland prairie, marshes, and woodland. Mapping of the river hydrology reveals that the northeast part of the site is the deposition area while the southern part is more likely to be eroded. The northern bank consists of high bluffs forming a natural barrier to the city. Mapping the 100 and 500-year flood plain shows that the southern bank changes seasonally with the flooding of the river. Danville and Ellsworth Dams built in early 20th century have modified the ecology of the river. Danville Dam was built for water supply and by 1970s was being used by General Motors Corporation for its industrial operations. With the closing of General Motors the dam is not serving any purpose, its abutments are heavily eroded, and it has reduced diversity in fish species.



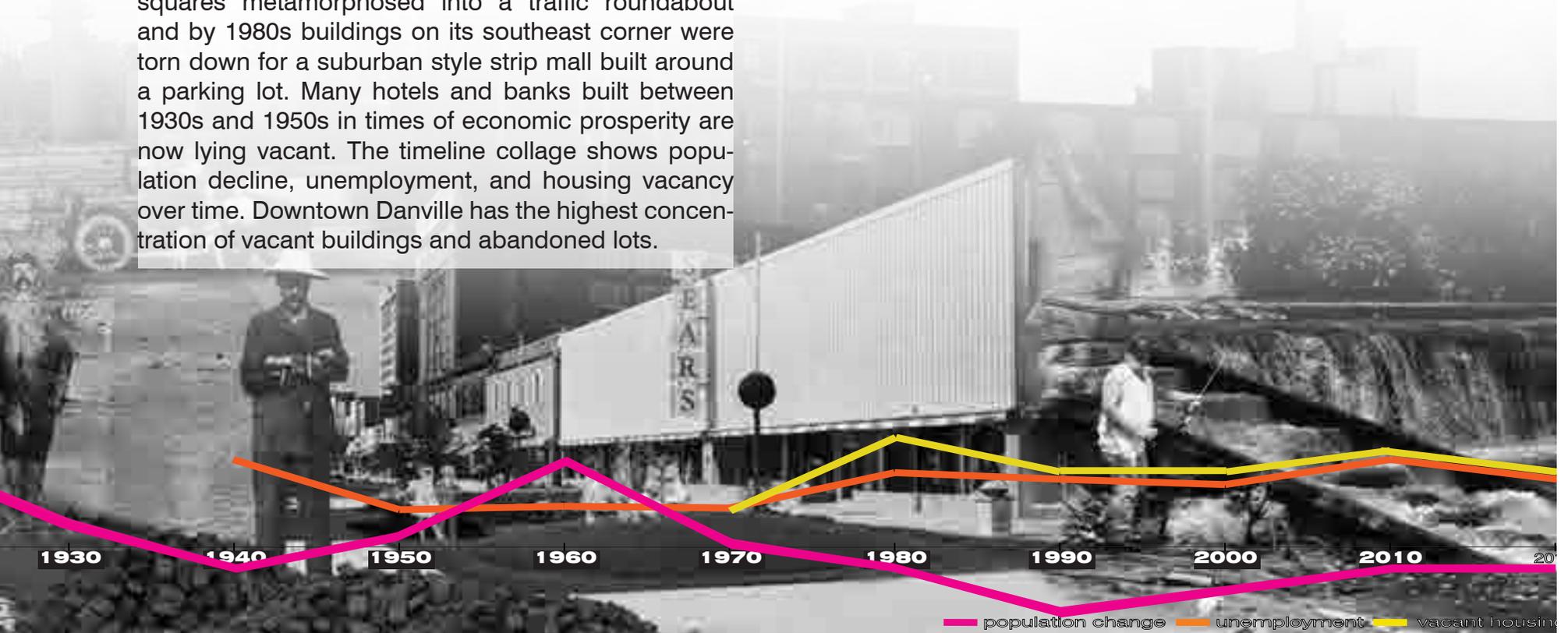
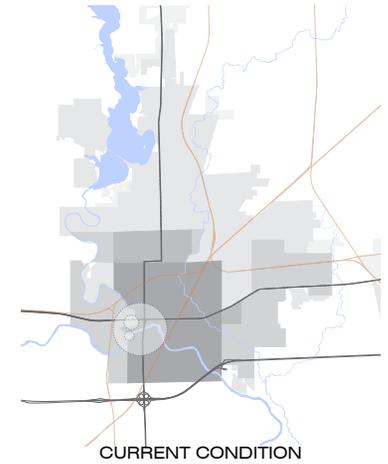
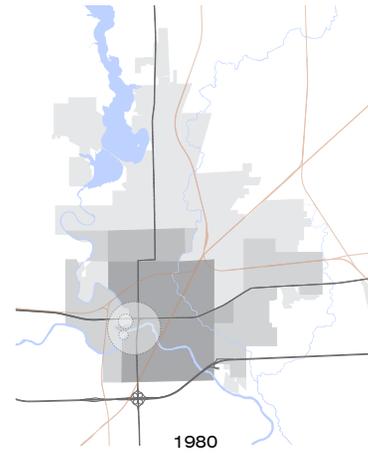


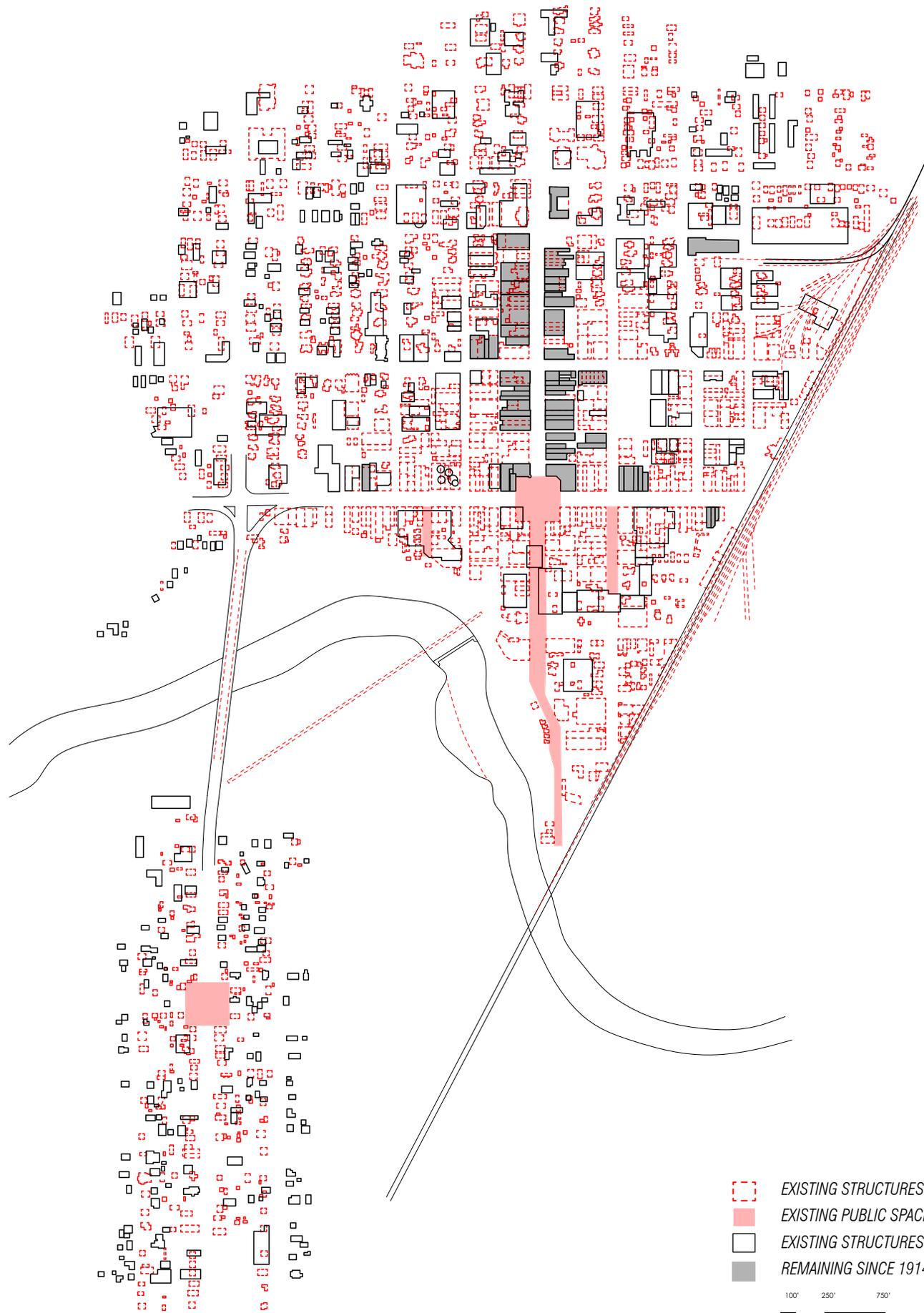
TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC SQUARE



Built Heritage

Vermilion River and Stony Creek formed the southern and eastern boundaries of Danville when it was first settled. The city grew northwards and beginning in 1950s it expanded across the creek and towards the south, making Vermilion River less of a boundary and more of a seam. The small population of 503 residents when Danville was founded reached 40,000 by mid-twentieth century. The population growth was in part due to coal mining industry that began in 1860s. When coal mining ceased, manufacturing became the major industry. With industrial decline, population dwindled to 33,000 by 2014. Abandoned coal mining strips were converted into lakes in Kickapoo State Recreation Area and Kennekuk Cove County Park. Danville's main public square was located at the junction of Vermilion and Main Streets. Civic buildings such as Vermilion County Courthouse and Breese Tower, the tallest structure in Vermilion County enclosed it on northeast and northwest corners respectively. The squares metamorphosed into a traffic roundabout and by 1980s buildings on its southeast corner were torn down for a suburban style strip mall built around a parking lot. Many hotels and banks built between 1930s and 1950s in times of economic prosperity are now lying vacant. The timeline collage shows population decline, unemployment, and housing vacancy over time. Downtown Danville has the highest concentration of vacant buildings and abandoned lots.





Forgotten Danville

- EXISTING STRUCTURES 1914
- EXISTING PUBLIC SPACE 1914
- EXISTING STRUCTURES 2015
- REMAINING SINCE 1914

100' 250' 750'



Urban Cartographies

Throughout the semester students in the architecture studio were asked to observe, analyze and map the existing conditions –frailties and potentials- of Danville, its downtown and the proposed redevelopment area. Using personal experience from a site visit and data provided by the urban planning team, students paired off and developed urban cartographies, which graphically highlighted different aspects of the city and different physical and atmospheric characteristics of the site. Through selective mapping and representation, the cartographies exposed qualities of Danville’s urban fabric ranging from concrete and quantifiable aspects such as building use, location and quantity of green space, identification of landmarks, façade types, and change in building density over time, to more abstract maps focusing on pedestrian comfort, perception of safety, relationship between built and green, intensity of activity, barriers, boundaries and continuities, etc.

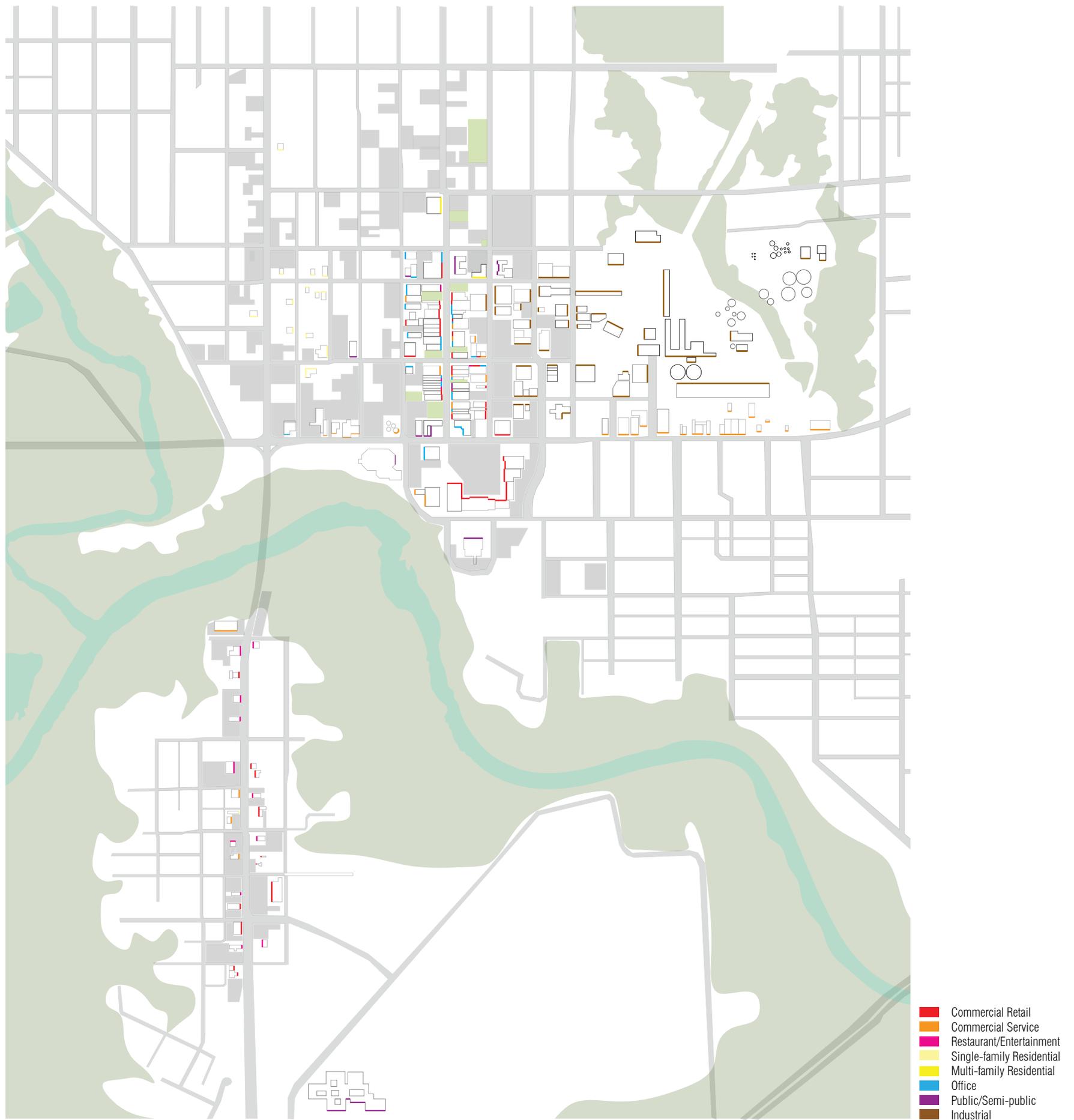
Forgotten Danville (1914-2015) maps what used to be and what remains, and dramatically shows the loss of density and memory through time, as well as the change in scale of built and open space in the city fabric.

Mapping walkability shows the quality of the pedestrian connections taking into account factors of comfort such as sidewalk width, proximity to traffic and noise, shade (awnings and trees) and nearby green space.

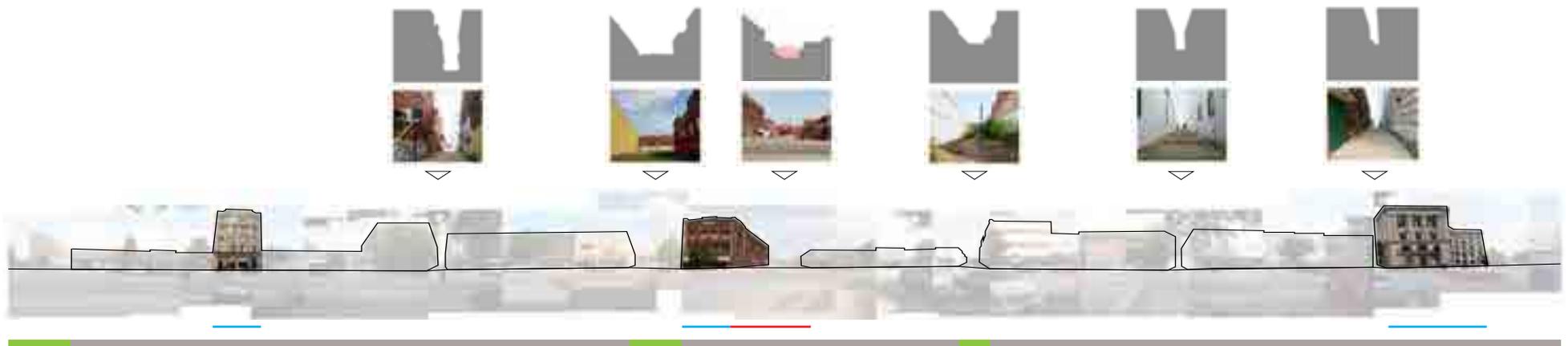
Fragmented fabric: density and fronts points out the lack of density and land use showing the amount of parking lots with impermeable surfaces in Danville’s car-dominated environment and indicating active fronts in opposition to inactive ones and urban backs.

Streetscapes highlights the differences between Vermillion Street and Main Street in terms of front continuity, building grain, rhythm of the activity and human scale.

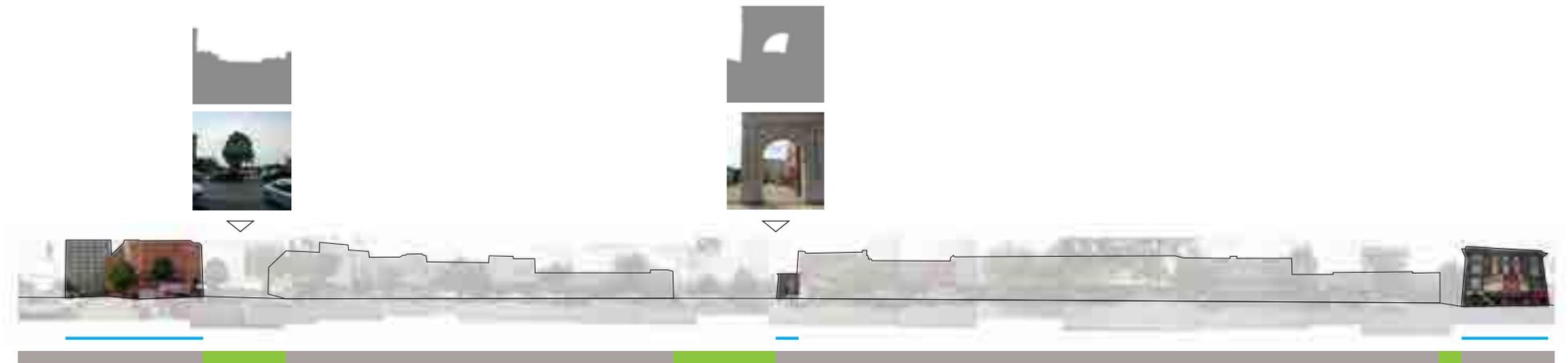




Fragmented fabric: density and fronts



Vermilion Street (East)



Vermilion Street (West)



Main Street (North)

Streetscapes



Sensory Experience

Among the senses, sight is the most privileged but also the most distancing way of knowing the landscape. Sight when combined with other sensory input reveals the somatic aspect of landscape experience. A tall green 'wall' of trees, shrubs, and weeds blocks the view of Vermilion River from downtown. A few abandoned buildings on the northern part will be demolished in the near future. The sense of enclosure as one enters the site gives way to openness as one comes closer to the river. Sounds of cicada, birds, and water dominate the riparian zone of southern bank as the city is completely shut out except for traffic noise on the bridge. Views to and from the Vermilion River in framed, panoramic, and terminal vistas, sequential views in movement, kinaesthetic and haptic experiences in the landscape, enclosure and openness, constriction and expansiveness, lightness and heaviness, are mapped in diagrams and collages. How sounds are amplified and attenuated and their pitch, loudness, and frequency are recorded for mapping acoustic space on the riverfront. Sensory input is mapped at nine places on two paths on the north and south banks of the riverfront. Fourteen respondents were asked to rank vision, haptic, acoustic, and kinesthetic experience on a scale from (most liked) to 1 (least liked). Point 9 close to the river with its natural sounds, panoramic view, and proximity to water received the highest score. Point 1 with traffic noise, absence of greenery and sense of desolation near the parking lot received the lowest score.





COMPTON, CALIFORNIA





Mental Maps

Residents were asked to draw a map of Danville or draw on an existing base map places important to them and were interviewed about their perception of the riverfront. Their individual mental maps (12) were combined into a composite map. Streets were drawn the most with Gilbert Street appearing on five maps, Vermilion Street in four, and Main Street in three. Together with railroad and river they were edges in addition to being paths. Library, courthouse, County Market, Walmart, and Lake Vermilion appeared in one to three maps as landmarks (Kuhn Lee, Haoyang Lee, and Rose Schmillen, "Danville as Territory", unpublished study, LA 470 2015). In interviews residents wanted historic buildings renovated and more small businesses in downtown. They wanted to be able to walk everywhere in downtown and more social events. While storefront owners wanted the riverfront to be developed with hotels and casinos so that tourism would grow, residents felt that the riverfront should be a natural landscape where they can continue to fish, hunt mushrooms and birds, and train dogs. Residents pointed out that overgrown vegetation and absence of pathways inhibit use of the riverfront and wanted places to picnic, play, and relax with family and friends.

Planning Streams

Introduction:

The focus of the planning process was the creation of a document that would help to guide the progress of development on Danville's downtown riverfront site. In addition to the public engagement events held, the planning team worked to gather primary data from residents in the form of a community-wide survey, as well as secondary data about the existing conditions of the site. Based on data gathered, key planning issues and overarching development goals were established. These focused on the critical issues that must be considered as part of any redevelopment project. Finally, based on the data and design work, three potential development "streams," were established. Basic implementation information, like estimated costs and phasing were included for each stream.

Data Collection & Analysis:

In addition to public input gathered during the community engagement events, data was gathered and analyzed to support the community's desires/needs, and provide additional direction for the establishment of planning goals and potential redevelopment possibilities. This data collection included:

- An investigation of the historical context of the area
- A review of past plans that relate to the redevelopment of the downtown riverfront
- An examination socio-economic information, like household income, population, etc.
- A basic study of current economic conditions
- A review of current zoning regulations, land use plans and development patterns in site and surrounding areas of the city
- An examination of existing transportation networks and infrastructure, for all modes.
- And a discussion of environmental considerations, like the preservation of natural areas and the impact of the floodplain on potential redevelopment.

Planning Issues & Overarching Goals:

Based on this data collection process, some critical trends emerged, which needed to be addressed in the redevelopment of the site. The trends included the presence or lack of certain industries in the area, current issues with connectivity between the downtown and riverfront areas, and a general need for increased economic development. Following these trends, overarching goals were established to be met in the establishment of the potential redevelopment streams, or in detailed design plans in the future.

(Re)Development Streams:

Based on the overarching goals established, three potential redevelopment schemes were developed. In this case, these redevelopment possibilities were thought of as "streams," because they were designed to be much like the tributaries or streams that lead to larger river- they are able to exist on their own and support development without other projects being completed, but will be more viable if they are able to occur sequentially, creating one larger, stronger redevelopment.

The streams have been framed based on the populations they are designed to attract- existing users, future local users, and future regional users. Each stream plan includes an overall vision for the stream; key desired design elements; a potential site plan; sample designs of the desired elements, created by the Architecture and Landscape Architecture students; potential phasing of the redevelopment; a basic cost assessment of design elements; and additional recommendations related to that stream.



Stream 1: Existing Users

Goals:

- Better meet the needs of existing users
- Propose redevelopment of site as a public park that does not depend on significant investment
- Lay the groundwork for market expansion and additional development in the future

Design elements in this stream would include:

- Shared use path(s)
- Walking Trails
- Overlook(s)
- 2 pedestrian bridges would be created, 1 just east of the existing Gilbert Street Bridge, and further downstream, in the vicinity of the existing dam.
- Picnic area along the south bank of the river
- Classroom area along the south bank
- Additional surface parking along the south side of Main St

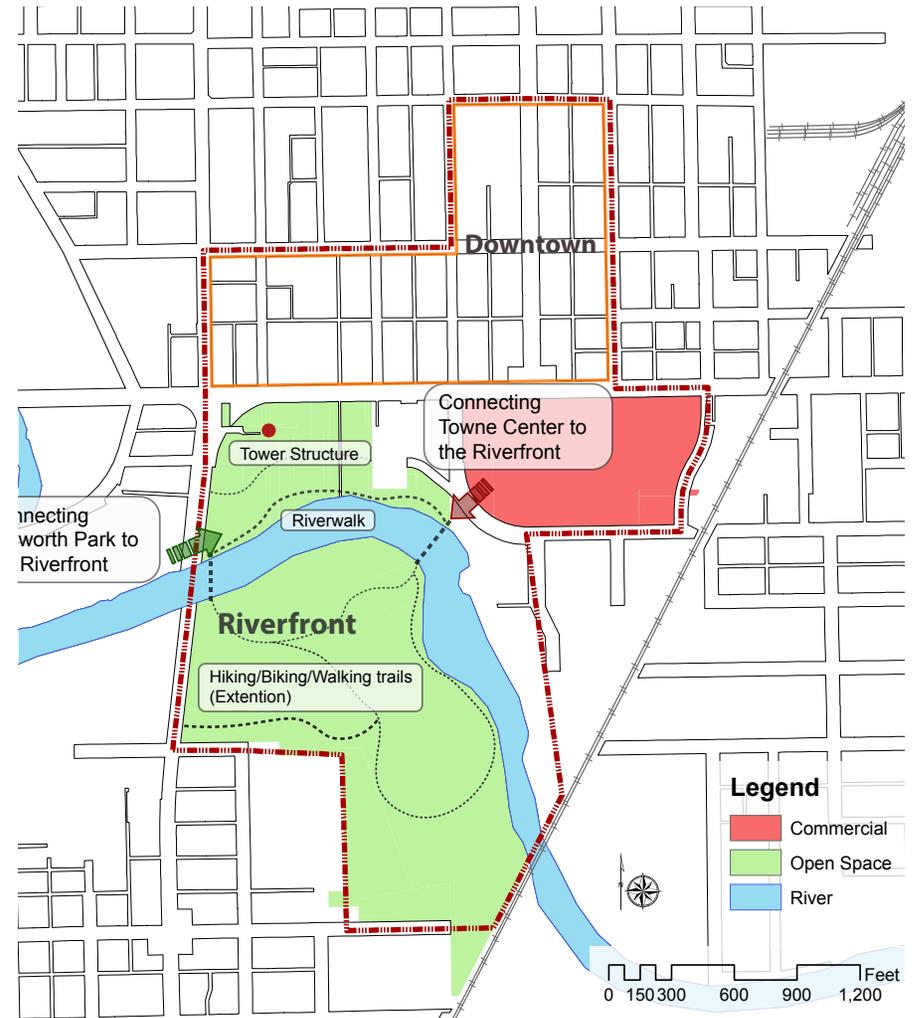
Stream 2: Future Local Users

Goals:

- Attract additional local users to the downtown riverfront area
- Establish the area as a recreational hub
- Create opportunities for additional local economic development to lay the groundwork for further investment and development

Design elements in this stream would include:

- Tower structure
- Riverwalk
- Hiking, bike, and walking trails
- Open Plaza connecting the existing Town Center and the riverfront





Stream 3: Future Regional Users

Goals:

- Attract new users for the area from the larger region and beyond
- Expand the market to support larger scale development in the area

Design elements in this stream would include:

- Expanded commercial and residential development along the north side of Main St
- Amphitheater
- Open Plaza on the south side of Main St
- Arena façade improvement
- Welcome/Nature Center
- Connecting with larger regional trails system through Ellsworth Park

Vermilion Riverfront Park

The proposals for Vermilion Riverfront Park are grounded speculations in reimagining the relationship between city and nature where the landscape is experienced as a situated event celebrating natural rhythms and social activities. Instead of being an edge the riverfront as an active public space will be a seam uniting the downtown with the river. The north and south banks of the Vermilion Riverfront in Danville are envisaged as environmentally sustainable ecological niches where vegetal, avian, and mammalian species thrive. In this nature preserve, visitors will learn about the natural heritage of the Midwest and riverine systems through close observations of natural phenomenon and on site exhibits. Here sensual experience of nature is made possible through amplifying and augmenting what is already present. The river, woods and meadows will be experienced immersively and there would be places where heightening of senses and phenomenal engagement with nature and landscape is made possible through design interventions. There are eight proposals for the Riverfront Park each focusing on a natural element: sun, wind, water, and vegetation; and on each of the senses: sight, touch, sound, and movement. The riverfront park will be one of the diverse typology of public spaces in downtown Danville — mini- and vest-pocket parks, plazas, rain gardens, and community gardens—in a way that all are seamlessly connected to encourage pedestrian use. Downtown streets are redesigned as linear greenlines, threading existing vest-pocket parks and vacant lots redesigned for social and ecological functions. The Vermilion River and its tributaries are envisioned as part of the prairie river network and its restored ecology. Greenways with bike and walking trails will connect parks and nature preserves on the river and lakefronts. The region will be planned as a postindustrial landscape, reclaimed and recovered from industrial blight, where nature is healed.



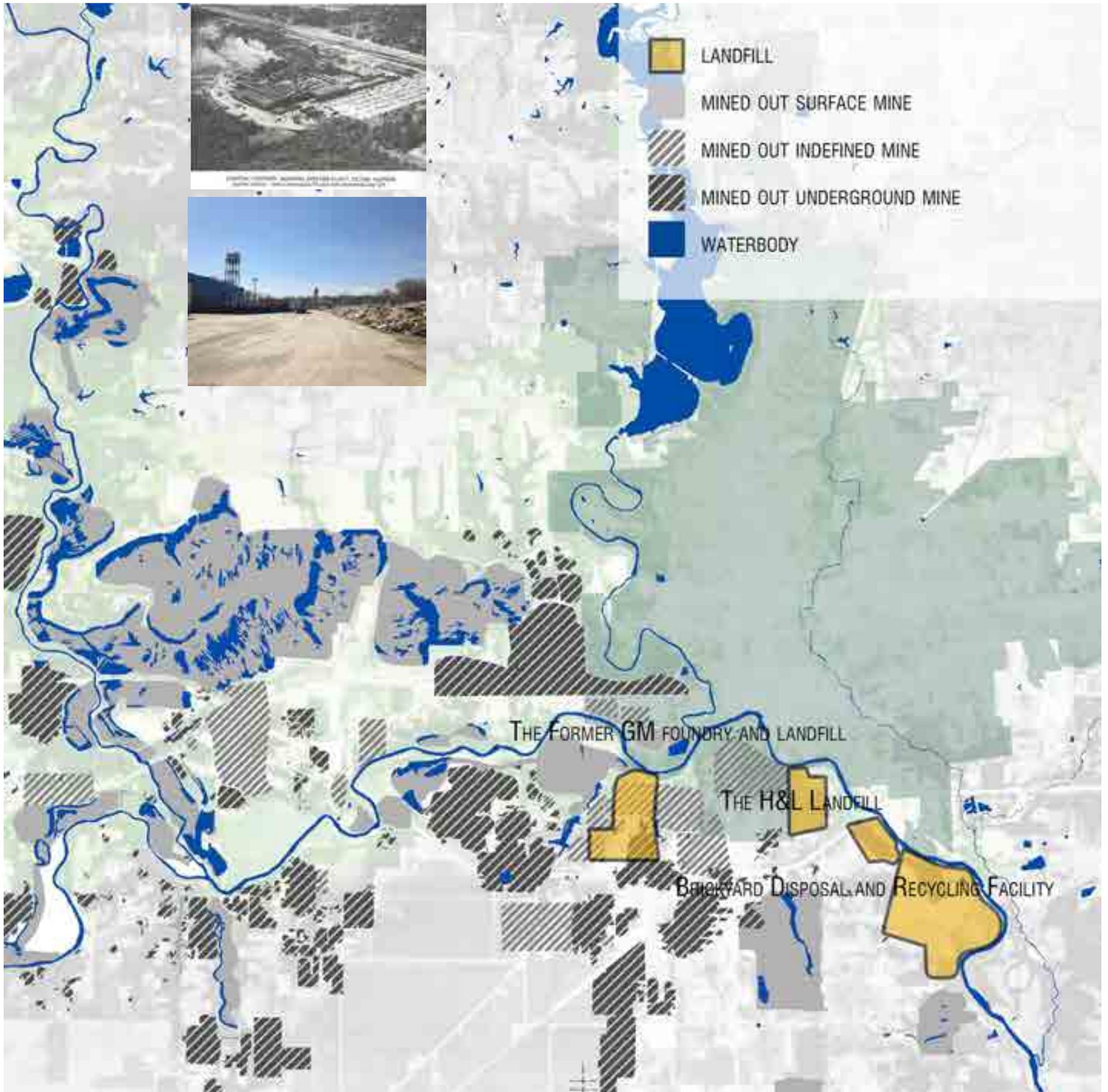
Remains of the Bridge



Sedimentation on the River Bank

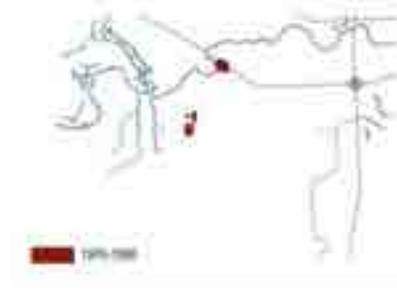
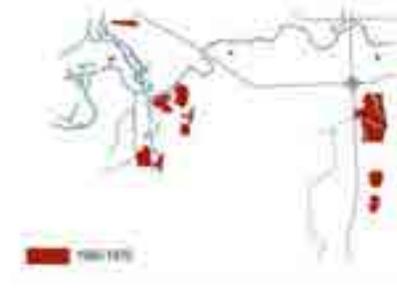


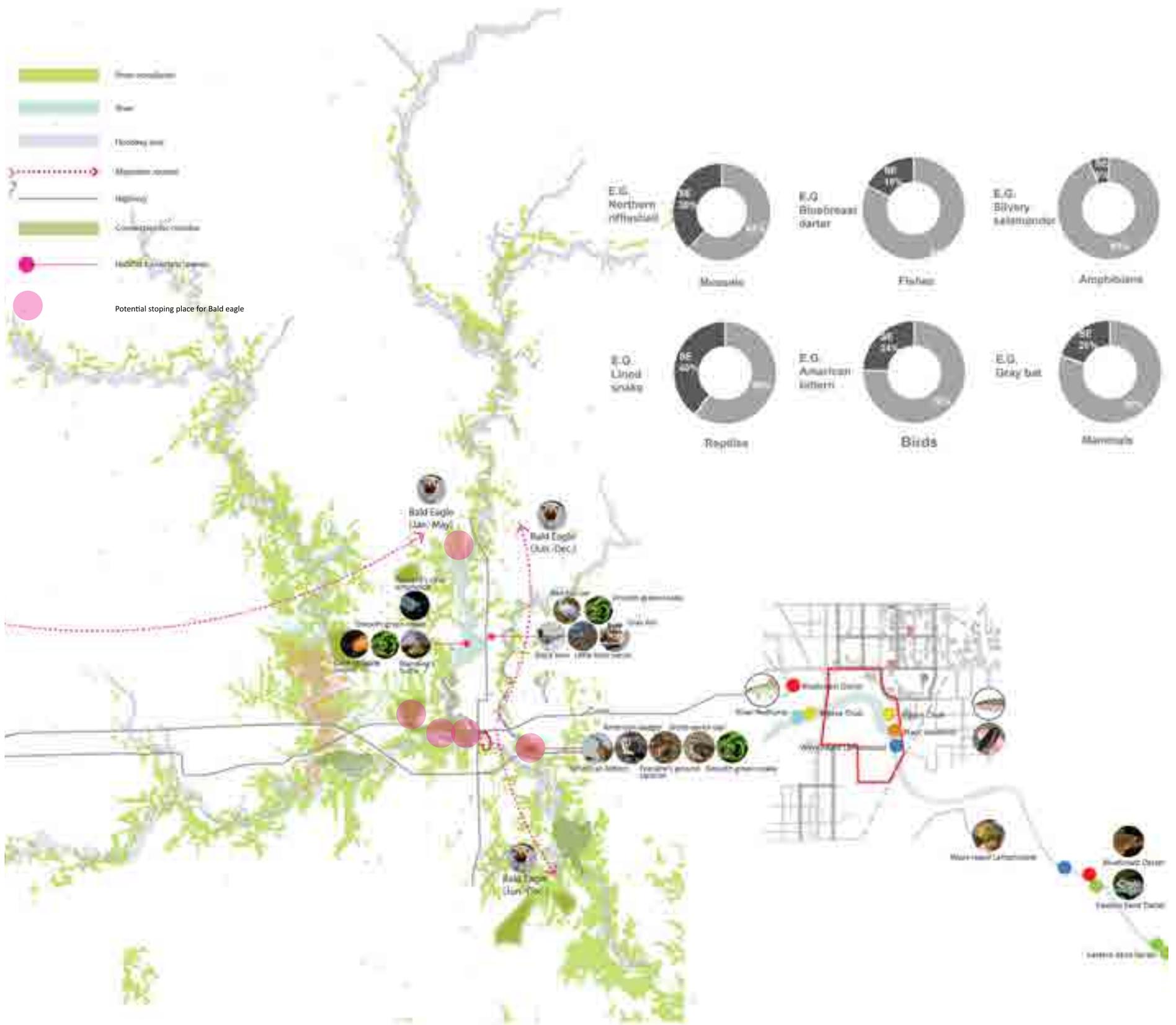
Vegetation on North Bank



Regional Ecologies

The changes in land cover, the history of coal mining, farming and industrial, as well as the analysis of soil condition, led to the conclusion that, the soil is fragile in the area where once had old coal mining, and may be also have polluted water from farming and industry. So we propose to construct the ecology along the Vermilion River through our regional plan. In the master plan, we locate the river, existing green space, also the transportation system, including railroad, highway, and bike lanes. We plan buffer zone along the river, which is two times wider than the river bed, to prevent polluted water from flowing into the river directly, as well as to protect the land along the river area. Then we add wetlands to connect river and green space, also to restore the poor soil condition due to the coal mining. What is more, we proposed prairie belt along railroad. We also worked out some solutions for recover the regional ecology. We propose a plant palette to remediate the weak soil (based on pH value). We provide a habitat migration route for endangered species.





From the soil analysis we see that the soil along the river is in a poor condition: severe soil erosion, low water capacity and low quantity of organic matter, likely because of coal mining. The soil became fragile after mining and is badly in need of reclamation, so prairie, woodland and wetland are planned. In addition, the landfill area is lowest water capacity and organic matter, which means that planting should be chosen carefully. First, for the remediation of soil, we choose plants which can tolerate eroded conditions. We found that along the riverside, the erosion situation is really severe, so we also select plants for erosion control. Second, because our site includes the flooding plain of Vermilion River and Middle Fork Vermilion River, three floodable plants are chosen. Last but not least, we provide a food and habitat resource for wildlife, by choosing plants which produce abundant fruit or which have flowers that would attract pollinators.





LEGEND

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| ① Entry Plaza | ② Bioswales | ③ Bike Lane | ④ Overlook Platform |
| ⑤ Basketball Playground | ⑥ Bike Rental Spot | ⑤ Rain Garden | ⑤ Bridge |
| ⑦ Community Garden | ⑦ Rest Platform | ⑥ Ecological Parking Lot | ⑥ Skating Park |
| ⑧ Climbing Wall | ⑧ Eating Deck | ⑦ Shopping Plaza | ⑦ Grass Slope |

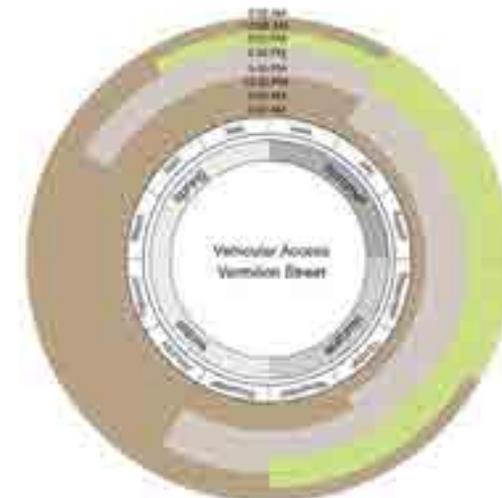


URBAN ECOLOGIES

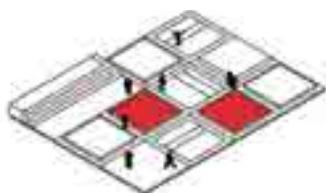
Revitalizing Danville Downtown

In Danville downtown, there are many public spaces where events were held in different seasons and residents gather around them to have fun. Take the Vermillion Street as an example, the diagram on the top shows diverse events, and the diagram below illustrate where people gather.

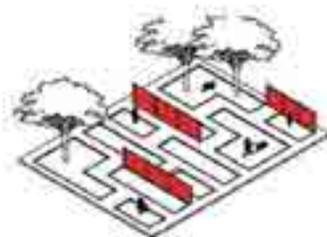
Through site investigation, we categorize several typical spatial pattern of the site. Most of these spaces are underused. So we propose community gardens, playgrounds, rain-gardens and art installations to transform the current spatial pattern into new ones that can support various activities.



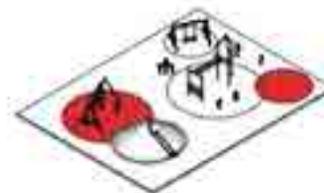
- ▀ stand: pedestrians, Bikes and cars
- ▀ stand: pedestrians and Bikes
- ▀ pedestrian only



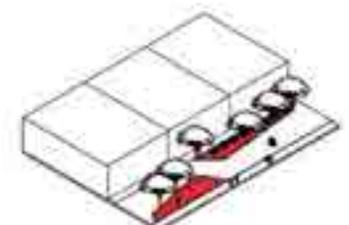
Community Garden on vacant grass land



Art Installation



Children Playground



Pedestrian Street



County Clerk

Southside Annex

Via & Berney's

The Haven
194 Dining &
Jazz Club

Engineers
Designing

Title &
Appraisal
Center

Book Print

Multiscreen
& Title Co.

East Community Action
Agency

North St.



MAIN ST.

VERMILLION ST.

Vermillion Court House

Gold Lumber
Buff

1919-1921
Baltimore Police
Office

Law Office - Corporate Center

First Midwest Bank

Yogi Berra

Pharmacy

Law & Title
Service

Concrete Deposition
& Power Inc.

Feature Graphic
Design

Advanced
Prescription Shop

North St.

West



Commercial/Recreation



Offices



Open space



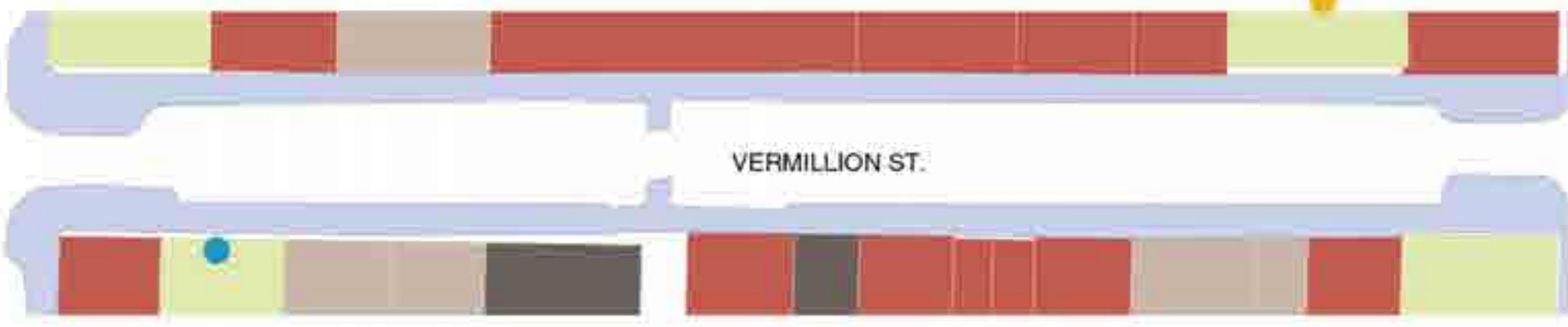
Public/Institutional



Vacant building



The Terrace | World Mobility Agency | Hamilton County Jail | Warehouse | News Gathering Shop | Furniture Shop | Book Palace | Artists & Musicians | Life Office Shop | Home Theater



Use Shop | Paved and Gravel Accessory Building, Pickup Firewall | Outdoor Lawn | Fence Shop | DVD Shop | Residential Release | Adams Building | Hill North, Music Center | Daniels Exhibition, Outreach, Law Office, Community Daniels INC | Carpenter, Tree View Center

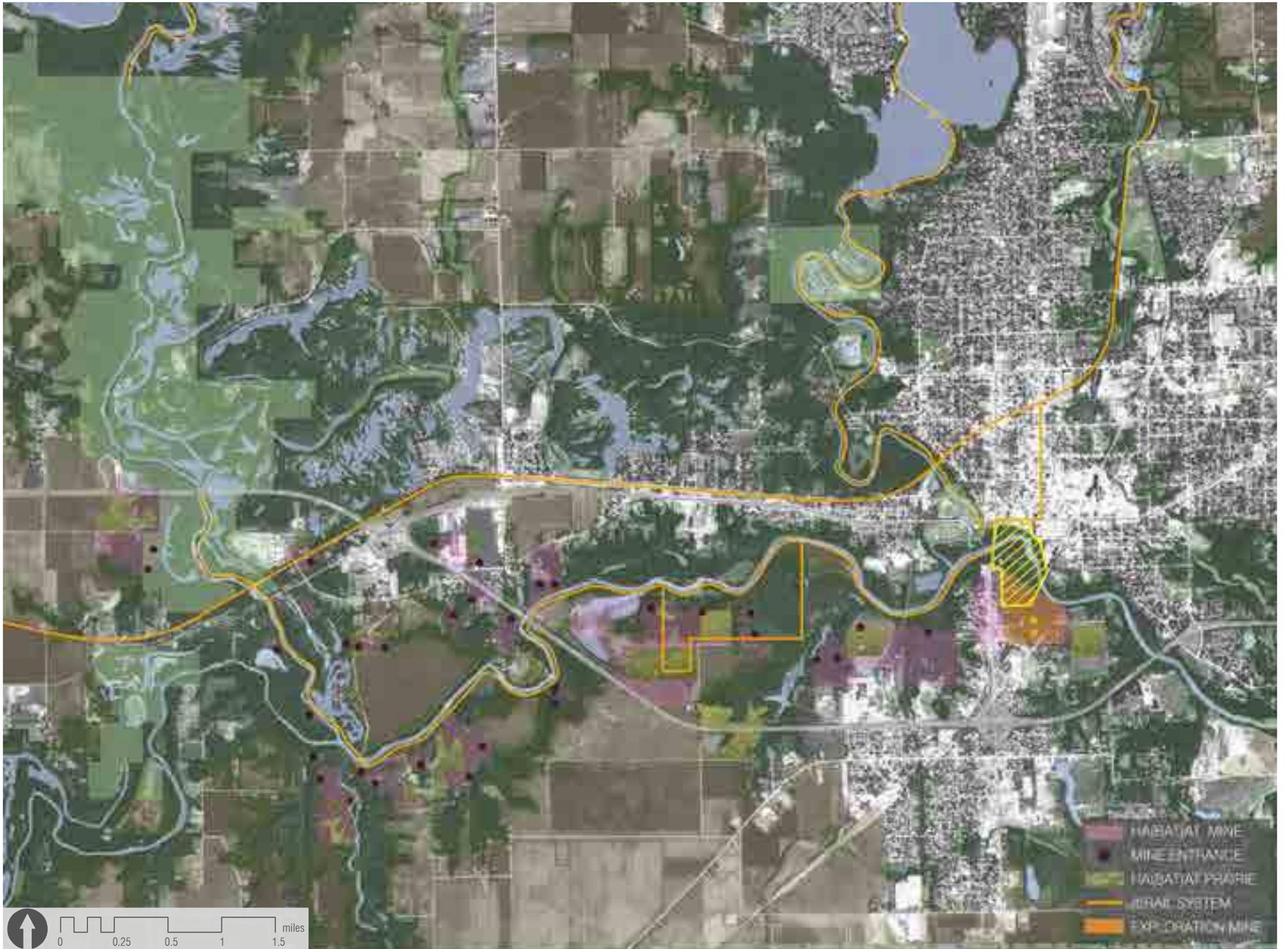


Material



Pocket Gardens





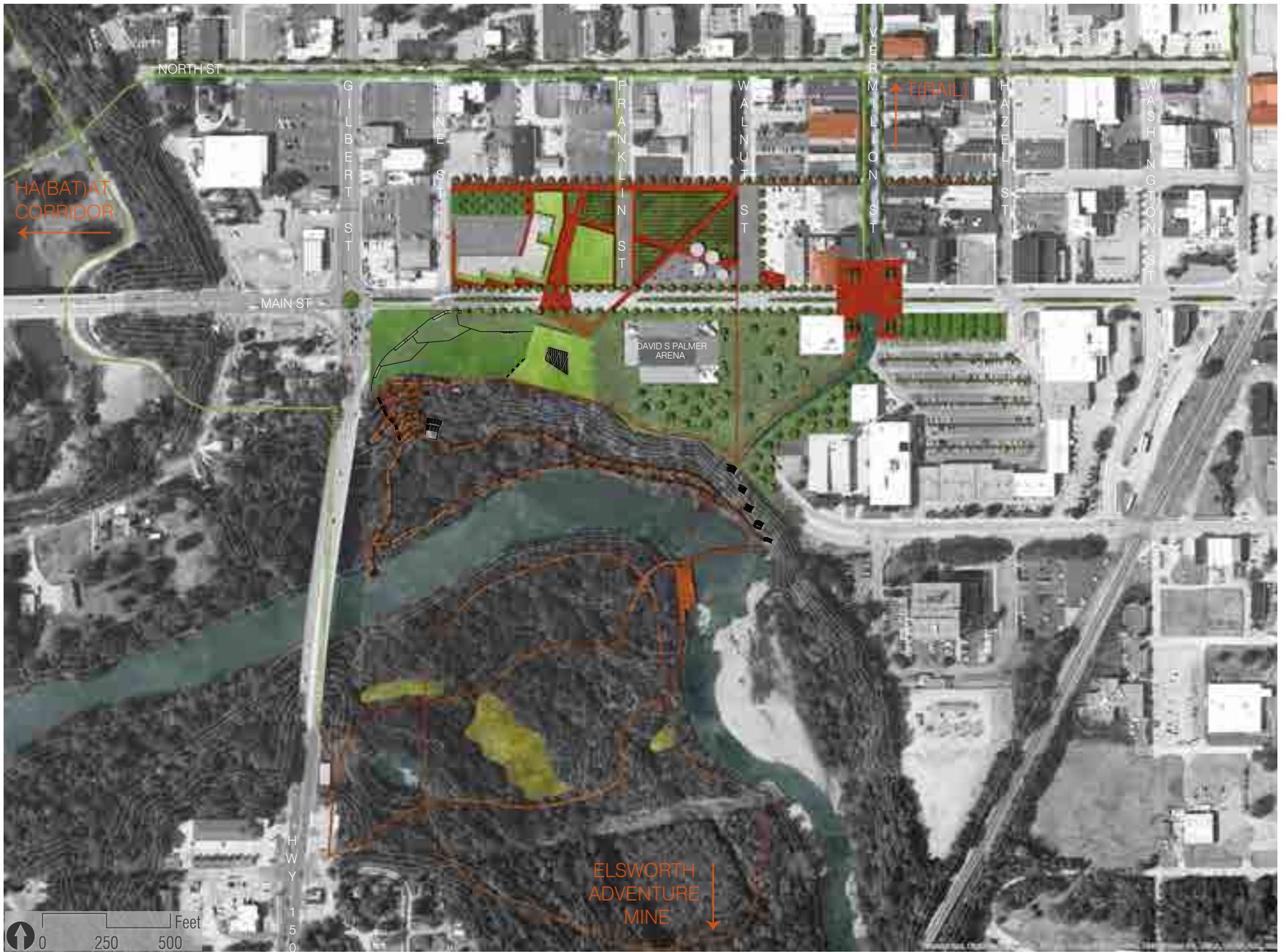
Ha(BAT)at Post Industrial Urban Lab

Ha(Bat)at is an environmentally sustainable greenway corridor where vegetal, avian, and mammalian species including humans thrive. In considering the endangered bat species native to this area and their ideal habitats, Ha(Bat)at reclaims abandoned mines and restores prairie along the Vermilion river to promote biological diversity.

The greenway acts as a mediator between the existing rail-trail extending from Urbana to Kickapoo State Park and linking it to downtown Danville along the Vermilion river corridor. Walking and biking trails on the riverfronts encourage improvement of human health and facilitate interaction with an ecologically healthy landscape.

By funneling tourists into the downtown Ha(Bat)at acts as an economic driver and stimulates the local economy. Nurturing bat population growth in the Vermillion county agricultural landscape will allow farmers to reduce their expenses in several ways. First, bat colonies consume damaging pests resulting in less usage of pesticides. Second, nutrient rich bat waste diminishes the need for fertilizers. Finally bat assistance in pollinating crops benefits both the farmer and the environment.





Trails guide users down to a new riverfront park, which features a multi-use trail connecting to Kickapoo State Park via an abandoned rail line. Turning former coal mine caves into habitats for endangered bats in the region reveals historic land patterns to be explored following the Vermilion River corridor. On south bank of Danville Riverfront Park, historic Ellsworth No. 1 Mine will be reopened for human exploration.

Danville is re-envisioned as a high quality of life city attracting and retaining both residents and businesses with this project. Streetscaping elements installed downtown include bike lanes and bioswales, managing stormwater while offering a contemporary aesthetic. Traffic calmers and pedestrian crossings allow visitors to cross Main Street safely. A large outdoor civic plaza provides a central location to host farmers markets and other outdoor festivities.



STAIRS TO RIVERFRONT



RIVERFRONT BOARDWALK



VERMILION SECTION





Dynamic Waterscape

Phase 1
water height: 80

Phase 2
water height: 85

Phase 3
water height: 90

Phase 4
water height: 95

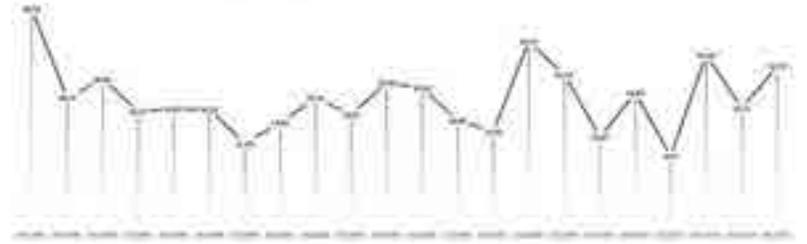
Phase 5
water height: 100

Phase 6
water height: 105

Water

The main feature of the Riverfront Park is a dynamic waterscape. This landscape contains a flood plain, which will be covered by water annually during the flood season. Instead of excavating channels to create constructed wetlands, changes in topography cause the riverine ecology to develop spontaneously. Mounds and depressions alternate and are planted with vegetation to create habitats. Three glass pavilions are designed on the northern bank for vistas to the river. The wooden deck system enables people to experience this natural attraction of river during non-flood periods. Boardwalks are designed to bring people to the wetlands and the river. This riverfront park will be ecologically sustainable and will be a place for recreational activities.

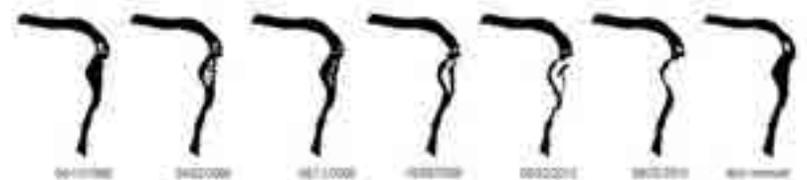
Highest Recorded Gage Height of Each Year



Flooded Area Analysis

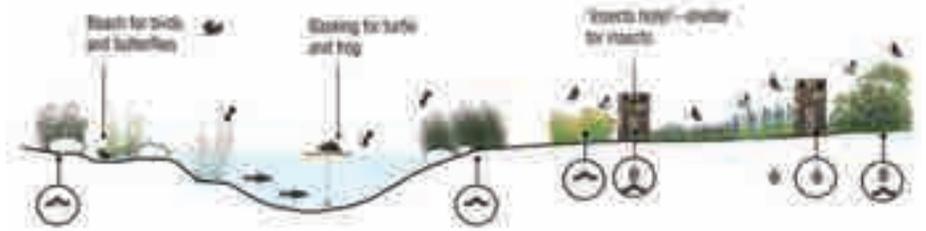
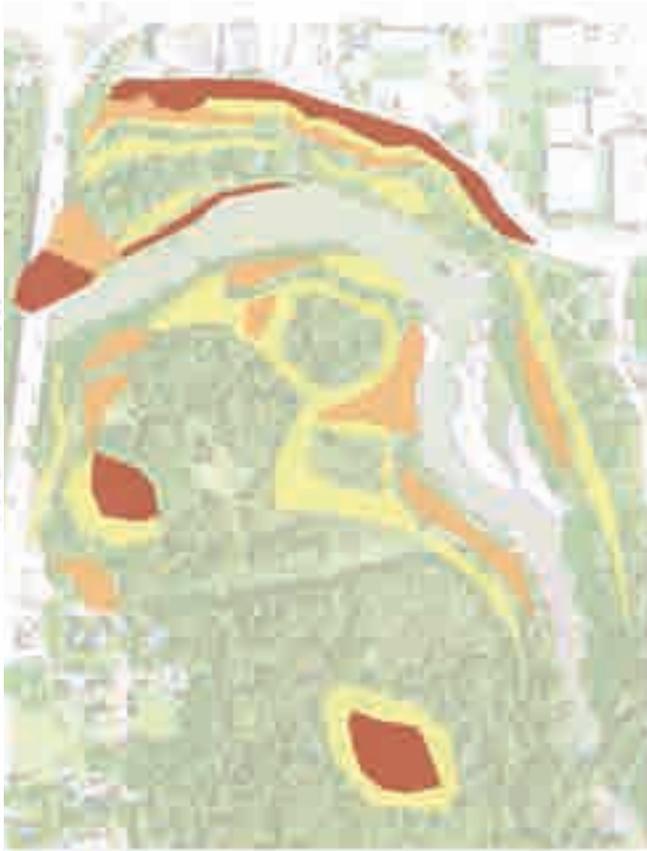


Current Dynamic Waterscape



- Fully Remove
- Partially Remove
- Species Add/Replace

In order to create new tangible and visual connection in the riverfront park, the basic strategy is to replace and remove some of the existing vegetation in terms of minimum intervention.



Insect Garden Section



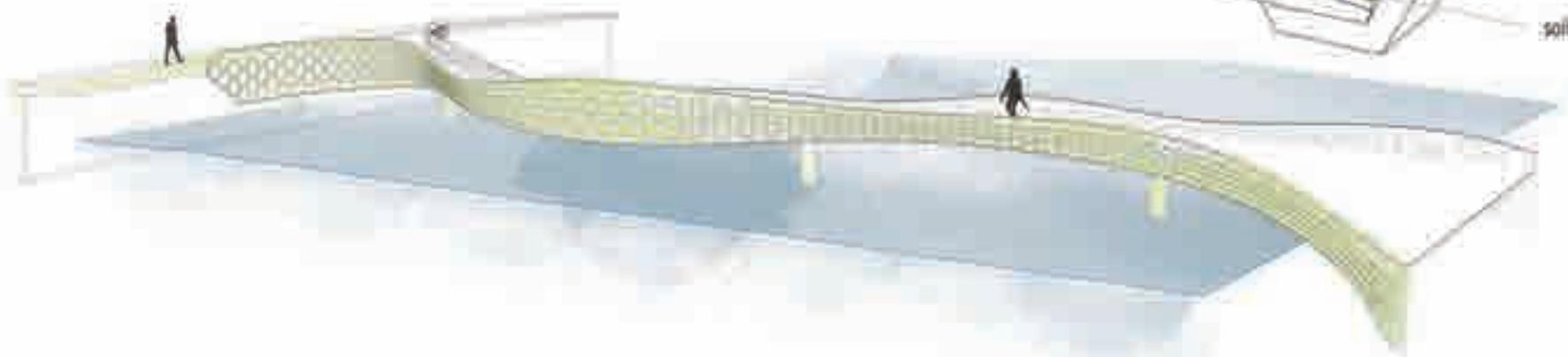
Living wall footbridge view

The installation "living box" is installed on the pedestrian bridge. The box will open differently based on the growth of the inside plants, therefore, it works as a micro-climate amplifier of the riverfront.



Living Box

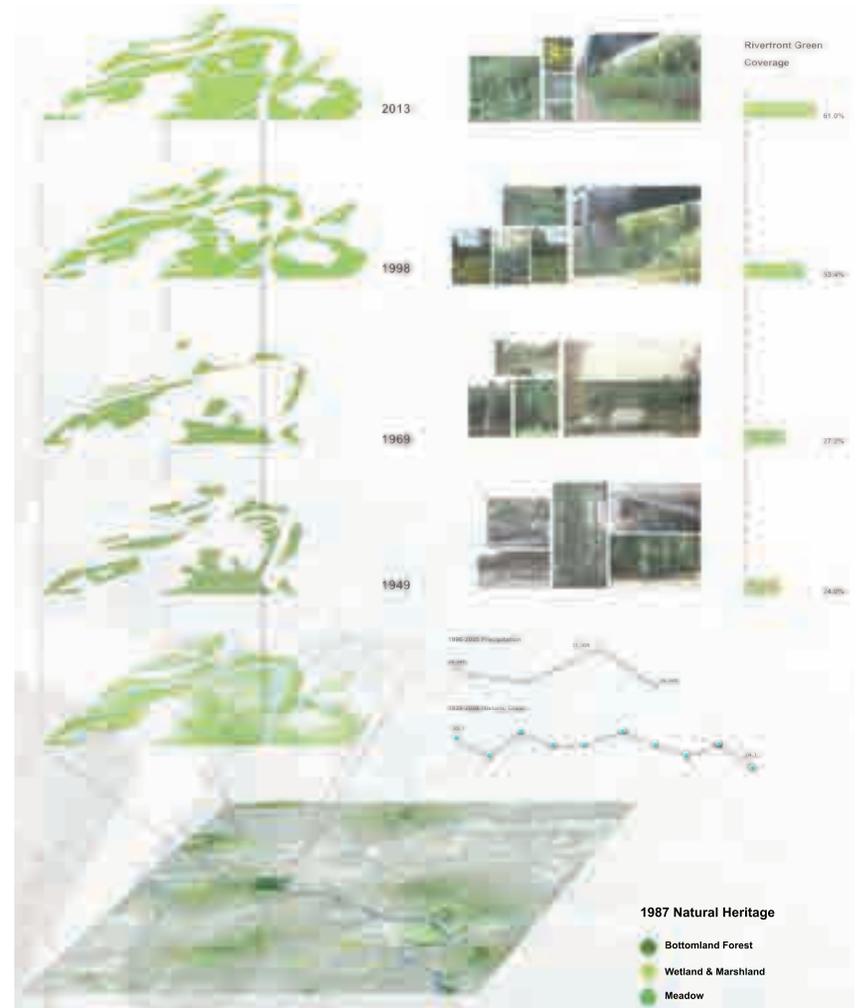
Antonia villosa
Fringed Sedge
Common Bur-reed



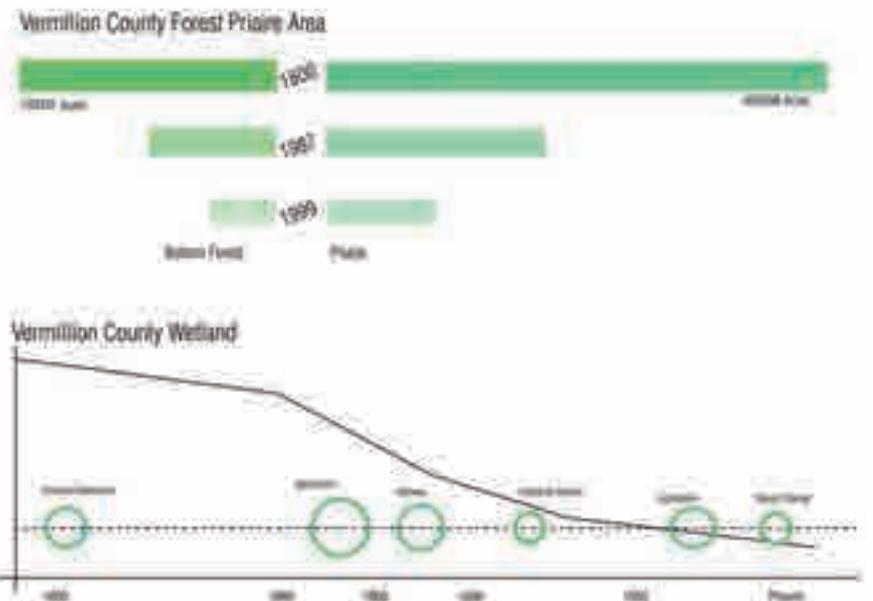
Vegetation

USGS and Google Earth satellite maps show that since 1949 green cover has been increasing but in Vermillion county overall wetlands, prairie and forests have decreased. Wetlands were drained between 1800 to 1860 to farm. Native trees and shrubs include sugar maple, american beech, viburnum, willows, dogwoods and winterberry.

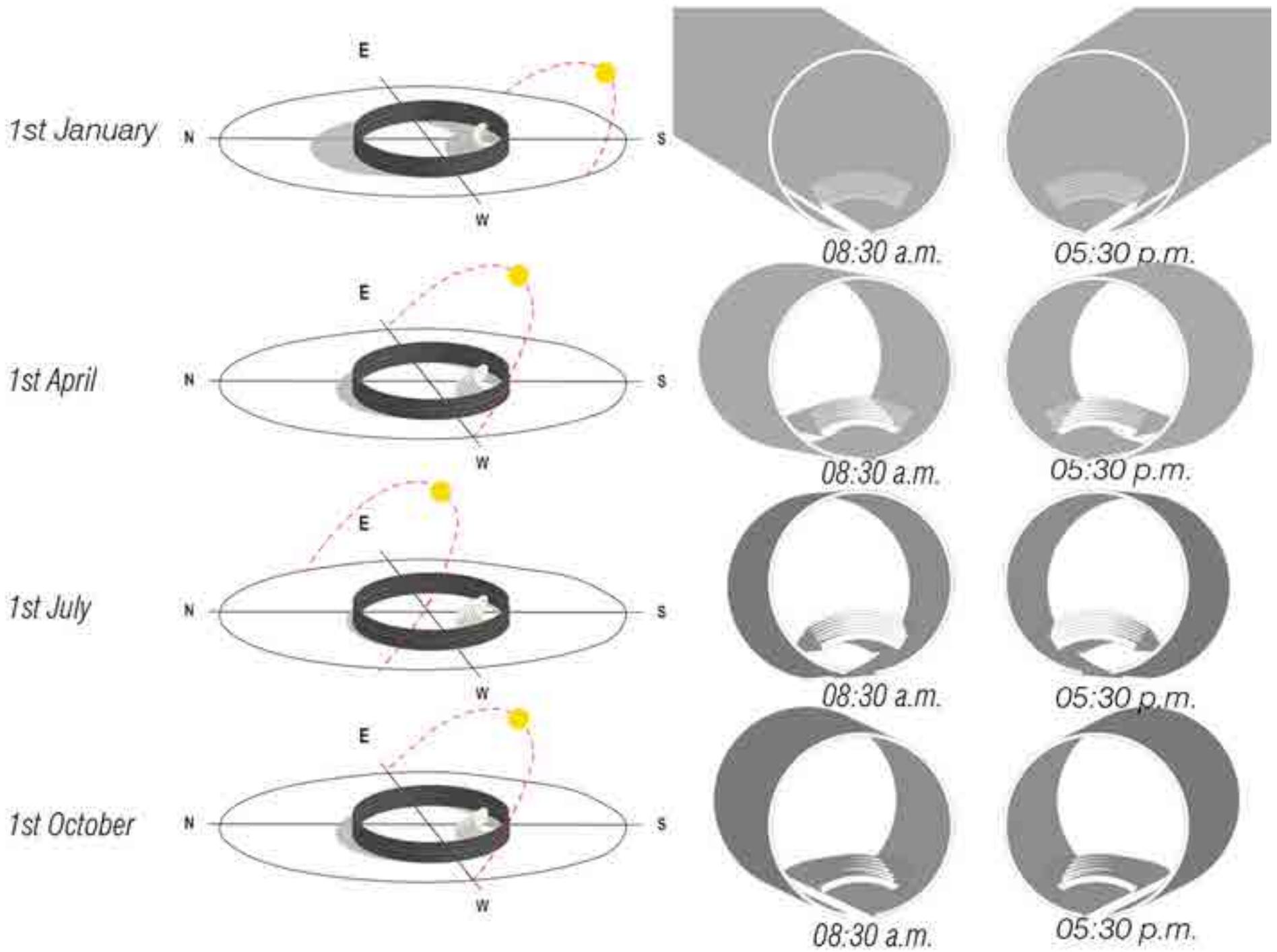
The site of Riverfront Park is mostly covered by dense vegetation which makes large areas inaccessible and breaks the visual connection between the riverfront and downtown. Besides, the majority of the park is in the frequent flood zone of the Vermillion River that has a significant effect on the plant species and distribution. Aimed at providing interesting and pleasurable sensory perception and to protect the ecological system, we propose removing part of the vegetation in certain areas to create open space and enhance visual connectivity; improving the diversity of plants by adding plants attractive to beneficial insects which has the function of nature education and recreation; purifying the urban runoff with phytoremediation wetland. The design aims to create an ecologically sustainable riverfront for Danville with minimum intervention.



Historical Vegetation Change



Sun movement analysis
Danville, IL time zone: UTC-06:00



Sun

Over more than a hundred years in Danville, numerous settlers followed the footprints of their forefathers in complete darkness, exploring the rich inherited coal reserves with laborious efforts. The faint light of miner lamps tells us how people in Danville never stop pursuing a better life. Our main concept is the experience of sun shine and to amplify the warmth and lightness to recall people's feeling in the mine shafts, thus educating visitors about the history. It is about past and future, brightness and darkness. The riverfront park is expected to improve social engagements, public safety, health, and promote tourism growth, which will revitalize Danville.

The circular installation is a metaphorical idea of the underground coal mines, as people walk through the passage during different time of the day, the sun movements will create different light spaces that mimic the same experience of coal miners. A mining memorial will be built to educate people about the geological facts and a sunburst path will mark the boundary of the historic coal mines.





Temperature gets lower with stronger wind



The molecules move in a larger scale with stronger wind



The sound gets louder with stronger wind



The wind strength gets bigger with stronger wind



The fabric moves more with stronger wind



Experience of wind



Wind

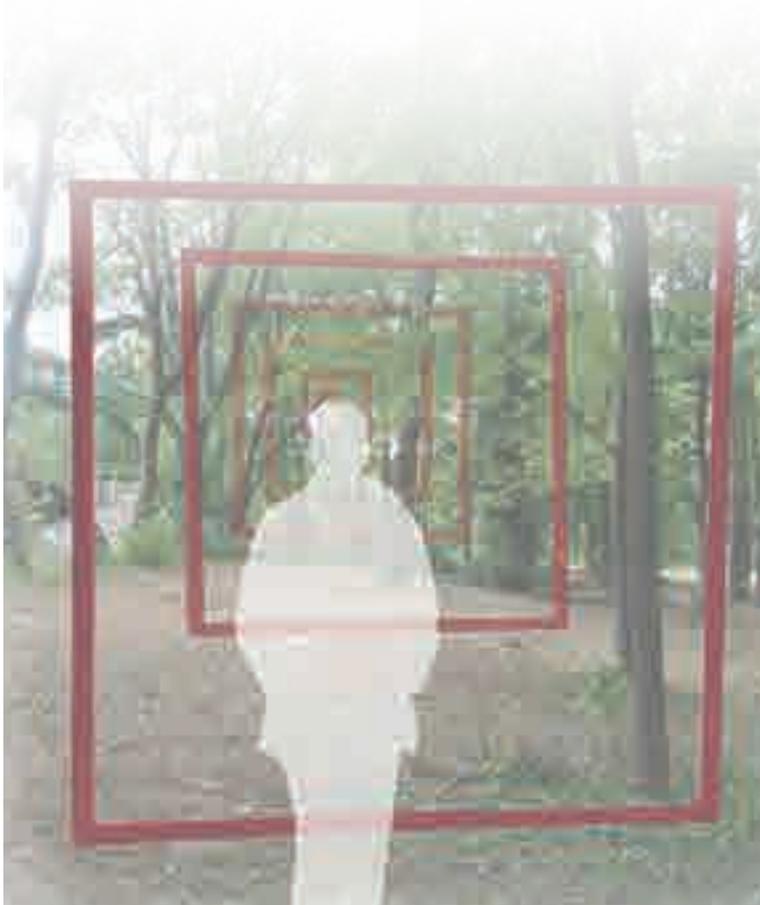
In the riverfront park the experience of wind is amplified through designed installations. Wind has no specific figure or shape. People can feel it by skin directly or experience it through sight, sound or smell indirectly. Three installations are designed based on people's indirect experiences of wind, including "opening wind-wall structure", "fabric wind wall" and "bell wind wall". The "opening wind-wall structure" refers to the movable doors on the walls of wind tunnel in similar texture. When the wind blows, the door in certain direction would open, bring people into a hidden garden. The fabric on "fabric wall" would move along with the wind, showing different textures. Bell on the "bell wind wall" would ring with the wind, noticing people the existence of wind. Visiting these three installations, people can see the movement and hear the sound caused by wind.





Sight

In order to enhance the visual experience, we use frames, pavilions and vegetation in the riverfront park. Interesting views of designed amphitheater and the river will be framed through metallic squares mounted or hung. The pavilion is irregular shapes. Its surfaces reflect surroundings and enhance light effects. It is also moveable and can be combined with other units to form places such as fishing deck, stage and exhibition area. We use plants that have different heights and colors to guide people's sightline. Seasonal plants will be planted along sightline; plants with different heights will be planted along the boardwalk to form multiple layering scenes.



A



Stone Wall supports walkways with a sweeping wooded canopy.

B



Plaza Platforms at varying heights and levels offer unique viewing experiences.

C



Site plan profiles the path of water through the site.

D



Stone Circle uses composition of the site to attract views while creating social interaction.

E

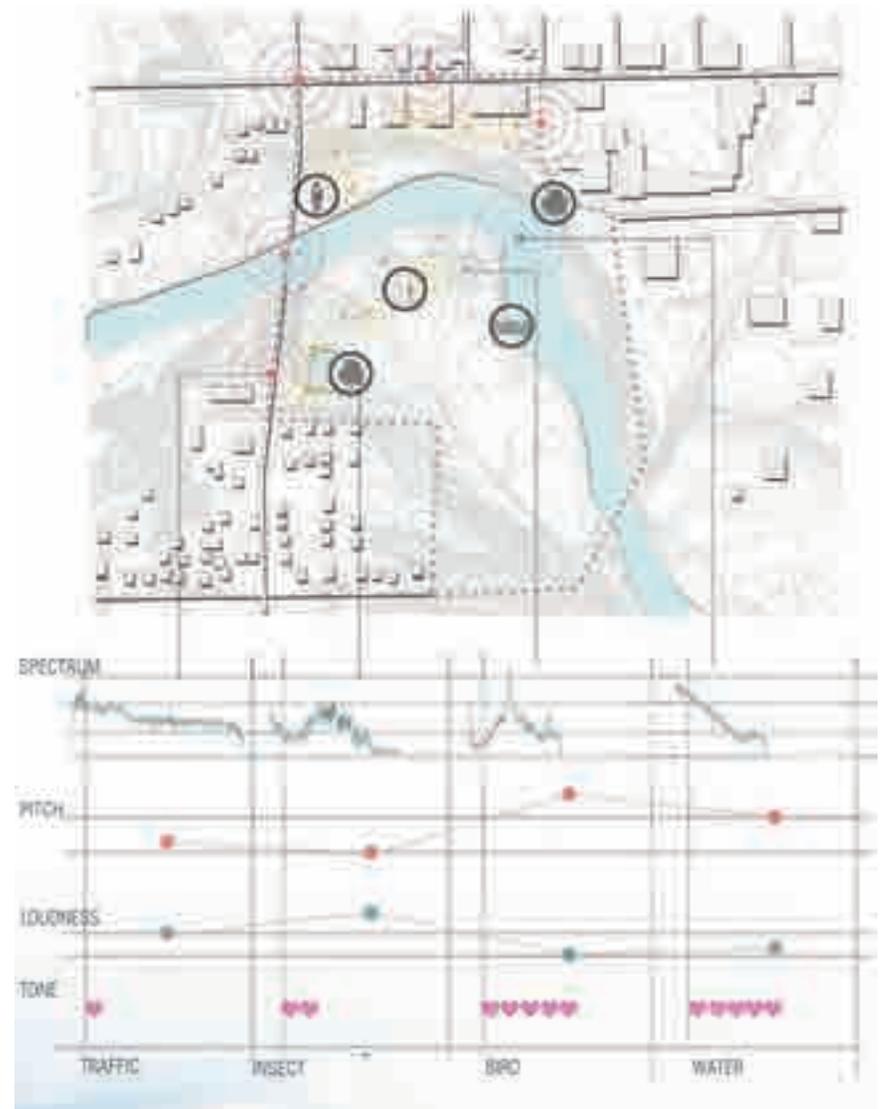


Wooded Access Coves provide elevated views high in trees and connect them to elements of the ground.

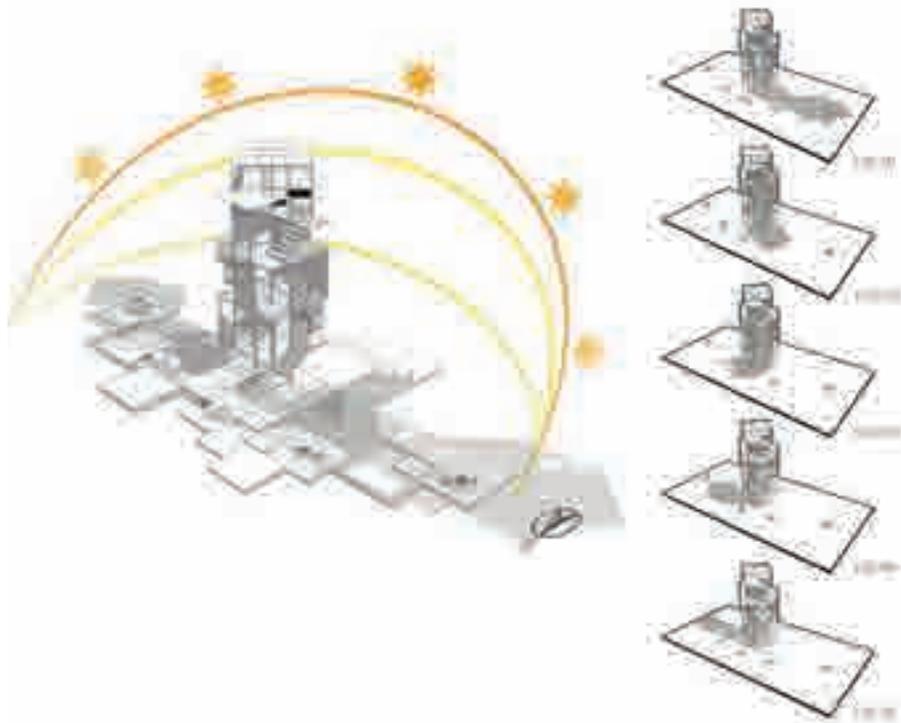


Sound

Nature sounds are amplified through sound walls, sound slopes, echo walls and acoustic cones. Nature and meeting center will serve as an introduction point for those traveling along the river trail and will offer programming for children and adults while increasing community involvement with volunteer and stewardship opportunities. The boardwalk pathway is 6' wide and runs from the nature center to the water's edge and sound installation. Trails throughout the site are 2-4', narrowing to change movement, view and experience as one travels through the site. Pathways are enhanced with sand, gravel and mulch depending on relationship to the location and will connect to a suspension bridge at the north side of the site. Constructed pool and riffle sequence with rock weir will improve habitat diversity while the sound enhances environmental awareness. Invasive species will be cleared to allow the wet prairie to expand; beneficial plant material will be added to build biodiversity of insects, plants and birds.



MOVEMENT: GNOMON TOWER



MOVEMENT: FLOATING BRIDGE

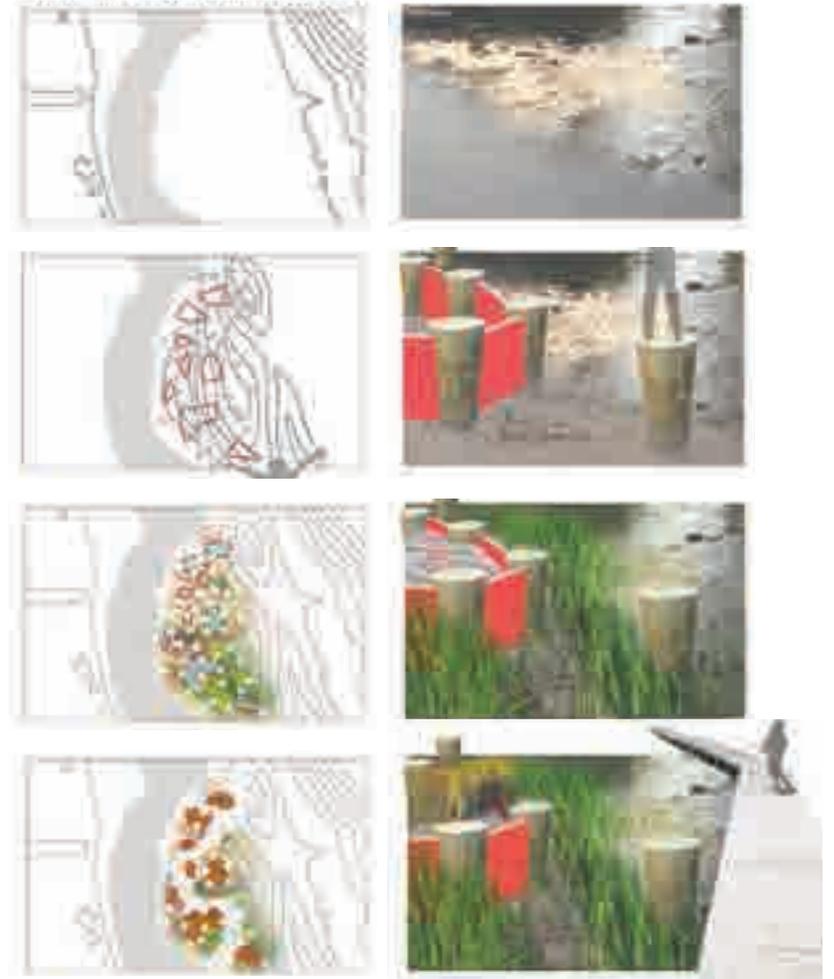


Movement

In the early days of Danville, the southern bank of the river was left untouched. Although the arrival of railroads and bridges freed Danville from the bondage of river and canal, Main Street and Vermilion River remains edges for the urban fabric both physically and psychologically.

Our goal is to fuse existing structure of Main Street and Vermilion Riverfront through movement, remarrying Danville downtown with Vermilion River, and transforming the latter into an important public space. The central feature of the riverfront landscape is a floating bridge, which opens up new connection to south Danville and attracts both residents and tourists by its resiliency to shifting water levels.

Our design offers a series of river-related spaces for recreation, and slows flood water through the downtown bio-swale system. It re-establishes lush riverside marshes by controlling movement of sediments, and breaks down visual barriers between the city and the river through a lookout tower, that also records the movement of sun. These design interventions will connect Main Street and Vermilion riverfront with the downtown.

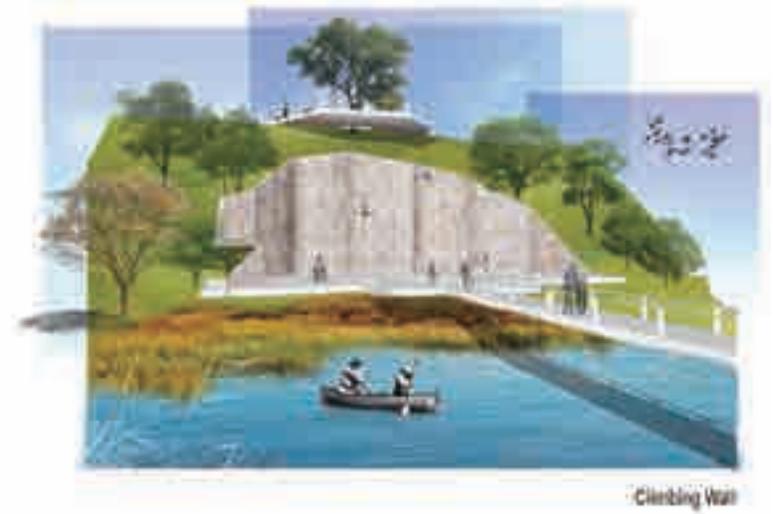




Touch

The riverfront area south of downtown Danville is currently an underutilized space with great potential. Opportunities exist to rejuvenate and bring more activity to the downtown area. Through the use of multifunctional spaces, the people of Danville will experience an increase in opportunities to participate in new recreational, social, and educational events. Our specific design interventions will allow people to interact with the site through tactile experiences.

These opportunities include being able to safely touch the river, interact with nature of differing tactile qualities, experience the textures of various structures and engage in many other activities. Installations on the site include the artistic use of historic bricks in walls and seating areas, an outdoor climbing wall with a variety of rough and smooth textures, and an open air educational space where people of all ages can interact with a multitude of textures, both natural and man-made.



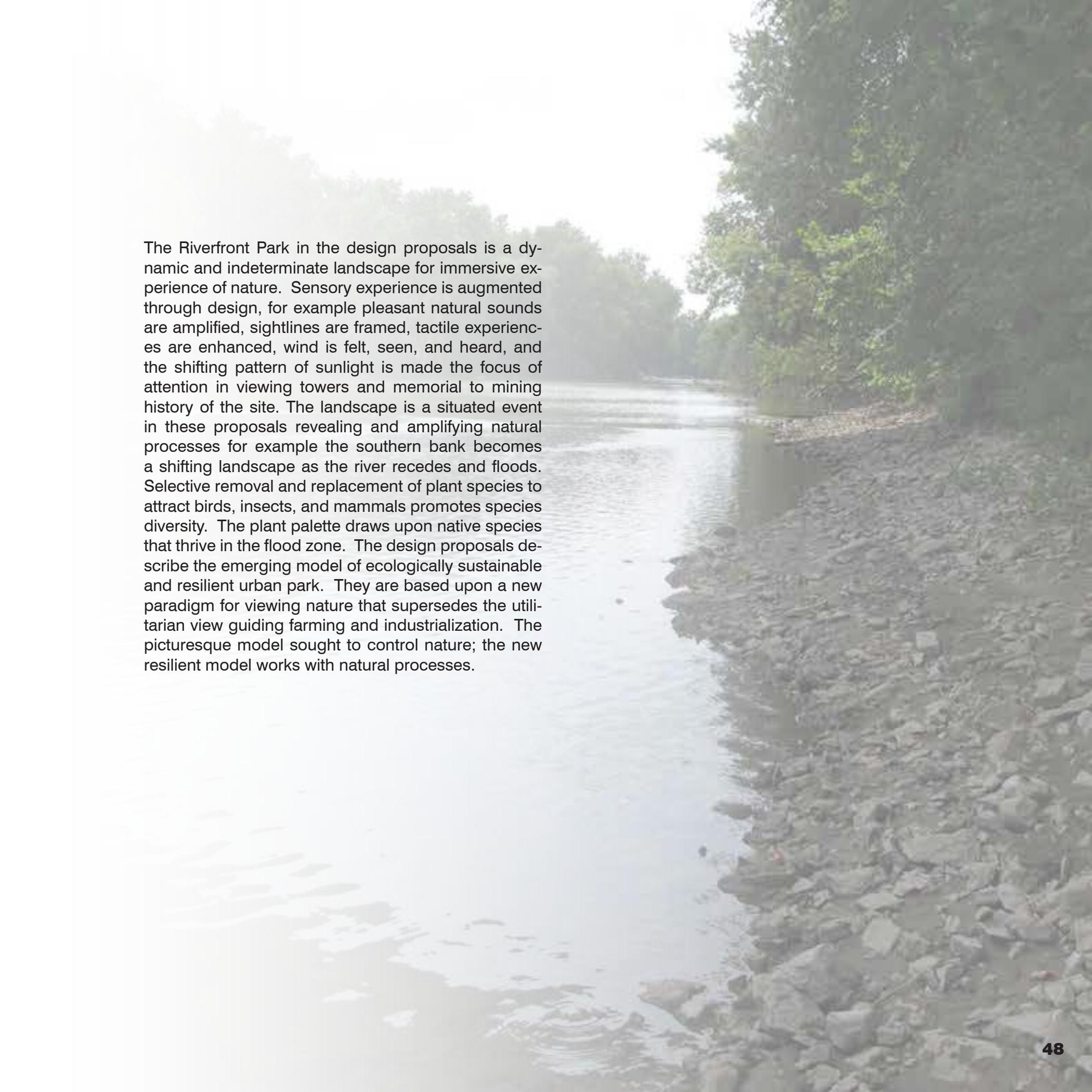
Climbing Wall



Outdoor Classroom



Adventure Spot

A photograph of a riverbank. The foreground is dominated by a rocky, greyish-brown shore that slopes down towards the water. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery. On the right side, there is a dense line of trees with lush green foliage. The background shows more trees and a bright, slightly hazy sky. The overall scene is a natural, serene landscape.

The Riverfront Park in the design proposals is a dynamic and indeterminate landscape for immersive experience of nature. Sensory experience is augmented through design, for example pleasant natural sounds are amplified, sightlines are framed, tactile experiences are enhanced, wind is felt, seen, and heard, and the shifting pattern of sunlight is made the focus of attention in viewing towers and memorial to mining history of the site. The landscape is a situated event in these proposals revealing and amplifying natural processes for example the southern bank becomes a shifting landscape as the river recedes and floods. Selective removal and replacement of plant species to attract birds, insects, and mammals promotes species diversity. The plant palette draws upon native species that thrive in the flood zone. The design proposals describe the emerging model of ecologically sustainable and resilient urban park. They are based upon a new paradigm for viewing nature that supersedes the utilitarian view guiding farming and industrialization. The picturesque model sought to control nature; the new resilient model works with natural processes.

Urban Projects: Downtown + Riverfront

Mapped as *urban cartographies*, the studies of the frailties and potentials of downtown and the riverfront, informed initial strategic plans that were further developed as *urban projects*. The design studio, working in pairs but still interacting as a whole group, generated unique urban projects, proposals which are in-between urban design and architecture in scope and scale. The interventions aim to create new environments which not only bring the riverfront to the Danville's existing community, visitors and potential future residents, but act as catalysts to regenerate activity and livability in downtown Danville. The 8 projects are grouped in 4 common design strategies/actions:

Sculpted Nodes: *Generating public space on the ground and in the architecture, as the first spark in the redevelopment process.* These strategies merge landscape with architecture by filling, carving into, and unfolding the land to build artifacts. Working with the existing conditions of the site (topography and unattractive architectural elements), they reshape them into new, active public spaces. In both projects, a single, large-scale intervention in the form of public space as a new, visually permeable gateway to the south riverfront park, contrasts with a more continuous urban façade proposed north of Main St.

Manipulating the Landscape
Wrapping Volumes

Inhabited Paths: *Creating a new linear public space that, integrated with architecture or attractions, draws people towards the riverside or connects opposite sides of the river.* These strategies are more structural in their approach by challenging and rethinking the edge condition of the riverfront. They address accessibility issues with potential effects on a regional scale. They clearly redefine how people move across and along the river, reinterpreting the traditional promenade and bridge to add complexity and condense activity along a connecting path as catalyst to reinvigorate Danville.

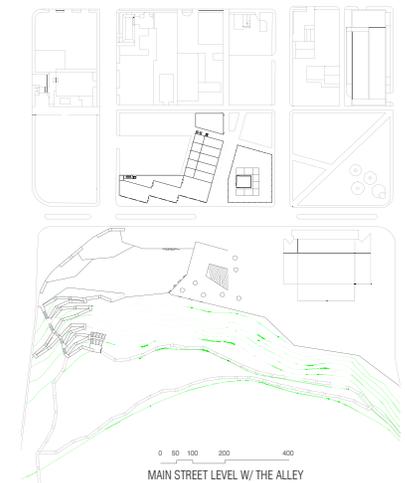
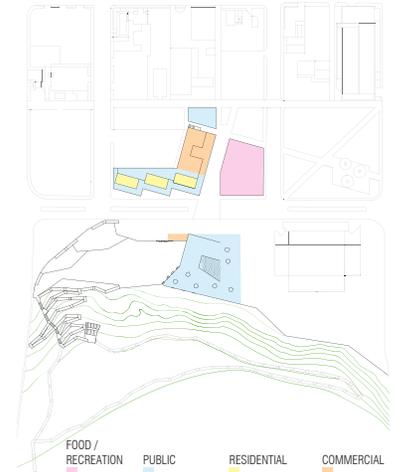
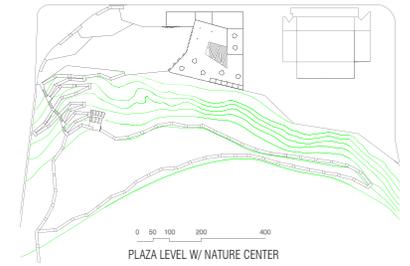
Redefining the Edge
Bridging Barriers

Accentuated Networks: *Connecting new paths with alleys from downtown towards the riverfront.* These strategies complement and punctuate existing networks to reinforce a secondary system of pedestrian pathways that overcomes the barrier of Main St. and invites people to the future river park. They propose a patchwork of open spaces along paths and medium-size buildings at the grid intersections to bring activity to the area. The designs build upon recent City strategies that improve alleys and introduce pocket parks, adding more intensity to the downtown network of urban scapes.

Interlacing Urban Conditions
Urban Stitching

Hybrid Fabrics: *Increasing density and mixing living with other activities near the riverfront.* These projects advocate a new neighborhood at the riverfront, a new hybrid fabric composed of intertwining green and built elements. Housing with private roof gardens in the upper-level and civic program and architecture with public boardwalks are enhanced to create a space that is active 24/7. The designs explore how to articulate the transition between the built and the natural, the domestic and public. With multiple small-scale buildings they add critical mass to the riverfront and propose innovative ways of living with nature as a way to attract new residents.

Filtering Green
Reclaiming Density



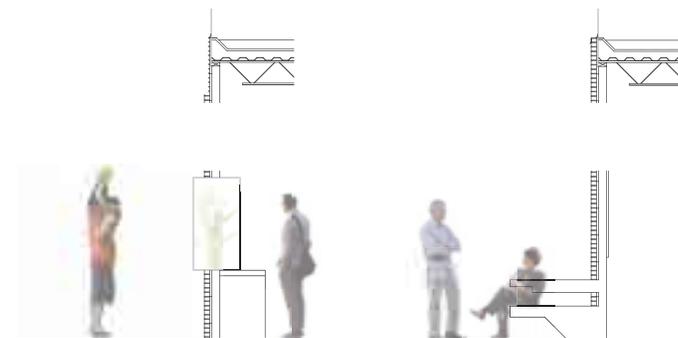
TERRACING THE LANDSCAPE



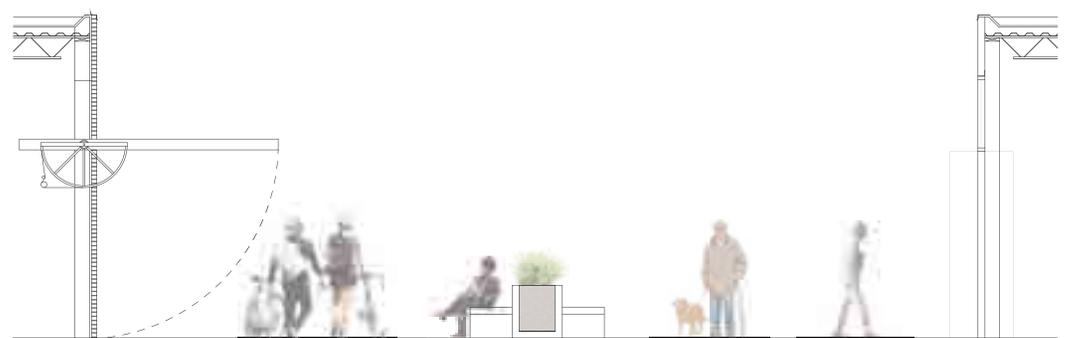
Sculpting Nodes: Manipulating Landscape

This project aims to connect Danville to its underutilized riverfront through a series of levels both natural and urban, merging the riverfront and the city into one entity. By integrating urban agriculture, incorporating greenery and a bioswale into the streetscape, and a large green urban plaza, the natural elements of the riverfront permeate into the city. The nature center/conference hall in the plaza as well as the boardwalk and amphitheater bring the city to the riverfront – completing the urban-natural mesh that we have created. Across Main Street we have incorporated a new alleyway complete with small commercial spaces, a year-round market that uses the urban agriculture as its main supply, and a living-learning research center in cooperation with the University of Illinois that will draw young professionals to live here. This alley directs you towards the upper green plaza where the landscape is lifted up to provide a viewing space for the river. Underneath is the nature center - which can be seen from the upper plaza through the tree-encompassing light wells. This space also includes conference and storage space for the arena as well as a small coffee/snack shop accessible from inside and out.

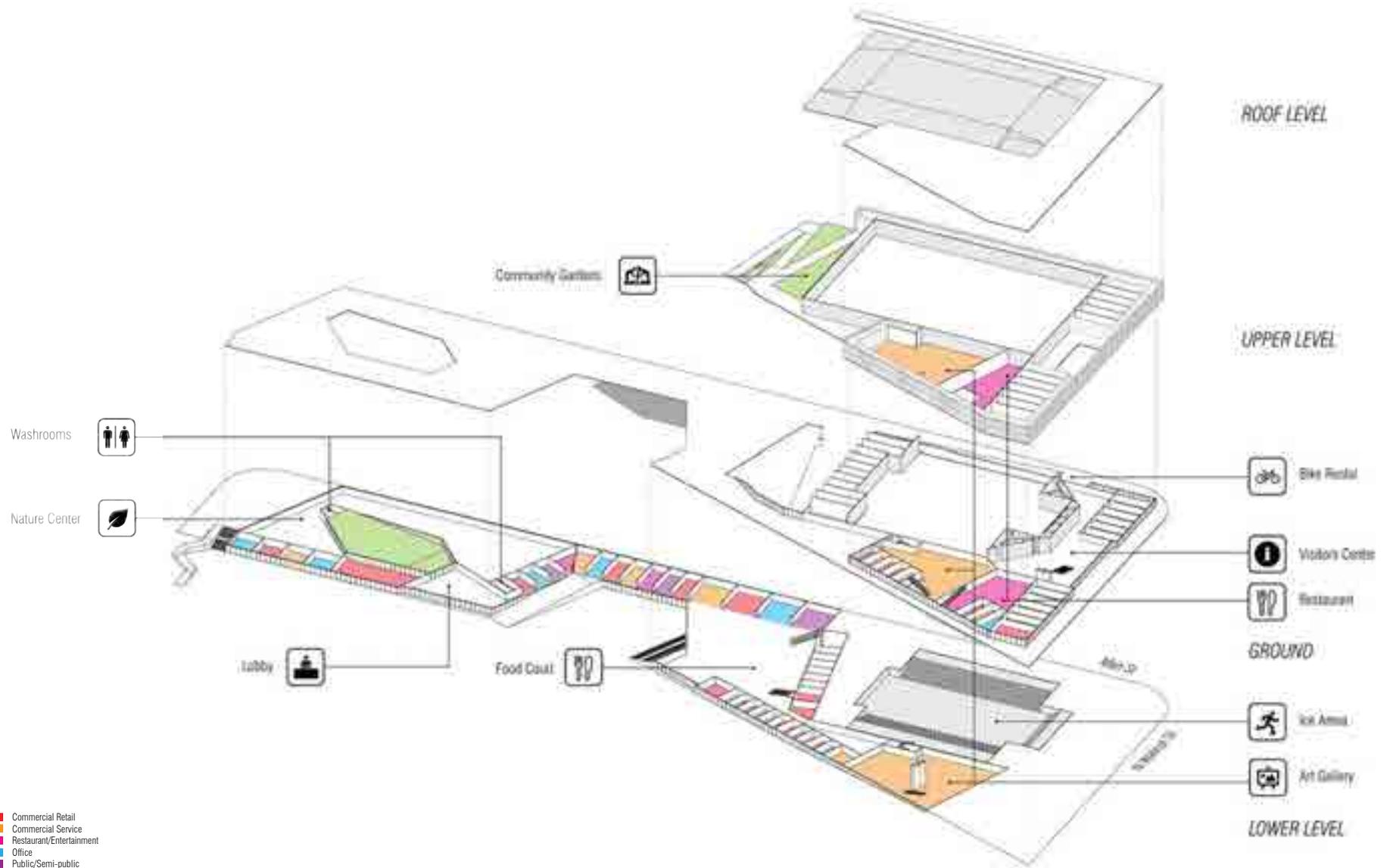
Through green roofs and urban agriculture, we were able to provide Danville with a healthy and vibrant alternative to the surplus of parking lots and impermeable surfaces without taking away from the economic and public potential of the riverfront site.



INTERACTIVE NATURE CENTER WALL WITH INSIDE-OUTSIDE EXHIBITS

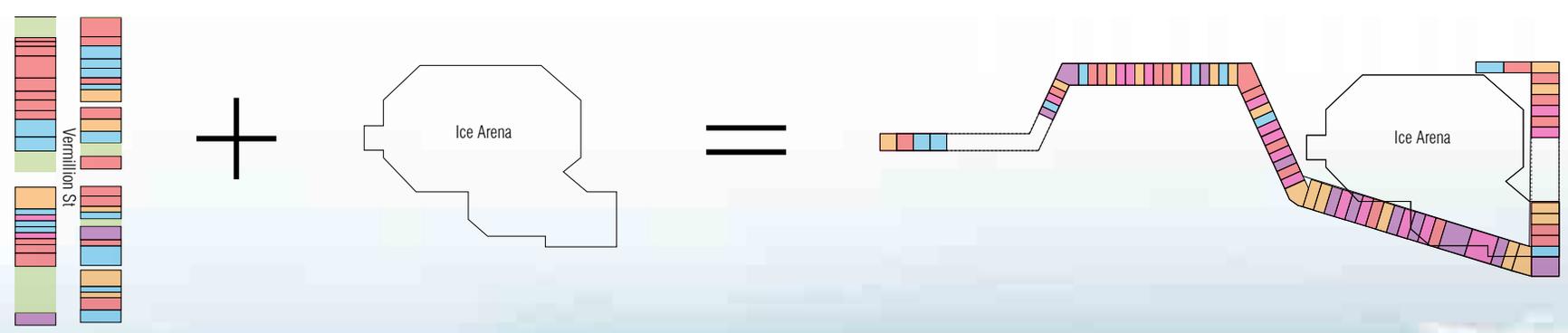


THE ALLEY - OPERABLE STOREFRONTS AS CANOPY, NANAWALL



- Commercial Retail
- Commercial Service
- Restaurant/Entertainment
- Office
- Public/Semi-public

Vertical Connection

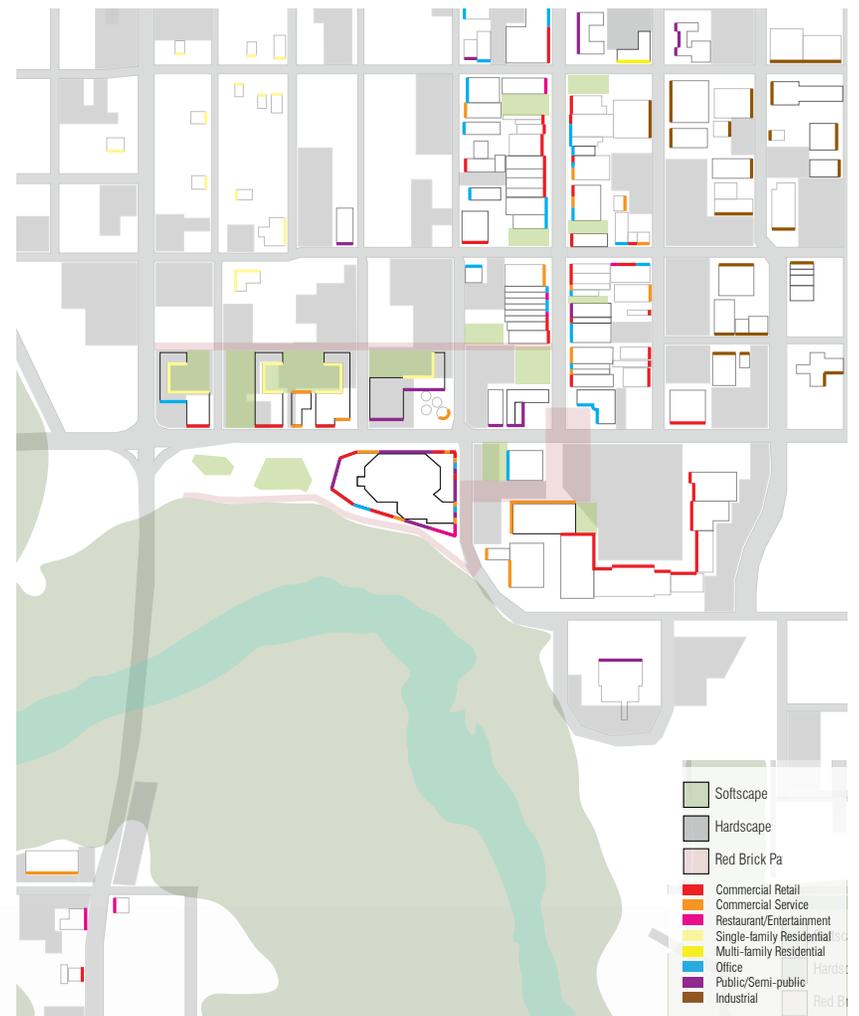


Section A-A 1:25 Classrooms Nature Center Courtyard Nature Center Lobby Sunken Plaza

Sculpted Nodes: Wrapping Volumes

The project's main idea is to enhance what Danville has had by adding, filling, and carving the volumes and wrapping it around with mixed use activities. Learning from the existing rules of storefronts along Vermilion Street, this project proposes the idea of wrapping the less attractive space on Main Street with mixed use activities. The David Palmer Ice Arena is the main focus and acts as the anchor to enhance the liveliness of downtown Danville. The existing "introverted" ice arena has a lack of connection to the outside, and is proposed to be more "extroverted" by adding new varieties of program like a scarf of storefronts. Pedestrians are welcomed to the space from all sides of the building.

Danville's original idea of having pocket parks around downtown is addressed by creating more public spaces in between the buildings to provide more space for the community. On the north side of Main Street, there are several community gardens for the people who live at the new proposed live/work apartment buildings. On the south side of Main street, there is a courtyard, a sunken plaza, and Vermilion promenade. The old public square is proposed as the node that connects Vermilion Street and Main Street. All these public spaces are laid out as the networks of pocket parks that connect downtown areas to the riverfront.



Food Court

Retail

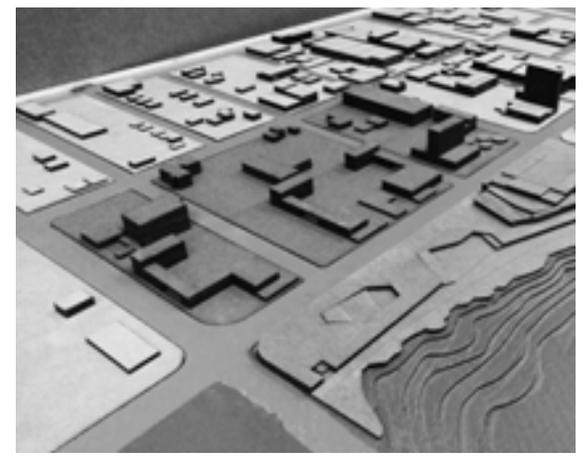
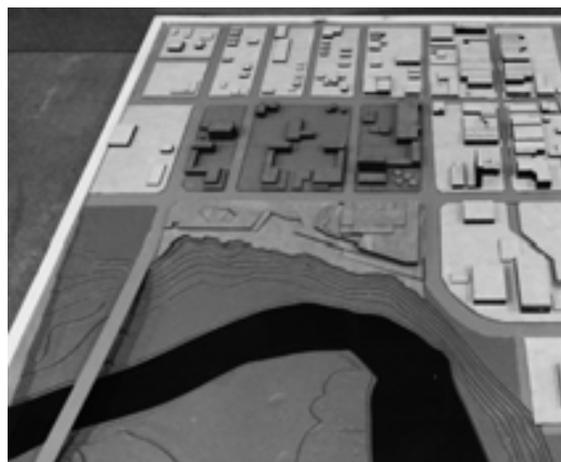
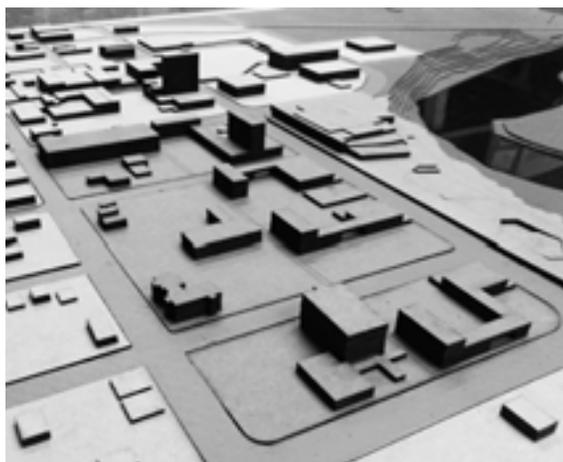
David Palmer Ice Arena

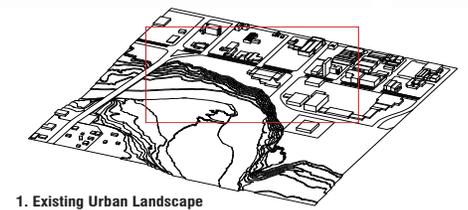
Ice Arena Lobby

N Walnut Street

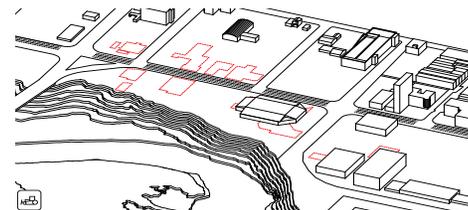


Integration of Pocket Parks 1:75





1. Existing Urban Landscape



2. Remove Barriers | Create opportunity for prime development along riverfront



3. Improve Walkability | Connect blocks north and south of Main St



4. Increase Economic Activity | Enhance Existing Infrastructure



5. Extend and Carve Open Public Space | Define places of communal activity



6. Activate Vermilion River | Connect downtown and South Danville



7. Create Community Cohesion | Populate downtown Danville



1 Nature Center Courtyard



3 Ice Arena on Main Street



2 Sunken Plaza

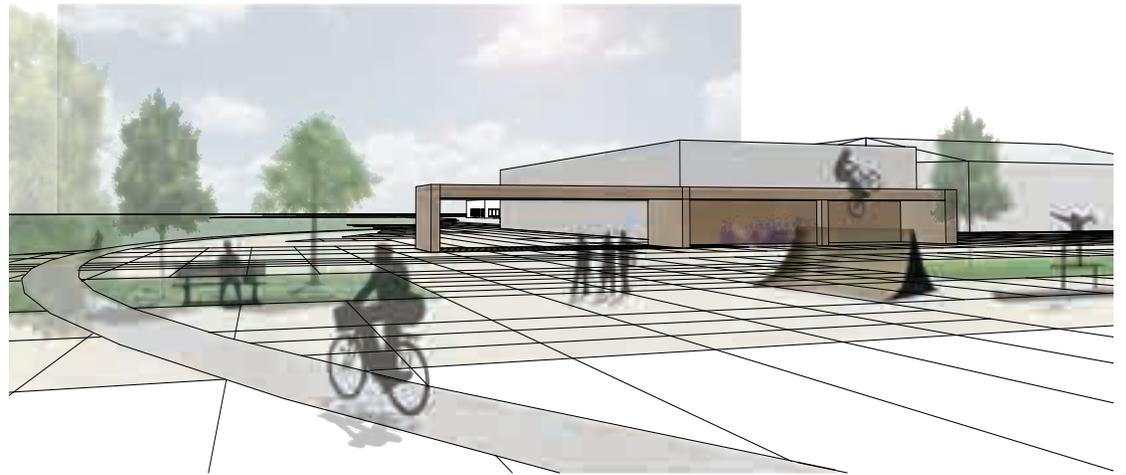


4 Vermilion Promenade



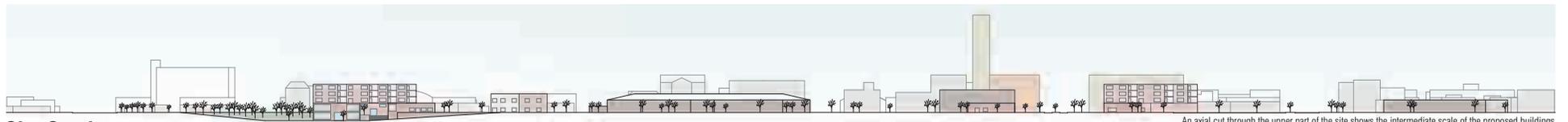
Connect to Downtown

Allowing both vehicles and pedestrians to easily access downtown and the mall is vital for economic stimulation.



Activate the Edge

The proposed surface gives visitors a multitude of opportunities to be active, such as walking, biking, skating, or heading down to the river.



Site Section 1" = 75'-0"

An axial cut through the upper part of the site shows the intermediate scale of the proposed buildings as well as a grade change near the intersection of Gilbert and Main and the riverfront access.



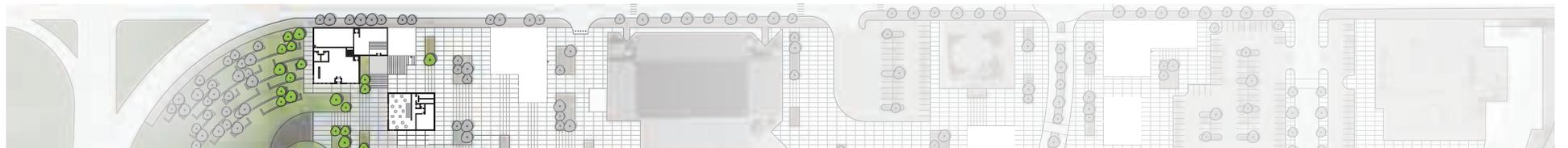
Upper Level Plan 1" = 75'-0"

The upper floors of the proposed mixed-use buildings are primarily for residential use, providing views to the river.



City Level Plan 1" = 75'-0"

The edge is defined with a surface connected by the addition of mixed-use buildings, the injection of green space, and several opportunities for activity. Vermillion Street is extended through the strip mall, Walnut Street is removed, and the parking is re-imagined to create a more functional and healthy space.

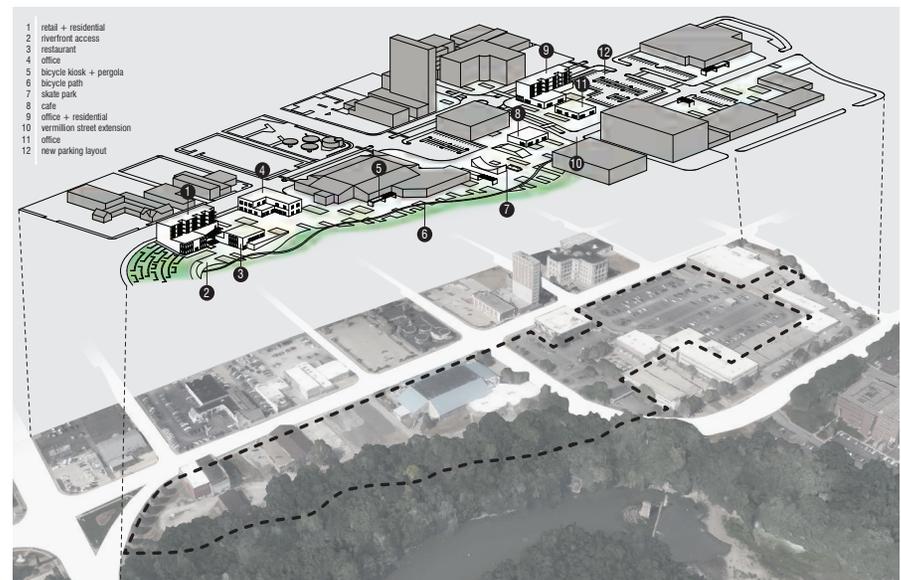
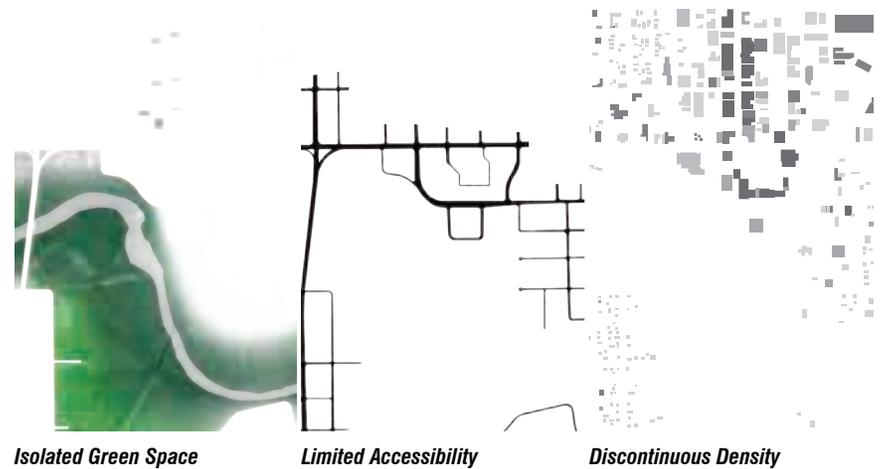
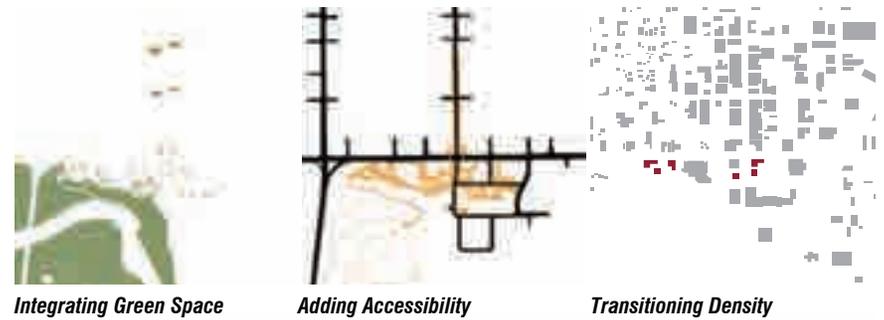


Lower Level Plan 1" = 75'-0"

The lower level of the site creates an opportunity for two levels of storefront. A stairway and accessible ramp lead visitors to the riverfront access.

Inhabited Paths: Redefining the Edge

During an initial analysis of Danville, the disconnect between the river and the city itself was immediately apparent. The hard edge of the slope leading to the river and the abrupt drop off in built space along Vermillion Street were stifling the city's ability to utilize one of its biggest natural resources. There are two causes for this disconnect: a hard edge of green space going north and a built edge of commercial/residential buildings going south. This proposal focuses on utilizing the site as a new mixed use development to act as a gateway into a nature and recreation park along the river. The site expands from downtown, the existing strip mall, and the riverfront access point, as it was important to optimize the walkability between these three hubs of activity. Reconfiguring the mall's expansive parking lot allows a re-direct in the traffic flow coming off Vermillion and encourages people to utilize parking available in the under-utilized garages and alternative lots around downtown. To encourage activity and bring people to the area, bike rental kiosks, a small skate park, and a gently winding bike path are all introduced along the walkable surface on the site. The surface will help add life and activity while being in a safe and easily observable environment. Blurring the hard edges of Danville will also help breathe new life into the struggling downtown and help reconnect the commercial, historical, residential, and natural assets the city has to showcase. The life and economic opportunities this proposal brings to a formally barren area will be a new welcoming entrance to this recovering and vibrant city.





Master Plan: 1" = 250'-0"

Inhabited Paths: Bridging Barriers

The proposal aims to capitalize on the neglected opportunities of Danville and to build a sustainable ecosystem promoting a socio-economic revival in the downtown area. Through minimum, but effective planning, a pedestrian bridge with public plazas at each end connect the north and south banks of the Vermilion river. The Plazas then provide a direct connection to the downtown area at Vermilion street and to the commercial/residential areas located south of the river. Additionally, a nature center will provide educational opportunities to the community by organizing public events collectively with the other spaces thus creating a more interconnected experience at both the local and regional scales. This proposal will be used to ensure a uniform regional development and provide a connection between the different city fragments encouraging a greater community engagement.

Enhance



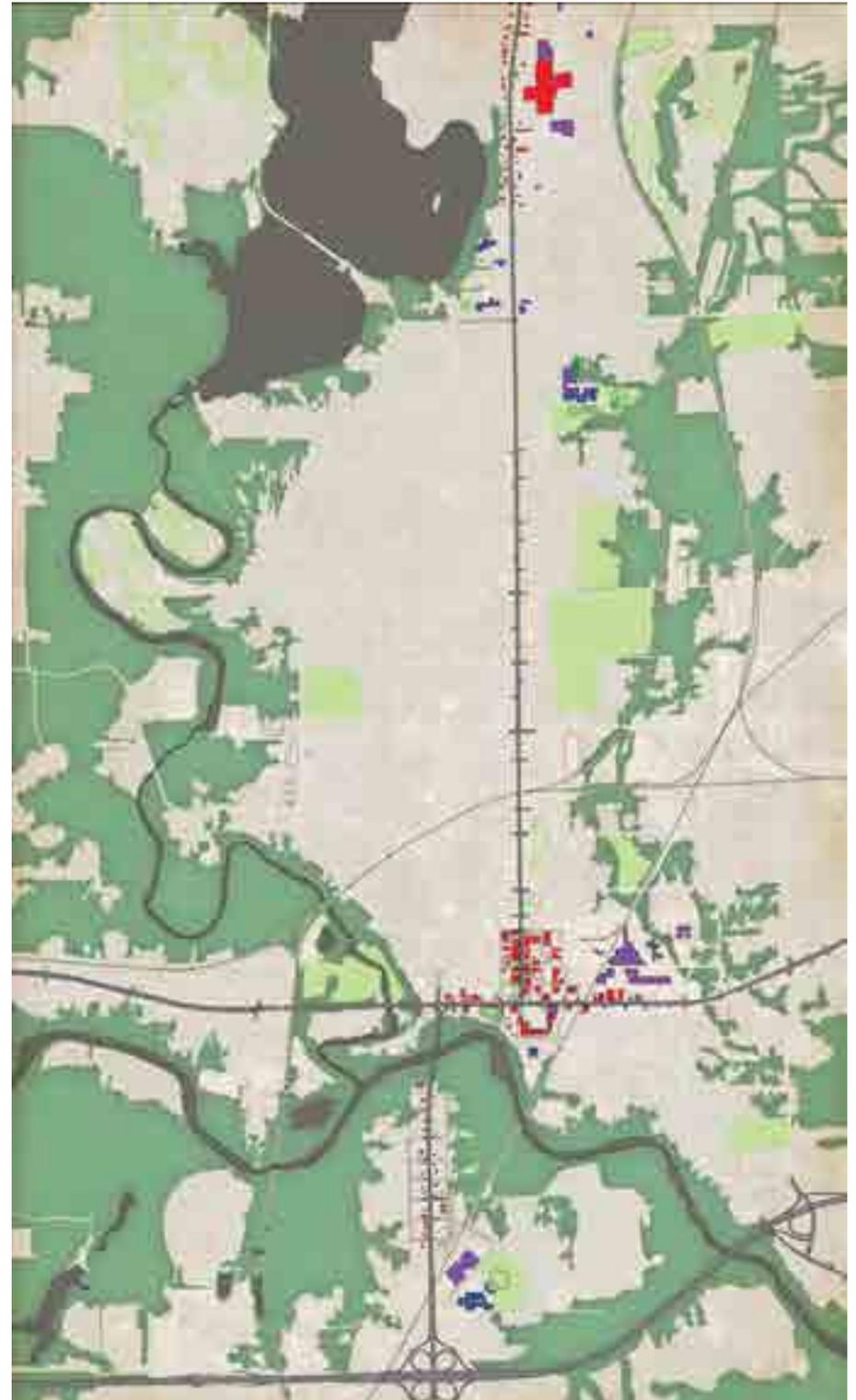
Connect



Improve



Secure





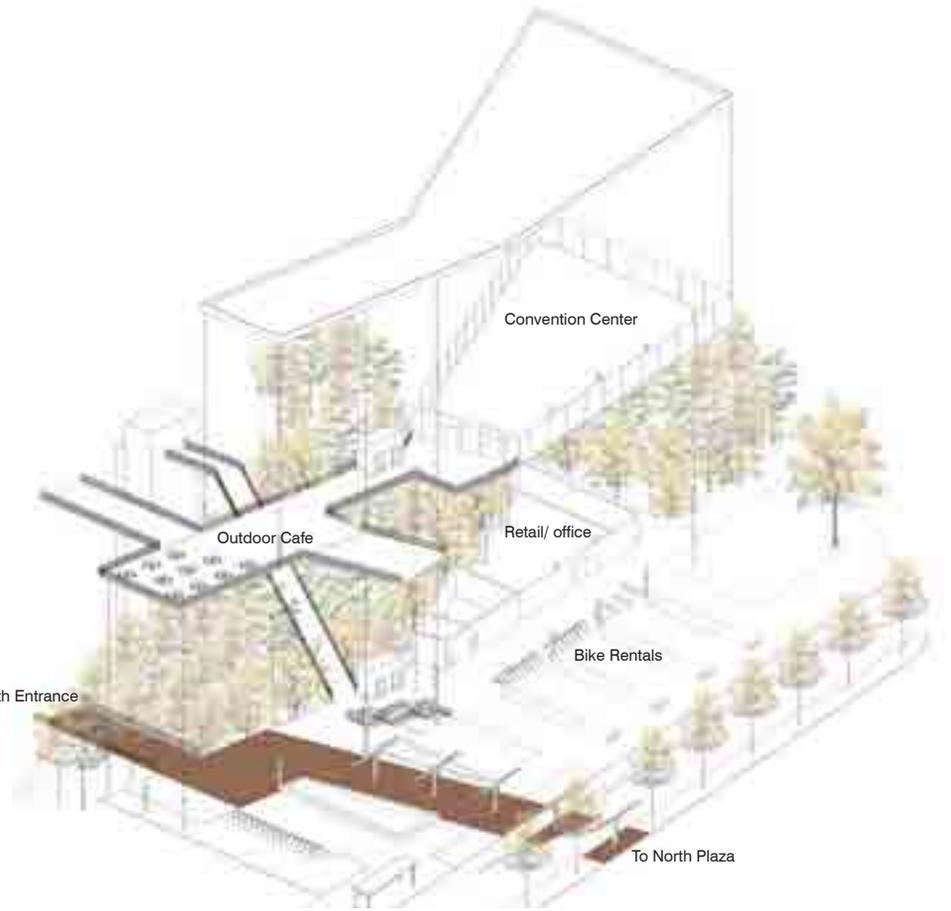
South Plaza: 1"=75'-0"

Connects the commercial and residential neighborhood on the southern bank of the river to the riverfront while building a symbiosis with downtown





North Plaza



Bridge North Entrance

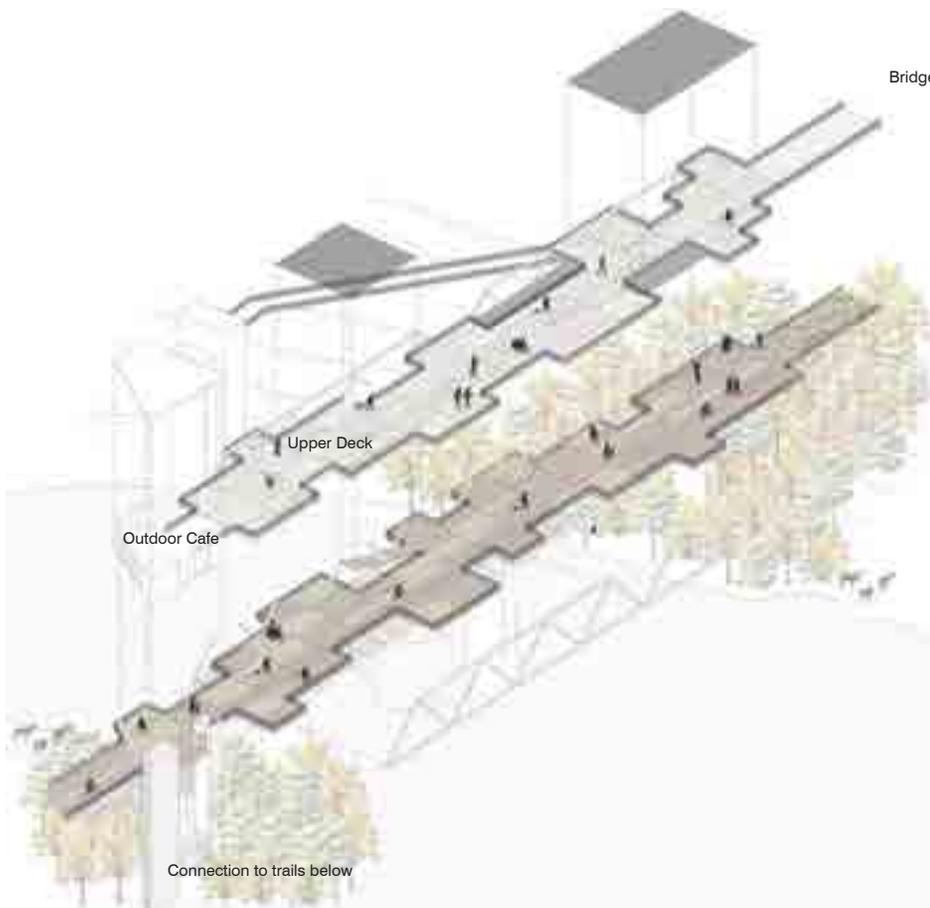
Convention Center

Outdoor Cafe

Retail/ office

Bike Rentals

To North Plaza



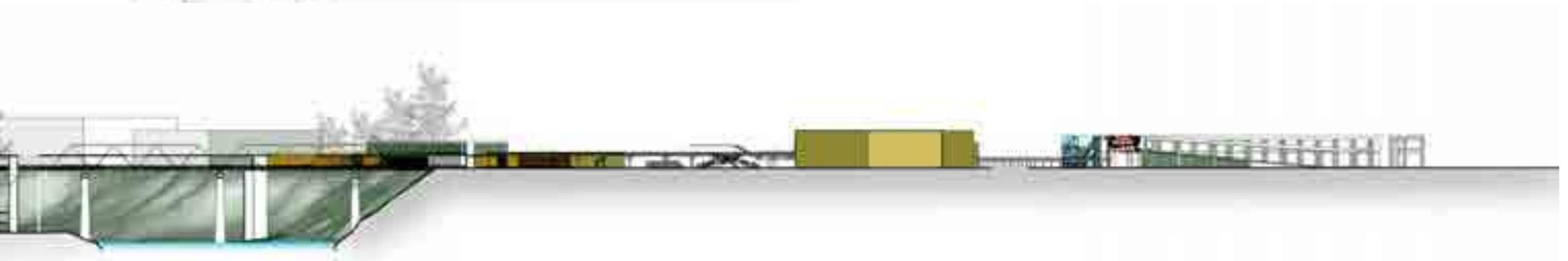
Upper Deck

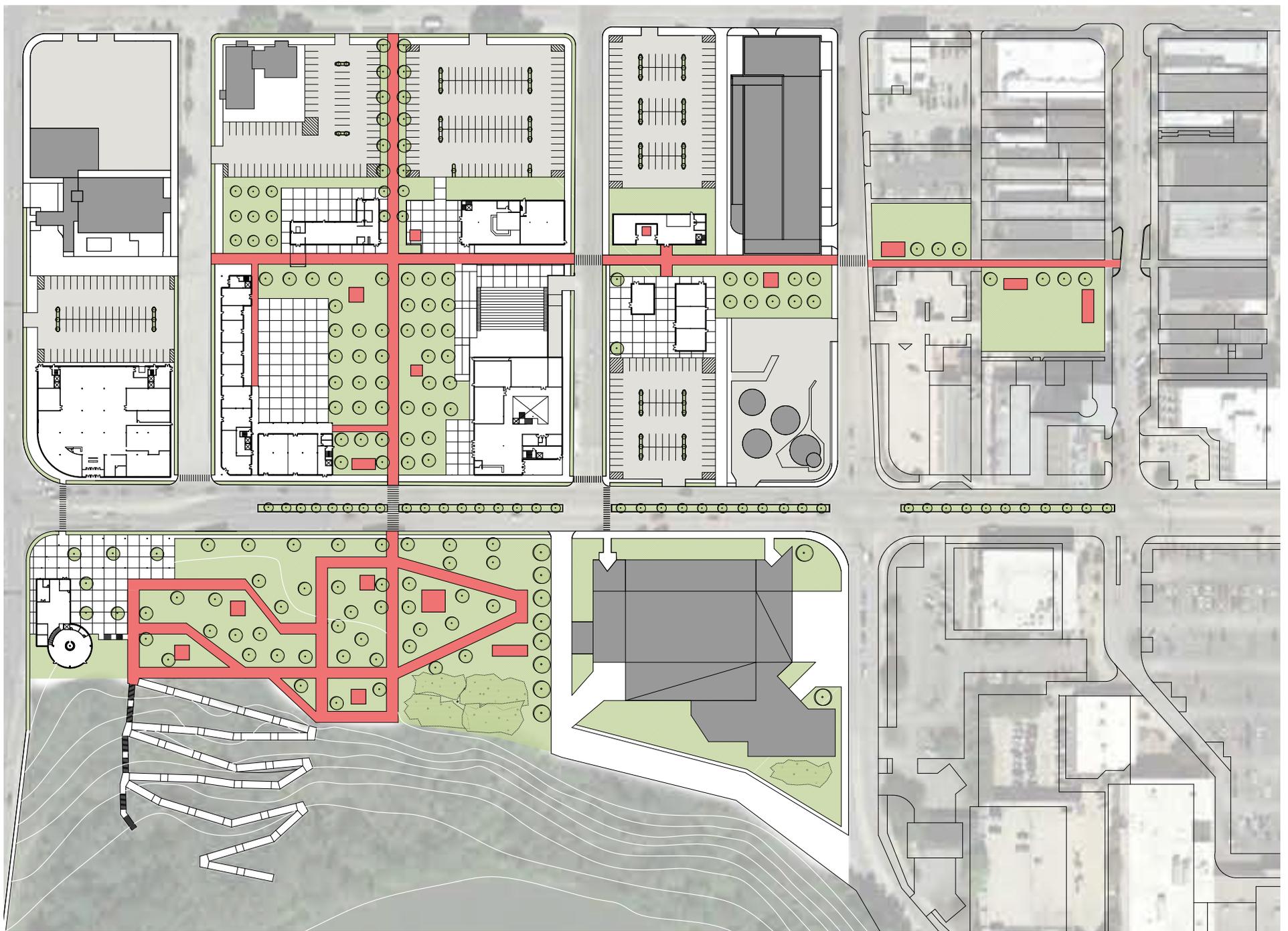
Outdoor Cafe

Connection to trails below



North Landing to Vermillion Bridge Transit Center





City-Level Ground Plan at 1" = 75'-0" shows proposed building usage at the ground floor, and the relation of public space to green and existing space. The red indicates the guiding concepts of the brick path connecting Vermillion Street to the riverfront and the pavilions.



Proposed Green Space (Unified)



Proposed Housing (Central)



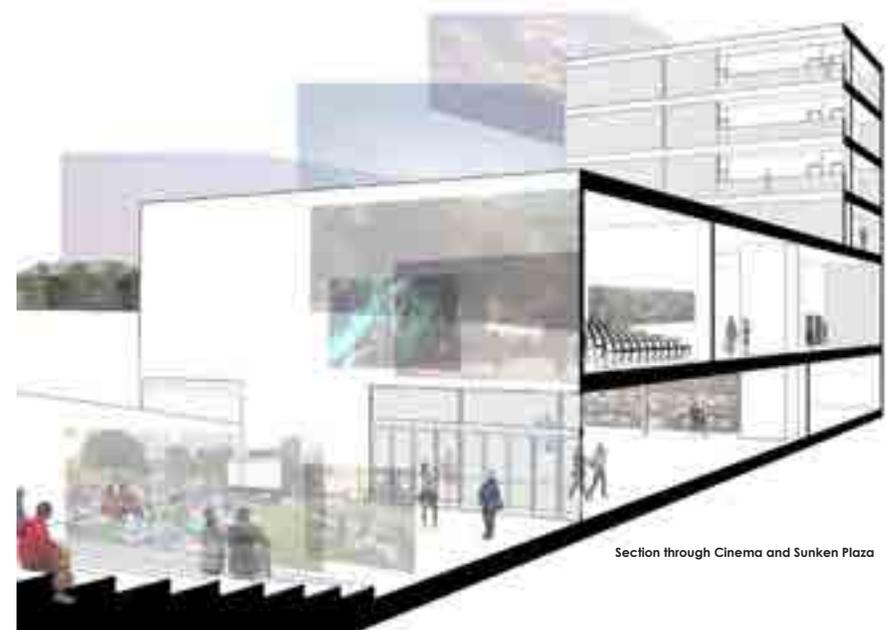
Proposed Public Buildings (+Entertainment)



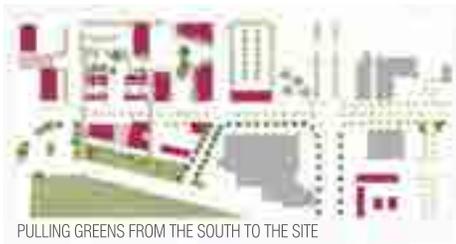
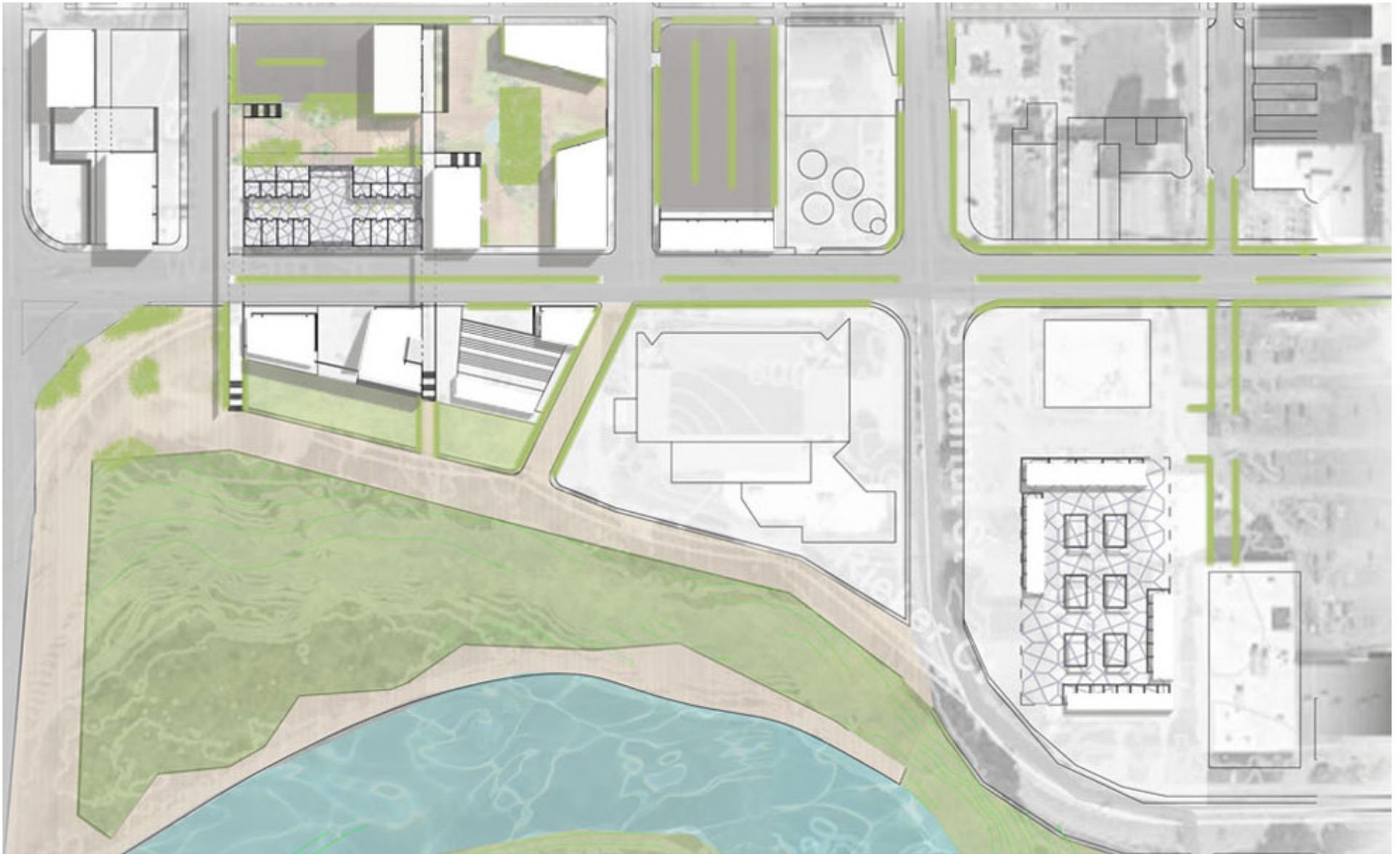
Proposed Commercial Space (Retail-Based)

Accentuated Networks: Interlacing Urban Conditions

The aim of Interlacing Urban Conditions is to connect the pedestrian-centric Vermillion Street with Danville's riverfront by developing a central urban environment and implementing the circulation infrastructure required to navigate pedestrians through the site. Guided by a renewal of Danville's existing street and alley grid, pedestrians will be able to move safely through the central area of development along Main Street between Gilbert Street and Vermillion Street. This central development transforms existing vacancies into public, entertainment, and commercial spaces, simultaneously providing new living spaces to encourage more permanent residency in downtown Danville. Trees from the riverfront area will be transplanted into the central development, as well as into a pavilion garden south of Main Street. Pavilions are intended to be part of an architectural competition, engaging both the public, as well as students from The University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, creating a dynamic experience for residents and visitors. Danville's system of pocket parks will be linked to connect the vernacular environment of Vermillion Street to the new urban and cultural conditions in the central development. By framing Main Street both architecturally and arboreally, Danville transforms visually and experientially into a destination where both residents will frequent and visitors will enjoy.



The intersection of Main Street and Gilbert Street shows the reinvisioning of Danville as a welcoming destination. Main Street is framed by different densities of mass, and becomes safer for pedestrians to cross as traffic is slowed by the median.



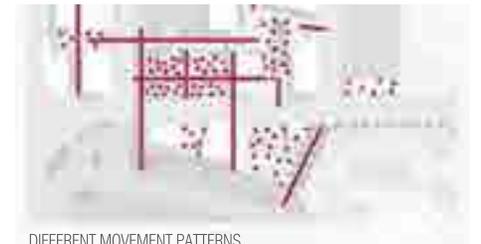
PULLING GREENS FROM THE SOUTH TO THE SITE



CREATING A POROUS FABRIC



COMPOSITION OF SHELTERED AND OPEN SPACES



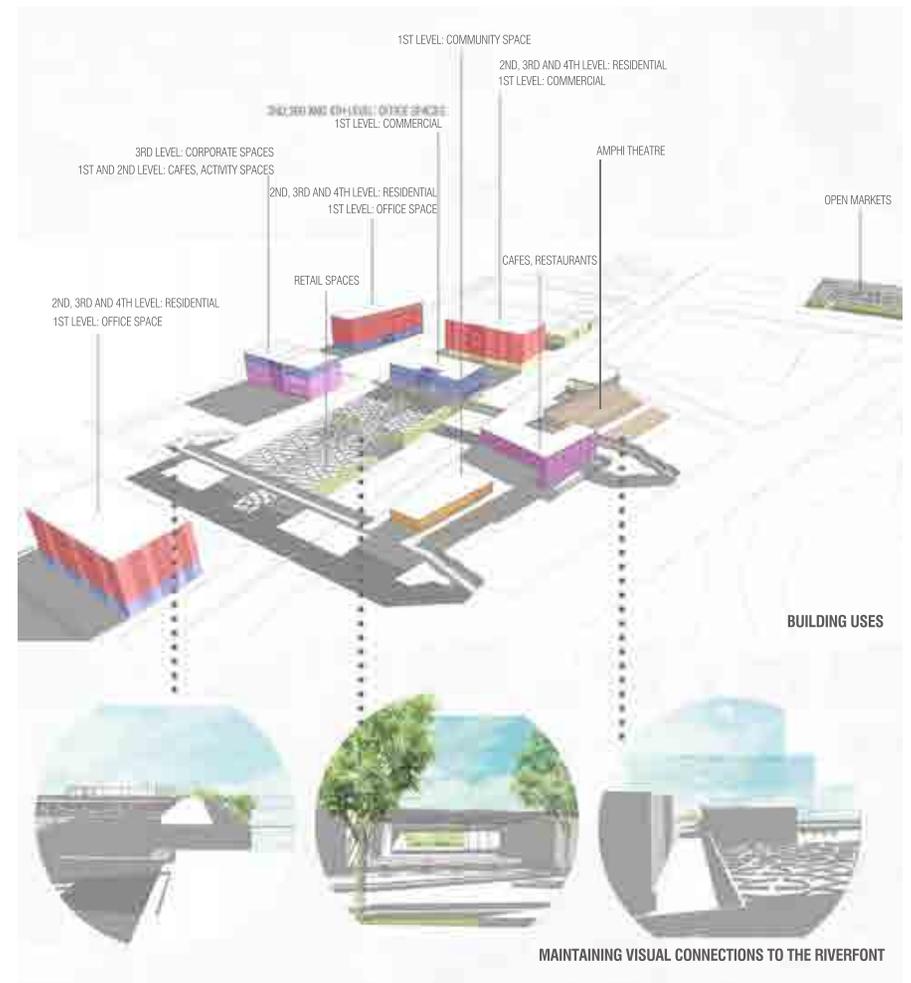
DIFFERENT MOVEMENT PATTERNS



SECTION A - A'

Accentuated Networks: Urban Stitching

Since time immemorial, rivers have been always a source of vitality and identity of a city. Danville's Riverfront is an important asset to Danville which is ignored due to the haphazard urban development in Danville. Through our project we aim to connect and bridge two parts of the city in a way that the riverfront becomes accessible to all. The aim is to create spaces on the south side of the site that attracts people and ultimately leads one to the river. It is Urban stitching based on architectural and urban elements that reconnects different parts of the city. The idea of zipping the south and the north part of the city, slowing down the main street which is an element of rupture in the city, helps in solving the urban problems of the city. There are other important scenarios that we tried to create that contribute to the quality of life in the city. There are spaces that are eclectic, vibrant and are inviting to different kinds of users. The urban space relies on the design that defines the riverfront with a new urban identity, thus raising the quality of the city in an effort to reinvigorate its downtown. The approach primarily reclaims the riverfront to assert its identity. Hovering between contemporary urban needs and desires, the ultimate aim is to generate urban stitching that intends to generate a spatially interesting civic place and which can contribute to the quality of life of a city and its inhabitants.



SPACE BELOW THE PERGOLA

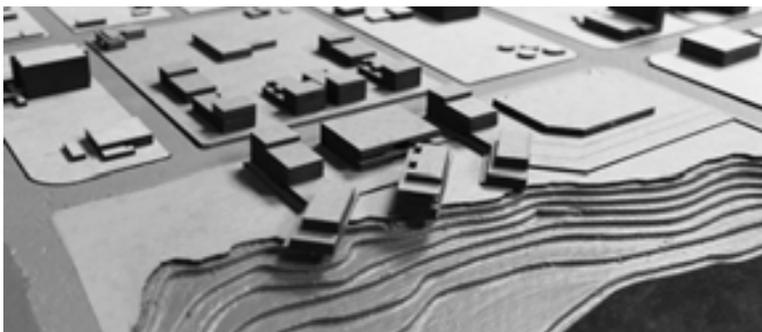


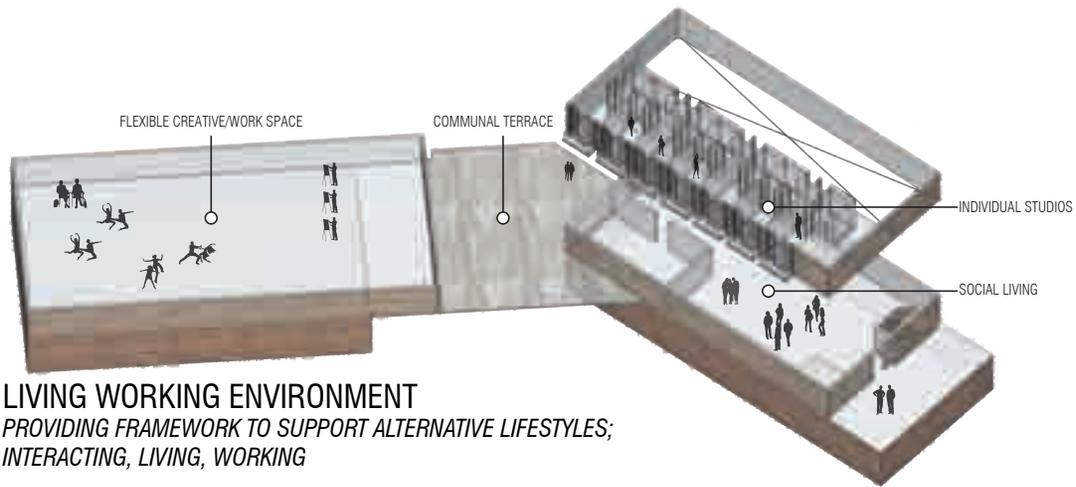
OPEN PARKS



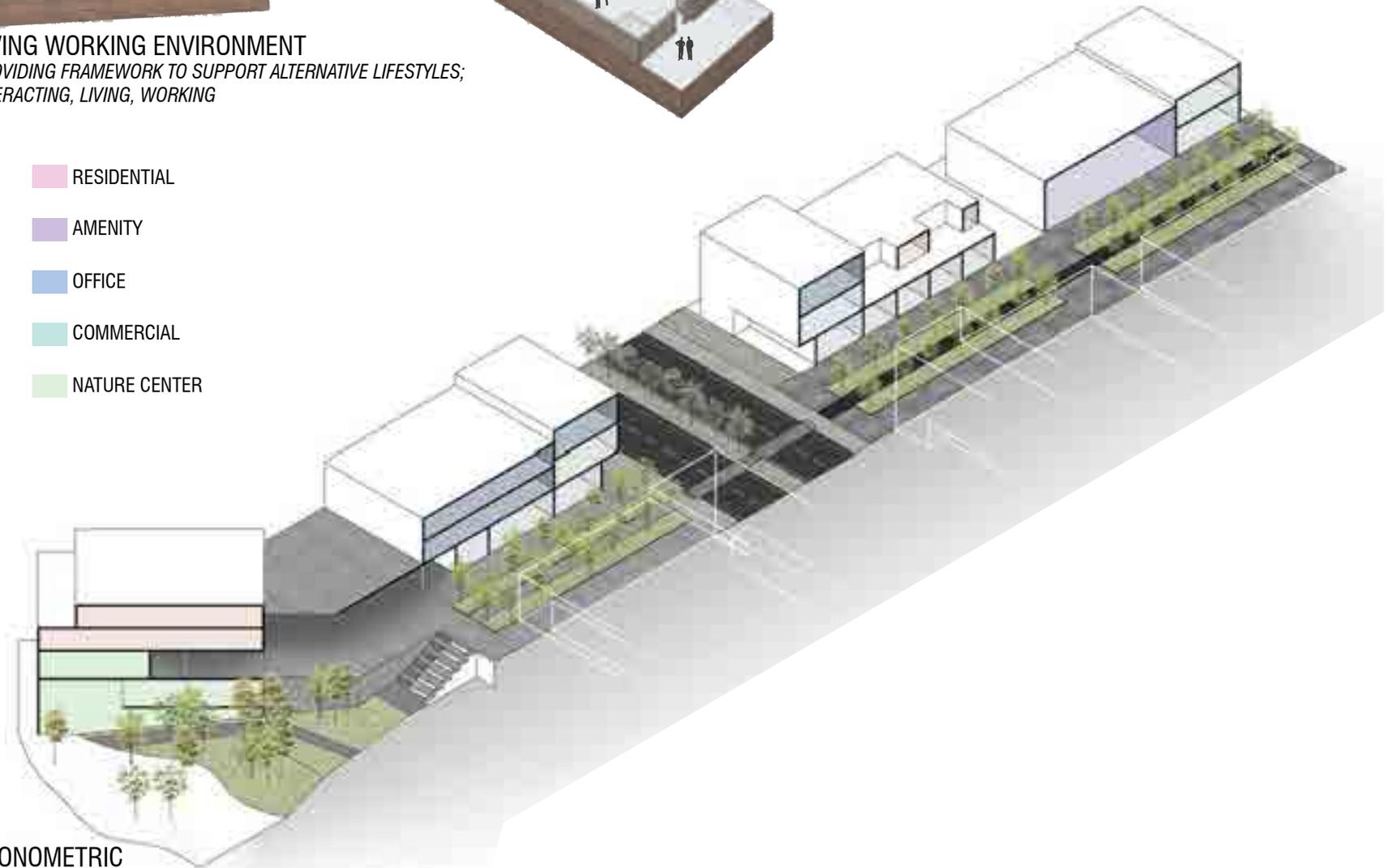
Hybrid Fabrics: Filtering Green

In looking to revitalize Danville's downtown and create a new connection to the riverfront, FILTERING GREEN'S solution focuses on two factors: the importance of integrating green into the built environment, and developing pedestrian connections between existing downtown and the riverfront. The resulting project creates a new urban fabric, which densifies Main Street and creates a walkable, comfortable environment for people to move, linger, shop, work, and live. Mixed use buildings span Main Street, featuring publicly accessible commercial areas on the ground floor, different housing options on the upper levels, and office/public meeting space. This variety in program has the potential to attract a wide range of demographics, and create a 24/7 active space which will be unique within Danville. The buildings are linked with multiple pathways lined with trees, lawns, benches, and streetlamps which create a linear park experience, and "draw up" the existing vegetation from the riverfront. These green strips create a gradient in the density and quality of "green space" filtering the very natural, dense conditions of the riverfront into a landscaped, organized aesthetic as it engages with the city. A boardwalk projects the buildings out into the natural canopy, articulating it as it meets with the built fabric. The connection to downtown is both physical and conceptual. The redbrick to the north extends directly from Vermilion, while the southern promenade engages Vermilion at its terminus. By reinterpreting downtown's vibrant facades and intimate dimensions, the new development maintains an already familiar language.





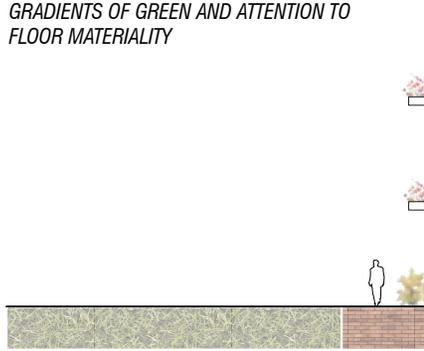
- RESIDENTIAL
- AMENITY
- OFFICE
- COMMERCIAL
- NATURE CENTER



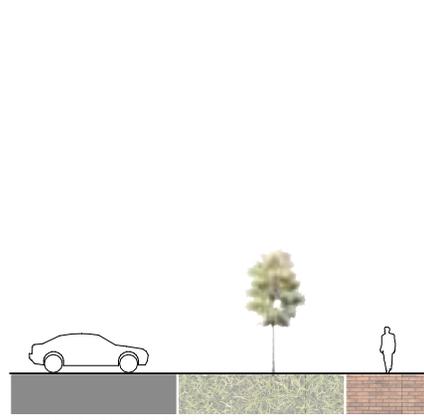
A **CREATING A PATHWAY TO THE RIVERFRONT**
FINDING PATHWAYS TO NAVIGATE THE RIVERFRONTS STEEP TERRAIN

50' 125' 250'

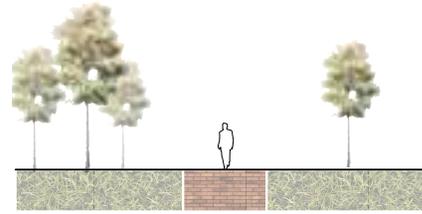
MOVING THROUGH THE SITE
*CREATING A MOVING EXPERIENCE THROUGH
 GRADIENTS OF GREEN AND ATTENTION TO
 FLOOR MATERIALITY*



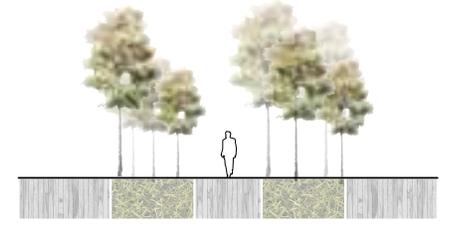
① VERMILLION STREET POCKET PARK



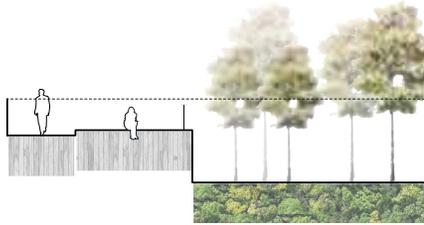
② ADJACENT TO THE PARKING STRUCTURE



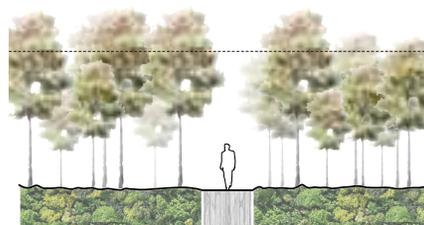
③ RED BRICK PATHWAY NORTH OF MAIN



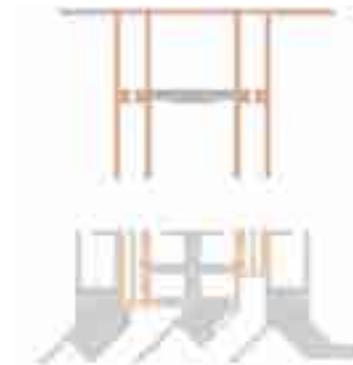
④ BOARDWALK SOUTH OF MAIN



⑤ BOARDWALK STAIRS & PARK



⑥ PARK RAMP



CREATING NEW PATHWAYS
*BRINGING EXISTING URBAN FABRIC
 TOWARDS THE RIVERFRONT AREA*



FILTERING THE GREEN
*DRAWING NEW GREEN INTO
 THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT*



▽ **CONTINUING THE RED BRICK WALKWAY**
*DEVELOPING ALONG EXSITING PATHWAYS TO GENERATE
 CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN DOWNTOWN AND THE RIVERFRONT*



▽ **INDOOR/OUTDOOR SPACE**
*A PUBLIC FACILITY WHICH ADAPTS TO THE SEASON
 THROUGH A CONFIGURABLE ENVELOPE*



CITY LEVEL MASTER PLAN
 CONNECTING PUBLIC SQUARE WITH SOUTH RIVERFRONT
 WHILE ADDING DENSITY AND PURPOSE TO NORTH RIVERFRONT



● PUBLIC ACCESS TO RIVERFRONT IN SECTION
 ACCESSIBLE TERRACES CONNECTING
 MAIN STREET DEVELOPMENT TO RIVERFRONT

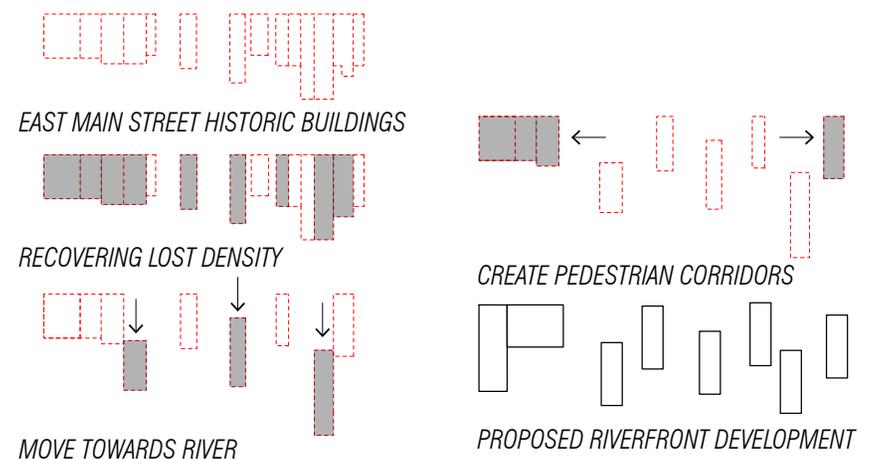
VERMILION RIVER

TERRACED BOARDWALK TO RIVERFRONT

MARKET + INCUBATOR STREETScape

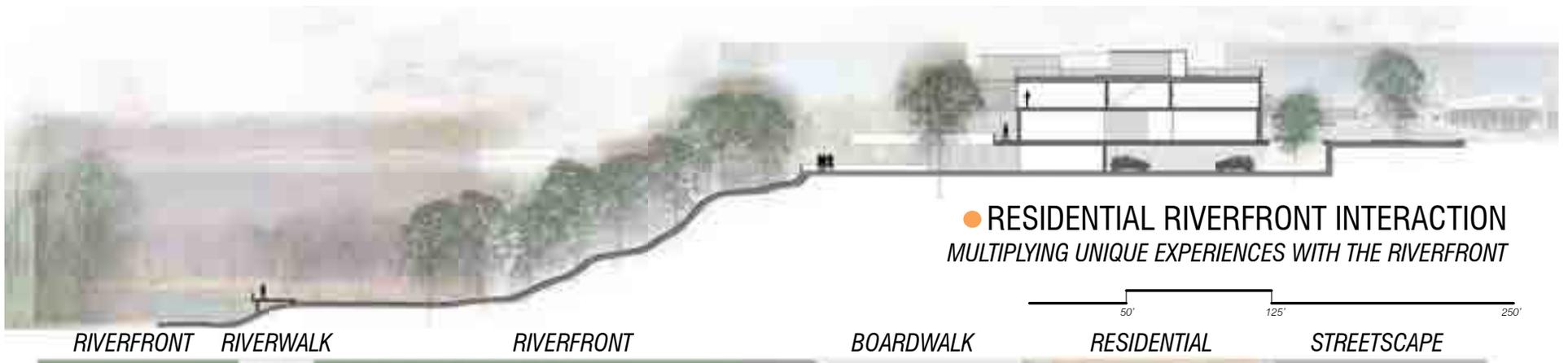
Hybrid Fabrics: Reclaiming Density

Influenced by the historic density of downtown Danville, this project seeks to reclaim Danville's thriving past and create a place for community members to prosper. By providing a connection between the historic public square and the south riverfront of the Vermilion River, the river becomes accessible to the entire community. Fitting in with the scale of the historic fabric of Danville, mixed use development along West Main Street offers a unique living experience in connection with the city and riverfront. This porous scheme affords several living opportunities for a broader range of demographics, while allowing each resident their own private and unique outdoor zone as well as opportunities to socialize with neighbors in common spaces. Residents and citizens will benefit from the opportunity to work, live, and play all in connection to the riverfront. The terraces create multiple viewpoints from which to enjoy the natural scenery and interact in an urban setting. Fueled by a startup incubator, this riverfront community will increase Danville's downtown economy while also creating an active and walkable community with unique scenic vistas both along its boardwalk and riverwalk. A nature and welcome center anchors the scheme on the south side of the river, visible to visitors and in close proximity to a nearby elementary school. At the termination of Vermilion Street, a revitalized public square connects Danville's historic downtown with the riverfront area and community.

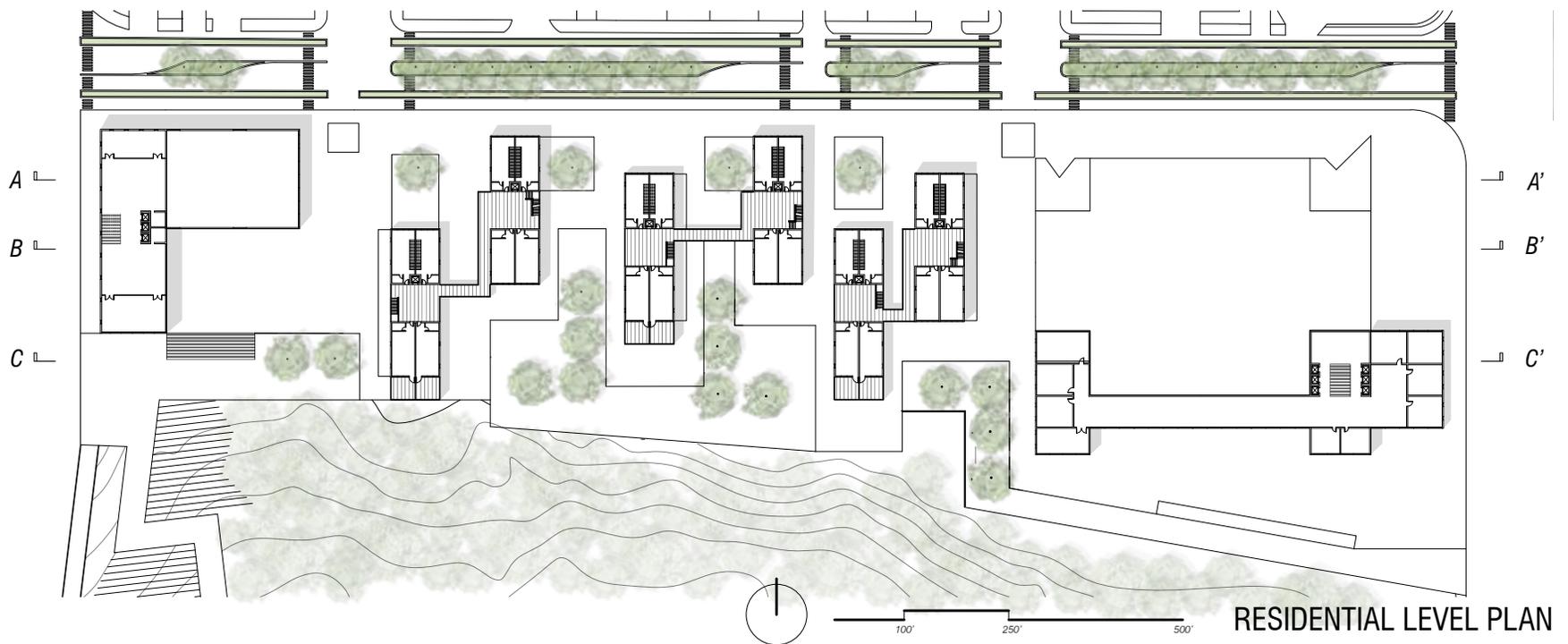
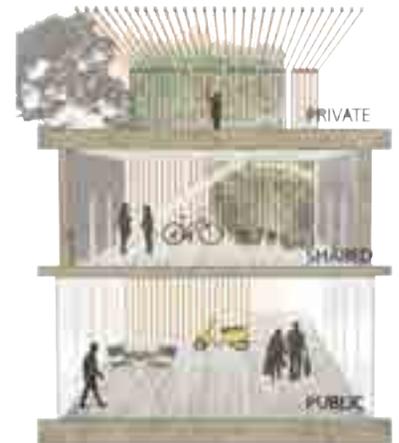




MIXED USE BUILDING DIAGRAM
*TERRACING INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR
 RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE RIVERFRONT*



RESIDENTIAL RIVERFRONT INTERACTION
MULTIPLYING UNIQUE EXPERIENCES WITH THE RIVERFRONT



The architecture students' projects, by reclaiming and transforming the existing or adding new built and public space, contrast strategies with different design actions: emphasizing the riverfront's void as a green gateway, as a *sculpted node* with a single built intervention or, conversely, densifying the riverfront with a low-rise *hybrid fabric* of buildings and platforms as a new civic district or neighborhood; reinforcing new pathways to the river through *accentuated networks* by strategically placing larger buildings over several blocks, or designing single elements, linear infrastructures as *inhabited paths*, as condensers of movement and activity.

All the designs address the physical and visual isolation of the river, a back and a fracture in the city, a hidden treasure to be revealed, to be transformed into a park, into an active ecological and leisure infrastructure. They all deal with ways to bring people down to the riverfront and to turn the river back around into a new city face.

The proposals reflect our conviction that reclaiming the riverfront is a great opportunity to revitalize downtown, and that enhancing the riverside as a park, even as part of a broader ecological system, is insufficient to create a strong connection with the city due to topographical and urban barriers. This is why the projects go beyond the boundaries of the initial given site and expand to connect with Vermilion Street and confront the lack of both character and density on Main Street. The solutions aim to establish tertiary continuities to the riverfront and range between drawing activity and people over from the mall and across Main from downtown. They deal not only with accessibility, but also with identity issues, and they revitalize spaces for leisure, culture, memory, and social interaction. By mixing uses and activities they promote potential interaction between different users at different times and encourage livability. Aware that implementing riverfront projects of such scale and scope cannot be done all at once, they consider time and economics thinking about phases and designing conditions, which even if temporary, can act as catalysts to improve and activate Danville. They design with friction, flow and time.

By mediating between the landscape and the city, between landscape and people, the projects either plug or re-plug people in place(s) that have been forgotten, have become obsolete or are inaccessible even though centrally located. They re-conquer places for both nature and people by softening hardscapes and edges, restoring natural processes and reclaiming parking spaces to introduce green, human scale and activity into place. Through *urban projects*, at an intermediate scale between urban design and architecture, they bridge the abstraction of the urbanistic plan and the definition of the architectural project. With empathic architecture, architecture that makes place, that is porous –to include, expand, or merge with public space- we can give something back to the city and to the landscape.

The riverfront project, most importantly, provides Danville the opportunity to restore urbanity with an ecological approach and to explore more sustainable ways of living and intervening in the city, to become an example for postindustrial cities facing today's environmental and social challenges.

Acknowledgements

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