ABSTRACT

In the context of urban development, many inner city industrial areas have been rezoned, and fallen into decay. People living in those changing urban neighborhoods seek new strategies for development. This thesis studies the Pilsen neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois. Residents in the Pilsen neighborhood celebrate the Mexican culture and history of their neighborhood and make the neighborhood an art destination. However, there are still potential opportunities for the growing creative industry to build on the cultural strengths of the neighborhood. Most existing cultural activities and programs happen in interior spaces, but there are still underutilized outdoor spaces to be developed. Besides, galleries and museums are expanding programs in discrete areas in this neighborhood. Landscape architecture offers one potential strategy to help stimulate the art and culture in the neighborhood, and alleviate the impact of gentrification by slowing its progress and securing alternative values and uses for underutilized space. As gentrification in this neighborhood has begun, residents need resiliency to gentrification and a way to slow down this process. If residents’ current needs are taken into consideration, keeping their culture and identity, offering job opportunities for local Mexican artists, and providing affordable houses for residents, resilient design proposals of adaptive re-use on a small, surgical scale, might now work. This thesis explores programmatic precedents and site analysis to inform urban landscape design. It provides a landscape architectural approach to help stimulate creative industry in this neighborhood, encourage local residents to participate in creative activities, and revitalize this changing neighborhood. This thesis identifies three landscape operations to guide both programming ideas and detailed site design for specific sites in Pilsen neighborhood: connection, extension, and intensification.

Keywords: landscape operations, creative industry, urban revitalization
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Background / Problem Statement

As a result of the development of society and industry, economic structures in many American cities have changed. In post-industrial cities, manufacturing economies have shifted to information-based, knowledge-driven economies, as Richard Florida mentioned in his book *The Rise of Creative Class* (Florida 2012a, 29-35). Large industrial cities in America have steadily declined for decades due to globalization and deindustrialization, leading to disinvestment. However, many of these cities are trying to “navigate these trends and remake their economies around knowledge, creativity, and service” (Florida 2012b, vii).

People living in post-industrial areas often suffer from low income and a high rate of unemployment. According to Carter (2012), post-industrial cities share common symptoms, including: “loss of industrial jobs, subsequent loss of support and multiple jobs, out-migration and population loss, lack of private investment, tax base decline, neglect and disinvestment in infrastructure and public services, abandoned factories, brownfields, vacant houses, vacant land, declining real estate values, loss of family equity, increase poverty, and finally loss of hope and psychological depression” (Carter 2012, 4-5). Residents want a better life with more economic and cultural opportunities. Local people seek new ways to revitalize their neighborhood.

Low rent, convenient location close to the inner city, diverse culture, and the relics of industrial space can be attractive to newcomers. Many young urban pioneers would like to rent spacious lofts, and adapt them for new use as workshops, studios, and galleries. In his book *The Rise of The Creative Class*, Richard Florida (2012) sees creativity as one of the key drivers in today’s economy, especially in post-industrial districts that are undervalued in American cities. Florida defines the creative class according to the occupations people have, and divides it into two components. “The super-creative core of the creative class includes scientists and engineers,
university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers, and architects, as well as the thought leadership of modern society” (Florida 2012a, 38). People in these occupations are all “producing new forms or designs that are readily transferable and widely useful” (Florida 2012a, 38). Beyond them, “the creative class also includes ‘creative professionals’ who work in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries. … These people engage in creative problem solving, drawing on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems” (Florida 2012a, 39). These groups of people are paid for their creative works, which distinguishes them from other workers. Florida estimates that roughly thirty percent of the workforce in America belongs to the creative class.

However, the gathering of the creative class will bring newcomers to a place along with other factors that cause or intensify gentrification. In his article “Struggling with the Creative Class,” Jamie Peck points out that “Florida concedes that the crowding of creatives into gentrifying neighborhoods might generate inflationary housing-market pressures that not only run the risk of eroding the diversity that the Class craves but, worse still, could smother the fragile ecology of creativity itself” (Peck 2005, 746). Among the gentrifiers are those who show a “lack of commitment to place” and have “weak community ties” (Peck 2005, 764). Peck criticizes “increased public subsidies for the arts, street-level spectacles, and improved urban façades, [that] with expected ‘returns’ in the form of gentrification and tourist income, run the self-evident risk that such faux-funky attractions might lapse into their own kind of ‘generica’. The creatives’ restless search for authentic experiences may, of course, lead them to spurn such places” (Peck 2005, 749). Florida proposed to gently lubricate the gentrification processes by street-level manipulation. However, “as Florida’s critics frequently point out, the production of
authentic neighborhood cultures through deliberate public-policy interventions is a daunting, if not infeasible, task” (Peck 2005, 750).

Landscape architecture may offer a potential way to respond to these problems. Landscape architecture might provide opportunities to reinforce the identity and diversity in a gentrifying community, help build connection between people and the community they live in. As creative industry becomes an important driver of today’s economy, changing post-industrial neighborhoods into creative districts may seem an attractive development strategy to revitalize declining neighborhoods. However, to the extent it leads to gentrification or displacement, it must be tempered with grassroots control and balances. So, by exercising the approach of landscape design, and shifting new functions into existing vacant space and re-utilize space through art and culture, the loss of neighborhood identity may be alleviated and gentrification may, hopefully, be slowed.

This thesis explores the role that landscape architecture plays in support of creative industry, and ways if may reprogram the underutilized spaces in Pilsen neighborhood, Chicago. At the same time, it tries to avoid the all-too-common negative effects caused by gentrification, which include the loss of community uniqueness and sense of place.
Description of Context / Site

Founded in 1878, as one of the oldest communities in Chicago, the Pilsen neighborhood was designated an official historic district in 2006. Figure 1 shows the timeline of the history and development of Pilsen neighborhood, as well as the population changes from 1900s to 2010s. The collage tells the story of Pilsen history. Just three miles from downtown Chicago, and served by the railway and Chicago River, Pilsen established an industrial economy since it was built. Immigrants settled in this area because of the job opportunities in the factories nearby. Since the 1950s, this neighborhood has been a center of Mexican life. But deindustrialization in the 1970s caused the industry to fall into decline. People in Pilsen started to seek new forms of development, including new kinds of “business, such as food production, trucking, restaurant work, and a nascent tourist industry” (Pero 2011), to build neighborhood economy, and create a stronger neighborhood image of Mexican culture. Today, Pilsen has become an art and cultural destination because of its unique culture, tradition, murals, music, architecture style, and Mexican business.
The Pilsen neighborhood (Figure 2), the site for this thesis, is located in the Lower West Side of Chicago, along the Pilsen industrial corridor on the Chicago River. In the 1930s, Pilsen had a thriving industrial economy with stockyards, meat-packing plants, steel mills, and fabricated-metal plants (Wilson, Wouters, and Grammenos 2004, 1176). “Originally built for the working class, Pilsen has been home to various immigrant groups” (Betancur 2005, 6). Since the 1950s, Mexican-Americans have settled in Pilsen neighborhood because of the “inexpensive housing and proximity to the many factories that employed them” (Wilson, Wouters, and Grammenos 2004, 1176). However, because of deindustrialization of the Windy City in the mid-1970s, Chicago lost more than 100,000 manufacturing jobs in just one decade between 1970 and 1980 (US Census Bureau 1970; 1980), causing population declines in Chicago’s south and west neighborhoods. Because of its unique Mexican culture and history, the Pilsen neighborhood now is a center of Mexican life in Chicago. According to the US Census data (2012), seventy-eight percent of the people in Pilsen neighborhood are Mexican-Americans. Now this community is suffering the problem of poverty and unemployment. Thirty-eight percent of the people in Pilsen are unemployed and about twenty percent of people are living below the poverty level (US Census Bureau 2012). Many of the people who have work are “in the low-wage service sector, such as restaurant or retail store that now booms in Chicago” (Wilson, Wouters, and Grammenos 2004, 1177).
Since the 1980s, developers have been interested in Pilsen because of its location and low price of property. At the same time, the residents and community organizations have struggled to resist gentrification and redevelopment in this neighborhood because they believe that middle-class gentrification will displace long-time residents and eliminate the identity of their Mexican-American neighborhood (Wilson, Wouters, and Grammenos 2004, 1173). However, the younger generation’s attitudes towards gentrification may now be changing in today’s US society. Sometimes “gentrification is a process that will make the neighborhood more attractive to residential and commercial investors and thereby increase the quality of life” (Boyd 2005, 266-267). Even though there are still many people opposing gentrification, others have taken
strategies to be resilient and adapt to it. Gentrification is a nationwide problem that may not be inevitable, or at least not inevitably destructive.

The Pilsen neighborhood has been home to generations of Mexican families and businesses. “Spanish is the first language spoken, and there are signs of typical Mexican culture, from murals and music to churches and community organizations whose mission is to make life better for local families” (Pilsen Planning Committee 2006, 2). According to the Pero (2011), “more than 21 agencies currently exist in Pilsen to provide care for the community,” for example, “Pilsen Neighbors Organization, the Spanish Coalition for Jobs and Housing, the Resurrection Project, and other local groups” (Pero 2011, 103). However, some groups “tend to resist commercial and political interference from outside Pilsen” (Pero 2011, 103) because of “the threat of gentrification on their work and the negative impact on the Latino community at large” (Betancur 2005, 13). There are still “other groups or individuals have pursued their own political agendas without much concern for the larger impacts of gentrification” (Betancur 2005, 13). According to Betancur (2005), “as a model, hard-working ethnic group,” Pilsen “asked for opportunity and for resident-based community development” (Betancur 2005, 65).

According to the Pilsen Quality-of-Life Plan (2006), the Pilsen neighborhood has both strengths and challenges today. With a long history, art and culture are longstanding traditions in Pilsen neighborhood. Pilsen is also home to many activists. Local “organizations and leaders today – many of them participants on the Pilsen Planning Committee – are experts and innovators in community development, health care, education and the rights of women, immigrants and low-income workers” (Pilsen Planning Committee 2006, 2). Though Pilsen has many strengths, it is also a vulnerable community. After the deindustrialization of the 1970s, thousands of local jobs disappeared. But the close-in location and transportation resources that
remained have helped bring new development to this neighborhood. Because of efforts by local residents and strong community organizations, this neighborhood now thrives with a growing job base and a strong housing market. However, “the strong housing market has led to tear-down of historic buildings and sale prices beyond the reach of many residents” (Pilsen Planning Committee 2006, 5). Under the pressure of gentrification, this cultural heritage and community identity are at risk.

Local organizations are now working together to seek a better life for local residents. According to Pilsen Quality-of-Life Plan, local residents want more affordable housing for both owners and renters. To gain economic growth, they would like have more job training and support for small business. As home to Mexican families, residents require improvement in public safety, health care, and social support. Also they need more education opportunities to “raise achievement levels and address declining enrollment due to gentrification and smaller family sizes” (Pilsen Planning Committee 2006, 6). Additionally, as the center of Mexican culture in Chicago, people in Pilsen neighborhood want to maintain and enhance their cultural identity and preserve historic district image. In general, residents in Pilsen neighborhood would like to “expand housing options, build a stronger neighborhood economy, make a self-reliant, family-oriented community, create a stronger image as a historic Mexican neighborhood, and develop educational opportunities for residents of all ages” (Pilsen Planning Committee 2006, 8). People in Pilsen are now seeking new forms of development, including new kinds of industry, diversifying neighborhood economy, and creating a stronger neighborhood image of Mexican culture.

Changing this post-industrial area into an artist’s community had been strongly opposed in the 1980s because of the fear of gentrification. As it has already become gentrified however,
residents now need resiliency to adapt to gentrification and find ways to slow down this process. If residents’ current needs are taken into consideration, keeping their culture and identity, offering job opportunities for local Mexican artists, and providing affordable houses for residents, resilient design proposals for adaptive re-use on a small, surgical scale, might now work. Little Village is also a Mexican-American community just adjacent to Pilsen neighborhood, which has recently been transformed by art. “Arts, music, and film festivals have transformed vacant and underused spaces into galleries, music venues, and theaters, even if just for a weekend,” according to Little Village Quality-of-Life Plan (Quality-of-Life Plan Steering Committee 2013). Several underutilized spaces with murals and paintings in Pilsen were seen during site visits, which give the idea that creative industry might provide more opportunities for the local residents and artists, as well as the neighborhood development. Considering how much underutilized industrial space there is and the vibrant cultural background in Pilsen, it may be possible to revitalize this neighborhood through art and culture.

Landscape architecture has much to offer in this process because the industrial relics and cultural background provide a large stage for new landscapes and new outdoor programs. Therefore, the thesis goal is to using the approach of landscape architecture to stimulate creative industry in a changing neighborhood, not only to benefit the potential new creative workers, but also benefit local residents by slowing down the negative effects, protecting community identity and diversity, and providing resiliency to the gentrification process. Through landscape architecture design, vacant land can be used more effectively and creatively. Shifting vacant spaces into creative parks and art plazas could display the local art and culture, and offer new job opportunities for local people, such as art educators, venders, and gallery workers.
Since the 1960s and 1970s, as national economies moved from manufacturing-based to service-based, much of the United States has become a post-industrial society. Some industrial cities suffer from depopulation, disinvestment, and decline. However, some argue that these cities could have a bright future with well-planned redevelopments, “including walkable neighborhoods, affordable housing, historic downtowns and main streets, strong universities and hospitals, cultural amenities, parks, unused infrastructure capacity, development density sufficient to support public transit, and abundant water” (Carter 2012, 3). Landscape plays an important role in the redevelopment process of those cities. Loures, Viegas, Ramos, and Silva conclude that reinventing landscape in post-industrial areas “might promote sustainability, reducing negative environmental impacts, and fomenting economic prosperity, social inclusion, multifunctionality and a better quality of life” (Loures et al. 2010, 168). With many historic buildings and vacant land, these places could be changed into creative industrial districts through a variety of means, including preserving historic architectures, changing streetscapes, and expanding cultural impact to attract the creative class.

Richard Florida, an urban studies theorist, has systematically explained the concept of the creative class. In his book The Rise of The Creative Class (2002), Florida defined the creative class as people whose occupation is to create new forms. He also stated the importance of creative economy in today’s social development. According to Florida, member of the creative class prefer a flexible, active lifestyle. Members of the creative class are not looking just for a single job but for many employment opportunities. In other words, they won’t stay with the same company for very long and tend to be mobile. Besides, he explained the lifestyle of creative class. The boundary between work and leisure seems less clear than for other work groups, and
the places of work are various. Members of the creative class prefer a culture which “is called street level because it tends to cluster along certain streets lined with a multitude of small venues… This kind of ‘scene of scenes’ where music, art, film, and nightlife scenes interact and overlap provides a key source of visual and aural energy” (Florida 2012a, 149). In his book, Florida also provided an evaluation of the places where members of the creative class gather. Florida pointed out that the creative class prefer places with thick labor markets which could offer a job market that is conductive to a horizontal career path, flexible lifestyle, social interaction, cultural diversity, authenticity and identity (Florida 2012a, 223-231).

Florida’s theory, of course, has many critics and opponents. The rise of creative class brings new economic opportunities, but brings gentrification at the same time. Gentrification is any facet of urban renewal that inevitably leads to displacement of the occupying demographic (Hamnett 1991, 173-189). It refers to shifts in an urban community lifestyle and an increasing share of wealthier residents and businesses and increasing property values (Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2010). Gentrification is widespread in US cities nowadays. According to Newman and Wyly, “In the 1970s and 1980s, ‘gentrification’ became familiar because it seemed to summarize all of the market failures, polarization and injustice that shaped life in America’s inner-city communities” (Newman and Wyly 2005, 1). Gentrification causes displacement of poor people because of the rising rents. According to Betancur (2002), West Town in Chicago has been placed “in a difficult position as institutions, businesses, and households feel its impact and wonder about the future” (Betancur 2002, 780). However, on the other hand, gentrification may also bring advantages to the neighborhood – “increased safety, less overt drug dealing, better transportation, improved governmental responsiveness and more stores” (Newman and Wyly 2005, 4). In this situation, people often have conflicting attitudes about gentrification. Boyd’s
research about African-Americans in Chicago shows that “the strategy of attracting middle class residents to poor, black communities” which was once viewed with suspicion, is gaining popularity (Boyd 2005, 265). Especially if newcomers share the same racial and cultural background with the neighborhood, it is possible that non-white gentrification might help improve the quality of life and revitalize the neighborhood.

As a Mexican-American neighborhood with unique culture and history, Pilsen also faces the problem of gentrification. In the article “Gentrification before gentrification? The Plight of Pilsen in Chicago,” Betancur focused on the pressure, extent and impact of gentrification in Pilsen, and concluded that “the transformation of Chicago from a manufacturing to a corporate city and tourist destination … the dramatic expansion of the financial industry and the high availability of low-interest mortgages … and the growth coalition controlling the city” make Pilsen neighborhood a desirable location for gentrifying investment and redevelopment (Betancur 2005, 64). However, local residents are sometimes able to resist the gentrification process through community-protection movements. Wilson and Wouters reviewed the successful campaign against gentrification in Pilsen neighborhood in the article “Successful protect-community discourse: spatiality and politics in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood.” (2004) According to Wilson and Wouters, Pilsen neighborhood could successfully resist the gentrification process because “they have positive resident identities and clear enemies, and humanly created an imagined, mental space for community identities” (Wilson, Wouters, and Grammenos 2004, 1173). As mentioned before, residents in Pilsen are afraid of negative effects of gentrification, such as the loss of jobs and their Latino community identity. What they want are “resident-based community development” (Betancur 2005, 13). Even though Pilsen successfully resisted gentrification in the earlier years, “a compromise between some activist
groups and a new ensemble of redevelopment agents formed” since the early 2000s (Anderson and Sternberg 2012, 452). According to Anderson and Sternberg, the “revised portrayal has worked to politically defuse much of Pilsen’s established base of opposition by appealing to the identity-based sensibilities of both existing residents and the neighborhood’s growing Latino middle class” (Anderson and Sternberg 2012, 453), indicating that there might be opportunities for landscape architecture to provide a new proposal of creative industry.

Gentrification is a social problem that seems inevitable. However, a resilient community could alleviate some negative effects caused by gentrification and at least slow its effects to a more manageable level and allow resilient communities to adjust, adapt, and prepare. To think about gentrification in Pilsen neighborhood, the Mexican culture, history of Pilsen, and current situation should be taken into consideration. Pilsen neighborhood could be resilient to gentrification, which means the neighborhood could accept certain levels or types of gentrification, and yet still work to reduce or delay some of the negative effects of gentrification. As a Mexican-American neighborhood since the 1950s, Pilsen neighborhood has long been a significant cultural icon of Mexican culture. “Non-white” gentrification as Boyd (2005) mentioned, which will bring “increased safety, less overt drug dealing, better transportation, improved governmental responsiveness and more stores” (Newman and Wyly 2005, 4) might help improve the quality of life in the neighborhood. With the compromise between some activist groups and new redevelopment reached in recent years, Mexican gentrification might be more palatable to Pilsen residents. In such case, targeted landscape design and other programs might strengthen and intensify the identity of this Mexican neighborhood and avoid loss of identity or sense of place.
The Pilsen Planning Committee has their own Quality-of-life Plan to provide strategies to create a better life for local residents (Pilsen Planning Committee 2006, 2). In the Quality-of-life Plan, the Pilsen Planning Committee plans to “build a stronger neighborhood economy…make Pilsen a self-reliant, family-oriented community… and create a stronger image for Pilsen as a historic Mexican neighborhood” (Pilsen Planning Committee 2006, 2). This plan conveys the needs of local residents, and could provide goals for urban planning or landscape design.

In 2013, UrbanWorks, an architectural firm founded by Patricia Saldaña Natke, developed a master plan (Figure 3) for Pilsen neighborhood. As an architect who grew up in the Pilsen neighborhood, Patricia Saldaña Natke proposed a college dormitory, a high school, a fashion and textile incubator, and green spaces connecting the neighborhood and the river. She “envisions more green space along the neighborhood’s largely industrial waterfront, and the transformation of an abandoned, surface-level railway that runs along Sangamon Street into a stretch of park” (Amer 2013). She also “hopes to transform the abandoned buildings that line the railroad into a fashion and textile incubator” (Amer 2013). UrbanWorks’ Pilsen Master Plan “provides a framework for neighborhood-scale revitalization by placing most new development near existent mass transit nodes, creating a Green Trail paseo that links proposed cultural anchors, and connecting the neighborhood to new river amenities” (Urbanworks 2013). In this master plan, the architect considered the educational, industrial, commercial, and recreational use of spaces in the neighborhood, and aimed to build on Pilsen’s strong Mexican cultural heritage. Her vision was accepted by local residents through a series of community meetings, which suggests that local residents are willing to revitalize their community, as long as it is based on their community identity.
In addition to community committees and architectural and planning firms, landscape architectural students are also interested in the Pilsen neighborhood. One MLA thesis completed at the University of Illinois provides a vision for a mixed-used community for Pilsen neighborhood. The author developed a “site scaled land use plan” and a “street hierarchy scheme” (Wang 2007). By projecting “grey structure, green structure, blue structure, and red structure,” the author developed a detailed plan for “commercial and residential mixed-use block; recreational and institutional mixed-use block; institutional block; garden-side walkways”
The thesis shares similar idea with the Urbanworks master plan: they both envision the community becoming more multi-functional and diverse.

Although many people have already conducted previous studies and plans for Pilsen neighborhood, there is still a gap between the precedents and the existing condition. Despite having comprehensive development plans for this neighborhood, and thriving neighborhood art and culture, none of the previous studies or plans focus on the needs of the creative community. By the “creative community,” I mean to include both local creative workers and possible new Mexican artists, newcomers who need space for both a flexible lifestyle and working style. The benefits of creative industry potentially provide more job opportunities in educational, commercial, and industrial areas, increase recreational public spaces, strengthen the community identity, and bring diversity and vitality to the neighborhood. There are also potential downside risks, such as gentrification and alienation. As an art and cultural destination, Pilsen neighborhood is already gentrified to an extent, and it is very likely that trend will continue. Landscape architecture offers one potential strategy to help stimulate the art and culture in the neighborhood, and alleviate the impact of gentrification principally by slowing its progress through stimulating local capacity for resistance, controlling space, and consolidating strong local service, and securing alternative values and uses for underutilized landscape. “Good design will generate a return on perception, can also generate a sense of place, civic pride, and belonging, along with many other qualitative and quantitative benefits that serve the larger public interest and add value to the built environment” (Jerke, Porter, and Lassar 2008, 19).

According to Jerke, Porter, and Lassar (2008), a good design is more than pure form. “Good design requires a thoughtful response to characteristics of the site and its surroundings, market demands, available technologies, and several other factors… (It) draws on human
perceptions of the visual environment, a range of physical forms, contextual features and sense of place, and user satisfaction with spaces and structures” (Jerke, Porter, and Lassar 2008, 8-9). Related to this thesis, that idea suggests that any design should create an environment coincident with the cultural and historical background of the neighborhood, and establish a condition that fulfills the requirements of creative people’s life and working style. Landscape design approaches offer one potential way of reinforcing the cultural and historical background of this neighborhood. With the exciting strong cultural and historical background, community identity and diversity, and sense of place would be further secured. This effect might call for enhanced local commitment to the neighborhood, while at the same time become part of community-protection movement, and serve as the force to resist, or at least resiliently slow down the unwanted effects brought by developers.
Research Questions

Through studying the culture and history of Pilsen neighborhood, theory of urban development, and precedents of creative communities, this thesis investigates the question of how landscape architecture could promote creative industry by creating a condition with diverse opportunities for creative class in a cultural community. Such diversity includes different spaces for creative people to live and work, a variety of job opportunities, amenities for creative lifestyle and social activities, connections between creative people and local residents or visitors, and incubators of innovation. This condition with diversity, which fulfills the criteria of places built by Richard Florida, could be supported by landscape architecture design operations. That means, landscape architecture could offer more than urban amenity or visual appearances, it could also shape new space and facilities for living, working, and social activities.

To put this in the specific context of Pilsen neighborhood, I break down the large question into the two questions below:

1. What kind of landscape architecture design operations could support economic and cultural diversity in this neighborhood?

2. What places offer the highest potential return on attention received from landscape design operations?

These two questions are answered through two phases of research. In step one, precedent case studies are analyzed to identify effective landscape architecture design operations that have supported development of creative industry which includes economic and cultural diversity in similar neighborhoods in other cities. Step two required site visits and analyses of local
demographics and infrastructure, in order to identify criteria for site selection with potential to benefit from surgical design interventions (Figure 4).
CHAPTER II. RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Strategy

A sequential research design, including strategies of description, evaluation, and design projection is used in this thesis. Before design projection can be completed the situation of the site needs to be described and specific programs and other requirements of people living in Pilsen neighborhood need to be identified. Because “a good design requires a thoughtful response to characteristics of the site and its surroundings, market demands, available technologies, and several other factors” (Jerke, Porter, and Lassar 2008, 8), much preliminary information needs to be collected. In addition, precedent case studies are also employed to build criteria for site selection.

Descriptive strategies include mapping and case study. Through analysis of demographic data, the background, culture, and history of the Pilsen neighborhood suggested many strengths, weakness, and opportunities. After visiting the area and gathering information from local contacts, data was collected for both spatial and programmatic conditions in this neighborhood. This allowed me to map the green space, vacant land and buildings, and existing creative programs, in order to provide a general context of this neighborhood. Precedent case studies to be identified in order to understand the requirements of a creative community; analysis of these precedents suggested three landscape operations. These gave the criteria for the site selection; the neighborhood was evaluated for linked criteria and best potential area was selected. Program ideas and landscape interventions were proposed as illustrations for several specific sites.

Evaluation strategies were employed to evaluate the design projection. To answer the research questions raised before, the landscape operations should provide a condition of diversity
in Pilsen neighborhood, which include five elements: spaces for creative people to live and work; a variety of job opportunities; amenities for creative lifestyle and social activities; connections between creative people and local residents or visitors; and incubators of innovation. These elements form for evaluation for the design projection, to determine whether the landscape operation could provide these elements, and create a diverse condition decide the quality of the projective design in Pilsen (Figure 5). This evaluation is discussed later, in the conclusion.

Figure 5: Criteria
Data Collection

The first step in this project was to study the history and culture background of Pilsen neighborhood, mainly by reading relevant articles, websites, and consulting and interviewing local residents. After building a general understanding of the neighborhood, the site were visited several times in order to observe the lifestyle of local people and the way they use their space, as well as to identify vacant spaces in industrial areas that could be redeveloped or enhanced (Figure 6). Besides the museums and galleries, there are also artworks in exterior spaces. Murals are painted on the façade of buildings; paintings on the wall show the scope of business of retail stores; sports, festivals, and art activities are held in community parks; paintings in the metro station, and banners tell the sense of place. Architectural style and building appearances were noted and photographed where they reflected the culture and history of the community. The site visits also offered a chance to investigate existing art programs and institutions in the neighborhood (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Site Visit Map
Information about the existing creative space was collected, including art museums, galleries, cafés, shops, and parks. Through the calendar of programs in those spaces and my own observation, the potential and needs of both existing creative space and potentially creative vacant space are assessed. Exploring the ways the community uses space guided my design projection. In particular, design that is sympathetic to community patterns might mediate or forestall dissent of local people. Contact with community organizations through e-mail and face-to-face meetings helped to identify what some creative industry workers in the community really need, and suggested the direction of design program and guidelines for my site design.
The second category of data collection involved precedent case study. Analyzing four cases of successful creative industrial districts offered parallels in what the districts offer to the users and what support role landscape architecture plays in the context (Figure 8). Using scale comparison, I identified art functions in a variety of creative communities, and spatial and structural performance requirements for each different function. Furthermore, detailed landscape interventions were studied to understand how landscape architecture has supported the creative requirements of both artists and residents in these districts. Then, by combining the creative district and detailed interventions together, specific landscape design patterns and operations were identified that could be applied to Pilsen neighborhood.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Art</th>
<th>Public space use</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Dallas Art District</strong></td>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
<td>17 blocks (street), 1.75 acres (park), 3.5 acres (square) provide an urban design framework for private investment and public improvements to a key 374-block section of downtown Dallas; create a lively, attractive downtown pedestrian environment; offer a variety of activities day and night and provide a truly unique environment in the downtown area.</td>
<td>Architecture: Visual and Performance Art, Music, Yoga, Sculpture, Asian Art, Dance, Opera. Sculpture Installation artwork with materials salvaged from the abandoned city.</td>
<td>Plera Street is the connector and unifying element that knits together the many diverse activities of the Dallas Arts District. The Betty S. Marcus Park provides an inviting area for public use. Artist Square provides the arts community with a working performance and exhibition area.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thedallasartdistrict.org/">http://www.thedallasartdistrict.org/</a> <a href="http://www.daysi.com/project/174/dallas-arts-district/">http://www.daysi.com/project/174/dallas-arts-district/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Heidelberg Cultural Village</strong></td>
<td>Detroit, MI</td>
<td>2 blocks</td>
<td>Painting, Sculpture, Design, Installation</td>
<td>The House That Makes Sense Community Art Center; The Heidelberg Art Farm; The Black Bottom Healing and Memory Garden; The Heidelberg Assemblage Art Park.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.heidelberg.org/">http://www.heidelberg.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fort Point Arts Community</strong></td>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
<td>100 Acres</td>
<td>Painting, Sculpture, Design, Performance art, Jewellery, Book, Digital media art.</td>
<td>Fort Point Open Studios; FPAC Gallery for all visual media; Made in Fort Point Store; new limited equity artist cooperatives that provide live/work space for 30 artist households; free-hand-in art projects for the public; Summer Park Party; increase pedestrian activity and vitality to the area.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fortpointarts.gov/about.html">http://www.fortpointarts.gov/about.html</a></td>
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</table>
Design Goals

Based on the data collected in preliminary stages, and taking the identity of the site and the needs of users into consideration, the goals of design are: adaptively reuse the vacant space in a creative way for local residents using the space; maintain and support the Mexican-American culture and history, and provide opportunities for local artists to utilize outdoor spaces creatively and for economic activities.

Objectives for the design include:

- Identify, connect and reutilize vacant spaces for creative activities
- Extend the time during which existing open spaces maybe creatively used
- Provide new spaces and facilities for creative activities and art organizations that extend or intensify existing programs
- Support creative activities for local residents and tourists using landscape treatments and amenities
- Use landscape space and strategies to stimulate thick economy and more job opportunities for local artists
- Make the neighborhood more attractive without losing its historic and cultural identity
Data Analysis

The first category of data comes from site analysis and mapping local land use patterns: vacant land (brown), vacant buildings (dark red), green space (green) and art galleries, museums, artist lofts, and studios (black). Also activities and program calendars relative to large museums and public parks in the neighborhood were recorded (Figure 9).
A grid of 100m X 100m, which is about the block scale in Pilsen neighborhood, was overlaid on the neighborhood, and different colors were used to stand for different elements, for instance, a darker color means a higher percentage of area in this category. There are five layers in total: artists’ concentration, green space, vacant land, public access, and industrial area. Artists are the driving force behind creative industry in this neighborhood; more vacant land means this area has greater potential to be developed for creative use; less green space might result in demand for public parks or community gardens; of course, easy accessibility is convenience for both local residents and visitors. Therefore, these four elements – high density of artists, more vacant land, less green space, and easy accessibility, guide the site selection (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Grid Layers Overlay for Site Selection (Diagram by Xinnan Jiang)
The second category of data comes from analysis of precedent case studies. Two different kinds of precedents were studied: creative district or community, and small-scale landscape interventions.

Scale comparisons between the creative communities showed different sizes and extents (Figure 11). Precedents included Heidelberg Cultural Village (Detroit, MI), Dallas Art District (Dallas, TX), Fort Point Arts Community (Boston, MA) and Treme neighborhood (New Orleans, LA). Each community was studied to identify their special art forms or special features. This helped to highlight the art forms that should be focused on because they are related to Pilsen’s Mexican culture and celebrate by local residents, which are painting, music, dancing, literature, and mural. The space and landscape for those art forms have their required support functions: such as storage, creation, vending, performance, exhibition, participation, and viewing. And the performance requirements for these functions include sitting area, outdoor stage, walls, lights, signage, etc.
Figure 11: Scale Comparison (Diagram by Xinnan Jiang)
Each art district also featured landscape interventions on a smaller scale, for example: light lanes, paintings for satellites, phone booth book share, street stage, stairway stories, post furniture, art farm, Participation Park, imagination playground, and so on. As shown in Figure 12, those interventions all utilize artistic forms of landscape design to solve specific problems.

Figure 12: Precedents of Landscape Interventions

Art Farm
Austin
Problem - need for climate-adaptable agriculture
Solution - deployable and sustainable structures for farming fish and produce

Paintings for Satellites
New York City
Problem - urban heat island and climate change
Solution - reflective painting on rooftops

Piazza Gratissima
Bronx, New York
Problem - overlooked outdoor library courtyard
Solution - create a multi-use public space

Imagination Playground
Manhattan, New York, & elsewhere
Problem - need for engaging play spaces for children around the globe
Solution - mobile, accessible, engaging playground

Participation Park
Baltimore, Maryland
Problem - absentee land ownership
Solution - participatory placemaking

Post Furniture
Los Angeles & Oakland
Problem - inferior pedestrian experience in auto-centric urban environments
Solution - make sidewalks inviting and comfortable via signpost-mounted furniture

Light Lane
Boston
Problem - compromised cycling safety
Solution - personal, high-visibility bike lanes

Phone Booth Book Share
New York City
Problem - obsolete phone booths
Solution - repurpose into community sharing system

Stairway Stories
New York City
Problem - encourage people to take the stairs instead of the elevator
Solution - reward stair-climbers with an entertaining, sexy story

Source from: http://www.spontaneousinterventions.org/interventions
CHAPTER III. FINDINGS AND DESIGN PROJECTION

Design Strategies

Three landscape operations, or we could say, design strategies emerge from analysis of the case studies: connection, extension, and intensification. These three strategies support the identity of the neighborhood, meet the performance requirements, and generate new opportunities for creative space in this neighborhood. All of those design strategies lead to the desired outcome of a “thick” diverse economy that helps support community identity.

1. **Connection** means to bring existing creative people/places/activities/programs into contact; build relationship and communication between separated distributed locations; and create a more continuous creative industrial fabric in this neighborhood. Connective operations might include a comprehensive signage and way-finding system, using public spaces as linkage between two different groups of people (such as creative class and local residents or students), and linking facilities that develop the same or similar cultural theme. A continuous identity or cultural environment in the neighborhood works for both creative workers and other residents, for example, “(creative people need) access to recreation on a just-in-time basis, given their flexible and unpredictable work schedules” (Florida 2012a, 224). On the other hand, residents may like to have the space where they could “hang out simply for the pleasures of good company and lively conversation” (Oldenburg, 1989, ii). Connected spaces offer the social connection between creative people and their community.

2. **Extension** means to add new creative spaces to existing ones; expand existing creative spaces/activities to include or affect more people/things/activities. It includes magnifying or enlarging a stretches; existing cultural zones; extending interior creative activities to exterior spaces; developing new creative and cultural infrastructures close to existing creative spaces; and
adding new spaces for existing creative activities. As a neighborhood with unique culture and history, the extensional landscape could make the neighborhood authentic, which means “a place has real buildings, real people, real history, and offers unique and original experience” (Florida 2012a, 228). By extending its existing creative activities and cultural identities, Pilsen neighborhood could provide an even more unique experience for both local people and visitors to Chicago.

3. **Intensification** means to develop new creative spaces/programs to increase the amount/degree/impact of creative industry in the neighborhood; create a new condition to make creative environment more intense, stronger, and more marked. It includes new spaces or facilities as landmark for this neighborhood, new creative activities hold in open spaces, and reuse of vacant land as creative places. Adding these new creative spaces and programs could offer more job opportunities for creative workers, which might be educational, commercial, or industrial manufacturing. With these opportunities, creative people could be better involved in their communities. They could “both actively establish their own identity in places, and also to contribute to actively building places that reflect and validate that identity” (Florida 2012a, 230). This, in turn, has the potential to candidate community capacity for self-determination and thus slowing the progress of gentrification process.
Site Selection

For site selection, after overlaying layers of art galleries and museums, vacant land and buildings, green space, and public transportation, the areas of greatest existing potential spaces were identified. Same areas have even more potential because of more artists and vacant space and less green space. One area with the highest density of artists was also served by an MTD bus line across the street.

Another area on the east is close to my selected site, but a railway between these two parts forms an impassable barrier. This has been set aside for phase two development to connect the east part later in time. The southwestern area has more vacant space and, because it is close to the river, it may also provide opportunity for development. This has been set aside for phase three (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Site Selection (Diagram by Xinnan Jiang)
Programming

Design program ideas emerged from analysis of existing conditions, and the outdoor environment, including green space, streetscape, and temperature year round. Some new creative programs, such as art farm, music festival, wall painting, and mural restoration, handmade workshops, outdoor movies and snow art in the winter, were suggested by other precedent case studies. Figure 14 shows the possible or anticipated density of people participating in outdoor activities in a typical year. Some on-site workshops might only have 30 to 50 people, but some performances in a larger park might attract hundreds or thousands of people. Because Pilsen is the center of Mexican life in Chicago area and in the Midwest, some existing Mexican traditional festival even could attract tens of thousands of people to the neighborhood. Several kinds of landscape infrastructure are proposed to fulfill the requirements of these large programs, like seats, lights, and signage. Figure 14 shows each of them: a base line represents regular use; and anticipated increases are shown during special programs or festivals (Figure 14).
Figure 14: Programming and Anticipated Usage (Diagram by Xinnan Jiang)
Master Plan

The master plan proposes outdoor exhibition space, wall painting park, community garden, art farm, performance stage, sitting area, signage system, and street vending. Each of these elements have been projected into the neighborhood (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Master Plan

The location of each new design element is decided by the analysis of vacant space, green space and artists’ distribution and concentration. New design will be located on vacant land in
the neighborhood. The art farm and community garden will be placed on the site which has a lack of green space nearby. Outdoor exhibition and wall painting park will be near art galleries and artists’ lofts to extend and intensify them. The performance stage will occupy the largest vacant space to provide enough space for audience. Sitting area, signage system, and street vending will be a linear landscape along street, and create connections between groups.

Each of those programs might fall into one or more operations I mentioned before – connection, extension, and intensification. Outdoor exhibition and wall painting park could be the extension of interior galleries and mural on historic buildings. Performance stage will be new destination in this neighborhood, intensify the creative industry. Both wall painting park and performance stage build the connection between residential area and artist’s street. Community garden and art farm which offer educational programs could also serves as the intensification of creative spaces in the neighborhood. Streetscape with designed signage system and facilities in traditional style will build connection between the separated distributed creative sites (Figure 16).
Figure 16: Design Projection
Detailed Design Intervention

Following the general master plan that showed overall strategy, three specific areas were chosen to be designed at the site scale, for illustrative purposes. The first one is the performance stage in the north. The second one is wall painting park near the Halsted Street, which has the most art galleries nearby. And the third one is streetscape on Cermak Road in the south along the abandoned railway.

1. **The performance stage** (Figure 17-b, c) is located between the residential area and the art district. Adding creative space can serve both as connection and intensification. To connect the residential area and art district, some walkways are added to cross the lawn. The Amtrak railroad is on the north; trains to Chicago always stop here for a moment before proceeding to Union Station. So the stage might become a landmark for the neighborhood, and also attract the attention of visitors out of the neighborhood (Figure 17-a). Shipping containers which are plentiful in the industrial areas are used to create the stage. Containers could be multi-functional and flexible, serving as a stage when there is performance. They could also provide signage and indoor space for some creative workshops or programs when there is no performance (Figure 17-d). Seating for audience should also be flexible and temporary. One option is to use plastic milk crates. People can set them up at different heights when they need to sit down. Children could play with them like large building blocks when there is no need for large number of seats (Figure 17-e). From the train windows, people will see the containers and crates displaying some traditional Mexican colors on site (Figure 17-f). The larger containers could also be placed as a barrier to block the noise of the train and create and quiet and peaceful environment for the community. But they could also be placed somewhere else, maybe create a corner space, or
spread on the lawn if the barrier block the view. The stage is mobile, and the containers could be shipped by small container crane and truck (Figure 17-g).
Figure 17-b: Plan of Performance Stage
Figure 17-c: Perspective of Performance Stage
Figure 17-d: Multi-functional Stage

Figure 17-e: Flexible Seats
Figure 17-f: Perspective of Performance Stage from Train Window

Figure 17-g: Mobility of Containers
2. **The wall painting park** (Figure 18-b) is also located between the residential area and the art district. Because there is a public school on the south, this park could connect the school students and the artists, and encourage teenagers to participate in creative programs. On the north there is a public park for the neighborhood, so a small square here will be designed as an extension of the existing public park. Also, because there are murals on the façade of several buildings nearby, the wall painting park might emphasize and strengthen this art form (Figure 18-a). Three kinds of infrastructure are related to wall painting. The first one is mobile painting. The feature walls are installed in different angles. As people walk along the path, figures painted on the wall will look as if they are moving (Figure 18-c, d). The second feature is transparent painting. Colorful pigments painted on the glass will create beautiful light and shadows in the sunshine (Figure 18-e). And the third feature is participatory paintings. The squares could be rotated easily by residents and artists. Different colors and patterns on each side could create unique and ever-changing patterns (Figure 18-f, g).
Figure 18-a: Site Analysis of Wall Painting Park
Figure 18-b: Plan of Wall Painting Park
Figure 18-c: Mobile Painting

Figure 18-d: Perspective from South Entrance of Wall Painting Park
Figure 18-e: Transparent Painting
Figure 18-f: Participatory Painting Wall

Figure 18-g: Perspective from East Side of Wall Painting Park
3. The streetscape on Cermak Road (Figure 19-b) connects the large art museum with artist lofts and public parks (Figure 19-a). Three kinds of infrastructure are featured in this park: bus stops covered with traditional tiles and paintings, signage system on the street to guide people to the museum, and seats with Mexican traditional patterns hollowed on them (Figure 19-c). The sitting area is along the abandoned railway on the south side of the road, and also close to bus stop. The perspective (Figure 19-d) is seen from this corner. The larger building is Mana contemporary Chicago, an innovative contemporary art organization; the vacant land beside it would be developed into an art farm. There are also banners hanging on the street lights or poles.

Figure 19-a: Site Analysis of Streetscape on Cermak Road
Figure 19-b: Plan of Streetscape on Cermak Road

Figure 19-c: Landscape Infrastructures
Figure 19-d: Perspective of Streetscape on Cermak Road
CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSION

Evaluation

When evaluated according to the criteria created before, the projective landscape design illustrates potential responses to the research questions and suggests how a condition of diversity for Pilsen neighborhood might be provided through landscape design operation.

Outdoor exhibitions, wall painting park, community garden, art farm, performance stage, sitting area, signage system, and street vending are proposed in programming and master plan. As they serve as connection, extension, and intensification of existing creative industry, they may also create a new diverse condition with the five elements in the criteria: spaces for creative people to live and work; a variety of job opportunities; amenities for creative lifestyle and social activities; connections between creative people and local residents or visitors; and incubators of innovation.

Outdoor exhibition and performance stage provide places for creative people to live and work. These spaces are not only limited in interior galleries, but also extended into public open space. As shown in the detailed design of performance stage, the multi-functional container could serve as performance space, interior working studios, as well as living lofts.

Almost every proposed design programs could provide job opportunities for both artists and residents in the neighborhood. The exhibition and performance provide jobs for local artists; the art farm and community garden would hold art class for children, provide educational job opportunities for people; and the street vending spaces promote the commercial opportunities in this neighborhood. Employed residents have more opportunities in their own neighborhood, and in their familiar cultural environment. And the revitalization of the neighborhood might attract
tourist to this neighborhood, which will promote the development of cafes, restaurants, and retail stores.

Creative workers have flexible lifestyles and seek social activities. These designed open spaces serve to break down the boundary between interior working space and exterior recreational space. Creative workers could choose to work at wall painting parks, outdoor exhibition areas, containers on stage, art farm, or even just sitting along the street. Street vending will support their needs.

The community garden and art farm build the connection between local artists and residents. The educational programs in these spaces help introduce art to the community. Some other interventions, such as performance stage and wall painting park, represent the cultural icon of Mexican tradition, which can also connect the creative class and residents more tightly. Those creative spaces and programs might attract visitors, and the signage system will guide them to explore other creative spaces in the neighborhood. More visitors will bring more commercial opportunities for local residents, and thus bring economic benefits for the neighborhood.

As the Pilsen neighborhood is already the center of Mexican life in Chicago area, artists who share the same religious and cultural background might be attracted by this neighborhood. In that condition, creative spaces connected to Mexican culture will provide better places for them to work and live. By consolidating a concentration of Mexican art and culture, the identity of this neighborhood would thrive and become an incubator of additional forms of Mexican creative industry.
Contributions

This research study is grounded in the specific community of Pilsen. The design process is not just a graphic design for a post-industrial area, but takes the history, culture, race, development, and people’s requirement into consideration. The design projection reflects the cultural and historic identities of Pilsen neighborhood. Although gentrification seems inevitable, because of its unique cultural landscape, Pilsen neighborhood might experience the “non-white” gentrification, meaning that newcomers to Pilsen might share the same racial and cultural background. In that condition, some of the negative effects caused by gentrification, such as loss of cultural identity and social changes in race, could be weakened or avoided.

This research proposes one possible vision for revitalizing the Pilsen neighborhood. This design exercise envisions Pilsen neighborhood with thriving creative industry, distinct cultural identity, vital community economy, and a better life with art, creativity, and culture.

At a larger scale, this thesis also answers the question of what role landscape architect may be able to play in support of creative industry district in a neighborhood, and how landscape architecture build the connection between exterior space and interior creative community. One strategy for a neighborhood that would like to become a creative destination, is to develop the qualities of space that attract members of the creative class. The creative community can offer various job opportunities for local residents, provide flexible and convenient lifestyle, present diverse social activities, give different living experience than elsewhere, and own their unique community identity. Landscape could offer much for a creative neighborhood through design operations of connection, extension, and intensification. Those landscape architecture operations create new spaces and infrastructures for creative activities and programs, in order to provide
spatial, structural, and social diversities for creative class, and help establish a condition which could stimulate the creative industry in a neighborhood.

**Future Study**

I believe this research and design may have potential application to other similar areas in the United States. As a national stage in urban development, post-industrial neighborhoods need to be revitalized. However, as a country with racial diversity, the redevelopment process should be thought through carefully. This thesis provides one way of approaching such revitalization, when the key is to solve the conflict between local people and urban gentrification. Landscape architecture provides opportunities to revitalize declining neighborhood, but it has significant limitations at the same time. In most situations, redeveloping a declining neighborhood is not a simple design problem. Landscape architects need the help and support from policy makers, urban planners, the city government, local residents and organizations, and other stakeholders. The role of the landscape architect is to find a balance among all the complicated factors.
CHAPTER V. REFERENCES


