CHARRETTE
ARTS PLAZA / W. MICHIGAN CORRIDOR
MAY 19, 2006

~ Practicing architects ~
~ Planners ~
~ Faculty ~
~ Students ~
~ Day-long planning session ~

Team: Allegretti Architects
St. Joseph, MI

Allegretti Architects:
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Daniel Page-Wood
Frances Blasy
Christopher Allegretti

Andrews University:
Carey Carscallen, Director, The Division of Architecture
Emily Szilagyi-Mack, Masters in Architecture;
intern @ Allegretti Architects

WMU:
Alice Kropewnicki, BS Interior Design;
intern @ WMU Campus Facilities
Kelly Conlan, College of Education, Textile & Apparel Studies

Team: Hamilton Anderson Associates
Detroit, MI

Hamilton Anderson Associates:
Rainy Hamilton, Jr.
Sam Lovall
Lori Singleton

University of Detroit Mercy, School of Architecture:
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Renee Chlopan
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Scott Hampton
Andrew King
Adam Hopkins (UDM Graduate, now with Kingscott Associates in Kalamazoo)

WMU:
Sam Eagan, College of Education, Interior Design program
Nancy LaDuke, College of Business, Department of Accounting

Team: DSA Architects
Berkley, MI

DSA Architects:
Jeff Sharpe
Jonathan Wehr

DSA Interns / Lawrence Technical University College of Architecture
and Design students:
Liz Beck
Kevin Leslie
Chris King

WMU:
Alan Lugo, College of Engineering and Applied Sciences,
Industrial Design program
Over Time … Change Happens!

- Facilities become dated and aged
- New technologies are developed
- Students’ expectations change

1st 50 Years – Big Changes

Administration Building - 1908
Administration Building - 1952
2006: Opportunities

- Notes from Campus Planning and Finance Council Chair:
  - Look and feel of the university campus contributes directly to the vision and culture
  - Window of opportunity to revitalize the look of campus
  - Plaza is an important green space on the WMU campus; a major gathering place
  - Chance to recapture green space on Michigan corridor, compensate for loss of green space from new construction

- Comments from the Campus Planning and Finance Council:
  - Water features:
    - Desirable!
    - Empty fountain is negative image
    - Maintenance costs / sewer issues impact feasibility
  - Pedestrian pathways too narrow, do not relate to buildings; fountain is a barricade
  - Plaza used:
    - Day .......... And .......... Night
    - Special events ........ And ...... Day-to-day campus life
  - Plants and lighting important:
    - Existing is dated and not compatible with architecture or activities

- Landscape and maintenance:
  - Stormwater issues !!!!!
  - Durable, easy to maintain year-round
- RCVA / School of Art
  - 12-month operation
  - Engaging for ALL students
  - Public access / public art
- Brown Hall / Plaza Cafe
  - Barrier-free Plaza entrance
  - Current location not adequate; demand expected to increase
- Miller Auditorium expansion
From the WMU Master Plan: “Michigan Mall”

- “PEDESTRIAN MALL”
  - Core open space
  - Pedestrian walkways
  - Plazas
  - Highly maintained landscape

- Replaces the existing four-lane road and adjacent parking lots with a core open space that

- Visual link from Haenicke Hall to Student Recreation Center

“Charge” to Teams

- Update the design of the Arts Plaza
  - Distinct open space
  - Articulated to the surroundings
  - Unifies the buildings of the quad
  - People-friendly space
  - Four-season activity hub, formal and informal

- Develop a pedestrian friendly design of the West Michigan corridor
  - Tie / unify activity centers located along the ‘spine’
  - Unobtrusive special parking and service access

Team Presentations
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• **Campus - Overall**
  - Way-finding on campus difficult
  - Ring road disorienting
  - Buildings create shadowed, cold, unfriendly spaces
  - Lack of visual reference points

• **Campus needs …..**
  - Artistic, creative commitment to education, the arts, excellence
  - Sense of Place – dramatic focal point
  - Interactive kiosks, directional aides

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• **Arts Plaza**
  - Functional circulation
  - Pedestrian-friendly spaces
  - “Interactive Quadrangle” – relate to building functions
  - Features:
    - Diagonal walkways w/ water-dispersion paving
    - Elevated central plaza
    - Environmental / water art
    - Outdoor performances / digital stage

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• **West Michigan Avenue**
  - Emphasize / enhance …..
    - Pedestrian-friendly – limited parking
    - Drop-off zones at east and west ends
    - Large gathering zone / information kiosk in flag plaza
    - Water-dispersing pavement system

Campus Plan
Stadium Drive Pedestrian Connector

Overview of the Campus

Site Plan

Arts Plaza

- Places emphasis on each of the buildings separately
- Allows each structure to be expressed in a quad form
- Promotes diagonal circulation pattern
- Creates performing arts backdrop
- Open and flexible in order to maintain venues throughout the year
Interactive Arts Screen and Theater
- Displays digital artwork
- Interactive arts presentation
- Compliment to performing arts
- Stage for small scale performances
- "Times Square" like space visible from new dining and reception area at Miller Auditorium

Information Kiosk and Meeting Room
- Signage of events
- Orientation
- Way finding
- Sense of Place
- Compliment to the East Campus Water Tower
- Observation Tower

Solar Bench and Outdoor Gathering Space

Hamilton Anderson
and
University of Detroit Mercy
Hamilton Anderson

- **West Michigan Corridor:**
  - Prominent campus gateway on each end
  - Campus identity / entry signs
  - Prominent pedestrian pathways
  - Both programmed and informal events
  - WOW!!! factor
  - Hide parking beneath sloping terrain
  - Stormwater channels lead to campus destinations

- **Flag Pole Area:** New iconic sculpture at major cross-circulation route

- **Campus Green** – between Sangren and SRC
  - Alternating lawn and hard-surfaces for gathering areas
  - Tree-lined walkways

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- **The Arts Plaza**
  - “Urban Square”: maximum flexibility and high levels of vitality
  - Pedestrian movement through and within the space
  - **Sprau Addition / coffee shop:**
    - Canopied, raised site provides views of plaza
  - **Water Feature:**
    - Visual reference point for major circulation paths
    - May be part of stormwater channel system.
  - **Plaza Surface** – special removable pavers can be reconfigured and provide stormwater drainage

Hamilton Anderson

- **The Arts Plaza**
  - **Expanded Terrace – Miller Auditorium**
    - Informal performance venue
    - Moveable seating and tables
  - **Trees:** Shade the sunniest (northern) area of the square with deciduous trees
  - **Art / Music Supply Store**
    - Southwest corner of the square
    - Generate activity in the plaza, convenient for students and instructors

Western Michigan University
• “A Learning Garden”
  – Connects to academic areas
  – Blurs the boundary between classroom and landscape

• The Student User – age 18 to 26
  – Experiential and social
  – WEB = Oxygen
  – Learning requires social interaction

• Strong path crosses Plaza

• “Plates” weave and shift to create activity areas

• Activity areas:
  – Planting beds
  – Gathering spaces – both large and small scale
  – Art installations
  – Information points

• Light and Water
  – Wrap through Plaza and connect activity nodes
  – Collect storm water
  – Creates sound and visual excitement
The Student:
- Web as oxygen
- Experiential
- Social Interaction

This IS a learning environment:
- Learning Garden
- Blurred boundary between classroom and landscape
- Interweaving the experiences

Visceral Learning
- Scale
- Memory
- Sustainable
- Learning Garden
- Experience

LTU + DSA Architects
Progressive AE

and University of Michigan

Progressive AE

Activities – Day & Night – 4-Season

– Display
  • Sculpture – School of Art
  • Public Art – environmental art
  • Temporary and permanent
– “Hang”
  • Informal, social
  • Quiet, study
  • Group activities
– Perform
  • Outdoor classes
  • Formal events – theatre, dance
  • Digital theatre

Progressive AE

• “Microclimates”
  – Diversity of space
    • Type of motion – heavy traffic vs. meandering
    • Type of texture – paved vs. grass vs. water vs. ?
  – Manipulation of topography
    • Variations in terrain create “rooms”
    • Landscape design can create both interaction and separation
  – Interactive water feature
    • Water display linked to weather, activities on Plaza
    • Water used as link between spaces; paths create spaces
    • Water paths are functional even when dry
microclimates

legend
1. vegetal scrim
2. circulation tie
3. cafe
4. event topography
5. sculptural tie
6. filter
7. social clusters

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hang

perform

display
“Wrap - Up”

Summary of Common Themes

• Today’s approach to design
  – Activity driven
  – Total flexibility of use
  – Not dependent on ‘classical’ geometric forms or symmetry

• Need strong visual reference points for wayfinding and orientation.

• How today’s students USE campus
  – Kinetic – ALIVE

• Zones
  – Quiet vs. active
  – “Hang” vs. formal

Common Themes (con’t)

• OPEN UP THE PLAZA
  – Pedestrian issues dominate
  – Water-feature important
  – Year-round aesthetic, function

• Information and display – “Times Square” – age of IPOD and internet.

• Type and location of spaces can both attract and generate activity

• Display, performance and teaching for ALL fine arts

• Reflect, focus on WMU personality

“Keepers”

• Ultra-flexibility – many uses, many activities

• Stormwater solution must be integral to design

• Total accessibility

• Develop East Entrance

• Enhance West Entrance

• Iconic sculpture

• More parking on east side

• TOTALLY FUN, DUDE
Thank you!

- Fishbeck Thompson Carr & Huber
- Phil VanderWeg
- Tim Holysz
- Campus Planning and Finance Council
- Richard Gershon
- Students of WMU
- Paul MacNellis – Charrette Photographer!
- Professional staff of WMU