

Clues in the Context



"History can teach us about why things are the way they are."

Peter J. Musty, CharretteCenter
Minneapolis, MN
February, 2003

Photo Courtesy of City of Anoka, MN

Space and Time

Urban Design should consider two types of context: spatial (the site) and temporal (history). Understanding the natural and political context can help guide the design in successful directions.

Study Historical Patterns

History can teach us about why things are the way they are. Helpful hints for the future can come from answers to questions about the past:

- Who has lived there?
- How did they live?
- What did they build?
- What were their values?
- What were their visions?
- What forces shaped the boundaries, shape and condition of the site?

Study Present Patterns

Understanding the immediate natural and built patterns can short term acceptance and long term success of the project.

- What is the shape of the site?
- What is important to protect?
- What should be removed?
- How big is the site?
- What is the condition of the earth?
- Where is the best place ...to put buildings? ...to treat water? ...to plant trees?
- What types of development will succeed?
- What would new citizens prefer?
- What would existing citizens prefer?
- What are the values of the decision makers?
- What can be afforded?

Comments or Questions: support@charrettecenter.com or 612.823.1966

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