BUILDING HEALTHY PLACES THROUGH LOCAL BUSINESS REVITALIZATION

MARYVALE AERIAL

MARYVALE DESIGNATED BIKE PATHS

MARYVALE LOTTING

MARYVALE PUBLIC PARKS & SCHOOLS

MARYVALE BUS ROUTES

MARYVALE ZONING

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SPRING 2010
“Our streets flood when we get a heavy rain at Osborn Road & 71st Avenue.”

“The canal is a great place for some kind of landscape improvement.”

“What can you do about the houses that have yard sales every weekend?”

“We would like to have more art like you see in other neighborhoods.”
"We want safer paths for our children and then we’ll let them walk to school."

"It’s too hot to be walking outside, except at night, most of the year."

"We are interested in community gardens. Is it possible to use our vacant lots?"
"A board two kids were hit by cars at the entrance of the school."

"People traveling through our neighborhood drive too quickly."

"We would like to see places for our skateboards and ways to get to them."

"We have people from outside the community using the alleys at night."
1. A commitment to revision and redevelop Maryvale as a healthy and active place to live requires community involvement and investment. To accomplish redevelopment goals, communities can start small with local businesses. Viable businesses can provide a driver for expanding future neighborhood healthy places, open space assets, and infrastructure.

2. Revitalized local businesses will provide job opportunities, generate local wealth, and can be developed to utilize local resources (such as community garden produce). Investment in local resources can provide competitive, local, foods as well as additional employment opportunities.

3. A thriving, reciprocal, relationship between local businesses and community can be expanded to provide additional resources and opportunities.

4. A thriving business and community will provide a driver for local investment and the development of neighborhood assets that encourage healthy living and safe places for children. A viable community can assist adjacent neighborhoods and catalyze redevelopment. Ultimately, this process can revitalize all of Maryvale and provide a mechanism for developing healthy, fun places.
One solution for creating a healthier and more active Maryvale is to revitalize existing business and retail cores (found along major traffic corridors) in order to provide an economic driver that will encourage further business development and opportunities. Revitalized neighborhood commercial and retail areas will also provide local employment opportunities, provide a mechanism for distributing healthy food alternatives, and promote investment in community. Once established, a vital commercial retail core with a vested interest in the local community will be in a position to give back directly to the community and transition the success of the commercial core directly into nearby neighborhoods. The establishment of a set of guidelines will encourage investments to take the form of healthy and active living assets and beautification projects. Examples of investments might be a “walking school bus” program, a neighborhood fitness and art walk, community gardens, and communal sales areas. Ultimately, the revisioning of Maryvale as a healthy and active community will encourage additional investment in local businesses and neighborhoods.
ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN - McDOWELL CORRIDOR

DETAIL PLAN OF COMMERCIAL & ACTIVITY NODES

PROPOSED BUSINESS CORRIDOR

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ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN - McDOWELL CORRIDOR

SECTION A-A’ - McDOWELL COMMERCIAL

SECTION B-B’ - McDOWELL MIXED USE

PROPOSED BUSINESS CORRIDOR (NIGHT)

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MCDOWELL CORRIDOR - PROPOSED
**ASLA 2010 Student Awards**

**General Design Category**

**Descriptive Data Summary**

**Entry Number:** 40

**Level of Study:** 2nd year graduate

**Individual Entry**

**Project Title:** Active Avenues of Maryvale

**Project Location:** Phoenix, Arizona

**Project Type:** Community planning and development

**Project Statement:**

Every child deserves the opportunity to walk or ride a bicycle to school and for recreation. Unfortunately, most children in the low-income area of Maryvale, Phoenix do not have the ability to do so because there are no bike lanes, inadequate sidewalks, and very few parks in their neighborhoods. This project investigates these issues and proposes solutions that can transform Maryvale into a active and healthy community.

**Project Narrative:**

Maryvale is large community on the west-side of Phoenix that was largely developed in the 1950’s and 1960’s by John F. Long. Low housing costs have attracted large numbers of families and immigrants from all over the world to this area. However, Maryvale has become a victim of urban decline, and like many urban neighborhoods around the country, it lacks updated infrastructure to support and promote active living for its youth.

This project was the focus of a graduate-level studio course. With funding assistance from the Robert Woods Johnson Foundation and St. Luke’s Health Initiatives, our class participated in walking audits with community members as well as community charrettes. This interaction with community members guided our designs for making Maryvale a healthier and more active place to live.

The primary concern I found parents and children repeating at the community meetings was that there is lack of places to ride bicycles or designated bicycle routes. Phoenix has ideal conditions for outdoor recreation nearly 8 months of the year; all of which is during the school year. Unfortunately, very few children ride bicycles or walk to school because there are no bicycle lanes, sidewalks are too narrow or non-existent, or intersections are dangerous.

I began my project by researching the existing bicycle route infrastructure in Phoenix. Maryvale has very few bicycle lanes, and there are often no bike lanes around schools or parks. I mapped all of the existing bicycle lanes and designated bicycle routes, then proposed new bicycle lanes that connect
schools, parks, and residential areas. The goal of this research and proposed bicycle lanes was to have solid research evidence that will help school districts apply for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funding. These “safe routes to school” will promote active lifestyles for children and help fight the obesity epidemic that exists in Maryvale.

The final element I researched for this project was a community bicycle workshop. I found a bicycle shop in Scottsdale, Arizona that provides kids with useful bicycle maintenance skills and bicycles. The children recondition old bicycles, and build new bikes from old parts that they clean and reassemble. After 20-30 hours of volunteer work, they earn a bicycle of their choice. Unfortunately, this bicycle workshop is only available to residents of Scottsdale. Part of my proposal was to use this bike shop as a template for similar bikeshops throughout Maryvale. This is especially important because there are not any bicycle shops in the entire area of Maryvale I researched.

The next phase of the project focused on a smaller scale of Maryvale. I chose to redesign a 60’ wide street median that is one mile long. This planting median is the only of its kind in Maryvale, and is unique because it passes two schools and is very close to two others. My design focus was to redevelop this unused turf median into a linear park and route for children to travel to school. I tried to design the park as though I were a child. I incorporated simple design elements like rolling hills on the path and bicycle-inspired swingsets that would encourage children to run, bike, and play.

Currently, use of the grass median is discouraged with 3’ tall cyclone fencing at street intersections and around the schools. In my design, I propose a 15’ wide curving path that wanders through the mile-long median. The extra-wide multi-use path allows plenty of room for children to walk side-by-side or even bike next to one another without taking up the entire path. Sections of the grass were left for recreation areas, and other areas were turned into desert shade gardens. The design is relatively simple and repeats itself throughout the park to simplify maintenance and construction costs.

Every ¼ mile is interrupted with a unique play area. Here, children have a place to swing, climb or skateboard after school. It can also be a relaxing place to sit in the shade and enjoy a cool drink of water. Most of the designs are inspired by the bicycle theme that runs throughout the park.

After completing my research and design, I presented my work to the community members and city officials that came to the presentation. The design for the park was enthusiastically embraced by community members, but I was not surprised to see the city officials grumbling about how much a new park would cost. However, I was surprised that my proposal to incorporate the community bicycle workshop received such interest from everyone. This wonderful idea began with Jack Harris in Scottsdale, Arizona in 1994. Now, it seems as if I may be able to generate the support and funding to make a similar project happen in Maryvale. My goal is to continue this project next year as my graduate thesis project, and help create a community bicycle workshop in Maryvale.
The map above shows existing and proposed bicycles routes in Maryvale. The photographs on the right illustrate the need for bike paths and sidewalks. The cross by the side of the road was a common occurrence on many of the busy streets.
Obesity among U.S. children has tripled in the past 25 years. Nearly one out of three American children ages 6 to 19 (17.4 million) is overweight. More than half of them are obese. There are numerous reasons for this problem, but lack of exercise and poor diet are the largest issues that should be addressed.

Most of the parents that attended the community charettes said they did not feel comfortable letting their children walk or ride bicycles to school because they felt the streets were unsafe. The reasons cited were:

- lack of sidewalks
- lack of crosswalks
- cars driving too fast
- lack of bicycle lanes

When asked if they would encourage their children to walk or ride a bicycle to school if these issues were remedied, most parents enthusiastically agreed.

Initial research for this project showed that obesity is a significant problem throughout the U.S., but especially so in Arizona. Programs such as Safe Routes to School are potential sources for funding new bike paths and sidewalks that can encourage children to incorporate exercise into their daily routes and Handlebar Helpers can help provide children with useful skills and bicycles to ride.
These maps show the context and scale of this project. The 60’ wide linear park I chose to research and design is one mile long. The enlarged picture on the right shows the proximity of the park to two schools. This area was of special interest in order to create a safe route to school for children.
The map on the bottom is the design for the one-mile park. Above is a planting plan and plant list for the desert gardens.

**Project plant list:**
- Desert Ironwood / *Olneya tesota*
- Chilean Mesquite / *Prosopis chilensis*
- Variegated Century Plant / *Agave americana 'Variegata'*
- Desert Marigold / *Baileya multiradiata*
- Grey Desert Spoon / *Dasylirion wheeleri*
- New Mexico False Yucca / *Hesperaloe funifera*
- Texas Tuberose / *Manfreda maculosa*
- Deer Grass / *Muhlenbergia rigens*
- Firecracker Plant / *Russelia equisetiformis*
Above are two section/elevations of the park. The path was designed from the point of view of a child with rolling bumps and sloped curves that encourage activity and playfulness.
Every 1/4 mile of the park path is interrupted with an interactive play structure. The simple form of the structure is inspired from the chainring of a bicycle. The bicycle theme permeates throughout the park. The structure is designed to be made from a composite plastic that will not absorb too much heat.
This swingset is designed to let minds and bodies soar. The seats are recycled bicycle seats and the chains that hang from the I-beams are oversized bicycle chains. The I-beams act as pendulums that are anchored to the ground on the opposite sides of the wall.
Climbing walls for children are rarely found in low-income areas, and those that exist on playgrounds are generally made from plastic and are uninspiring. This climbing wall is designed to be made from cast-in-place concrete panels that fit together like a puzzle, and are tilted to create a wide range of difficulties and movements.
Skateboarding is a very popular activity for youth in Maryvale, but the closest skatepark is not accessible to most residents. Although this park does not have enough space for a standard skatepark, there is sufficient room for a swimming pool-style element with a half-dome that adds a unique architectural element and an extra challenge for the skaters.
Garbage and recycling receptacles formed in the shape of bicycle chainrings.

Brake lever operated drinking fountains. Instead of pushing a button, pull the brakes to take a drink from these fountains.

Custom benches built from chromoly bicycle tubing. These benches can be welded and constructed locally.

Bicycles were the theme that guided the design of this park. The smaller details that are often overlooked were also created to inspire and remind users of the park of the importance of bicycling.
Section and elevation of the proposed community bicycle workshop for children. An angled green roof planted with native grasses softens the building and blends it into the surrounding landscape. Gabion walls, and glass windows provide the facade for the unique landmark in an otherwise ordinary neighborhood in Phoenix.
Perspective of community bicycle workshop
The entrance of the park should have a dramatic feature that catches people's attention from Camelback Road. Large steel pieces sculpted into bicycle chainrings set the theme for the park and create a unique experience for trail users.
The picture on the left shows the current state of the linear park at each intersection. Chain link fences and gravel act as barriers to keep people out of the grassy median, and discourage people to use it for recreation of as a place to safely travel to school.