ASSIGNMENT 2B: ART AND COMMUNITY

OBJECTIVES
To gather place information remotely and on-site
To translate research and direct experience of an area into analytical ideas
To consolidate and communicate these analytical ideas in a presentation

DESCRIPTION
On Alberta Street in NE Portland’s Albina district, a progressive arts community has flourished amidst a traditional African-American community. We plan to design a community arts workshop. In order to design an appropriate center, we need to know the history and dynamics of both communities.

- How much connection is there between the older residents and the new developments?
- How have artists been involved in the revitalization of Alberta Street?
- What have been art & craft traditions in the African American community?
- What institutions, individuals and forces have been motivators to redevelopment?
- What have been hindrances and downsides to the development?
- How do space and form foster human activity and interaction?

PROCEDURE
1. PREPARATION: Before you go, read the reference readings and search for maps and background information. Gather equipment and practice techniques such as audio recording, measured drawing, digital sketching. Find compelling images of the area to foster conversations.

2. ON SITE OBSERVATION: Each member of the class will walk along these streets to observe what shapes their character. The class will split into two teams to document what shapes life on a commercial versus a residential street.

What makes the buildings along the street similar? Which features are most crucial to creating a unified street? Where do consistent patterns break to create thresholds? Look at building setback, niches, cornice lines, overhangs, paving, window patterns, entrances, signage, street furnishings, vegetation, etc. By measuring and drawing these features and carefully noting how they are used, you can gather information to use in your own design work. (see drawings below)

At a larger scale, note what districts, landmarks, nodes and edges you noticed along the path and what material evidence helped you see them. Use Lynch’s Form Qualities on p. 105 of Image of the City: singularity, simplicity, continuity, dominance, clarity of joints, gradient, etc. to help you sort out what you see.

3. ON-SITE INTERVIEWS: At the site, each student should talk to at least 4 people, i.e. residents, property owners, and visitors of different ages, to understand how they see the city. To help them open up, introduce your assignment, discuss what you think of the street and show them your photographs & sketches. Ask them:
   - What makes this area special? Where does it begin and end?
   - Where is their favorite spot in the area and why?
   - What activities do they like to do in this area?

RESOURCE PEOPLE:
Roslyn Hill, artist & developer
Erez Russo, architect
Eli Spivak, develops low-income housing, co-housing
Brian Melton, architect (11:30 with Brook Muller)
Eduardo, owner of "Best Auto Repair"; 1904 NE Alberta; 503 - 287 5715
Kelly Collor, owner of Office - products, art, events; 2204 NE Alberta; 503 - 282 7200
Margaret, owner of Vepadoe's Deli; 4936 NE 16th Ave; Phone: 503 - 282 4500
Maria Raleigh, owner of collage (creative space and supplies for artists of all ages); 1639 NE Alberta Street; Phone: 503 - 249 2190
Phone interview with: Earl Clark, Earl's Barber Shop; 1726 N.E. Alberta St; tel: 503 - 249 5068

4. LIBRARY AND WEB RESEARCH: Can you find information that puts the streets into context? Discovering more about the streets’ historical development, demographic mix, transportation connections, building construction, functional uses, Lynch elements etc. can give depth to your study. Was the area always so affluent? Can the factors that boosted its prosperity be applied elsewhere? (to Eugene?) Portland Maps has aerial photos and a Geographical Information System online:  http://www.cgis.ci.portland.or.us/Main.cfm

5. ANALYZE
Gather and examine the information that you have collected for trends and connections. What similarities and differences jump out? What adjectives come to mind and where are they strongest? As a group, identify major themes to include in your report, crucial factors to describe / illustrate and delegate the writing, drawing, layout and editing.

6. COMMUNICATE
Mimic the drawing techniques and formats shown in Great Streets so you can graphically compare NW 23rd St. and its cross-street side by side with the given examples.

Street Section (2)
Street Plan (2)
Perspective of Overall Character (2 minimum)
Plan and Section of a characteristic public/private Threshold (2)
Perspective sketches of characteristic details or Sequential storyboard
Overall Figure-Ground Map with 10 minute walk (1)

Layout the text and graphics digitally. Plan the presentation so you can present it to a large group and also publish it to the Web (as in PDF)

REFERENCES
Allan Jacob’s Great Streets
Kevin Lynch’s Image of the City & Walk Around the Block
Peter Bosselman’s Representation of Places
Paul Laseau’s Visual Notes
Grady Clay’s Real Places: introduction
Cultural geographer Grady Clay explains that walking a section through a city helps reveal the shifts in character between the diverse districts.
Delores Hayden’s Power of Place
Lucy Lipprnd’s Lure of the Local

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE
Mon. Oct. 3: Field Trip
Wed. Oct. 5: Organize site information
Fri. Oct. 7: Measured drawings draft & Report draft due
Mon. Oct. 10: Photo record due, analysis discussion
Fri. Oct. 14: Final Report presentation, PDF due (Cheng out)
Mon. Oct. 18: Computer & Cardboard model due