GARFIELD PARK CEMETERY

P5 Report

Edwin Damen
1502506

Msc4 Complex Projects: Chicago Studio
TU Delft Faculty of Architecture

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Tutors:
Henri van Bennekom
Bas Gremmen
Stefan de Koning
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INTRODUCTION

The project discussed in this book is a design for a cemetery in one of the most suffering parts of the city of Chicago, reporting on parts of the design process, as well as the final result: an enclave within the American city, and a blending of architectural and landscape design.

The project was done under the banner of Complex Projects, at the TU Delft, Faculty of Architecture, starting September 2014, and ending June 2015.

The themes throughout this book revolve around the subject of the cemetery. As an urban artefact, as a subject of postmodern thought, and as a case study for architectural design.
The United States

LOCATION

Chicago

GARFIELD PARK
THE SEGREGATED CITY

West Side Chicago:

- 25,228
- 43,628

% AFRICAN AMERICAN RESIDENTS

LOW RACIAL DIVERSITY

LOW INCOME

2013-2014

HIGH AMOUNT OF GANG VIOLENCE

LOW LIFE EXPECTANCY

Each dot represents a household of 25 African-American residents.
WEALTH

Low quality housing, and lacking public facilities are just few of the signs that this area is lacking behind on the Chicago median. It’s a vicious cycle, in which a lot of residents have to deal with grim employment prospects in an environment that already doesn’t engender much in the sense of motivation. The result is that many people turn to religion, as one of the few things they can hold on to.

Churches.
IDENTITY

There is not much left of what once was a blooming neighborhood of Chicago. It has become gang territory, a no-go area for outsiders. People have moved out, leaving behind empty lots, and a trapped community.

Gang controlled territory.
SAFETY

West Garfield Park has the lowest life expectancy rate in all of Chicago, with over 50% more yearly deaths than the city average. Most of it is caused by gang violence, and another part is due to insufficient access to health care.
CHICAGO HOMICIDES

murders

year


1995

Garfield Park Cemetery
“They’ scared of the policeman.”

That is what a local resident told us in an interview, indicating the state of mutual tension between authority and the people they police. The emergency response network that was set up in 1995 helped reduce crime in the following years, but also left behind a culture of fear. You can feel it just walking through the neighborhood.
BOTTOM OF THE BARREL

The situation in East & West Garfield Park could be described as disfunctional, unoptimal, unacceptable.

The fact that the area is expected to undergo a severe transformation in the coming decades is both a blessing and a curse.

Gentrification in the form of the expansion of the city center is on its way to the black neighborhoods of Garfield Park. And with it, a new threat of evictions for the current residents.
Right now, the only thing that seems to be well organized is the crime, and it’s become the center of all attention, dominating the identity of the neighborhood.

Instead of focusing the attention on fighting crime, it is perhaps more effective to make the more positive parts of the neighborhood stronger, more pronounced, and more cohesive, so that the crime will eventually be pushed out.
To answer this question, we developed a masterplan. A connected system of zones were appointed to become a new place for development. We made it our goal to make it of such a scale, and intrusive in such a way that it may sparks new support groups, or protest groups, both equally important to start a conversation.
AREA OF INTERVENTION

We called it: The West Side Crack.

The plan functioned as a general outline for our individual projects, but still proved to be too inprecise on a local scale.
In the initial plan, the area of intervention was to be interpreted as a complete tabula rasa. This, unsurprisingly, raised a lot of questions, about costs vs. merit, destroying urban tissues, but also about the threat of more evictions, the very thing we were trying to prevent.
AREA OF INTERVENTION

Because of those reasons, the masterplan was divided into smaller chunks, covering only the most vacant of plots, and leaving elongated areas open for new development and architectural intervention along short-grid streets.
AREA OF INTERVENTION

But it isn't as simple as that. In a neighborhood that is running empty, and where funds are not readily available, not a whole lot is happening in terms of development. To balance things out, half of these zones were appointed to be left deliberately open, removing streets, and putting more pressure on the other half that would be densified.
Black and white neighborhoods.
CHICAGO Cemeteries.

Garfield Park Cemetery

GARFIELD PARK
CHICAGO

Roman Catholic and Baptist churches.
Partners for Sacred Spaces representatives.
PARTNERS FOR SACRED SPACES

Rolf Achilles Curator, Smith Museum of Stained Glass Windows & School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Rabbi Michael Balinsky, Executive Vice-President, Chicago Board of Rabbis

Joel D. Bookman, Director of Programs, LISC Chicago

Suzanne Germann, Director of Grants and Easements, Landmarks Illinois

Eleanor Gorski, Assistant Commissioner/Director of Historic Preservation, City of Chicago

T. Gunny Harboe, AIA, Principal, Harboe Architects, P.C.

The Reverend James M. Moody Senior Pastor, Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church

Suzanne Morgan, Sacred Space Ambassador, Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions

Michael P. Mosher, JD Attorney at Law, Mosher & Associates

Joan Pommareo, Program Director, American Institute of Architects, Chicago Chapter

Father John Sanaghan Senior Pastor, St. Matthias Parish

Pastor David W. Watkins III, Greater Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church
FOREST PARK CEMETERY

size 400,000+ graves

In scale: Disneyland Paris
And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.
SANCTIFYING WEST GARFIELD PARK
GANG TERRITORY

Rivaling gang borders.
“And for as long as I been grown, once a month I been with her on a church Sunday, telling myself ain’t no need to worry, ‘cause ain’t nobody in this city that lowdown to disrespect a Sunday morning.”

- Omar Little

1. The Wire, Season 3, Episode 9
SACRED SPACE

Rituals, traditions and faith.
HETEROTOPIA

The cemetery is an example of a heterotopia, as defined by Michel Foucault. To constitute a heterotopia, Foucault poses six principle rules:\(^2\)

1. Assume a wide variety of forms, but not universal
2. Change function or purpose over time
3. Juxtapose incompatible spaces in a single real space
4. Limited to slices of time
5. System of opening and closing
6. Space of illusion more real than surrounding reality

\(^2\) in his lecture “Des Espace Autres” in March 1967. Published in the October 1984 issue of the French journal Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité.
PRINCIPLE SIX: SPACE OF ILLUSION

Reliving the past through memories, images of the afterlife, heaven, hell and the promise of eternity.
"The city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places."

- Aldo Rossi³

GARFIELD PARK CEMETERY
space for speaking and listening
ASCENSION
CONCLUSION

For a city where death burdens its residents so much on a daily basis, it seems oddly invisible, almost unconsequential. As of now, the notion of death is being tucked away in the corners and the outskirts of the city, along with the memory and the mourning for those deceased.

Both the data and the stories of residents confirm that these fairy tales of gang violence and black on black crime are not exaggerated, they’re real. In fact, I would say they are rather being played down by those responsible. Part of the project is merely to confront people of this reality, to raise awareness, to introduce the idea of accepting a presence of death in the city, even the smallest presence, in order to respect the living. Just a bit more.