

5 ANALYSIS

SITE STRATEGIES + MASTER PLANNING

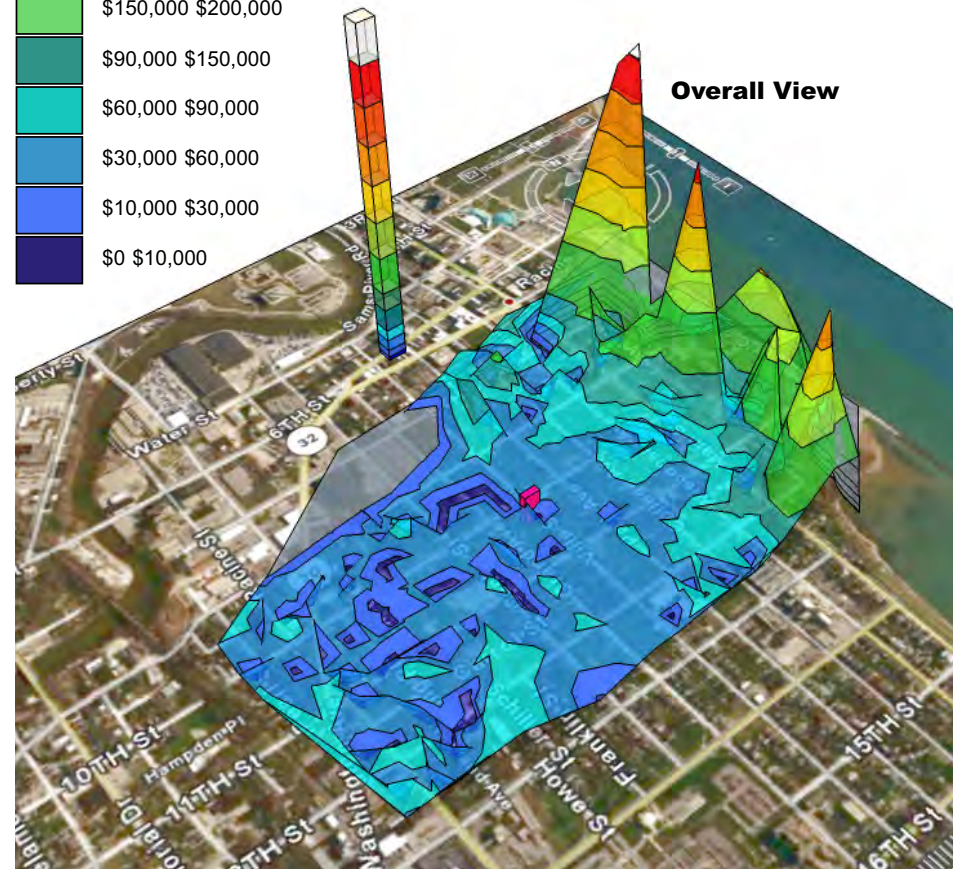
In order to best understand the communities in which they were working, student teams undertook an extensive analytical and master planning exercise. This involved the mining of data like census numbers, climate studies, and research of local history. As a complement to this analysis, students developed a series of proposals into a master plan for each neighborhood. These master plans included ideas for lighting, signage, and community building projects. There were also policy-based proposals regarding sustainability, future development, and financing.

This research culminated in presentations to community leaders. While the planning proposals were primarily theoretical in nature, this exercise in speculation proved valuable to both the students and communities. Student designers gained a real insight into the complexities of building affordable housing in existing neighborhoods. Rather than simply being handed a series of requirements for a house, students learned what factors determined the final construction cost, why their sites were selected, and who the neighbors would be.

Community members and leaders received an analysis and proposals unfettered by hidden agendas or marketing language intended to sell planning services. In the end, this exercise also served to build a degree of trust between community and students. While some members of the community remained skeptical throughout the process, the extensive efforts of students to understand the context paid dividends in later presentations.

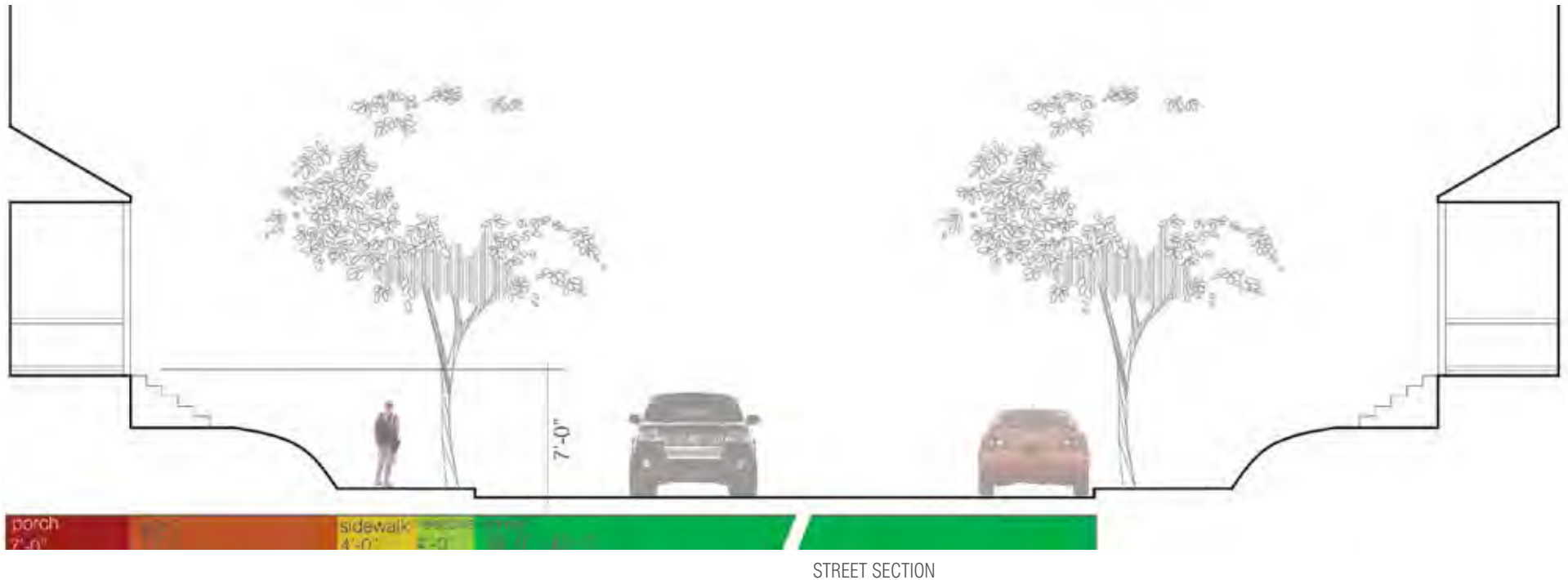
Housing Values

(2000 Census Data)



Above

Spatial diagram indicating range of housing values in Racine, WI.



Above

Street section showing areas of the streetscape and typical dimensions.

Compelling Diagrams

One of the major goals for this part of the studio was to understand the power of the diagram as a communication tool. Diagrams are often filled with redundant, misleading, or unnecessary information that actually hinders their legibility. Teams were encouraged to have more than just the right research; to tell the story of the figures in a way that provided a clear and lasting impression on the viewer.



housing

CONTEXT

Below

Simple, bold graphics and reduction of visual clutter help the viewer easily make connections between the many different expressions of similar facades.



408 410 North 31st Street



3013 West St. Paul Avenue



431 North 29th Street



Above and Right

Examples of unsuccessful integration into the existing neighborhood context.

One product of the housing analysis was the identification of recently built houses that violated key principles of the built environment. Overly suburban treatments of site, including street setback, immediately stick out within the progression of homes. Newer homes often failed to acknowledge the fairly steep roof pitch of the area (8:12 or 10:12), opting for a shallower 4:12 pitch. Another common error involved the placement and proportioning of windows in the facade. While most homes in both

Milwaukee and Racine neighborhoods have a primarily skinny, vertical appearance, the newer interlopers tend to have fatter, almost square windows. Many of the new homes have little or no porch to speak of, while older homes have a porch that consumes at least half of the lower story on the front elevation. Identifying and applying these and other conventions became an important part of developing a method that allowed students to design modern homes in a historical context.

“Is it possible to communicate not by ‘making known,’ but by ‘making understood how little we know’? If we can recognize that we know so little, a method for finding out how little we know will become clear as well.”

Kenya Hara



Above

Rendering of a proposal to reclaim green space next to an electrical substation in Milwaukee's Merrill Park Neighborhood. Also visible is a series of wind turbines envisioned for the generation of renewable energy.

Top
 Proposed farmers market pavilion for empty site in Racine's Towerview Neighborhood.



Bottom
 Proposed community center at corner of a park in Racine's Towerview Neighborhood.

