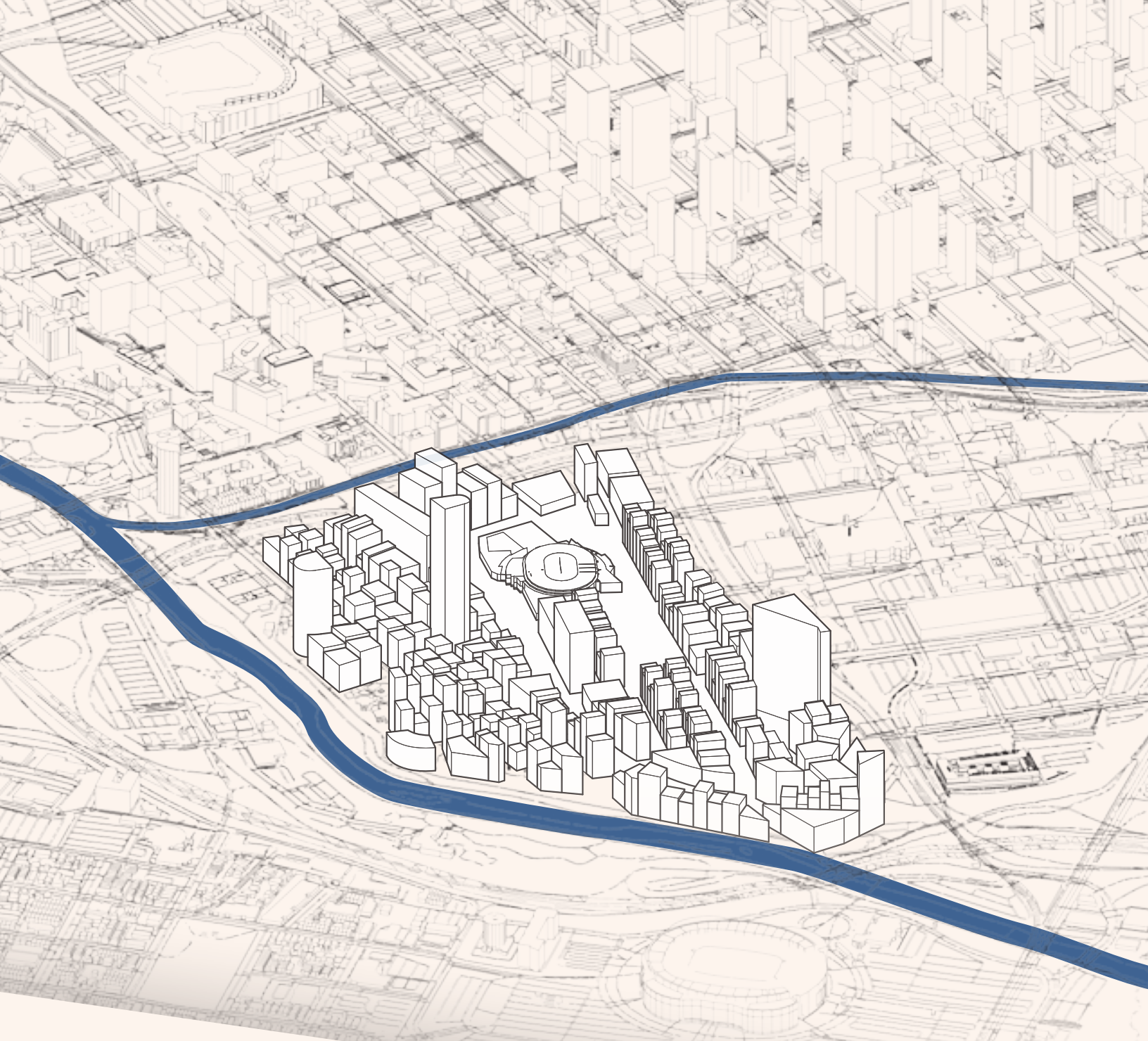

A SECOND DOWNTOWN

Practices In Bottom-Up Urbanity
Via Arena-Centered Developments
And An Application In Denver, Colorado

Dennis Swanson
Dr. Azza Kamal
University Of Colorado Boulder
March 2026

I have endless gratitude for so many people who have helped me along this process :)

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My dad, for getting me invested in Avalanche hockey

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Go Avs

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Committee:

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Distinction TBD

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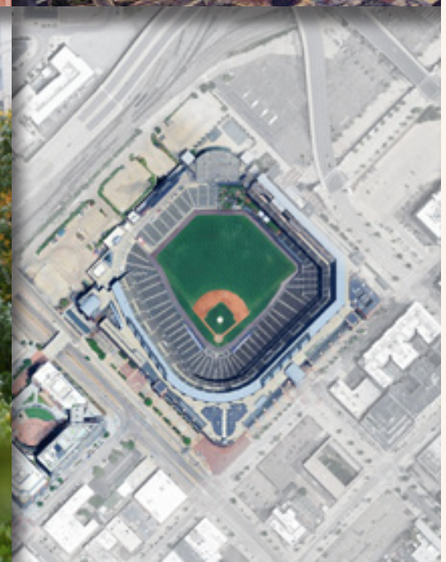


0 - ABSTRACT

In the last several decades, the movement of Americans back to historic downtown areas in many cities has spurred rapid urban development around the country. In many cases, large urban projects are led by similarly large development companies, who have existing stake in the city and offer substantial financial means. Around the United States, many major league sports teams and their owners, possessing these characteristics, have began investing in dramatic new stadium districts to surround existing or new stadia. These teams often build their districts from the ground up, featuring new streets, public spaces, and buildings. Research has already examined some of the large scale impact of these developments, but space exists to examine the styles of corporate advertising and urban design that appear in their pseudo-public urban spaces and design goals.

This thesis examines how corporatized public design is or isn't present in stadia district developments, involving styles of urban governance, distinct building typologies, and disparate development intent. Specifically, the study selects four existing and two planned arena-centered districts as precedent, built in different periods and representing separate design goals. These precedents are used to determine the governance and design factors that influence the typologies of urban space present. This research finds that the urban design of these spaces often centers a single street or pathway, creating the illusion of urban fabric; projects often fail to create vibrant districts outside of that intended experiential center. The study turns this trend to the upcoming Ball Arena and River Mile projects in Denver, Colorado, suggesting a bottom-up framework of governance and design to create a vibrant new district. This framework is intended to contribute to the broader understanding of large urban projects and their places in contemporary American cities.

<- All images via author except middle right (Figure 13)

WHAT OUTCOMES MIGHT RESULT FROM A BOTTOM-UP MODEL OF URBAN STADIA DISTRICT DESIGN?

1 - INTRODUCTION

I've heard it said that there's an old American mindset, informed by nearly two and a half centuries of capitalism in the United States: Everyone is trying to sell you something.

This perception is a symptom of a considerable underlying function in American society: the conflicts between people in their local communities, politicians in City Halls, and corporate executives in glass towers define the primary power dynamics that shape American cities and culture.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, some of these tensions have become apparent in the meteoric rise of professional sports, which have evolved from localized organizations into national corporations worth billions of dollars. These organizations, already with strong influence in their communities, have become cornerstones in both the physical and intangible urban fabrics of their cities.

The 21st century has seen the rise of a new trend: these teams using their stadiums as anchors for development. Rejecting perceptions of arenas as singular, one-day destinations, team owners have increasingly used stadiums as anchors for larger stadium districts. Friedman and Beissel (2020) describe this stadium phenomenon as 'development guarantors'. Often, these new neighborhoods replace the enormous parking lots commonly built around arenas from the 1960s to 1990s. As such, the team owners have become even more influential in their cities' economies and policies, becoming indispensable to entire districts.

In Denver, Colorado, attention has turned to the expansive parking lots that currently surround downtown Ball Arena. This ~20,000 person arena hosts Denver's major league hockey, basketball, and lacrosse teams, the Avalanche, Nuggets, and Mammoth. The arena, formerly called the Pepsi Center, was built in 1999 at a cost of $187 million. The construction of the arena cost the city nearly $45 million: $36.5 million via waived property taxes, $4.5 million in construction of roads, and $4 million in lost value from the previous hockey and basketball arena on the site.

In 2024, Kroenke Sports and Entertainment, the owner of the arena, received approval to complete their own vision of a stadium district. Additionally, in 2025, the company completed their acquisition of River Mile, a 62 acre development immediately west of the Ball Arena site. Together, the projects are intended to develop over 100 acres of land into a *Second Downtown* across Speer Boulevard from the oldest portion of Denver's existing historic downtown. The language of a 'Another Downtown', used by Harris (2024) about the projects, refers partially to their scale: an expansion of Denver's downtown land area by nearly 40%. It may also refer to the experiential differences between the project's streets, sidewalks, parks, and plazas when compared with the original downtown across the Speer Boulevard.

This research began with the hypothesis that the urban spaces in the midst of the new developments are planned to serve the particular goals of sports industry developers instead of those of the city writ large. Urban theorist Stephan Schmidt describes this process as corporatization, defining it as follows:

> *Corporatization has "re-territorialized" urban space, as each individual space is constructed in such a way to meet the needs of its "owner," which when juxtaposed with non-corporate space..., adds to an overall visual and physical incoherence. Although visually amenable and open, corporate space is actually spatially controlled. Although constructed to appeal to our "urban sensibilities," the user's senses are, in fact, manipulated and guided* (Schmidt 2004).

At Ball Arena and River Mile, the early proposals, renderings, and plans indicate the prevalence of one overarching design style, large blocks, large buildings, and some degree of corporatized public space. In light of the historic power wielded by sports owners, scale of the Ball Arena/River Mile projects, and the critiques of corporatized styles of urbanism, the projects deserve an examination of their place in the city's communities, cultures, and urban forms.

As such, this thesis explores the ways which, if at all, arena-centered developments invoke elements of "corporatized" public space, defining some spatial and physical elements of these spaces.

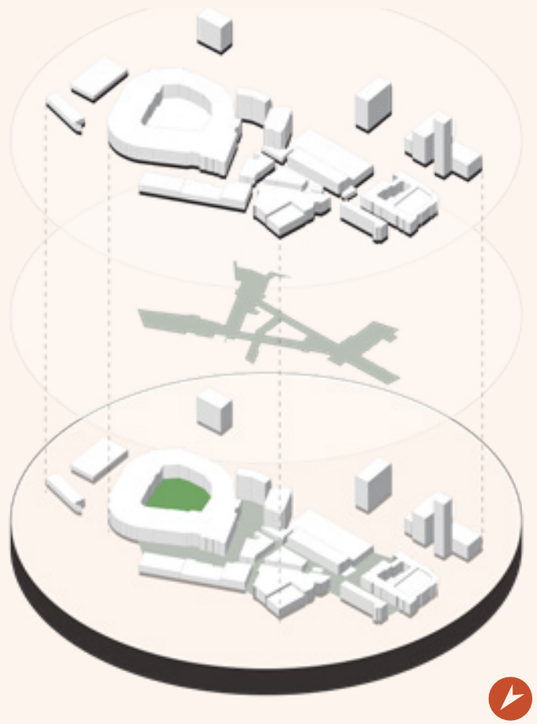


Figure 1 // Example Analysis // By Author

As a counter to "corporatized" public space, I explore the extent to which the historic urban space of Downtown Denver and other case study cities differs from the corporate design model. In turn, I seek to discover what design choices or city-making processes the Ball Arena and River Mile arena-centered developments could utilize to replicate some of the processes used to make Downtown Denver into what it is.

These processes revolve around the concept of being "bottom-up": emerging from local needs and desires.

This project seeks to build on the substantial work of urban theorists, particularly the frameworks explored in Jane Jacobs' seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs (1961) argues that elements of an effective urban neighborhoods include diversity in building age and prevalence of small blocks, both of which are naturally occurring elements of bottom-up urban design. Jacob's elements facilitate naturally occurring ranges in home prices, improve public life, and provide the ability to remake the neighborhood over time as community needs change. These citymaking processes, in Jacob's view, produce the elements that reinforce a vibrant community.

Through a thorough review of existing literature, I study distinct stadium districts throughout American history. Using these eras, I select four case studies that represent disparate priorities and motivations. I explore the city-making goals, historical contexts, and economic undercurrents of these places in Denver, Atlanta, Detroit, and Salt Lake City. After a physical site visit to each of these locations to observe urban elements and degree of activation, I explore the links between those processes and the resulting physical infrastructure, deciphering trends that emerge from each study. I then use these trends to design alternative bottom-up possibilities for Ball Arena and River Mile.

For planners and designers, the project seeks to explore the complex design issues around large urban projects. For government officials, this article seeks to advocate for incremental, bottom-up urbanism over heavy-handed, large scale urban design. And finally, for communities, this story intends to vindicate frustrations with current paradigms of urban growth and demonstrate alternative models.

2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

This study sits at the intersection of three distinct but intertwined fields of academic inquiry: urban planning, urban governance, and urban design. Specifically, I explore large development projects writ large, question the creation and financing of stadium districts, and dissect the corporatization of urban space. The following is an overview of the existing literature in these three fields that support the project.

2.1 - URBAN PLANNING - COMMUNITY-BASED TO CORPORATE SCALE

Increasingly in the 21st century, the field of urban planning in the United States has experienced a rise in large projects, led by a single development company, seeking a significant foothold in their urban context (Carmona et al. 2009, Kim 2022). These projects are characterized by large footprints, overarching design styles, and singular modes of financing. In some ways, this model represents a version of planning that takes inspiration from the 'authoritarian' movements of Le Corbusier and Moses and the more anarchist, decentralized versions of planning of eras before them (Hall 2014, p3). In authoritarian planning, 20th century governments began to serve as central and powerful arbiters of their city's design. In recent decades, government has taken a backseat to these processes and allowed corporations and developers to consolidate many parcels into larger development spaces (Kim 2022).

The role of the "urban planner" is a modern conception, one that arose long after most of the cities of today had already taken root. For the majority of human history, cities have grown "organically" – shaped more by their residents, industries, and environments than by governments or large organizations. This concept, organic urban growth, is often attributed to Patrick Geddes (Onaning 2025). In the early 1900s, Geddes described cities as one of the most complex forms of growth, mirroring the types of growth witnessed in plants, animals, and ecosystems. In the late 1800s, however, some began to argue the case for top-down urban planning; they sought to replace organic growth with large-scale decision making. By the 1900s, many residents and governments perceived cities as "Dreadful Night", echoing the dreary, "slum-filled" mechanical city (Hall 2014, p13-31). Planning became, over the course of the next century, an exclusively top-down practice to remake cities via zoning, governmental projects, and large private investments. The cities of today, particularly in "developed" countries, are cities of governmental or private directive as much or more than they are of historic organic growth.

Altshuler and Luberoff (2004) explore the mindset of modern American cities as "conspicuous for the emphasis they place on growth and the intensity with which they compete with one another for it." This competition primarily occurs through incentives and benefits for private investment – the "public-private partnership" model (Altshuler & Luberoff 2004). As historic urban cores become centers for development in the 21st century, this model has moved its way into older downtown urban fabrics. Lowry and McCann (2011) describes this phenomenon (albeit in the context of Asian cities) as the "failure of the state to control the city", motivating "the wave of privatization of both infrastructure and city-building."

One of the most prominent harbingers of this shift to top-down, private planning was large suburbanized developments. The first of these, Levittown, was designed by a single "visionary," William Levit, who created a new urban fabric entirely funded from private investment via his own company (Kushner 2009). Completed in 1947, Levit's model of large-scale private development was widely adapted and by the 1980s, private investment was the primary method of American citymaking, largely in suburban locales (Hall, 2014 p353-362). These projects range from smaller scale block-sized developments to large scale city-making projects in the mold of Levittown.

Figure 2 // A Building in the Union Station Development // By Author

There are academic debates over the value of scale in these private urban projects (Talen 2024). For some, economies of scale necessitate similarly large scale projects. Developers perceive large projects as necessary for providing ample housing, reducing overall bureaucracy (one 800 unit project, for instance, requires half as much permitting as eight 100 unit projects), and changing the public perception of "bad neighborhoods" (Talen 2024).

Those who criticize large-scale urbanism cite the rise of "cookie cutter" cities, the perception of developers as undemocratic forces influencing city governments, and the lack of naturally occurring affordable housing (Talen 2024).

2.2 - URBAN GOVERNANCE - DEVELOPMENT OF STADIUMS AND ASSOCIATED DISTRICTS

Current studies on urban arenas and their nearby districts explore the economics of stadium developments, the physical places that stadiums occupy in urban contexts, and the broad impacts of large urban developments. (Coates & Humpries 2000, Friedman & Beiseel 2020).

Firstly, there is the economics of stadium construction. Stadium projects are often supported both by extraordinarily wealthy team owners and by the cities they operate in (Coates & Humphreys 2000). The owners of these teams typically use the pretense of 'unsuitability' to condemn old facilities and demand new stadiums or arenas, threatening to move their teams without government support of new construction. This forces responses from city and state governments, who either choose to fund the new buildings or lose the economic stimuli that stadium developments provide. Coates and Humphreys (2000) find that in 1950, the National Hockey League (NHL) had zero publicly owned arenas, but by 1991, at least 65% of arenas in the league were partially or fully owned by a governmental entity. As a point of comparison, it was found that as of 1974, only 23 professional, major league stadiums in the United States were privately owned and operated; meanwhile, 53 were publicly owned (Noll 1974). However, despite the rush of public stadium development, research indicated that only 17% of those publicly owned facilities created a net gain for their local government, even after factoring local boosts to tax revenue. In his review of these facilities, accounting even for situations where stadiums receive only tax breaks, Okner (1974) concludes that "The benefits... probably accrue disproportionately to the moderate-income or well-to-do citizens in the community at the expense of the poor."

Figure 3 // Ball Arena // By Author

The development of stadiums in the 1950s through the 1980s had a few defining characteristics, often not present in today's developments. Stadiums of this era were built in the urban periphery, with massive parking lots, access to highways, and with ample land (Friedman & Beissel 2020). This method mirrors the perceived benefits of the suburbanization of the era, the dominance of the car, and the owner's desire to build "super stadiums."

Another, perhaps overlooked, benefit of the suburban stadium is their location's lack of nearby inhabitants to block the project's completion. The tension between residents and large arena projects is well documented;

Ahlfeldt & Maennig (2010) surmises resident perception of new buildings as "A stadium? OK, but not in my backyard!" In the case of the Washington Redskins (since renamed the Washington Commanders), even their 1997 construction of suburban FedEx Field required four attempts, a host of reviewed potential sites, and eight years of bureaucracy before construction even began, largely due to the pushback of the stadium's neighbors (Ahlfeldt & Maennig 2010). In urban centers, there are substantially more neighbors to appease.

The tension between residents and stadiums has contributed to a modern redefinition of what a stadium project should be. By the 1990s, the "Keynesian Super Stadiums" described by Friedman & Beissel (2020), had transitioned to centralized "Development Anchors," stadiums intended to play host to a vibrant district of greater economic and social intensity. These stadiums tended to be built in or near existing dense downtowns. Two instances of this development style are explored by (Buckman & Mack 2012), who compare the districts surrounding two 1990s-built stadiums: Coors Field in Denver and Chase Field in Phoenix. Both developments operated under wide-reaching goals of dense stadium districts as a means of anchoring the stadium and increasing tourism.

In Denver, this plan largely materialized with the number of restaurants and housing both nearly doubling in just the first year after the stadium opening (Buckman & Mack 2012). The ballpark district remains a critical cultural and economic landmark of the city (Miller et al. 2013; Nyren 2021). In Phoenix, the results were not so overwhelmingly successful, resulting in little change to the pre-existing urban fabric (Buckman & Mack 2012). The authors conclude that the explosion of business was partially as result of the intentional plan employed by the Coors Field project, which invested in development around the stadium itself. Additionally, the Phoenix project was located in a less dense, more sprawling metro area, reducing the willingness of residents to 'flock' to downtown before and after a game (Buckman & Mack 2012).

The success of 1990s and 2000s projects like Coors Field has ignited a new era of stadium projects. Friedman & Beissel (2020) describes the 2010s onwards as a period of the proliferation of these projects. While the Development Anchor era expected markets to respond to stadium developments, the 2010s feature team owners and governments investing directly in building the infrastructure around their arenas. Even in "organic" or "bottom-up" arena-centered neighborhoods such as Wrigleyville in Chicago, owners invested in adjacent developments owned by the teams intended to serve as expansions to their influence, impact, and physical footing in the neighborhood (Nyren 2021). The most intensive, and increasingly most common, examples of this footing are "stadium-centered districts", often entirely new districts built from scratch by team owners or related developers, intending to capitalize on the guarantee of foot traffic and financial investment. Projects like these have appeared in Los Angeles, Detroit, Atlanta, and Columbus, to name a few.

For cities, this era of development represents a shift from government "subsidies" for team owners, representing benefits almost exclusively to those owners, to "strategic investments", where cities governments benefit from development, job-market, and tax benefits for cities (Rosentraub 2009). For some, this shift represents a new reason to support city investment or tax breaks for corporations, a form of 'hands off' long term strategy for previously overlooked parcels.

2.3 - URBAN DESIGN - CORPORATIZED SPACE

In 1956, an international conference at Harvard's Graduate School of Design emerged with the definitions of a new field, separate from town or city planning: that of Urban Design (Krieger 2006). This new field was, as argued by the prolific attendees of this conference, a bridge between the individual building scale of the architects and the city-wide nature of urban planning. As a bridge, it services the in-between scale: that of the block, neighborhood, or district in a larger urban context. Today, the notions of the urban planner as a sculptor of the American city have given way, in many cases, to the notions of the urban designer. As such, the largest changes that modern cities experience are designed, carried out, and maintained by developers and corporations, not by municipal planning agencies (Hall 2014, p416-441. This is a shift towards a different, less granular style of organic urbanism, one that occurs at the whims of large organizations instead of individuals or communities.

The "hands off" strategy of governmental oversight into both stadium districts specifically and large developments as a whole has encouraged the proliferation of corporate public space. Schmidt (2004) describes these developments as "space that is neither public nor private, but rather sponsored." Mike Davis, an influential urban theorist, stated in his 1990 essay Fortress Los Angeles that "the 'public' spaces of the new megastructures and supermalls have supplanted traditional streets and disciplined their spontaneity." For Davis, this argument applied to malls, corporate office centers, government spaces, and even 'public' plazas and parks.

Davis' work was published in a larger collection, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, which sought to compile a number of experiences of new, corporatized forms of urban space (Sorkin 1993). For these theorists, privatized cities meant cities of exclusion. The introduction for the book, penned by the critic Michael Sorkin, argues that "privatized" public space substitutes the "democratic public realm", removing individual influence from urban form. These privatized public spaces include parks, plazas, and streetscapes designed for and by corporate entities with the intent to mirror traditional public space. For Sorkin, "the effort to reclaim the public elements of the city is the struggle of democracy itself." (Sorkin 1993, Introduction)

The description of American cities as increasingly privatized is not new. Jane Jacobs, in the seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, explores the concept of "Cataclysmic Money," large amounts of outside investment that destabilize districts and reshape them in the form of that outside investor (Jacobs 1961, p291-317). The changes that these districts thusly experience are guided by these outside investors, leading to planning choices that are top-down. For Jacobs, these projects can lead to a "hallowing out of the city", replacing previously vibrant districts with large office towers, poor quality public housing, or other types of urban displacement.

Figure 4 // Jacob's neighborhood, Greenwich Village NYC // Wikimedia Commons

In her work, Jacobs also famously explores the four elements which she identifies to be the cornerstones of healthy urban districts. The first and fourth of her elements, the need for mixed primary uses of buildings and the need for concentration (more commonly referred to as density today) (Jacobs, 1961 p152-177, 200-221), have been largely embraced by urban developers in the late 20th and 21st centuries through the proliferation of mixed-use developments (Rowley 1996). Her other categories, which include the need for small blocks (Jacobs 1961, p178-186) and the need for aged buildings (Jacobs 1961, p187-199) vary from project to project, based on context and design.

As such, there is space in the literature for study of the activation of traditionally developed areas of the city, matching the ideal set by Jacobs verses the activation of modern development projects.

PART 1

3.0 - METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The study's structure is broken into two parts. Firstly, I analyzed four case studies to illustrate positive trends in arena-district development. Secondly, I reinterpreted these trends to argue for a bottom-up design process for Ball Arena and River Mile. Each step is further described on subsequent pages.

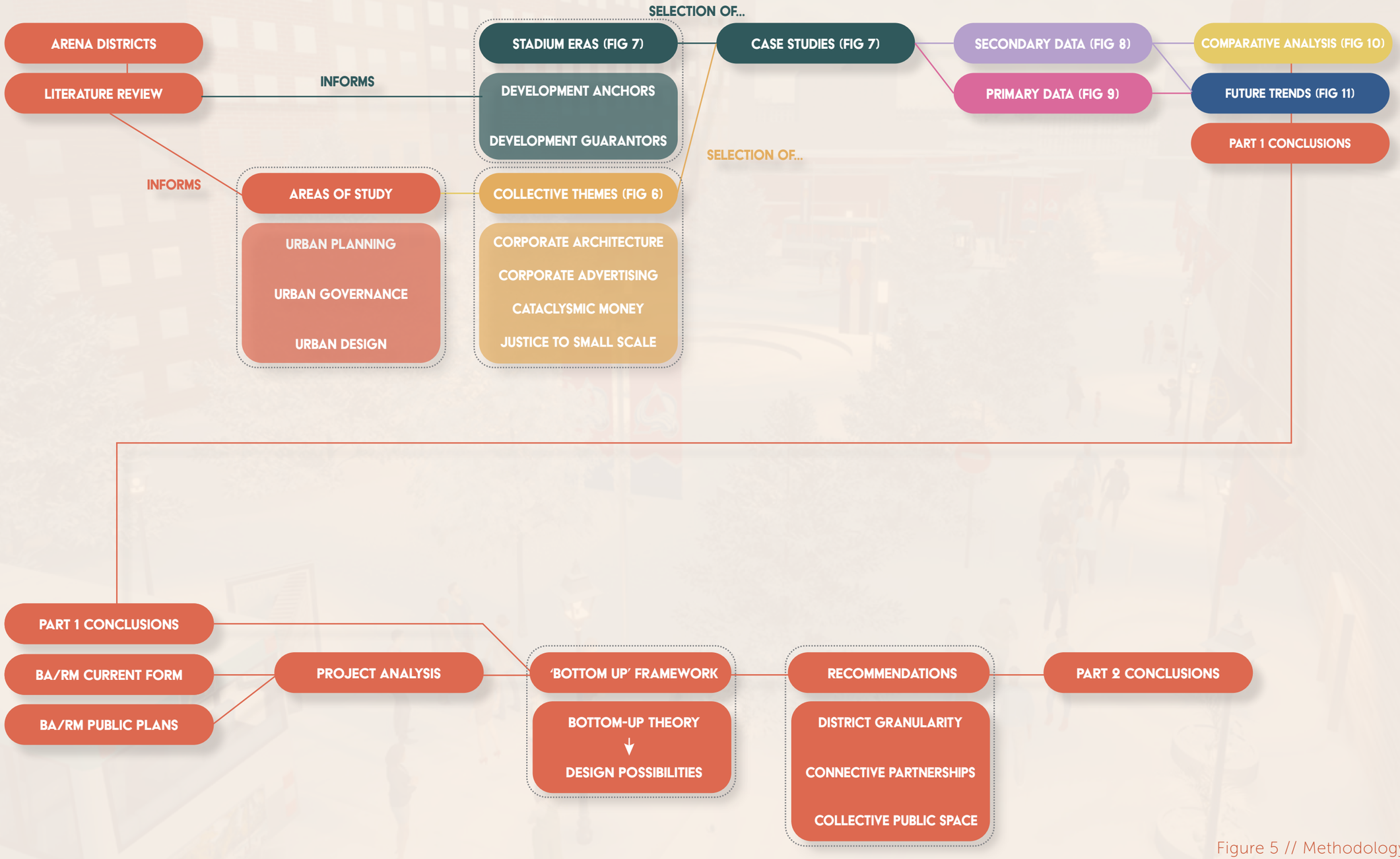
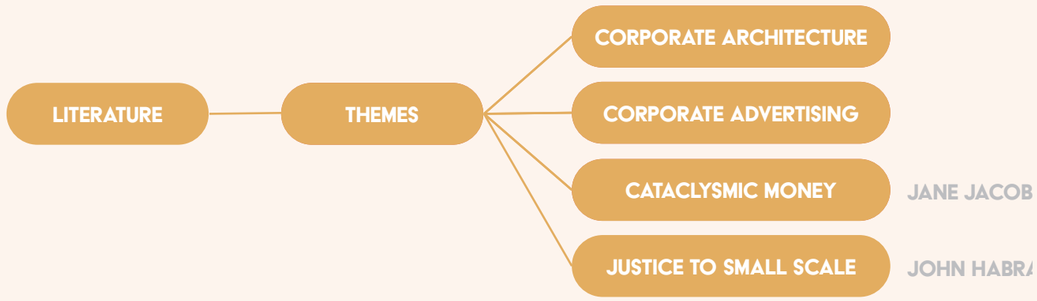


Figure 5 // Methodology // By Author

3.1 - SITE ANALYSIS, TREND DEVELOPMENT, AND REFINEMENT

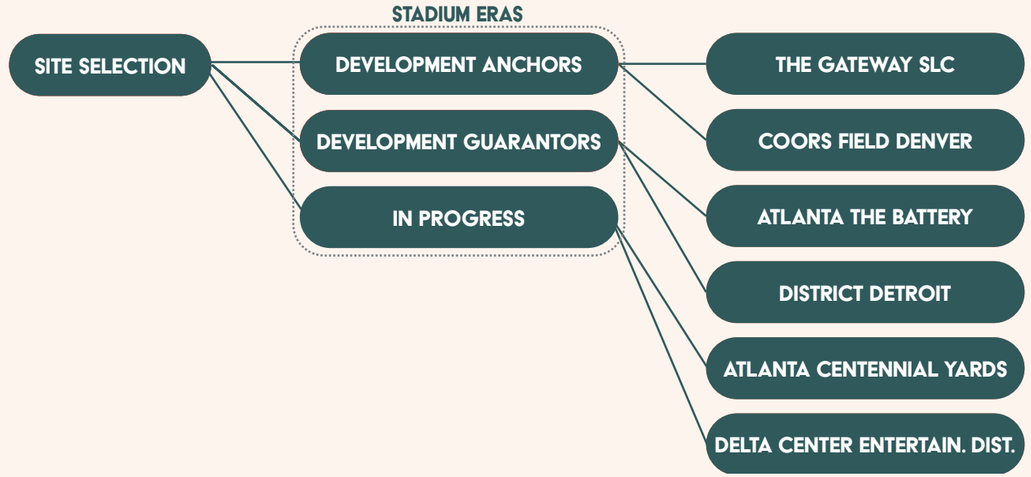
In order to understand the context and practices of sports arena and entertainment centers in the BA/RM area, I examined several case studies of arena-centered projects across the country. Fifteen case studies were considered based on their ability to analyze certain themes. I placed each project in its stadium era (Figure 7) and settled on four locations. I analyzed those four stadium-adjacent sites with types of data collection (Figure 8) and a physical site visit (Figure 9), documenting their infrastructure, building typologies, and public spaces. Afterwards, I used newspaper articles and government reports to determine each site's process of urban governance. I used trends from each of these results to craft design recommendations for Ball Arena/River Mile in Part 2.

FIGURE 6 // KEY THEMES // BY AUTHOR



The themes I explored in this project are Corporate Architecture and Corporate Advertising in urban spaces alongside the neighborhood analysis aspects of Jane Jacob's Cataclysmic Money and John Habraken's (1987) call for architecture to pay Justice to a Small Scale. Each selected case study was, in multiple ways, informative to the academic discourse related to each of these themes. The recommendations found at the end of Part 1 inform better city-making processes in each of these thematic directions of exploration. Additionally, they form the basis for the design development in Part 2.

FIGURE 7 // CASE STUDY SELECTION // BY AUTHOR



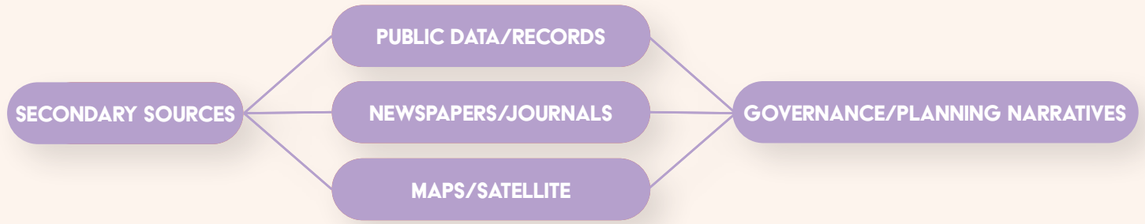
Friedman & Beissel (2020) describe four eras of stadium development, beginning with Laissez Faire ballparks as private concerns (1890–1920s). The vast majority of these stadiums and stadium sites no longer exist (Friedman & Beissel, 2020), so I did not explore them in this study.

The three stadium typologies that remain common today begin with Keynesian "Super Stadiums", characterized by large super structures, ample parking lots, and the first recognition of stadiums as "important civic amenities." These stadiums were primarily constructed between the 1960s and 1990s in America. Keynesian stadiums do still exist, but are surrounded by parking lots instead of urban districts, making them less relevant to this study.

The Development Anchor era began in the 1990s. I use two 1990s stadium districts: Salt Lake City's Gateway Mall and Denver Coors Field. Both projects were built on downtown peripheries with some intention of spurring development. Critically, this era did not feature large, centralized development by the stadium owner. Instead, civic leaders pushed team owners to facilitate development, often in neglected portions of downtown areas. These plans intended to bring other developers into these areas, crafting stadium districts. I chose The Gateway for its proximity to the Delta Center, which shares the types of sports played, distance from downtown, and mountain west context. The Gateway demonstrates the changing attitude of urban development in the 1990s as the mall typology began to fall out of favor in exchange for the urban district typology. I chose Denver's Coors Field both for its status as a development anchor era stadium that caused significant neighborhood change and for its physical proximity to Ball Arena/River Mile. The owners of Coors field also crafted their own development at McGregor Square, completed in 2021.

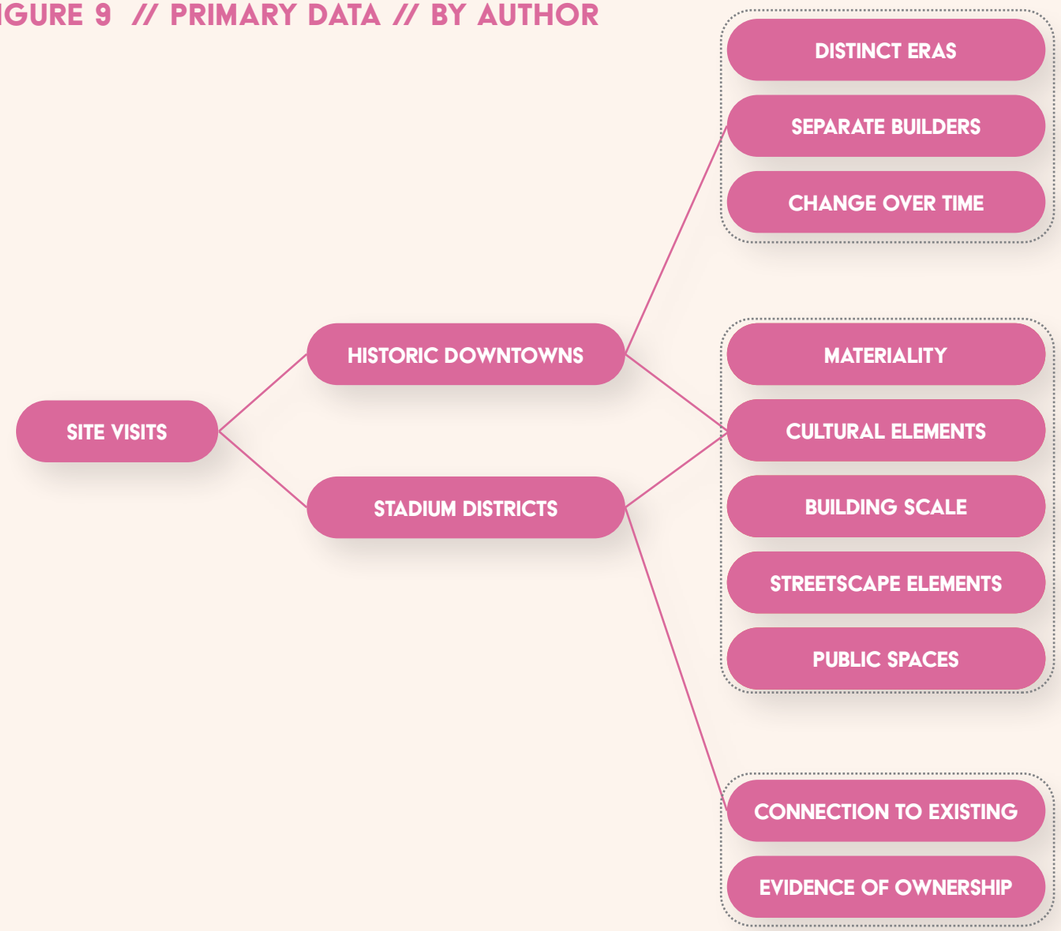
Lastly, Friedman & Beissel (2020) discuss Development Guarantors, a stadium typology common in the 2010s. These projects, including Atlanta's Battery and District Detroit, do not rely on market forces to bring development. Instead, the owner of the stadium and team, sometimes in partnership with the city, developed or are developing these stadium districts through their own financing and design. I selected District Detroit as a case study due to sharing the same types of sports, proximity to other stadiums, and proximity to downtown, while I selected The Battery for its high degree of design articulation and control of details.

FIGURE 8 // SECONDARY DATA // BY AUTHOR



My preliminary work before each site visit consisted of data collection that informed the necessary analysis. This included the public data and records on the site, often via libraries or governmental websites, newspapers and journals to examine public discourse on the site, and visual data that includes the block sizes, building typologies, and historical context present. The vast majority of cited works in the case studies portion of this text are from these governments, firms, or newspapers.

FIGURE 9 // PRIMARY DATA // BY AUTHOR

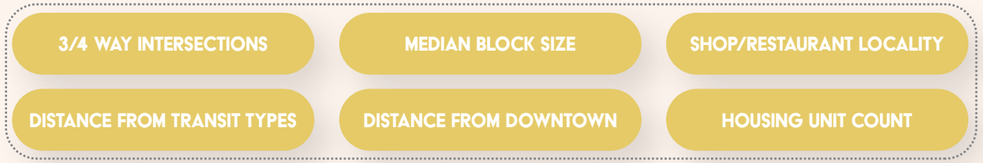


Each site visit consisted of documentation of the site's urban characteristics compared to the nearby downtowns (shown in Figure 9, left). I analyzed both the sites and the downtowns on materiality, cultural elements, building scale, streetscape elements, and public spaces. However, downtowns were analyzed for several unique elements not visible in the development sites: buildings from separate or distinct eras, buildings from unique developers, and distinct evidence of changes over time. Stadium sites contained the contrasting elements of connection, physically or culturally, to their existing urban context and the reality of a centralized ownership group.

Each site visit consisted of taking standard and VR photographs. The camera equipment consists of the Minolta ProShot MN67Z, pre-owned by myself, and the Insta360 for VR photographs. These VR photographs are not directly referenced elsewhere, but used to retroactively verify the location of standard photos. Additionally, the site visits, when possible, consisted of visits during multiple times of day, gamedays verses non-gamedays, and weekdays verses non-weekdays.

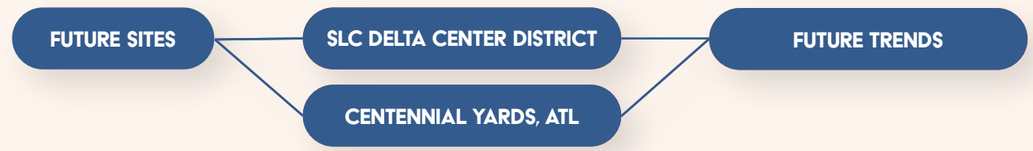
I followed the themes in Figure 6 to inform the site visits. I was informed by the Jacobian view of Cataclysmic Money and her frameworks for healthy urban design to inform my view of how separate eras, septate builders, change over time, and connection to existing urban fabric were or weren't present at each site. The visual and cultural elements, including materiality, building scale, streetscape elements, and public spaces were informed by John Habraken's call for spaces that respect their small scale.

FIGURE 10// NUMERIC DATA // BY AUTHOR



I selected important numeric data to compare the sites. These numerical data points allow a rough measure of the most 'vibrant', 'urban', and 'local' of the projects. For instance, a development with the greatest number of four way intersections, smallest median block size, most 'local' shops/restaurants, closest distance to transit/downtown, and most housing would be the most 'vibrant' and urban by this metric.

FIGURE 11 // FUTURE CASE STUDIES // BY AUTHOR

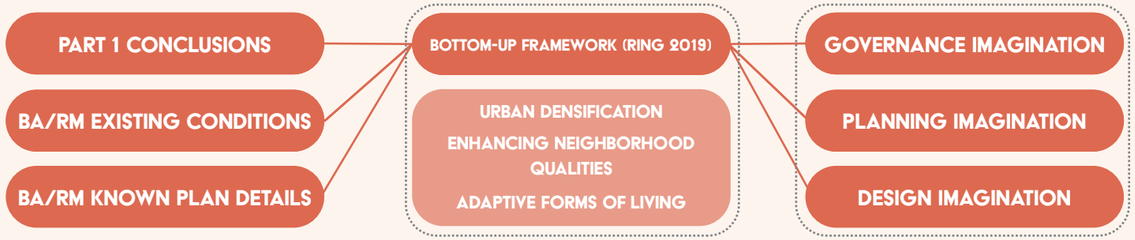


Finally, I analyzed news articles and other media that show several future projects in each of the studied cities. These future projects informed the analysis by showing which trends that are being adapted by architects, planners, and developers of future stadium sites. These sites are the future Delta Center Stadium District on the opposite side of the stadium from The Gateway and the Centennial Yards district in Downtown Atlanta.

3.2 - BOTTOM-UP PROCESS AT BALL ARENA/RIVER MILE

At the end of Part 1 of research, I was left with three refined conclusions in governance, planning, and design. I then used these three conclusions and a bottom-up framework to imagine ways in which Ball Arena/River Mile could be more communal and less corporate.

FIGURE 12 // PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS // BY AUTHOR



Following the refined conclusions, I suggested design and governance improvements for the Ball Arena and River Mile site in Downtown Denver, Colorado. This site, as the focus for the research, is selected for multiple reasons.

Firstly, the project is in extremely early stages of development, leaving time for improvements in the process and design to occur. Secondly, the project is one of the largest stadium-centered developments happening in the United States at the moment, making it a prime case study for research into the impacts of this process. Lastly, this development's proximity to the oldest portion of Denver's downtown makes it incredibly relevant to the cultural direction of the city as a whole.

The concept of a bottom-up model is described on the following page. In short, the project aims for a more democratic method of city-making in large urban developments. I used a framework of bottom-up development articulated by Ring (2019).

The design and governance improvements are centered on the themes in Figure 2. As such, the research contributes to the ongoing academic discourse around these large scale developments, stadium districts, and urban governance.

Figure 13 // Ball Arena - River Mile Rendering // via SAR+

What ways, **if at all,** *do the* **development processes** *of* **arena-centered developments** *create* **corporatized urban space***?*

What **outcomes** *might result from a* **bottom-up model** *of urban stadia district design at* **Ball Arena/River Mile?**

1 // "If At All"

This wording communicates that there was no immediate assumption that arena-centered developments indeed create 'corporatized public space.'

2 // "Development Processes"

This wording refers to the primary processes by which faux urban stadia districts are created, which is generally a top-down process instituted by the arena owner and supported by city government.

3 // "Arena-Centered Developments"

Arena-centered developments consist of buildings, streets, and public spaces, often mixed-use, which surround an adjacent sports arena and intend to utilize the economic and cultural pull of that arena for additional economic or cultural purposes.

The selection criteria for arena-centered developments to answer these questions includes city size, development size, regional similarities, and downtown adjacency. Section 4.0 includes the full list of selected case studies and their rationale.

4 // "Corporatized Urban Space"

Stephan Schmidt (2004), an urban theorist at Cornell University, describes Corporate Urban Space as: *Space that is neither public nor private, but rather sponsored. Such corporate spaces are a manifestation of the sponsor's self image and public relation efforts.*

1 // "Outcomes"

'Outcomes' is a broad term referring to any phenomena that results from an action. In this case, the outcomes that the study is interested in are the proliferation of healthy urban space and the reduction of corporatization.

2 // "Bottom-Up Model"

The 'Bottom-Up Model' refers to planning and architectural processes that begin at a community level as opposed to an institutional or corporate level. Part 2 of this project takes inspiration from Ring's (2019) bottom-up model of densification, enhancing neighborhood qualities, and finding adaptive forms of living.

3 // "The Ball Arena and River Mile"

The Ball Arena redevelopment comprises the plans for the fifty-five acres, currently parking lots, surrounding Ball Arena that are to be redeveloped by Kroenke Sports and Entertainment (KSE). The River Mile refers to the sixty-one acre redevelopment site immediately adjacent to the west, acquired by KSE in 2025. These sites are the blue region on the map (right).

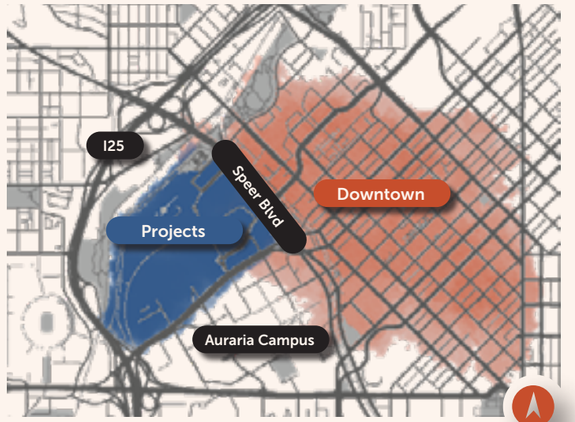


Figure 14 // Definition Map // By Author via Snazzymaps

+ // "Downtown Denver"

Downtown Denver is the historic core of the City of Denver. There is no perfect definition for what constitutes this space, but the orange region (above) is the rough area being examined. By positioning Ball Arena/River Mile as a 'second downtown', I seek to provide the methods by which BA/RM might be able to extend Downtown Denver's existing vibrancy.

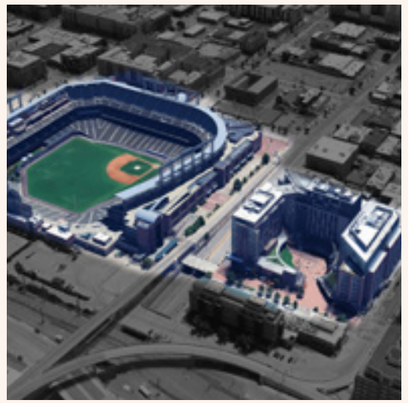
4.0 - CASE STUDIES SELECTION

EXISTING

THE GATEWAY // SALT LAKE CITY

The Gateway, designed in the late 1990s and finished in time for the 2002 Olympics in the city, represents a stadium district that strays closer to the mall typology that dominated the 1980s and 1990s. It interacts with the nearby Delta Center, where both of the city's major professional teams play.

Figure 15 // Gateway Highlight // By Author, via Google Earth



COORS FIELD // DENVER

The building of Coors Field in the 1990s created ripples by reinvigorating or gentrifying (depending on one's perspective) its neighborhood. In 2021, the owners of the stadium's team, the Colorado Rockies, completed McGregor Square on the block to the southwest of the stadium, providing a sharp contrast between the Development Anchor and Development Guarantor eras of stadium district development.

Figure 16 // Coors Field Highlight // By Author, via Google Earth

DISTRICT DETROIT // DETROIT

District Detroit lays between Little Caesars Arena and Comerica Park, all owned by Mike Ilitch, the founder of Little Caesars Pizza. The district is centered around the historic Fox Theater and consists of new development intended to extend the urban fabric of downtown Detroit. The project provides context for how projects might engage an existing downtown space.

Figure 18 // District Detroit Highlight // By Author, via Google Earth

THE BATTERY // ATLANTA

The Battery is a newly built faux urban district in the northern suburban region of Atlanta. It is widely seen as a success for a variety of reasons, including the financial stability it provides for the baseball team, the number of restaurants and venues associated with the project, and the small-scale urban design present in its spaces. However, the project has been criticized for being a modernized version of the mall typology.

Figure 19 // The Battery Highlight // By Author, via Google Earth

FUTURE (ONGOING DEVELOPMENT)

DELTA CENTER DISTRICT, SLC

The Delta Center is currently separated from its downtown by the Salt Palace Convention Center, but approved plans by Ryan Smith, owner of both of the city's professional sports teams, intend to remake most of the convention center into a new entertainment district.

Figure 17 // Future SLC Highlight // By Author, via Google Earth

CENTENNIAL YARDS, ATLANTA

Centennial Yards, built over a railyard known as "The Gulch", is an in-progress urban neighborhood being constructed by the billionaire owner of the Atlanta Hawks. It serves to potentially expand the downtown urban fabric to the edge of these arenas, making pedestrian connections significantly better to the monumental buildings on downtown's west side (the arenas and a conference/ convention center).

Figure 20 // Future Centennial Yards Highlight // By Author, via Google Earth

4.1 - SALT LAKE CITY GATEWAY

Figure 21 // Gateway Highlight // By Author, via Google Earth

4.1.0 - CASE STUDY INTRODUCTION

In Salt Lake City, Utah, The Gateway Mall is one of the earlier examples of monetizing the region around a modern sports arena. Immediately adjacent to the Delta Center, home an NBA and NHL franchise, the Gateway was opened in 2001 by Boyer CO, a large commercial developer not attached directly to the arena or its teams. The mall contains a series of stores, restaurants, movie theaters, condos, and offices (Semerad 2015). The project was described by local Desert News in 2001 as “Salt Lake’s grand marketplace” (Nii 2001). Today, however, it faces economic difficulties as newer, more profitable malls and shopping centers open up in its vicinity.

This case study holds value as an example of a project widely agreed to be a “mall” – but in the same breath, described as mixed-use, pedestrianized, and even as adaptive reuse, all terms used overwhelmingly positively in the modern urban planning discourse.

4.1.1 - GOVERNANCE

The Gateway was constructed in 2001 at a cost of $375 million dollars, primarily private funded – the only public funds involved was via the Redevelopment Agency of Salt Lake reimbursing the developers for "the costs associated with construction of public improvements" and a "portion of the extra construction costs needed for underground structured parking" (Redevelopment Agency of Salt Lake 2001).

The Gateway's primary interaction with surrounding urban governance comes in the form of the controversial decision made by the city government to prevent the Nordstrom store that had been five blocks to the east, on historic main street, to move into the Gateway as a flagship store (Deseret News 2003). This process occurred via a ruling by the Board of Adjustments that Nordstrom was a "department store" and thus not in line with the mixed-use zoning of the Gateway District. The mall applied for a rezoning exception, which was revoked 6-1 by the city council.

Figure 22 // Map // By Author via Google Maps

Interestingly, this ruling by the city council came eight days after the Church of Latter-Day Saints announced a brand new mall development in the city's nearby historic core. Consultants for the church publicly made statements (Deseret News 2003) indicating that their project would not be feasible if the Gateway was allowed to have department stores. It is unknown how the statements impacted the council decision, but what is clear is that the Gateway's economic success dropped dramatically after the Church's mall (City Creek Center) opened in 2012 (Semerad 2015, Riddle 2016, Harris 2017), complete with a flagship Nordstrom store. The annual taxable sales at the Gateway fell from $210 million in 2011 to only $100 million in 2013 after the opening of City Creek (Semerad 2015). The debacle demonstrates the danger of over-reliance on a single attraction.

The dichotomy of mall - a style of corporate space - verses mixed-use district is hazy; the advertising, architecture, and aesthetics of the development were intended to feel like a "mall", while the land uses, lack of flagship department store, and inclusion of some amenities not traditionally associated with a mall - including a hotel and a planetarium – make the case that the center is more of a mixed use district. Regardless of classification, the Gateway's financial success was tied to its place as the "premier shopping destination" (Semerad 2015, Nii 2001), and not to its mixed-use elements.

A strong argument for the interpretation of the Gateway as a mall is the degree to which its public space is controlled by a private entity – the owners of the mall. These owners even went so far as to consider a dress code in 2016 (Boal 2016), which local advocates for the homeless argued was discriminatory and meant to remove people from the public space. The code was not formally passed after pushback. There are related issues to cleanliness and drug use in the area around the mall; a 2014 University of Utah study for the mayor's office found that interviewees found that interviewees consistently cited it as one of the least clean and more drug-prone areas of downtown Salt Lake (Riddle 2016).

Figure 23 // Gateway Bridge // By Author

Figure 24 // Before Arena or Mall // Historic Aerials

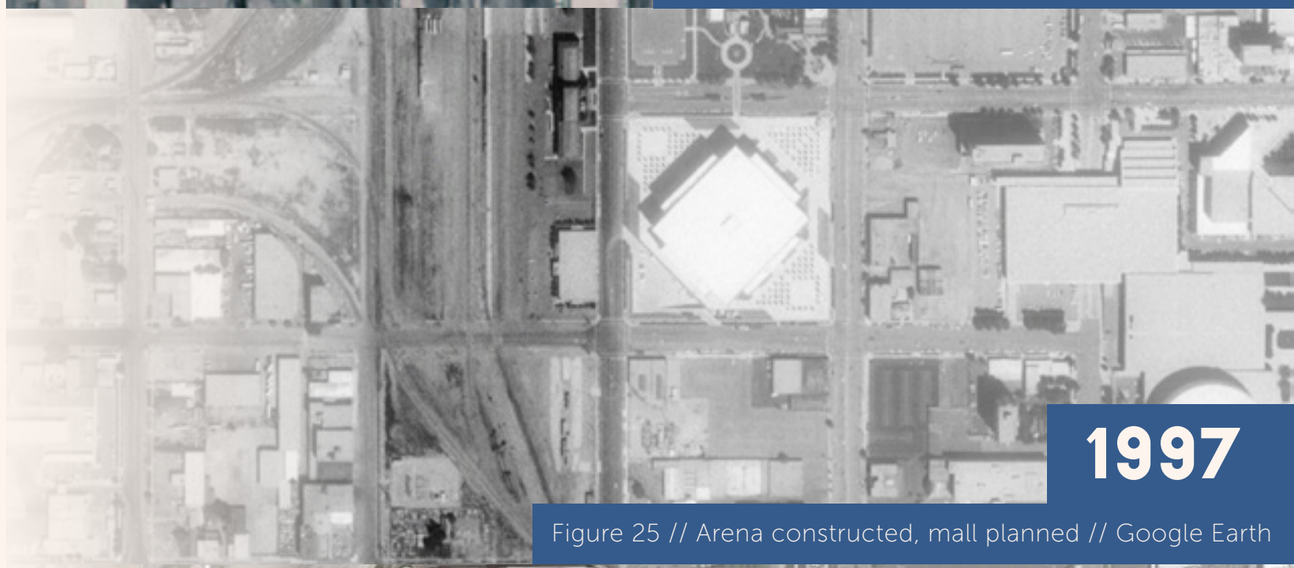


Figure 25 // Arena constructed, mall planned // Google Earth

Figure 26 // Mall and Arena Completed // Google Earth

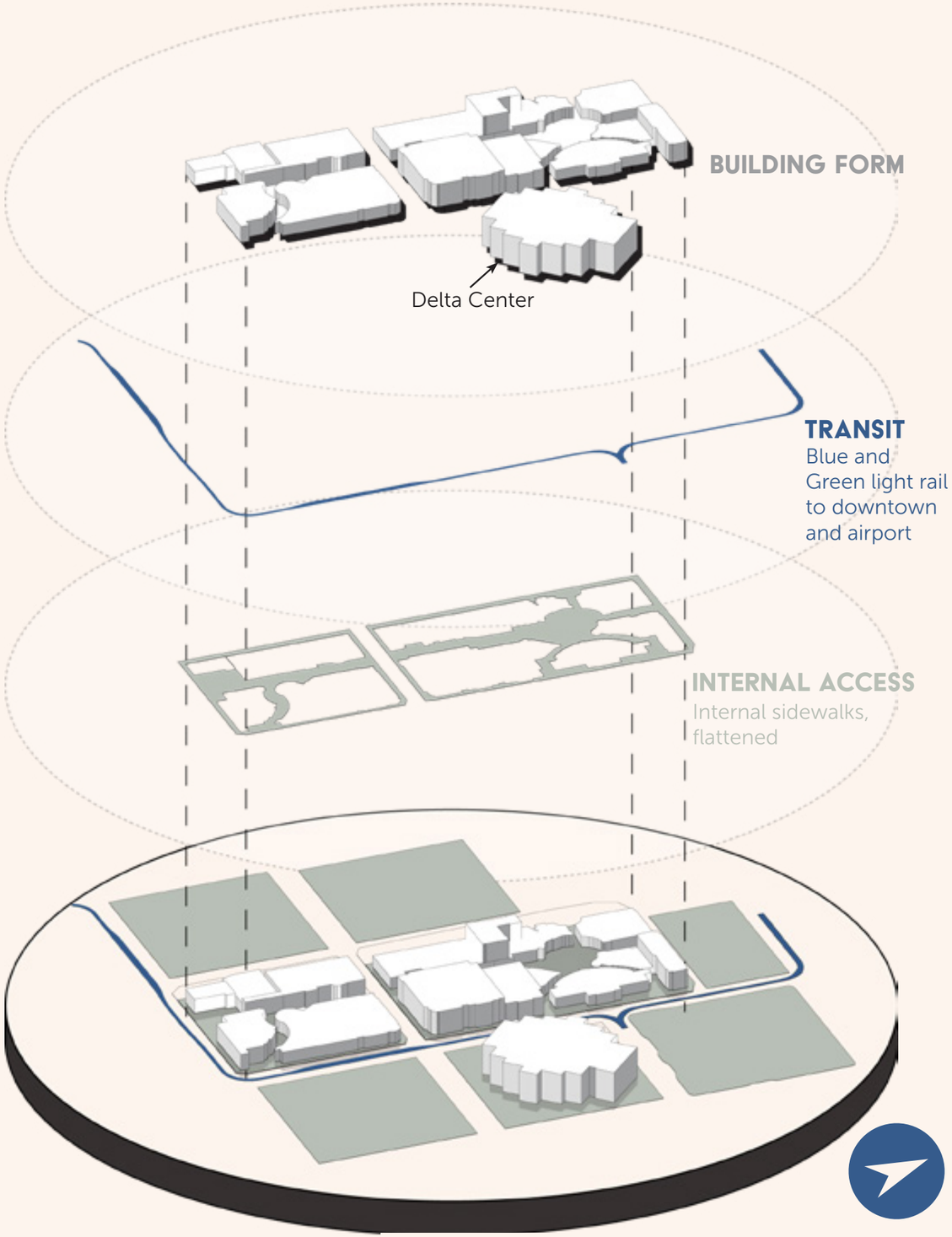


Figure 27 // The Gateway District Diagram // By Author

4.1.2 - TYPOLOGY // PLANNING

The Gateway was designed by the Jerde Partnership, and its founder, Jon Jerde (Jerde n.d.a, Leibowitz 2002). Jon Jerde was considered to be one of the preeminent designers of malls and shopping centers around the world from 1977 to his death in 2015. His work became so integral to most modern developments of shopping centers that journalist Ed Leibowitz (2002) described him as "global capitalism's preeminent designer."

The Gateway follows many of Jerde's standard choices in design. As comparison, his earliest work for his partnership, Horton Plaza, broke the mold of the traditional mall. When Jerde first conceptualized Horton Plaza, he purportedly "built a model out of cardboard, abandoning the straight line altogether for a crooked walk that changed orientation and elevation." (Leibowitz 2002). The result is a "labyrinth-like" mall filled with "uneven levels, long ramps, sudden falls, dramatic parapets, dead ends and colorfully painted facades" (Gutzmer & Mankel 2020).

Sale Lake City's Gateway, while not so labyrinthian, follows some of the ethos pioneered by Jerde and his firm. From above, the mall appears to follow a rational logic; at grade, the varying levels of plaza spaces and promenades and eclectic mix of building styles produce a lived-in effect . The mall's central street even has a name, Rio Grande Street, indicating the degree to which the mall attempts to recollect some elements of traditional urban design.

Jerde (the firm) describes itself as having been responsible for the planning of the project on their website (Jerde n.d.), while local architects were responsible for infill details and zoning specifics (Gardner 2004). On the same page (Jerde n.d.a), the firm lists the development as a "mixed-use district" in the heart of Salt Lake City and describes the central axis as a "street," not as a mall. This language is reinforced by the modern owners of the development, who have pushed back on the moniker "mall". Edie Trott, a marketing director for the current owners of the Gateway, argues that it is not a mall, but an "entertainment, arts, culture and lifestyle destination."

This distinction is not agreed upon by a number government, media, and academic sources on the topic. From research at the University of Utah (Straube & Steiert 2014) to articles published well after the opening (Riddle 2016), the moniker "mall" seems to follow the development, regardless of what the planners and marketers prefer.

Like many of the case studies to follow, the Gateway works under a simple premise: keep the shoppers, dinners, and arcade-goers on a single street axis. Following some of the design principles of traditional malls, The Gateway keeps its entrances minor and its central axis major.

Southworth (2006) describes the "atrium mall", a typology of mall which became popular in the 1950s and survived through the 1980s. In an atrium mall, the businesses all face a central, internal atrium, designed to mimic some of the elements of traditional urbanism for what Southworth describes as a "fantasy urbanism—devoid of weather, traffic and poor people." The Gateway, in many ways, attempts to do the same in its urban planning, albeit in an outdoor context.

Another moniker that sometimes follows the mall and Jerde's work as a whole is the concept of *Disneyfication*, a stripping down of the complexity of a space into something controlled and "safe" (Zukin 1995, p49-77, Leibowitz 2002). Leibowitz argues that "The critical assault on Jerde amounts to this: His architecture is a parody of a city, with all the grit and complexity wiped away." For some, the architecture of a Jerde mall, complete with its faux facades and ahistorical street patterns, are simply a reminder of the faux urbanism that Disneyland's Main Street USA evokes at Disneyland. At the Museum of Contemporary Art in LA, Jerde's work was once crowded into a room dedicated to *Disneyfication* (Leibowitz 2002).

The district interplays with the nearby Delta Center, which hosted a number of events for the Olympic Games in 2002. The builders of the Gateway explicitly rushed the project in time for the games (Nii 2001) and played host to several broadcasting operations alongside naming the largest public space in the mall the "Olympic Legacy Plaza." Today, the project remains attached to the arena via marketing and proximity, which was apparent when I visited the site before, during, and after a hockey game in 2025. As such, the Gateway represents an early example of urban planning taking advantage of a stadium as a mixed-use district catalyst.

4.1.3 - PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

DELTA CENTER

THE GATEWAY

The numbers (#) correspond to images and analysis on the following page. Each focuses on an aspect of public space present in and around The Gateway.

1. Streetscape // Ordering
2. Intersections // Walkability
3. Residential Space
4. Public Seating
5. Transit // Access
6. Advertising Density

Figure 28 // Gateway Map // By Author, via OpenStreetMap

1 Streetscape // Ordering

The streets of The Gateway (left) are modeled after traditional urban streets (right) via distinct sidewalks, auto-accessible roads, trees in planters, and buildings that are immediately adjacent to the street. The design imitates urbanism via a mix of building appearances, but all of the buildings in this picture are truly part of the mall.

2 Intersections // Walkability

The Gateway has one intersection with a publicly owned street (left) at 100 South, with a bridge crossing the street on the promenade level as well as high-visibility crosswalks. The bright colors of the crosswalks mirror the bright colors used downtown (right) for bike infrastructure. The intersection is near the attached Planetarium, one of the most activated aspects of the site (on my visit), which is the only “civic” aspect of the site.

3 Residential Space

The street to the west of the Gateway, 500 West (left), is dominated by residential uses and framed by a parkway owned by the city government. On the other side of the Arena, at 100 South and John Stockton Drive are new-build apartment buildings (right). The mall-adjacent apartments provide for a quieter and more nature-oriented space than the more traditionally urban apartments.

4 Public Seating

The public seating in The Gateway (left) is often framed by fake grass, interesting elements (such as the swings in this photo), and some degree of seclusion (this particular space is on the second floor). Meanwhile, the more traditional urban benches in downtown Salt Lake (right) are often similarly visually interesting but more adjacent to the street.

5 Transit // Access

The Gateway and Delta Center are serviced directly by two stops on the light rail network (left). However, the Gateway also plays host to the historic Union Pacific railway hub (right), which has been converted into a hotel. The evolution of the area has turned it from a national hub (via the train station) into a local hub, via the several light rail stops.

6 Advertising Density

The three public plazas (left) that connect the Delta Center to The Gateway, the light rail network, and the rest of downtown are filled with advertising for the sports teams and concerts occurring at the center. Meanwhile, in more “traditional” urban space in the city, advertising takes up a much smaller visual footprint.

Figure 29 // Photos // By Author

4.2 - COORS FIELD, DENVER

Figure 30 // Coors Field Highlight // By Author, via Google Earth

4.2.0 - CASE STUDY INTRODUCTION

Denver's Coors Field is widely accepted as one of the most successful arena-anchored urban development areas in American history, transforming a dilapidated warehouse district into a thriving center for the city and spurring additional development in a wider sphere. Like The Gateway, the various developments around Coors Field were (until recently) not directly owned by the team or arena owners, but the stadium was part of a larger comprehensive plan that created growth for the entire district.

This case study holds value for being in the same city as Ball Arena/ River Mile while being old enough to examine the long term impact of development. There are factors to consider including gentrification, overburdened housing costs, and taxpayer funds, but on the whole, the project is widely seen as a galvanizing force for its downtown.

4.2.1 - GOVERNANCE

During the 1990s, as Salt Lake City planned The Gateway and enjoyed the newly built Delta Center, similar processes were beginning in the warehouse district of Denver. Mayor Federico Peña, elected as a young, progressive, forward-thinking mayor for the city, planned for the city to become "world-class." Peña had viewed baseball as a necessary requirement for the city, establishing a commission in 1984 to bring a baseball team to the city (Claire & Saiz 2003). When the city was awarded the Rockies by Major League Baseball, it came as a result of $139 million in city financing for the project, leading to city ownership of the stadium.

Figure 31 // Historic Building in North Larimer // By Author

The urban development around Coors Field, when the field was constructed, consisted primarily of warehouses and other formally industrial sites (Buckman & Mack 2012). Urban development around the stadium primarily focused on infill development and revitalization. The number of restaurants adjacent to the stadium purportedly jumped from 35 to 60 within a year of opening, while the number of housing units had doubled (Western 1996).

Coors Field is widely celebrated as a catalyst for urban development in its region. Buckman & Mack (2012) argue that Denver used the four widely accepted principles of vibrant urbanism pioneered by Jane Jacobs. Additionally, these factors were championed as part of a larger urban design plan (Claire & Saiz 2003).

With the neighborhood desirable and land becoming more valuable, the Rockies unveiled a new project in 2017, McGregor's Square (Schroeppel 2017). The project redeveloped a full city block into an urban plaza surrounded by offices, hotels, and restaurants. The square was developed by the architecture firm Stantec, which described the surrounding neighborhood as "vibrant" (Stantec n.d.) and wanted their plan to create similarly "vibrant urban space".

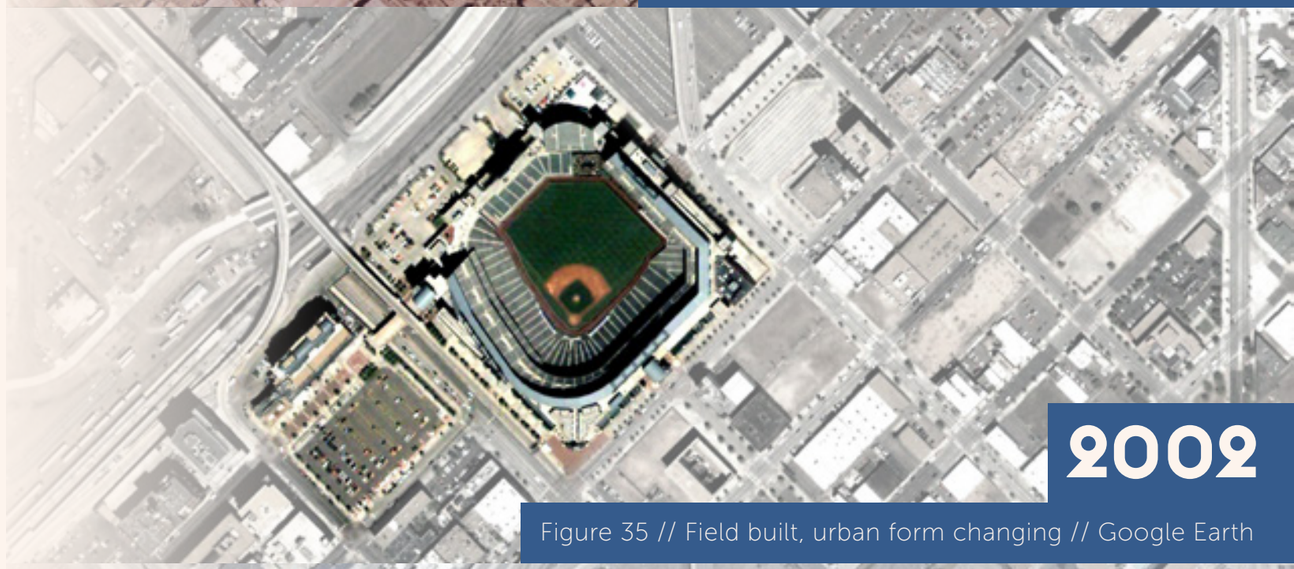
Figure 32 // Coors Field // By Author

One critical difference between McGregor Square and other developments in Lower Downtown is that McGregor is owned by the same group as the baseball team. Not only does this group own the hotel, office building, retail space, and residential space, but also the public realm that exists between the buildings (McCormick 2025). This creates the conditions necessary for a high degree of advertising; a large video board dominates the central space, while the walkable block of Wynkoop to the northwest is filled with references to the team. These elements make the block effectively an extension of Coors Field.

Figure 33 // McGregor Square // By Author

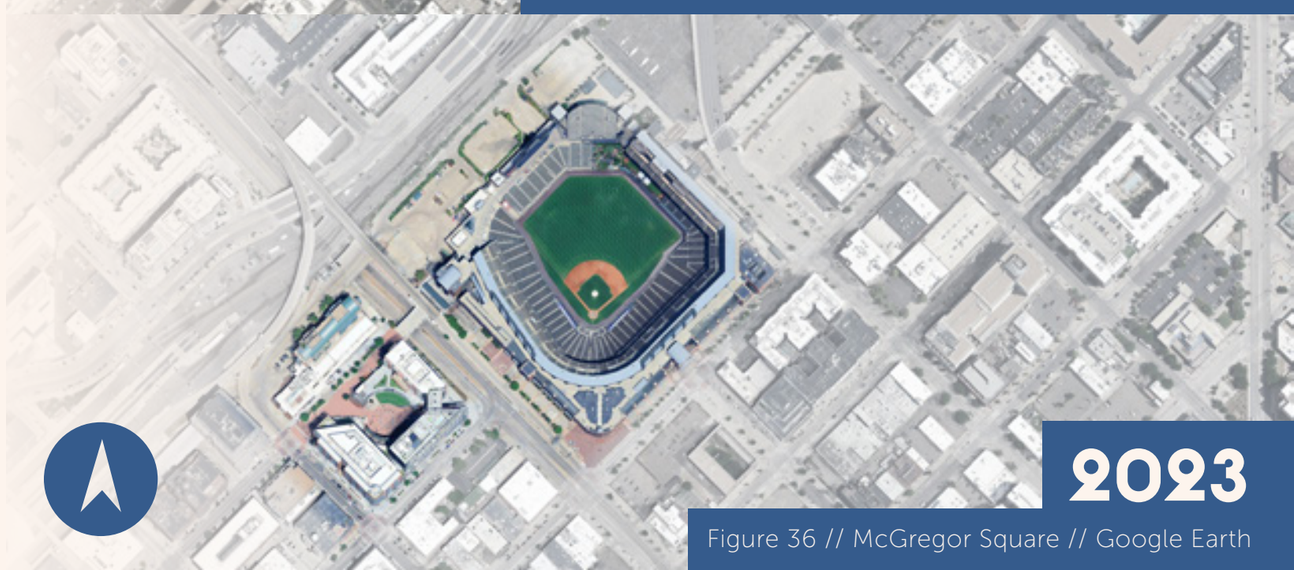
1991

Figure 34 // Historic North Larimer // Historic Aerials



2002

Figure 35 // Field built, urban form changing // Google Earth



2023

Figure 36 // McGregor Square // Google Earth

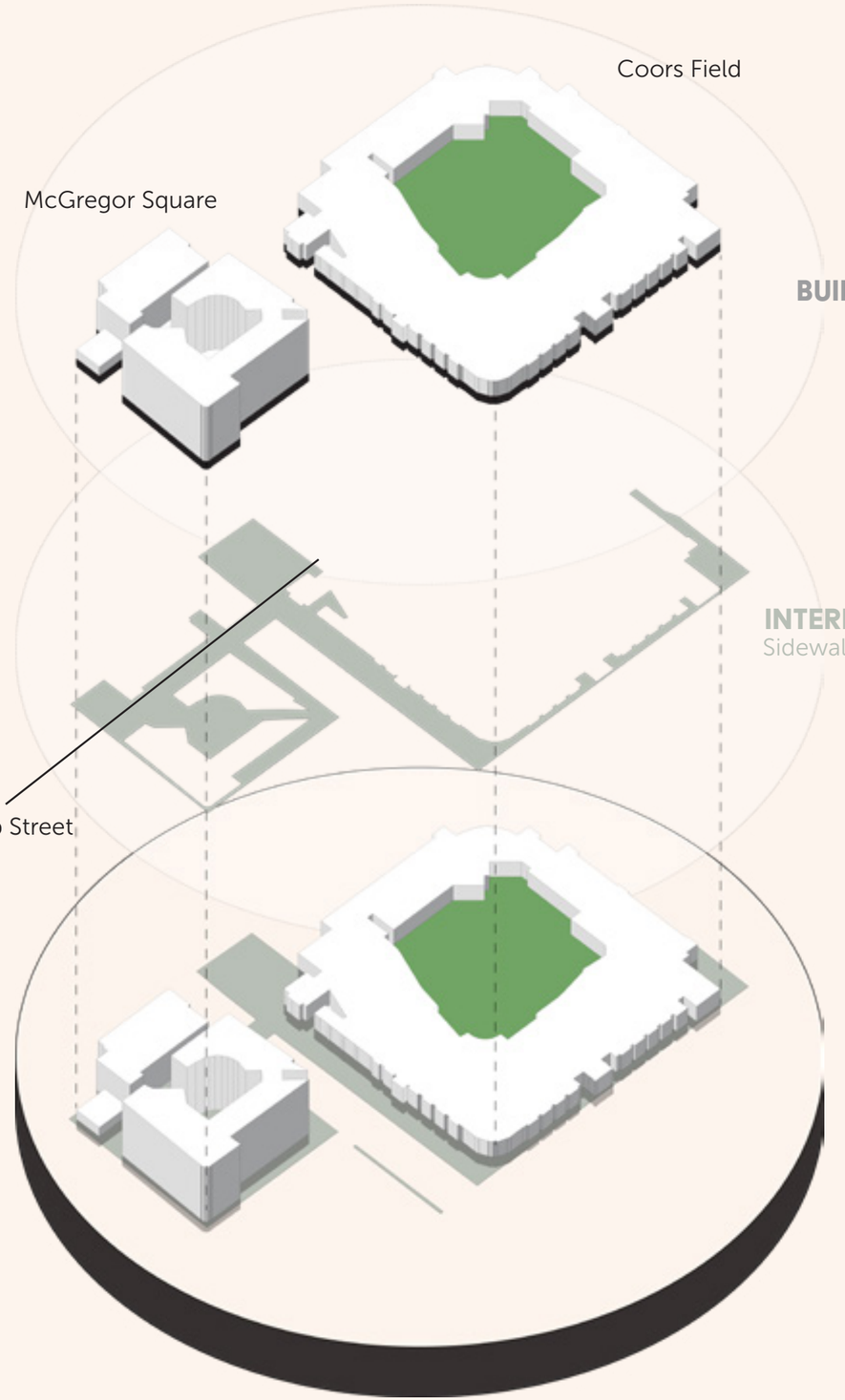


Figure 37 // Coors Field Diagram // By Author

4.2.2 - TYPOLOGY // PLANNING

The developers of McGregor Square site describe the intended circulation as "intuitive", linking the main entrance of Coors Field to the essential Wynkoop Street through a diagonal passageway. As with many of the other case studies, the flow of traffic is focused towards the arena via explicit urban forms – the hotel on the left, the offices on the right. Alternatively, one may choose to walk down Wynkoop itself, which is pedestrianized, owned by the Rockies, and of course, leads right to an additional entrance. The streets themselves are responsive to the design of the adjacent baseball stadium.

Figure 39 // Disney // Wikimedia Commons

On a larger basis, the original 1990s development of Coors Field came with a variety of impacts to the neighborhood. The number of businesses and housing units increased dramatically, reinventing a neighborhood that had formerly been working class. Miller et al. (2013) cautions that "there was no guarantee that North Larimer would evolve into a diverse reincarnation of its former self instead of baseball version of Disneyland's Main Street U.S.A." There are parallels to be had with the arguments made against Jon Jerde and his faux urban shopping centers, but the critical difference is that North Larimer (sometimes referred to as LoDo, while some argue that those terms describe similar but distinct neighborhoods) already existed as a neighborhood with a distinct culture – for some, any removal of the "authenticity" of this neighborhood is a great problem (Miller et al. 2013).

Miller et al. (2013) describes the resulting energy as follows:

With the advent of the Blake Street Ballpark, Private developers absorbed vacant or underutilized properties in the surrounding area at a frenetic rate. With new types of businesses and residents, the character of both LoDo and the nascent Ballpark Neighborhood evolved to meet the new lifestyle dynamic of the city of leisure. Brewpubs, restaurants, sports bars, and nightclubs all flourished in a resounding tribute to the longstanding alliance between baseball, beer, and food. Expensive lofts reclaimed warehouses and vacant lots while real estate speculation reached a fever pitch in general. A new demographic also surged into the area when young professionals, drawn by the promise of a vibrant nightlife, descended on the downtown area.

The planning behind the Coors Field project ultimately became a secondary force behind that of simple momentum. The rapid development of North Larimer, or the Ballpark Neighborhood, or LoDo, became the inevitable result of a space where developers had opportunities to rebuild and reshape a neighborhood considered to be on the up-and-up.

Figure 38 // Nearby Development // By Author

4.2.3 - PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

COORS FIELD

MCGREGOR SQUARE

The numbers (#) correspond to images and analysis on the following page. Each focuses on an aspect of public space present in and around The Gateway.

1. Signage // History
2. Public Walkways
3. Scale // Size
4. Centering of Sports
5. Relationship to Industrialism
6. Facade // Materiality

Figure 40 // Coors Field Map // By Author, via OpenStreetMap

1 Signage // History

McGregor Square uses a historic serif font (left) to communicate historical connection to the city. It marks a contrast with Union Station (right), its primary transit hub several streets southwest, which uses more modern lettering (installed in the 1950s) on a truly historic building to communicate progress and modern style.

2 Public Walkways

McGregor Square's primary entrance from the southwest (left) is a pedestrianized extension of Wynkoop Street. The use of herringbone brick in the materiality of the street contrasts many other streets in downtown Denver, including just down Wynkoop (right). Here, the street materiality is a more standard concrete.

3 Scale // Size

McGregor Square's distinctive architectural element is a bridge between the office and hotel (left) towering ten stories above the street level. From a distance (right), the height of the square towers over the smaller, older brick buildings common in the immediate vicinity.

PROJECT CITY CENTER

4 Centering of Sports

At McGregor Square, a large video board is used to center attention in the space towards the prospect of professional sports (left). This focus is repeated in other parts of the city, where local businesses like Wynkoop Brewing CO (right) fly the flags of all the major sports teams in the state.

5 Relationship to Industrialism

The architecture of McGregor Square uses industrial elements like steel throughout its design, such as this facade of Tom's Watch Bar (right). These uses mirror the historic reused industrialism visible throughout Downtown Denver, visible in this pedestrianized former rail bridge at Wewatta over Cherry Creek.

6 Facade // Materiality

The facade of Coors Field (left) uses brick patterns reminiscent of several buildings from the nearby area, principally the Blake Street Terrace (right), a 3 story former industrial and current office building built in 1887. Both buildings, built over a century apart, utilize dark green iron/steel to compliment the primary brick materiality.

Figure 41 // Photos // By Author

4.3 - DISTRICT DETROIT, DETROIT

Figure 42 // District Detroit Highlight // By Author, via Google Earth

4.3.0 - CASE STUDY INTRODUCTION

The District Detroit, unlike the other case studies but like Ball Arena/River Mile, is a long-term project planned over a number of years. It has already experienced significant setbacks and delays. Centered on the historic Fox Theater, the district was already an existing neighborhood largely owned by Ilitch Holdings, who also owns the local hockey and baseball teams, Little Caesars Pizza, and a variety of other ventures. Little Caesars Arena, finished in 2017, remains the most prominent result of the project, first announced in 2014 (Lengel 2018).

The District exists today as something of an urban advertising project laid over the already existing infrastructure with a primary focus on its arenas and renovated, pedestrianized street, Columbia Street. As of 2026, its website advertises a variety of bars, restaurants, and shopping experiences present nearby while the government page for the project promises ten more new buildings bringing $751 million dollars of revenue to the city over thirty-five years. These promises have been treated in the media as infeasible or behind schedule, leading to a broad distrust of the project and its leaders by the public (Reindl 2025).

4.3.1 - GOVERNANCE

The District Detroit was announced in 2014 as vision for midtown Detroit, which had long been ignored by policymakers and planners alike (Lengel 2018). The Ilitch Family, which owns both the Detroit Red Wings and Detroit Tiger major league sports teams imagined their midtown district as both a "model of innovation" and as a "good urban neighbor". To assist with the development, the city of Detroit invested $284.5 million in the new Red Wings arena (now called Little Caesars Arena), paid out prior to and during the city's 2013 bankruptcy filings (Anderson 2016). Of the projects proposed in the initial reveal, the arena was by far the quickest to take shape, only a little over three years before opening (Lengel 2018).

Figure 43 // Columbia Street // By Author

Some urban space has been shaped into the walkable vision of District Detroit, primarily Columbia Street, which links the parking lots on the southwest edge of the district with the baseball entrance on the northeast side of the district. This block-long 'European style' (Lengel 2018) street has been renovated to feature a number of new businesses, which are largely local. The project is still envisioned to complete ten new buildings, which were intended to bring $2 billion in economic impact by 2020 (Lengel 2018). Instead, the ten flagship buildings have stalled out, struggling to find investors (Barret 2024). Keith Bradford, president of Olympia Development, told a community meeting in 2024 that the office projects were delayed because of a lack of interest in office developments from banks and investment firms, while other projects are slowly searching for some investments (Barret 2024).

Figure 44 // Arena Exterior // By Author

The relationship between government and private billionaire investors in Detroit is complex. Anderson (2016) writes of the struggle between four landowning billionaires in Detroit in the last decade, who each own hundreds of parcels. Anderson directs focus onto two of these owners, the Ilitch Family in midtown and Dan Gilbert, the founder of Quicken Loans in downtown. Each own large areas in the center of Detroit, so much so that many locals refer to the midtown area as 'Ilitchville' and the Downtown area as 'Gilbertville' (Anderson 2016). These two organizations are "relocating thousands of jobs into Detroit, reversing suburban flight for the first time in decades." (Anderson 2016). In a way, Detroit might represent a form of urban governance that runs through two checkbooks. Indeed, the community benefits agreement of District Detroit invests $167 million in benefits in hopes of receiving $800 in incentives (Williams 2023)

This isn't a new paradigm in Detroit. Anderson (2016) discusses the former dependence of the city's economy on only several 'small number of enormous businesses' – the auto industry. The city flourished for half a century under the leadership of an increasingly large, mobile form of 'monopolistic capital'. When the automakers found a less expensive option, however, they followed the initiative north to the suburbs and then abroad. Anderson muses that this kind of reliance may be replaying itself now, simply in the new urbanist style of the 21st century.

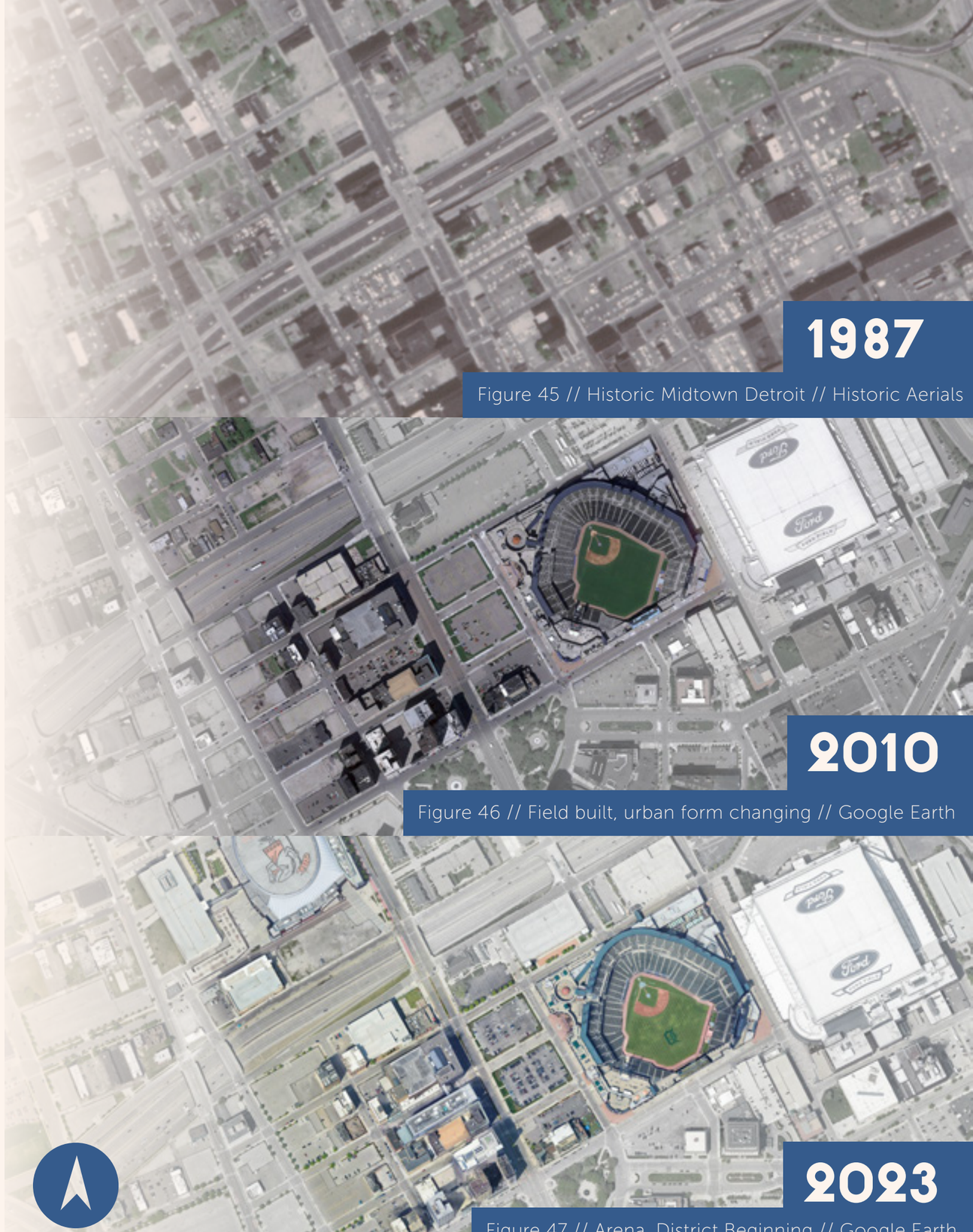


Figure 45 // Historic Midtown Detroit // Historic Aerials

Figure 46 // Field built, urban form changing // Google Earth

Figure 47 // Arena, District Beginning // Google Earth

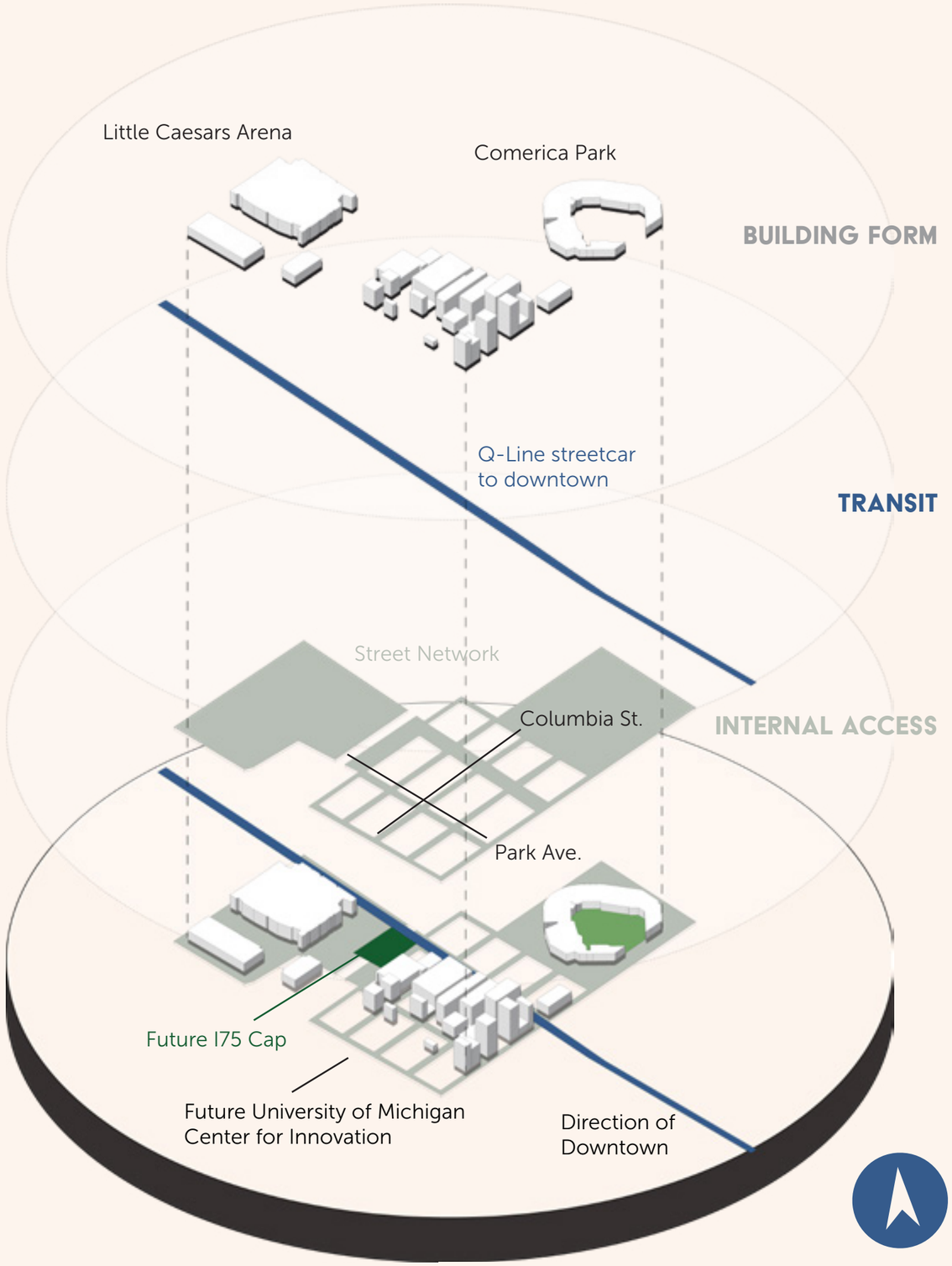


Figure 48 // District Detroit Diagram // By Author

4.3.2 - TYPOLOGY // PLANNING

A primary architect firm involved in District Detroit, KPF, attests that the planning goals for the large scale site explore the two existing 'anchors', the ballpark and hockey arena (as of 2017) and connect these anchors to a new third anchor, the University of Michigan Center for Innovation. Alongside downtown, these four 'anchors' produce a simple cross that centers around the intersection between Columbia Street and Park Avenue (KPF n.d.).

A major planning limitation for the renovated neighborhood is Interstate 75, which separates the hockey arena, business school, and several smaller developments from the central region of the district. In order to remedy this, there are large-scale plans for an interstate cap, which would be used for a public park. This cap, alongside two others nearby, would provide connectivity to these neighborhoods while reducing highway noise (Downtown Detroit Partnership 2026). These plans are supported by the Ilitch Organization but led by local groups including the Downtown Detroit Partnership, City of Detroit, and Michigan Department of Transportation. This interstate cap, however, seems to disregard Park Avenue as the primary northwest-southeast axis of the neighborhood, opting to bridge at Woodward Avenue a block northeast instead.

Figure 50 // Future I75 Cap // Downtown Detroit Partnership)

The district is planned around several historic buildings, including the Fox Theater. This historic building is placed at the intersection of Woodward and Columbia, making it the most likely candidate for the actual center for the new neighborhood. The theater, purchased by Ilitch in 1988 (receiving the National Preservation Award in 1990 for the subsequent refurbishment), was seen by the company as the original cornerstone of the district (Biles & Rose 2021). His goal was to create an "ultra-sports entertainment district" (Biles & Rose 2021) by moving all of Detroit's major sports teams into the area surrounding the District, a goal achieved through the completion of Little Caesars Arena in 2017.

Figure 51 // Fox Theater // By Author

Anderson (2016) summarizes the goal of the Ilitch family, as remaking Detroit "as a splashy, modern entertainment hub," which draws parallels with the language used by the Gateway in Salt Lake City and other malls or mall-like developments around the country. One may recall the critique of Jon Jerde and his work as "a parody of a city, with all the grit and complexity wiped away" (Leibowitz 2002). The question that faces urban planners, designers, and architects, both in Detroit and elsewhere, is whether the city ought to lean into historical 'grit" and complexity or evolve into a series of "splashy, modern entertainment hubs" - a style of corporatized space.

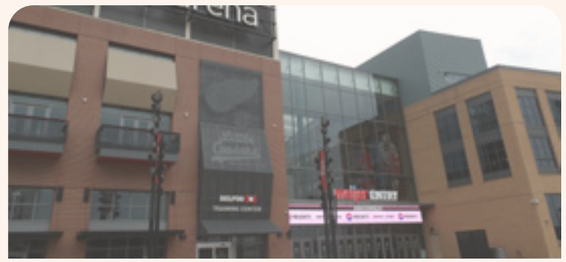


Figure 49 // Little Caesars Arena // By Author

4.3.3 - PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

ARENAS

DISTRICT DETROIT

The numbers (#) correspond to images and analysis on the following page. Each focuses on an aspect of public space present in and around The Gateway.

1. Plaza // Articulation
2. Public Seating
3. Greenery // Decoration
4. Shops // Facades
5. Centering of Public Transit
6. Framing a Street Axis

Little Caesars Arena

Comerica Park

Columbia Street

Woodward Ave.

Downtown

Figure 52 // District Detroit Map // By Author, via OpenStreetMap






1 Plaza // Articulation

The southwest edge of Little Caesars arena is home to Chevrolet Plaza (left) and a large parking garage, which is used for events and contains a large video board. When taking these photos of the plaza, I was approached by a security guard, reflecting the privatized nature of the space. Capitol Park (right) is a contrasting example of highly articulated space, which is more common in Downtown Detroit.

2 Public Seating

The public seating and plantings along Woodward in District Detroit (left) use similar materiality and design ethos to public seating along Woodward in downtown (right). In both cases, the public space is intended to feel playful, modern, and approachable for the young audience that Gilbert and Ilitch both intend to bring into Detroit.

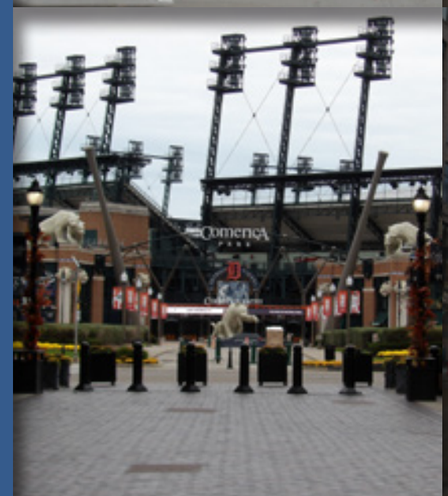
3 Greenery // Decoration

Columbia Street in District Detroit (right) is decorated for holidays with some festive greenery. Downtown, Woodward Avenue was substantially more decorated (right) when I visited, feeding into the "playful" feeling that both streets aspire to.

PROJECT CITY CENTER








4 Shops // Facades

The shops along Columbia Street in District Detroit (left) utilize a similar scale as shops along Woodward downtown (right). In both cases, the first level has outdoor space framed by plantings and canopies over the street.

5 Centering of Public Transit

The northeast edge of Little Caesars Arena in District Detroit is framed by Woodward Avenue and the Q-Line light rail (left). Downtown, the Woodward has relatively wide public space in the middle of the street (right) which it utilized as a stop for the Q-Line. In both cases, designers shaped an intentionally modern and friendly feeling.

6 Framing a Street Axis

As I walked northeast on Columbia Street in District Detroit, I noticed that its axis is perfectly lined up with a primary entrance to Comerica Park (left). Meanwhile, most of Woodward Avenue runs straight through most of Downtown (right), only broken up by park and monumental space. As such, the historic street frames the city itself while Columbia Street frames the baseball stadium.

Figure 53 // Photos // By Author

4.4 - THE BATTERY, ATLANTA

Figure 54 // The Battery Highlight // By Author, via Google Earth

4.4.0 - CASE STUDY INTRODUCTION

As of 2014, the Atlanta Braves had represented their city in major league baseball since 1966 from the same site a little over a mile southeast of Downtown Atlanta. In 2015, the ownership group unveiled plans to move the team 11 miles to the northwestern suburbs of Cobb County in order to build a brand new urban home for the arena from scratch. The Braves are responsible for all development in the previously undeveloped site, surrounded by traditional suburban patterns.

The site borrows a number of elements from traditional urban spaces, including the articulation of its sidewalks, urban elements, and building form. The irregular street pattern creates several uniquely shaped blocks that are utilized for urban amenities and eye-catching elements. Additionally, the site is filled with unambiguous advertising for the baseball team, cementing its stated destination-focused goals.

4.4.1 - GOVERNANCE

The Atlanta Braves, the MLB franchise based in Atlanta, were purchased by Liberty Media from its prior owners in 2005. Liberty Media, a conglomerate holding company primarily invested in motorsports and live entertainment, viewed downtown Atlanta's Turner Park as outdated (despite being completed in 1993), wishing for improved transportation, increased parking, and the ability to control surrounding development (Bradbury 2022).

In 2015, after four (Owens 2025) failed negotiations with the City of Atlanta, the Braves turned to their backup plan, a stadium in the northern suburbs of unincorporated Cobb County. This location had several advantages. Firstly, it was located in the Cumberland Community Improvement District, opening the way for increased governmental investment (Bradbury 2022). The ballpark (not including the surrounding development) came with a price tag of $672 million dollars, of which the county contributed $300 million. The Braves agreed to stay in the stadium through at least 2046 and produce a $400 million mixed use development district in the vicinity (Bradburry 2022).

Cobb County Commission Chairman Tim Lee, who negotiated many aspects of the deal, described the stadium and mixed use district as "the single greatest economic development project in the modern history of Cobb County" (Bradbury 2022). The county government was seemingly aware of the economic consensus regarding stadium projects as economically burdensome and unlikely to lead to long term net gains for the county, but perceived the mixed use elements of the stadium as a unique reason that separated it from former stadium projects. Another member of the county commission, Bobb Ott, stated that he was aware of the studies of stadium economic development, but that the Braves were also building a $400 million mixed use district, implying that the district would outweigh any economic consequences of stadium development (Murphy 2019). Mike Plant, an executive for the team, stated that the Braves "were going to build a city and were going to create tons of jobs, tons of density and year-round tax revenues." (Murphy 2019)

However, economic analysis by J.C. Bradbury (2022), PhD, professor of economics at nearby Kennesaw State University, finds that "the evidence is clear that Truist Park has failed as an economic development project." As of 2022, the county continues to run significant financial deficits of $6.4 million yearly on stadium operation and will continue to do so until 2046. He concludes that "A sound public policy assessment requires acknowledging that Truist Park and The Battery have not made the average Cobb citizen any wealthier," and calls for other communities to be aware that the attachment of a mixed-use district doesn't necessarily remove the risks associated with a new stadium.

One critical detail of the governance of this district is that unlike the majority of Cobb County, the streets are privately owned, meaning that the Atlanta Braves and their associated companies are responsible for maintenance and design in these spaces. Additionally, the district has its own security team, for which the district's website claims there exists a "command center" (Battery Atlanta n.d.). This security can be seen consistently on the streets of the districts. I personally experienced this security force: while photographing the public spaces in The Battery, a security member asked me to change from my professional camera to my cell phone camera. This experience reinforces that the streets and plazas of are privately controlled.

Another instance of the project's private governance is that the residents of the neighborhood are only permitted to fly banners for the Braves on their decks, via a stipulation in their lease (McCormick 2023). The CEO of the Braves, Derek Schiller, believes this to be a reasonable requirement, stating that "The way you need to think about this is we are the developer" (McCormick 2023).

Figure 55 // Suburban Park Area // Google Earth

Figure 56 // Site on the eve of development // Google Earth

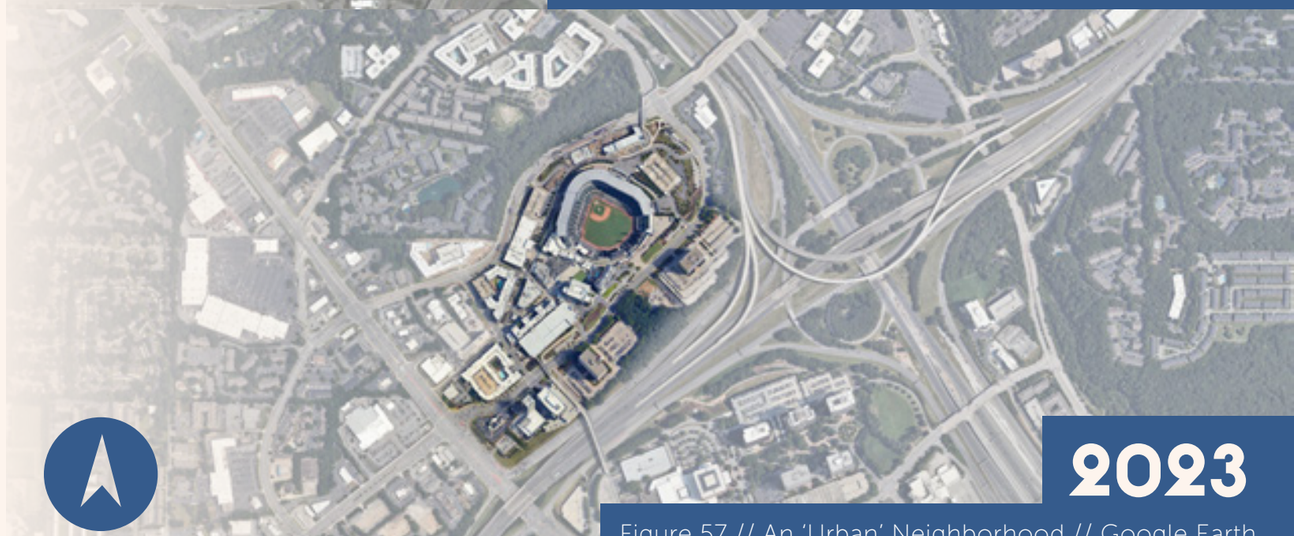


Figure 57 // An 'Urban' Neighborhood // Google Earth

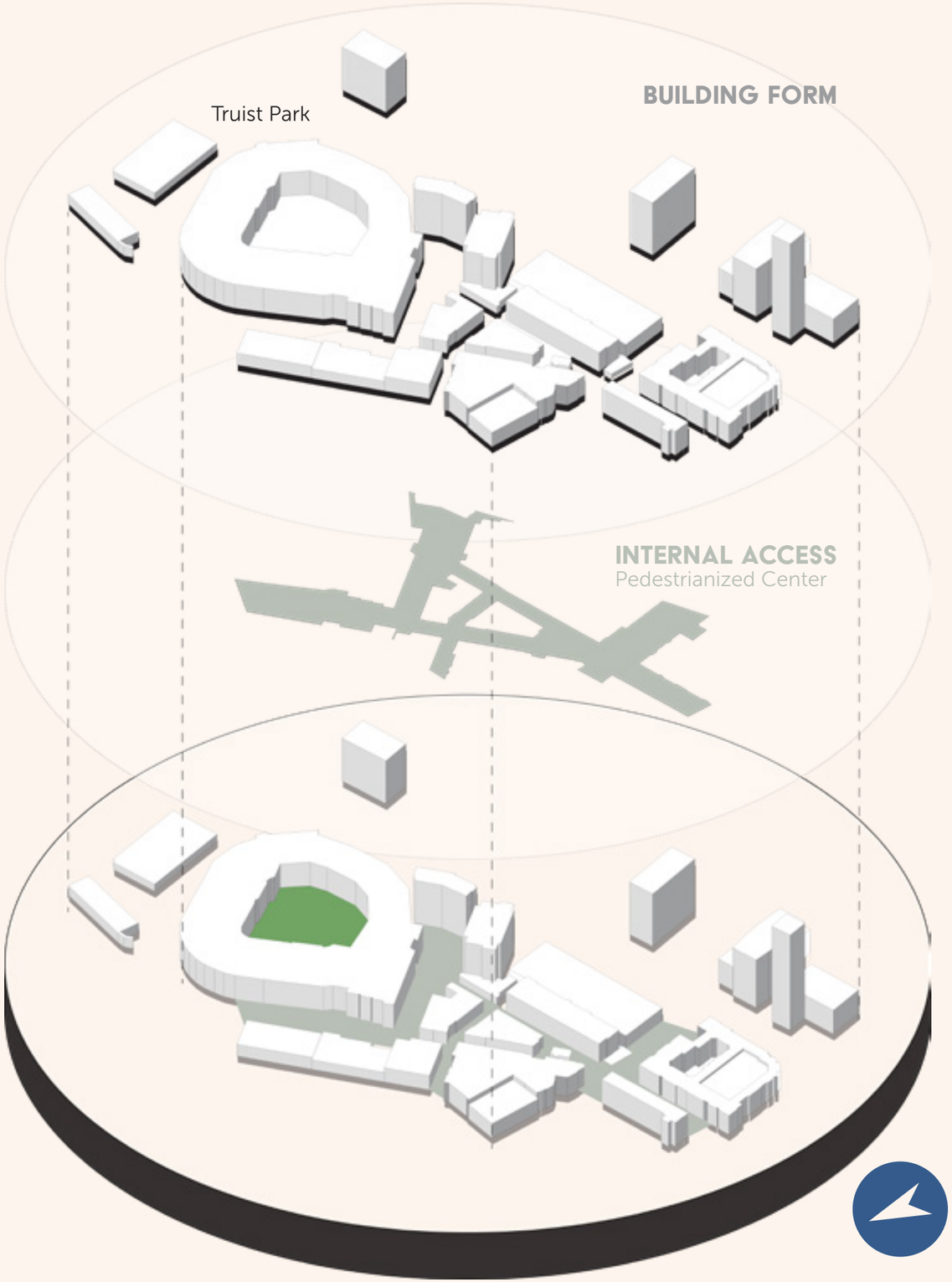


Figure 58 // The Battery Atlanta Diagram // By Author

4.4.2 - TYPOLOGY // PLANNING

Jerde Partnership, the same firm responsible for Salt Lake City's Gateway was hired for early development of the public spaces and urban form of the site. The firm lays out the following goals on their website:

"The urban design of this 24-hour mixed-use destination neighborhood was founded on organic planning where chance encounter is promoted, a variety of paths are provided and multiple centers of activity are planned that fluidly shift throughout the day. Natural shifts in grade throughout the site are used to great advantage in the choreography of the paths" (Jerde n.d.b).

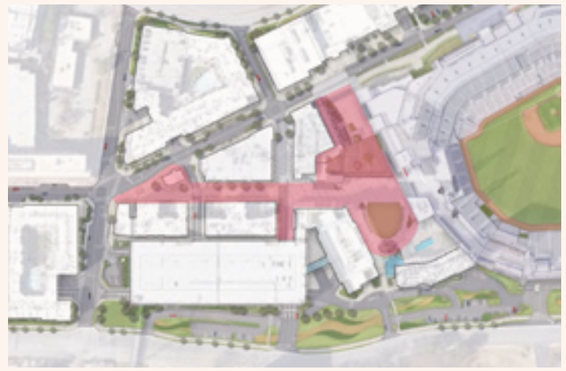
These goals mirror many of the traditional urban planning principles explored by Jacobs (1961), where urban spaces are for community, activity, and fluidity. The project is planned around a central core, with a triangle shaped street pattern. Outside of this core, the project largely contains office buildings, parking garages, and suburbanized streets, making the small central core the entirety of the project's urbanity.

Given that the firm recognizes the neighborhood as a 'destination neighborhood', this urbanized core recalls the mall-like patterns of several earlier case studies. Like The Gateway and District Detroit, The Battery's urban design focuses on high-end entertainment and dining. Additionally, the district is seemingly not built to grow. The central triangle of streets are boxed on all sides by parking garages, suburban street patterns, or larger facades, limiting the possibility of anchored developments that extend the urban form. This inward facing pattern is reminiscent of the atrium mall described by Southworth (2005), with an articulated entertainment area in the center surrounded by parking, highways, and suburbanized form. Some reporting seems to recognize the similarities: Elizabeth Strom (2023), a reporter covering the nearby Tampa Bay Rays, advocates against a similar district for Tampa Bay by describing The Battery as a "copy-and-paste suburban mall" after a visit in 2022.

The Battery's streets, as mentioned in the preceding section, are privately owned. The map below shows the streets owned by an LLC formulated for the ownership of the streets in the neighborhood (Cobb County 2025). This private ownership model permits The Battery to dictate all design choices, designate arterial access, and as mentioned above, patrol the streets with a private security force similar to 'mall cops'.

Parcels owned by "Bred CO LLC" |
Parcels owned by other entities

Figure 60 // Parcels // Via Cobb County Open Data



Central Triangle in The Battery

Figure 59 // Center // Via HGOR

4.4.3 - PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

TRUIST PARK

THE BATTERY

The numbers (#) correspond to images and analysis on the following page. Each focuses on an aspect of public space present in and around The Gateway.

1. Walkways // Articulation
2. Parks // "Public"
3. Art // Narrative
4. Security // Access
5. Public Seating
6. Verticallity // History

Figure 61 // The Battery Map // By Author, via OpenStreetMap

PROJECT

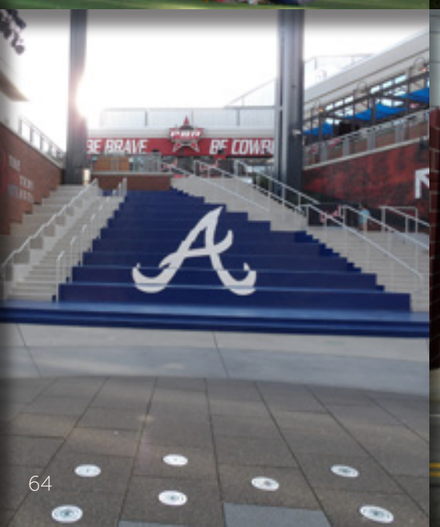
CITY CENTER

1 Walkways // Articulation

The Battery's walkways are highly pedestrianized (left), contrasting with Downtown Atlanta (right), where car-lanes tend to take up most of the street width. In The Battery, the pedestrianized street axis tends to end with elements like the stadium or the large baseball screen (left), while streets in Downtown Atlanta tend towards being more eclectic and less controlled.

2 Parks // "Public"

The 'public' park in The Battery (left) is immediately adjacent to the stadium and dominated by an Atlanta Braves sign. Thus, the advertising surrounding the public space is utilized as a reminder of who owns the space. Downtown green spaces tend to feel more public and open, such as this green space outside the National Center for Civil and Human Rights (right).



3 Art // Narrative

The limited art found in The Battery focuses on the team identity and brand, such as this staircase (right). Public art and graffiti in downtown Atlanta tends to be more expressive and diverse in subject matter, such as this mural on Joseph E. Boone and Maple in Vine City.

PROJECT

CITY CENTER

4 Security // Access

The Battery is primarily accessible via car owing to the limited public transit and walkability in the surrounding area. As such, the development's entrances (left) tend to be unguarded stairs into large parking garages. In walkable parts of Downtown Atlanta, security takes a more direct form, such as this fence and guards in Peachtree Fountain Plaza (right).

5 Public Seating

The public seating along streets in The Battery is generally limited to concrete slabs, such as the one shown on the left. In Downtown Atlanta, it is more common to see traditional benches, such as these ones near Centennial Olympic Park (right).

6 Verticality // History

A noticeable element of Downtown Atlanta is the 'verticality' of public spaces, often framed by courtyards and varying street levels (right). Having built on an empty site, The Battery uses verticality to place emphasis on the brand elements, including this display attached to a giant model baseball (left).

Figure 62 // Photos // By Author

4.5 - COMPARATIVE DATA

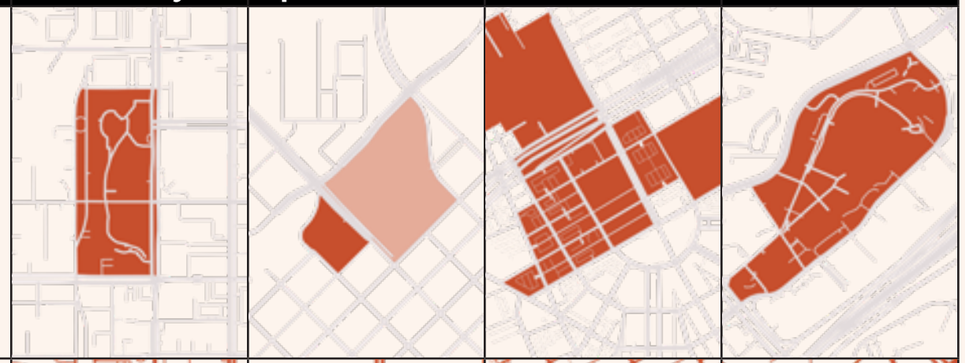
Visual Data	**The Gateway, Salt Lake City**	**McGregor Square, Denver**	**District Detroit**	**The Battery, Atlanta**
Study Area (1"=1500')				
Street Network (1"=1500')				

Figure 63 // Visual Data Table // By Author

The four selected sites are shown above at scale. The Gateway and The Battery are both situated in less dense contexts while McGregor Square and District Detroit are both within some of highest density portions of their cities.

The chart to the right shows data related to site sizes, block size, business locality, distances from transit and downtown, and the number of residential units.

As one may anticipate, the projects tend to have higher degrees of "urbanity" when situated in more urban contexts. District Detroit and McGregor Square have by far the highest rate of 4 way intersections, a general measure of urban mobility. The Gateway, interestingly, has the second smallest median block size. One reason for this may be the method by I defined blocks; any pedestrian pathway was considered the edge of a block, meaning that the pedestrian pathways through The Gateway broke it into 9 blocks, while some may describe it as only 2.

The locality measures demonstrate what percentage of restaurants and shops listed on the development's official website operate exclusively within the development's state. As such, I consider this measure to be demonstrative of how "unique" and "local" the development is. In this measure, The Battery scores by far the lowest, while McGregor Square and District Detroit are tied for the highest degree of locality.

The data supports the intuition developed in the earlier analysis of each case study: The Battery and The Gateway are more "mall-like", while District Detroit and McGregor Square are more "urban".

Numerical Data	**The Gateway, Salt Lake City**	**McGregor Square, Denver**	**District Detroit**	**The Battery, Atlanta**
Year Completed	2001	2021 (Coors Field 1995)	2017-Ongoing	2017
Acreage	20.9	3.2 (Just McGregor)	46	74
Restaurant Locality Percentage*	65%	88%	88%	42%
Shop Locality Percentage*	100%	100%	100%	18%
Distance from rail or BRT stop (miles)**	Immediately Adjacent	0.19	Within Project	0.59
Distance from local bus stop (miles)**	Immediately Adjacent	0.08	Within Project	0.20
Distance from Downtown (miles)**	0.5	In Downtown	In Downtown	10
3-Way Intersections (per acre)***	0	.3125	.0652	.0811
≥4-Way Intersections (per acre)***	.3349	1.250	.4782	.0405
Median Block Size (acres)****	1.51	0.90	1.71	2.19
Number of Residential Units*****	482	105	695 (when completed)	531

Governance Metrics
Site Location Metrics
Site Design Metrics

Figure 64 // Numerical Data Table // By Author

*Calculated by author using official project websites. A "local" shop or restaurant is defined as a business that operates physical locations only within the studied development's state. **See Appendix A2**

**Calculated by author from the closest edge of the studied area. For Distance from Downtown, Salt Lake City is measured from Temple Square and Atlanta from Woodruff Park.

***Calculated by author. Street intersections on edge of study site were included if connected to additional walkable areas (SLC, Denver, Detroit) and not counted in Atlanta, where these intersections lead to suburban stroads.

****Calculated by author in ArcGIS Pro using satellite data. **See Appendix A1**

*****Data gathered from either project website or governmental sources. **See Appendix A2**

Figure 65 // Futures Highlights // By Author, via Google Earth

5.0 - EVOLUTION // THE FUTURE

In two of the cities I visited, there are future plans for larger, more centralized stadium districts than the ones I analyzed above: Centennial Yards (upper left) in Atlanta and an unnamed entertainment district (lower right) in Salt Lake City on the other side of the Delta Center from the existing Gateway Mall.

5.1 - DELTA CENTER DISTRICT // SALT LAKE CITY

Figure 66 // Rendering // via owner Ryan Smith on X (formerly Twitter)

Ryan Smith, owner of the Utah Jazz and Utah Mammoth, intends to renovate the block to the east of his arena, currently a convention center, into an entertainment district (above). The plan calls for a replacement of the existing Salt Palace Convention with a new pedestrian walkway that would connect Downtown SLC with the arena. When I visited, I noticed that pedestrians walking from downtown tend use to S. Temple Street to access the site. The new pedestrian thoroughfare would make for a friendlier experience.

To fund the district, the city agreed to a .5% sales tax to fund the project, which city council chair Victoria Petro argues is a "good-faith" action to keep Salt Lake City the economic and cultural core of the state of Utah (Romboy 2024).

The earliest plans and renderings show many of the same trends visible in existing case studies: a large video screen appears to dominate one of the buildings while a pedestrian thoroughfare will be perfectly aligned with the new arena facade. The project, like District Detroit and Coors Field, intends to revitalize a portion of the historical industrial district of its city with government assistance. Like these projects, it will create and manage a highly articulated district curated to the needs of the local sports teams.

5.2 - CENTENNIAL YARDS // ATLANTA

Figure 68 // Rendering / via Urbanize Atlanta

Centennial Yards in Atlanta is the brainchild of Atlanta Hawks owner Tony Ressler. The 50-acre redevelopment is intended to connect the new Mercedes Benz Stadium and existing State Farm Arena to Downtown Atlanta via a new urban district elevated above the existing railyard, historically called "The Gulch". The development is supported by a municipal bond program.

The building of a new street level above the train network is not a new concept in Atlanta, as most of downtown was elevated for similar purposes in the early 1900s (Parrish 2023).

The project has completed two buildings as of 2025, including the Hotel Phoenix, (right). Like many stadium districts, there is a large advertising video board.

Figure 67 // Hotel Phoenix // By Author

In a statement given to Urbanize Atlanta, the company describes "pedestrianized routes, shared surfaces, and landscaped plazas form a vibrant public realm that can accommodate a broad range of experiences and opportunities" (Green 2021). These stated goals of vibrancy and diversity have become the universal language of these styles of projects in the last few decades.

All photos by author

5.3 - COMPARATIVE QUALITIES

Both the Centennial Yards and Salt Lake City entertainment district developments involve some of the trends of other urban stadium districts. In the case of Salt Lake City, the urban form is dictated by a primary promenade which will extend from the existing downtown space to the Delta Center. Cutting through land currently used by a convention center, this development would tie the stadium to its downtown more directly.

In Atlanta, the Centennial Yards also seeks to connect its existing downtown with the stadium area, albeit less directly. Centennial Yard's renderings seem to feature no obvious central thoroughfare, instead offering three streets that pedestrians may choose from. As such, the Centennial Yards district gives the pedestrian a greater degree of choice, as Jane Jacobs would advocate for in *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961, 178-186).

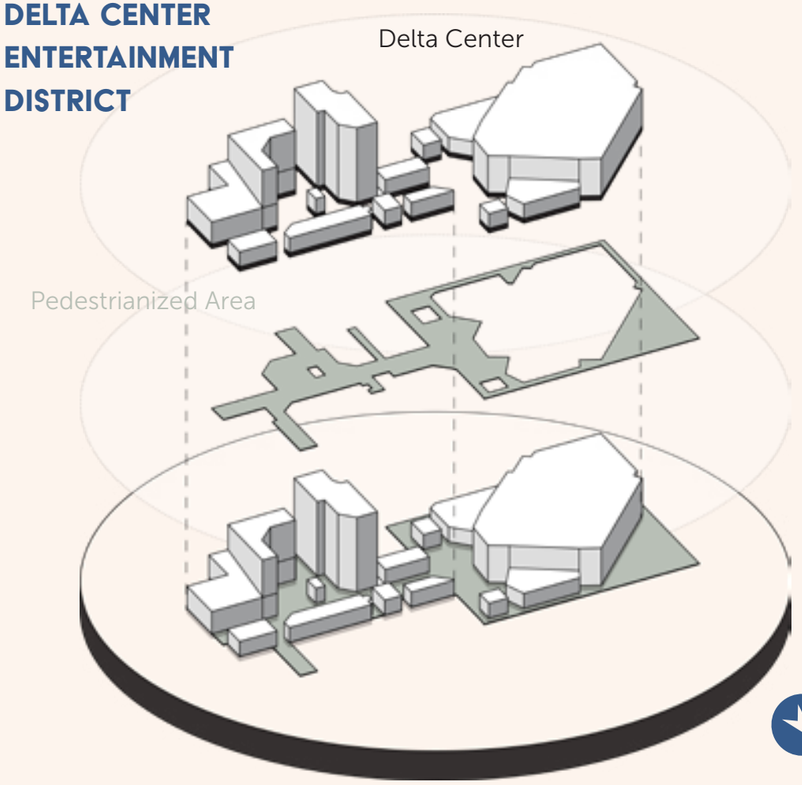
The owners of the respective teams both see their respective districts as part of their legacy, according to separate articles from the New York Times. Ressler, the owner of the Atlanta Hawks, first asked his chief executive about The Gulch after first acquiring the team, having a "twinkle in his eye" as he said "We're going to do something with that" (Belson 2025). For Ryan Smith, owner of the Utah Jazz and Mammoth, the new Delta Center District is part of a professed lifelong ambition of revitalizing Salt Lake City into a modern, innovative, and growing metropolis (Ganguli & Belson 2024).

However, the different urban design proposals may reveal different goals. In Atlanta, the project doesn't necessarily center the sports arenas as the most important design element. Both existing stadiums are walkable from the district, but the district's streets are not dictated by the stadium. In Salt Lake, the district chooses the more conventional path followed by previous case studies in Denver, Detroit, and Atlanta by placing the stadium at the end of a clear axis of the development site.

Figure 70 // Rendering // via Urbanize Atlanta

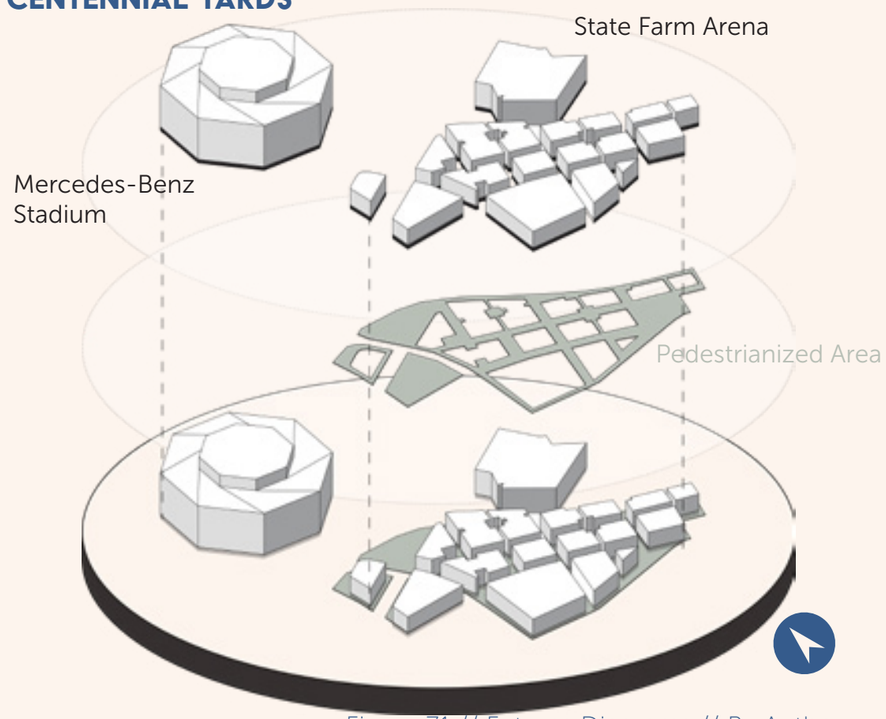
Figure 69 // Salt Lake City Entertainment District Draft Plan // Via Deseret News

DELTA CENTER ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT



The Delta Center district will be centered an on axis that leads directly to the stadium, leaning into the idea of the neighborhood as an "**entertainment district"**.

CENTENNIAL YARDS



Centennial Yards doesn't have a central axis focused on the stadium, leaning into the idea of the district as a **neighborhood**.

Figure 71 // Futures Diagrams // By Author

6.0 - ANALYSIS // RANKING

Each of the studied case studies is ranked below on several considerations, based on site visits and future renderings. These rankings are subjective but based in data and site experience.

LEAST CORPORATE Based on advertising density and centering of arena **MOST CORPORATE**


District Detroit


The Gateway


McGregor Square


The Battery

SLC Ent. Dist. and Centennial Yards not considered for most corporate, as they are not completed.

For *corporate* rankings, The District Detroit and Gateway both feature a number of attractions unrelated to their related sports team, while both McGregor Square and The Battery centralize their teams as their primary defining element. For *urban* rankings, McGregor is part of the most activated urban center while The Battery is the furthest from its urban center. For *locality*, District Detroit and McGregor Square have the most local businesses and The Battery has the least, while the Centennial Yards street network pays the most homage to its historic downtown.

MOST URBAN Based on street connectivity and walkability to a larger urban area **LEAST URBAN**


McGregor Square


District Detroit


Centennial Yards


SLC Ent. Dist.


The Gateway


The Battery

MOST LOCAL Based on restaurant locality and strength of local investment **LEAST LOCAL**


District Detroit


McGregor Square


Centennial Yards


The Gateway


SLC Ent. Dist.


The Battery

Figure 72 // Rankings // By Author, via Google Earth

6.1 - ANALYSIS // PART 1 CONCLUSIONS

In all of the considered cases, there are instances of successful practices and instances of unsuccessful practices. In the process of imagining what stadia district design may be in the future, I approached all case studies from the angles of their governance, planning, and design. These three separate fields permit interdisciplinary insight into the trends.

In governance, all of the studied projects were built by and for a single company, which in turn were often controlled by a single wealthy stakeholder. In Denver, this manifested as a highly coordinated governmental push for baseball, granting the owners leverage over the city. In Detroit, this dynamic has turned the city into a war of competing visions between Gilbertville and Ilitchville. In suburban Atlanta, Truist Park and its district leech tax dollars from the county, have private police, and provide primarily out-of-town, chain restaurants.

These spaces are not, however, poor instances of urbanism necessarily. Salt Lake City's Gateway was highly successful until replaced by the newest shiny mall while Coors Field revitalized a formerly industrial neighborhood and kick-started a transformation of much of Downtown Denver, eventually directly contributing to the transformation itself with McGregor Square. District Detroit, despite a slow start, is poised to be a catalyst for redevelopment in midtown. The Battery, however, may remain a lone 'urban' district in a sea of strip malls and highway interchanges.

One conclusion to draw from the results is that the most successful districts are based heavily in the history of their own city, both in proximity and in style. The primary quality holding The Gateway back is the excitement factor; this same quality might be responsible for the recent demise of the mall in general culture. As with all malls, The Gateway is curated, and when curated in an incomplete or imperfect way, the mall falters. The Gateway may need the ability to grow into a future where it is more of a district than a mall.

Another critical conclusion must begin with the fact that these districts are owned and operated for the sole purpose of either the team owner themselves or another large controlling organization. Unlike traditional urban space in the associated downtowns, the districts are subject to the whims and mistakes of these organizations. McGregor Square is oriented around the giant curved video-board while in Detroit, the street axis itself draws the pedestrian straight to the entrance of the baseball stadium.

In historic urban space, such as the associated downtowns, these paradigms break down. Downtown Salt Lake City, now home to a flashier mall than The Gateway, is not only subject to the success or failure of that mall. Instead, the mall is one of many elements that draws a crowd to Main Street. Similarly, McGregor Square in Denver is only one of many possible destinations in Lower Downtown today; the development of new destinations is the inevitable result of a good urban foundation and space for individual companies to find a foothold. In Detroit, the efforts of both Gilbert and Ilitch have brought economic, transit, and government investment, most prominently in the I75 Cap project, which has engaged the public in a collective design process.

Thus, three actionable conclusions are:

1 | Districts thrive on a plurality of attractions built by a plurality of stakeholders for a plurality of audiences.

2 | Districts that leave build connections for future growth lead to increased external investment, but may also contribute to gentrification and additional corporatization.

3 | Districts that engage the public through agency in design, such as in historic downtowns, can change and grow with time.

These theories promote, in short, more bottom-up design of arena-centered spaces.

The first conclusion is substantiated by the most successful non-sports aspects of each project. At The Gateway, the most activated portions of the development (by my observation of activity) were the planetarium and Dave and Busters, which bring a civic and entertainment use respectively that differ from the primary use of the space as a mall. In Denver, McGregor Square had little activity over multiple visits when not programmed: the Christmas skating rink increased traffic. In Detroit, with few attractions outside of dining and sports, the site was not nearly as active as its related downtown. Lastly, in Atlanta, The Battery manages some year-round activation via a concert hall and open park space.

The second conclusion emerges from the ways in which each district has impacted their surroundings. The Gateway has seen local growth across streets from its apartments. Coors Field has caused gentrification and displacement by being located directly in a previously underprivileged neighborhood. However, both District Detroit and The Battery are separated by highways and parking lots from spaces for additional growth, preventing the process of increased urbanization (so far).

The final conclusion emerges largely from the media view of each space as more "mall-like" or more properly urban. At The Gateway and The Battery, the designers worked to create a particular feel for their urban spaces informed by the "trendy" urban elements of their time; as such, they receive the most criticism as "Disneyfied" or simply as "Malls." On the reverse, both District Detroit and McGregor Square directly engage a traditional urban form developed in their cities over their histories. Both spaces, however, have received criticism as too "polished" or "controlled". Engaging the modern public instead of just historical aspects of a city's design is a way to reimagine these spaces and avoid Leibowitz's 'parody' critique.

"A PARODY OF A CITY, WITH ALL THE GRIT AND COMPLEXITY WIPED AWAY" (LEIBOWITZ 2002)

7.0 - BALL ARENA // RIVER MILE

Figure 73 // Ball Arena/River Mile Rendering // Via SAR+

The Ball Arena/River Mile developments are intended to reimagine just over 100 acres of land as an extension of Downtown Denver. The River Mile project consists of development west of the current light rail line, while the Ball Arena project consists of development east of the current light rail line. The River Mile mainly replaces Elitches Gardens amusement park and its parking lots while Ball Arena replaces the parking lots that currently surround the arena. The two projects came under the same leadership with the full purchase of The River Mile site and plans by Kronke Sports and Entertainment on June 11th, 2025 (Gamez 2025).

The projects will radically expand the urbanized core of Denver, having been called "another downtown" in an article proudly reposted on the project's website (Harris 2024). The expansive community benefits agreement has far more provisions than District Detroit's, which was the only other community benefits agreement in the case studies.

Critically, the development makes a distinction from the other districts studied: there is a concerted design effort to make the district livable, and not just an entertainment destination. Unlike the other studied districts, Ball Arena/River Mile will have elements like a daycare center (CBA), small business pop-up stores (CBA), intentional youth programming, and substantial public art, among other benefits.

All photos by author

7.1 - EXISTING CONDITIONS

The site, comprising most of the Central Platte Valley, has been industrial in nature for most of its history. From at least the 1930s to the 1990s, the site was dominated by an industrial railyard. With the building of Elitch Gardens Amusement Park in 1995 and Ball Arena (at the time called The Pepsi Center) in 1997, the railyard was replaced with primarily parking lots to serve the two new entities.

The site has very little history of residential use, owing to this industrial past. However, plans for some kind of development were first revealed in 2018, soon after the completion of the nearby Union Station Development Project (Murray 2018).

Project sites highlighted in light orange below, with other nearby context noted.

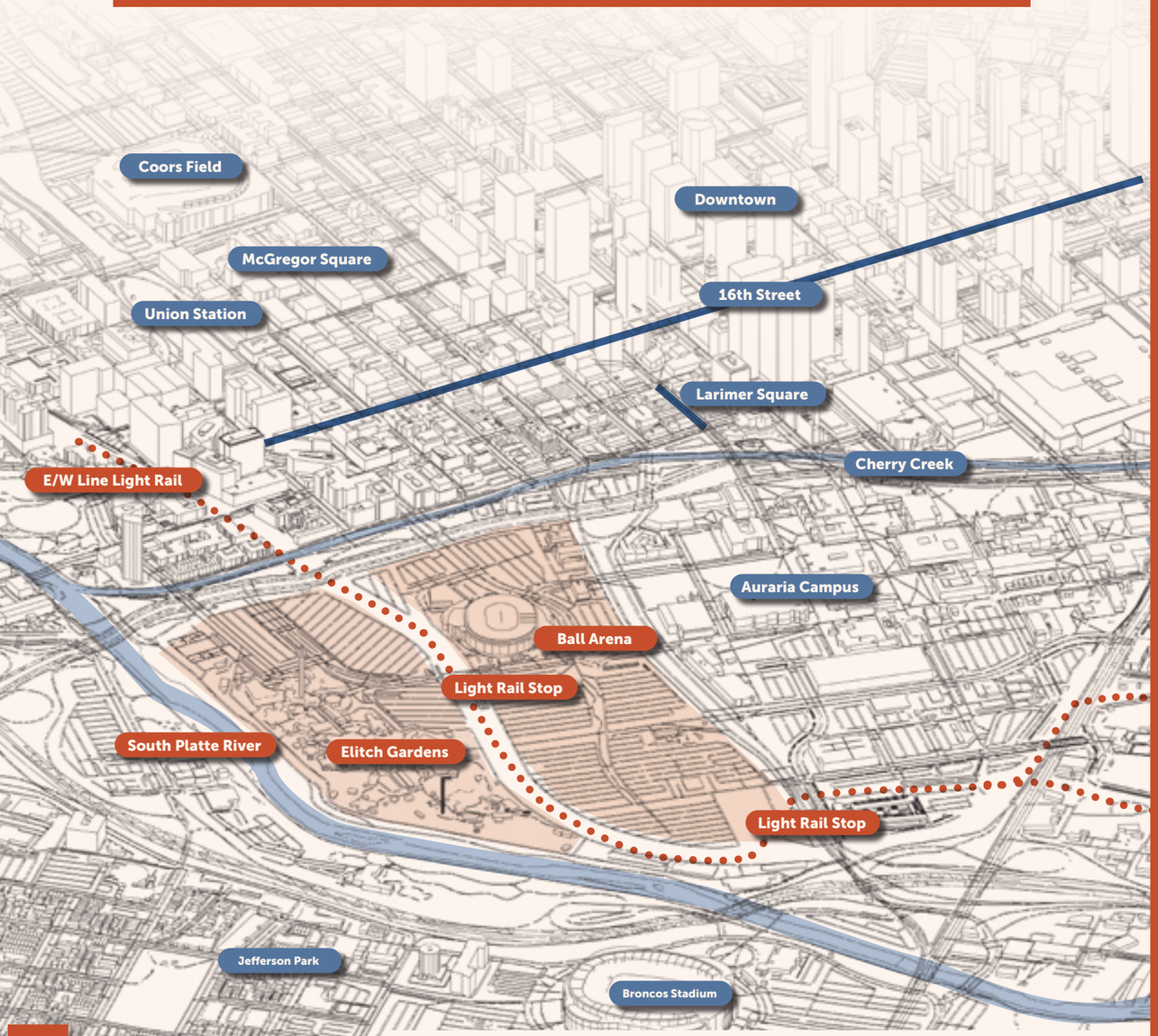


Figure 74 // Central Platte Valley Today // By Author via TopoExport

7.2 - DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The plans for the site have been developed by SAR+ Architects and primarily funded by Kroenke Sports & Entertainment, particularly since KSE's 2025 purchase of the River Mile portion of the development. These plans call for a brand-new urban district that will consist of (depending on what is considered to be "downtown") up to a 25% increase in the size of Downtown Denver alone.

The project websites both emphasize new-urbanist ideals, invoking their pedestrianized streets, two light-rail stations, and attention to detail in architecture.

Below is a simplified project diagram based on the author's reading of draft renderings.

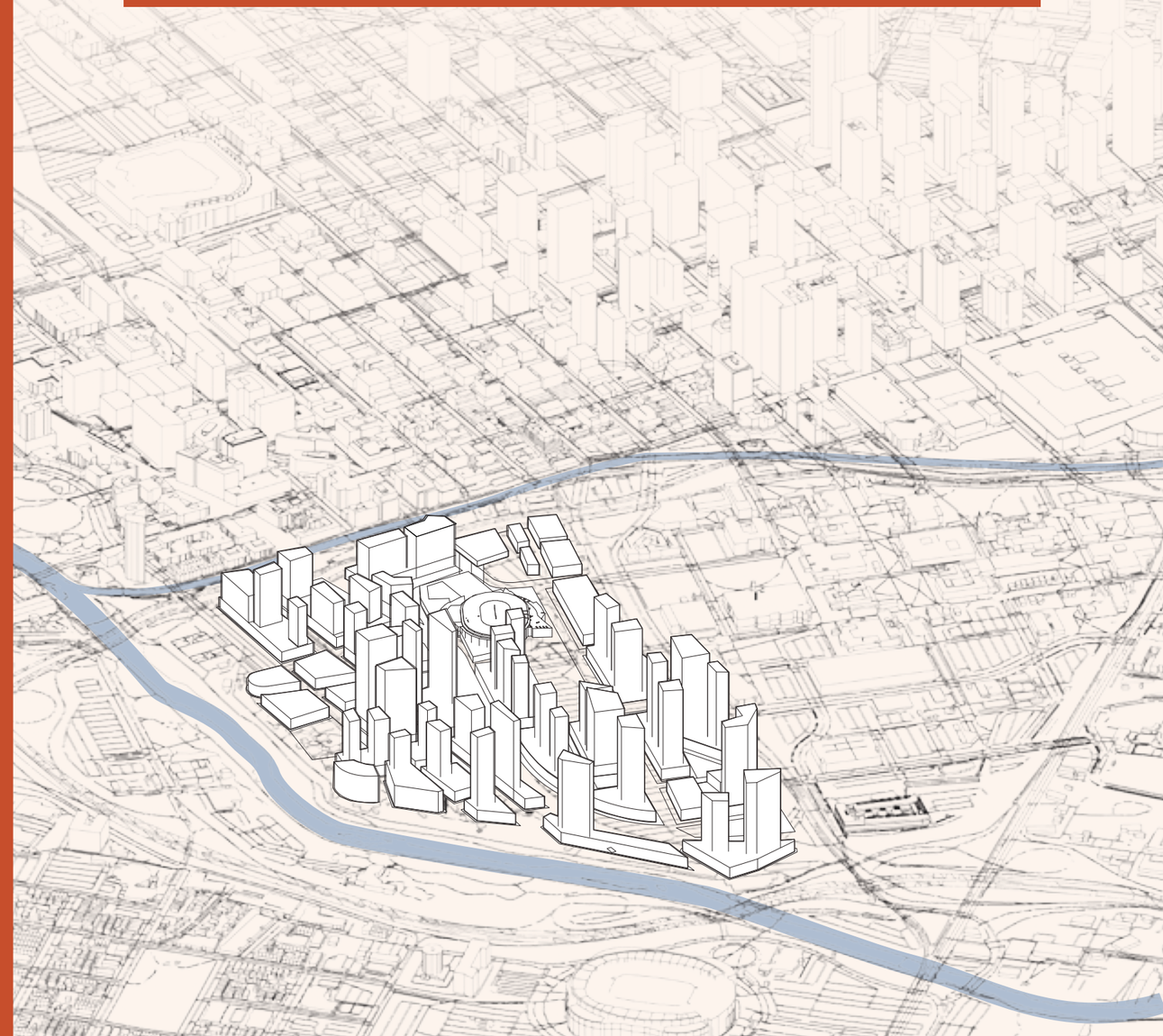
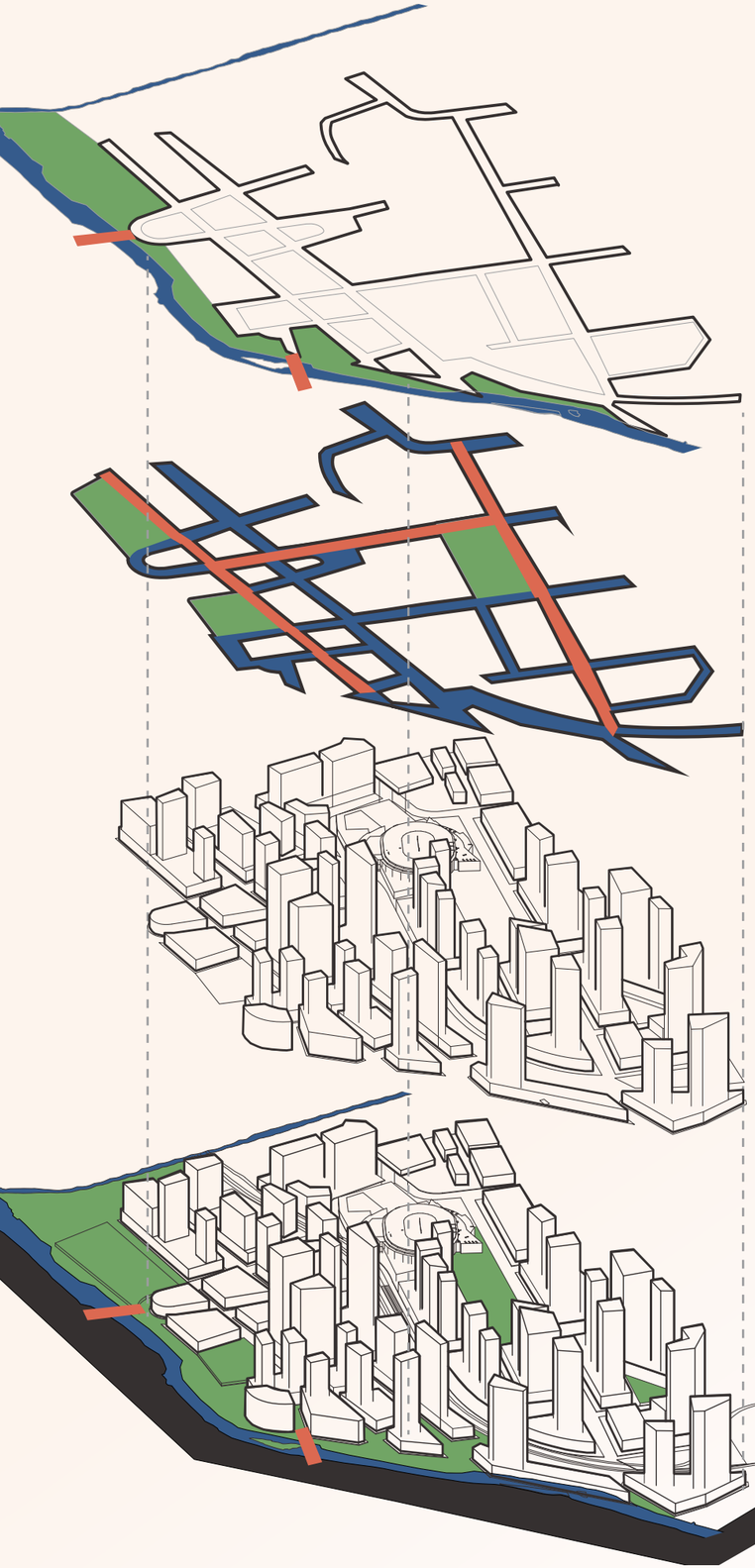


Figure 75 // Ball Arena/River Mile Plan // By Author via TopoExport



RIVER // CROSSINGS

River
River crossings
River-related open space

STREET NETWORK

Primary streets
Secondary streets
Parks

BUILDING FORMS

COMPOSITE

Figure 76 // Ball Arena/River Mile Exploded Plan // By Author

7.2.1 - PLAN DETAILS

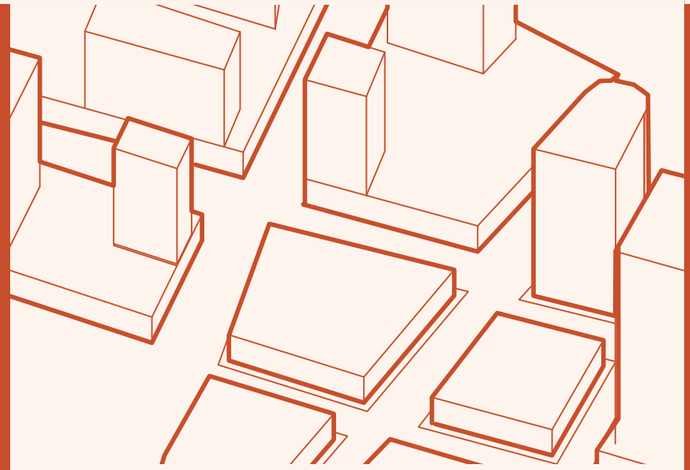
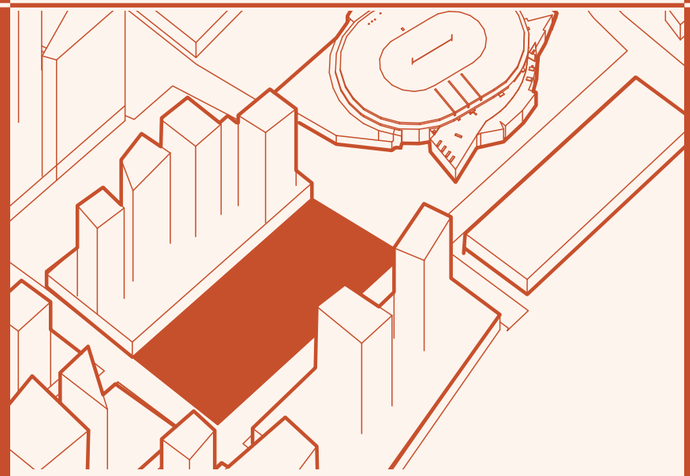
The development plan includes two new pedestrianized crossings of the river, one to access the Children's Museum and one to access the Denver Aquarium. The development features new green space along the entirety of the river, with the stated goal of reinvigorating river ecosystems.

The primary streets in the development are oriented towards bringing pedestrians from downtown Denver into the development as well as across the train network at Ball Arena station. These two streets are aligned with related street grids: The River Mile with Downtown Denver's and Wynkoop Street in the Ball Arena Development with the Auraria Campus.

The building forms are largely composed of blocky bases (by press release stating that there will be ample parking on the site, likely parking garages) with skyscrapers reaching up to 59 stories (Kenney 2018). These building forms need to serve both the purposes of those living within the district and the needs of those parking at Ball Arena events.

The new district would be the largest single development in Downtown Denver's history at over 100 acres.

Figure 77 // Plan Rendering // Via ZGF

	Plan Status	Current Development Plans	Benefits/Drawbacks
URBAN GOVERNANCE **Case Study Conclusion 1 |** Districts thrive on a plurality of attractions built by a plurality of stakeholders for a plurality of audiences.	**The district's design is largely controlled by KSE, but there has been a substantial community benefits process and an intense approval process from the city government. The district's private design means that it serves the purposes of KSE first and the city second.**	 Figure 78 // Block Density // By Author	Developments of this style, as seen in the case studies above, tend to fill blocks with a single building without facade variation or distinct elements, creating a more monotonous urban pattern, a style of corporatized space. The diagram to the left demonstrates this style of single-building block patterns.
URBAN PLANNING **Case Study Conclusion 2 |** Districts that leave build connections for future growth lead to increased external investment, but may also contribute to gentrification and additional corporatization.	**The projects propose 6 new pedestrian and bicycle bridges at Wynkoop Crossing, Sun Valley, Transit Plaza, 11th, and 7th, and an unnamed river crossing further north. Additionally, it connects to the proposed 5280 Trail to wrap Downtown Denver.**	 Figure 79 // Some Crossings // By Author	The crossings are designed to encourage pedestrian movement into the site from all directions and produce the conditions necessary for the development's impact to grow beyond its initial offering, either via the same developers or opportunistic ripple-effect developers. The diagram to left shows two new crossings planned for the river.
URBAN DESIGN **Case Study Conclusion 3 |** Districts that engage the public through agency in design, such as in historic downtowns, can change and grow with time.	**Signature Park, the central park space in the Ball Arena development, has been promised to the City of Denver as a new city park instead of a private park. Additionally, the plans show mostly public streets, with very few exceptions.**	 Figure 80 // Signature Park // By Author	The willingness of the developers to allow most streets and the primary park to be public demonstrates a higher degree of integration into existing city infrastructure than many of the case studies. The diagram to the left demonstrates the "Signature Park" set aside in the center of the development to be donated to the City of Denver as a standard public park.

8.0 - IMAGINING A BOTTOM-UP FRAMEWORK

In all six of the case studies, from different eras, with different design goals, there is one central, undeniable thread: stadia districts serve the stadium, not the other way around. In Salt Lake City, both the existing Gateway and future Entertainment District are built around the extension of the gameday experience over the benefit of the people living there. In Denver and Detroit, the existing urban context provides historical motifs, but the districts utilize these motifs for high-end entertainment districts and use their stadia as the endpoint of pedestrianized streets. In Atlanta, The Battery's lack of local restaurants and shops makes it more akin to a mall than a community hub.

The second research question of this thesis asks how these developing districts may be more bottom-up. In a bottom-up model of design development, the large-scale street planning and general allocation of land still requires collaboration between organizations like the government, planning firms, and landowners, but the development would be undertaken by a larger, more collective group that is more representative of the city as a whole.

This portion invites further research into these possibilities, both in urban stadia district design and in other forms of urban design.

WHAT OUTCOMES MIGHT RESULT FROM A BOTTOM-UP MODEL OF URBAN STADIA DISTRICT DESIGN?

All photos by author

8.0.1 - BOTTOM UP PRINCIPLES

Kristien Ring (2019) describes the bottom-up model of city-making as a way of adapting to the rapid speed at which urban centers are changing. In these new urban spaces, Ring describes a common lack of affordability, diversity, care for the quality of public space, and social sustainability, among others. These qualities emerge from the existing top-down model of urban design, where the primary development goals serve the shareholders first and the residents second.

To shift this power dynamic, Ring recommends three strategies. The first, *urban densification,* has been an established goal of both bottom-up and top-down projects in urban centers in recent decades, but thoughtful densification requires a process that carefully examines each of the already existing urban spaces and activates the street via increased diversity of spaces.

Secondly, she recommends *enhancing neighborhood qualities,* whereby interaction between neighbors, strong social networks, and thoughtful open spaces build a collective neighborhood fabric. Neighborhoods with these qualities can resist corporatization in favor of the values of the community.

Lastly, she advocates *adaptive forms of living.* Alongside traditional homes and apartments, opportunities should be made for co-housing, new styles of shared spaces, and high levels of customization.

These qualities promote the stated goals of the developers of Ball Arena/River Mile.

However, the critical difference is that the city-making process is undertaken as a collaboration between the developers, architects, existing local organizations, and critically, future residents of the site when possible.

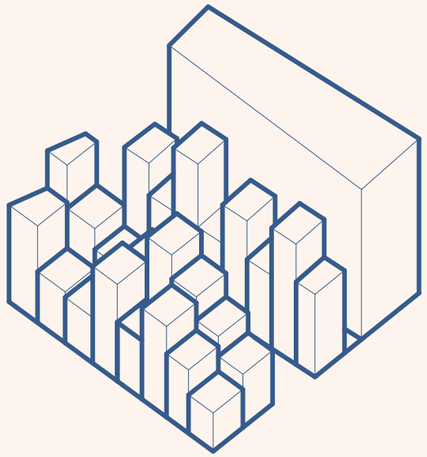
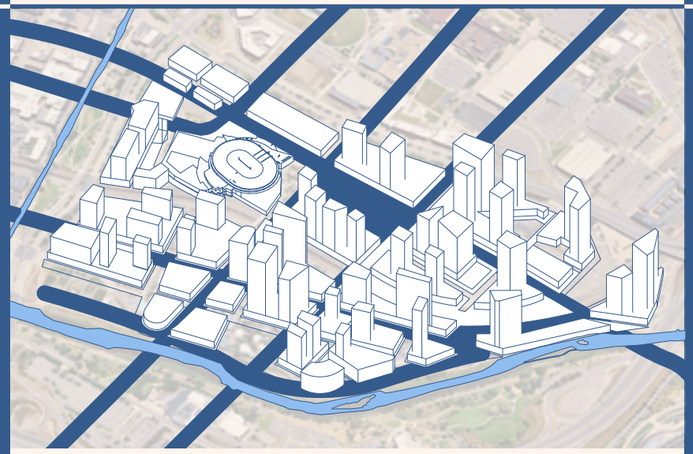
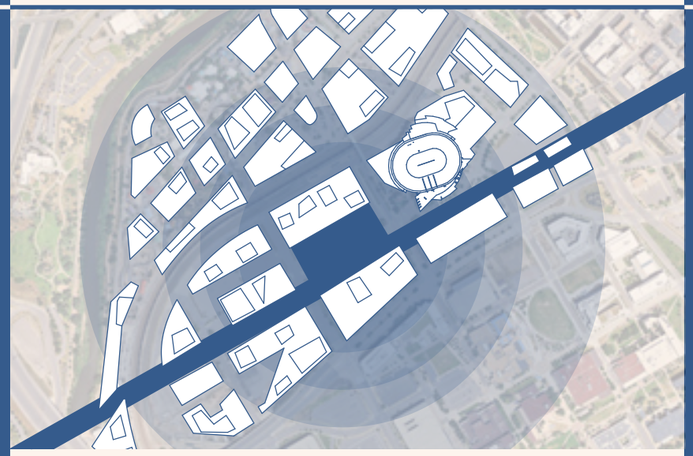
The following page imagines, under each of the three frameworks of governance, planning, and design, ways in which the processes of building the new Central Platte Valley neighborhood could be more bottom-up, serving people first and stadiums second. As such, this reduces the corporatization of the space.

URBAN DENSIFICATION

ENHANCING NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITIES

ADAPTIVE FORMS OF LIVING

8.1 - BOTTOM-UP ANALYSIS

	Imagined Alternative	Envisioned Future	Benefits/Drawbacks
URBAN GOVERNANCE **Case Study Conclusion 1 |** Districts thrive on a plurality of attractions built by a plurality of stakeholders for a plurality of audiences. **Bottom-Up Principles (Ring 2019) |** Urban Densification	**Instead of being designed and controlled by a single entity, the district could be split into parcels, with each parcel sold to a separate developers.**	 Figure 81 // Granular Parcel Density // By Author	**District Granularity** This process would create, a district with more distinct user groups, activation times, and building ages. Densification would mean a higher degree of granularity in the building forms, avoiding the trend of buildings covering entire blocks. Additionally, this creates a higher degree of visual interest.
URBAN PLANNING **Case Study Conclusion 2 |** Districts that build connections for future growth lead to increased external investment, but may also contribute to gentrification and additional corporatization. **Bottom-Up Principles (Ring 2019) |** Enhancing Neighborhood Qualities	**The projects could be connected to existing neighborhoods or entities via collective partnership programs, who decide which types of connections (bus, bike, auto, rail) should be built.**	 Figure 82 // Partner Crossings // By Author, via Google Earth	**Connective Partnerships** This process allows any adjacent communities to decide for themselves the ways in which they should be physically connected to the new neighborhood, producing intentional, community-led growth instead of developer-led growth. The diagram demonstrates the number of distinct crossings the project must consider.
URBAN DESIGN **Case Study Conclusion 3 |** Districts that engage the public through agency in design, such as in historic downtowns, can change and grow with time. **Bottom-Up Principles (Ring 2019) |** Adaptive Forms of Living	**The pedestrianized streets (particularly Wynkoop) and park space in the center of the district could undergo a local voting process to decide its programming, meaning that the programming may not be oriented towards the sports teams.**	 Figure 83 // Critical Public Space // By Author, via Google Earth	**Collective Public Space** A public process on the open space on the site gives community organizations and politicians more say over the street and park, currently being programmed before being given to the city. The process may prevent the “mall-like” street archetype.

8.2 - DISTRICT GRANULARITY

Figure 84 // A District of Parcels, Not Blocks // By Author via Twinmotion

Through instituting a sell-off of the land via parcels, the site would achieve a more granular urban pattern with more distinct architectural styles, building types, and community resources. Additionally, this process would reduce the likelihood that the neighborhood is entirely reliant on the stadium for long term success, bringing in more distinct programs and attractions.

The graphic above demonstrates the higher diversity of building types and thus increased granularity that may be brought into the site under this method.

8.3 - CONNECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

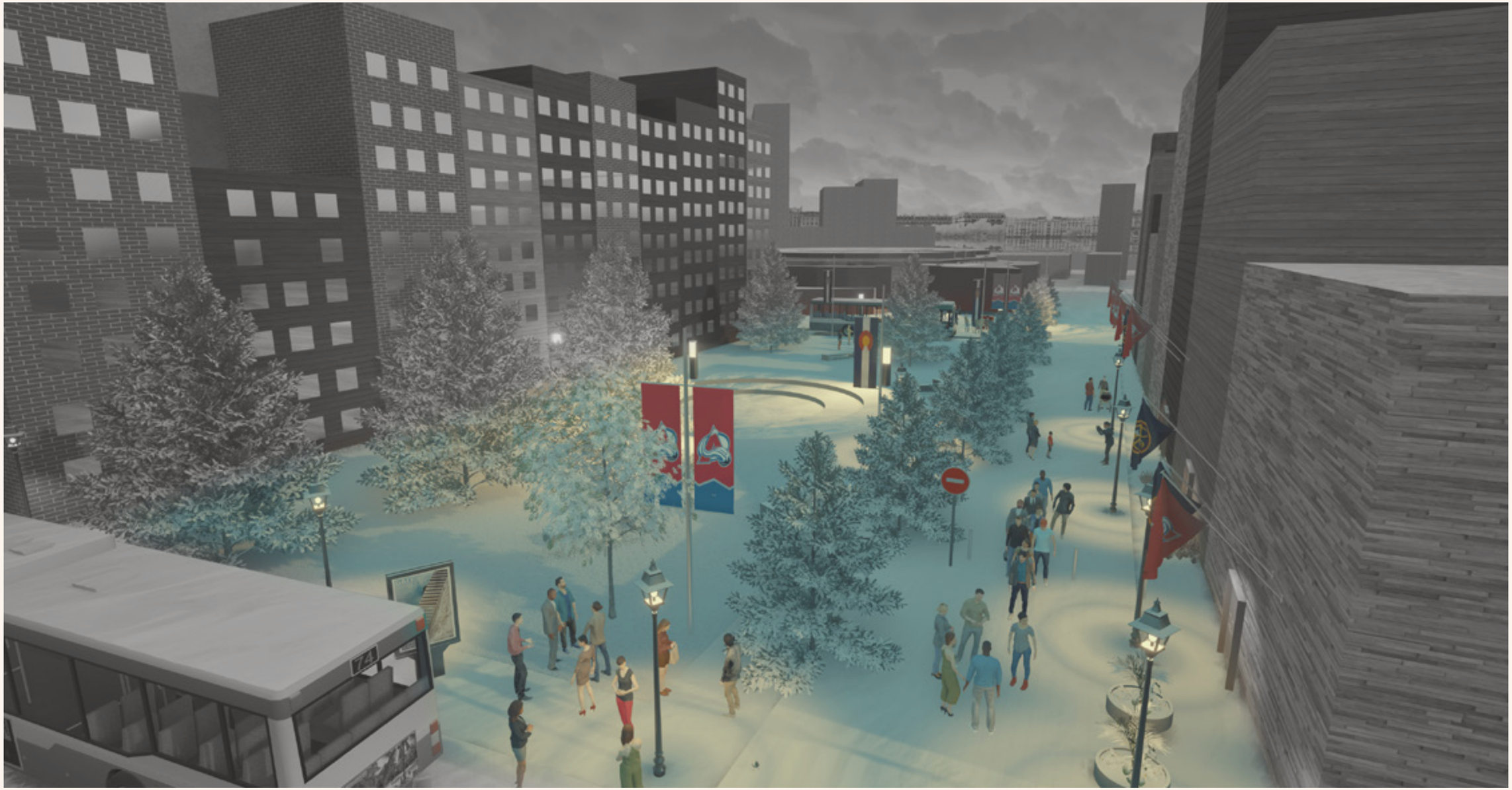
Figure 85 // Transit Collaboration // By Author via Twinmotion

The process of permitting local communities and entities to dictate their engagement with the site would protect nearby communities from the gentrifying effects of being connected to brand-new development. Some communities may choose to connect via certain modes of transportation, perhaps only a pedestrian or bike bridge, while others may fully embrace the connection.

This graphic includes a bus line, not something currently included in the plans for the site. To bring about a new bus route, the district would need to collaborate with the local transit agency (RTD), nearby communities that may want increased access to the site, and their own engineers to decide which bridges over the river must be vehicle-accessible.

8.4 - COLLECTIVE PUBLIC SPACE

Figure 86 // Central Urban Park // By Author via TwinMotion



The public park in the center of the space, under the current planning process, will be programmed with community input for the purposes of the developers. One way that this manifested in case studies was the exclusion of homelessness via private security at The Battery and District Detroit, while at McGregor Square, the public space is used for a large video screen and ice rink. Additionally, the primary connection through the site, Wynkoop Street, faces the risk of being another "mall-like" space, with high degree of corporate control.

This rendering imagines a park and street that may still contain some advertising for the teams, but also many elements of traditionally constructed urban space, including an amphitheater, local Colorado Blue Spruce trees, a pedestrianized street with bollards, and helpful street signage.

Avalanche and Nuggets logos are trademarks of Kroenke Sports and Entertainment

8.5.1 - CURRENT PLANS

Under the current paradigm, the development has engaged its community insofar as it provides community benefits. However, it still will ultimately stand out from Denver's traditional urban spaces via large, single-building blocks, limited connectivity, and potentially corporate public space.

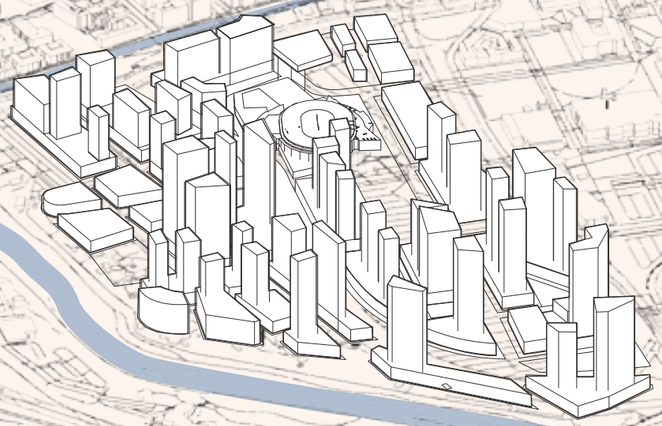


Figure 87 // Ball Arena/River Mile Plan // By Author via TopoExport

8.5.2 - RE-ENVISIONING

The reimagining creates a district with the same granularity, public engagement, ability to grow, and intense connectivity that already permit the vibrancy of the city, reducing corporatization and reimagining the new district as a diverse and beautiful *Second Downtown.*

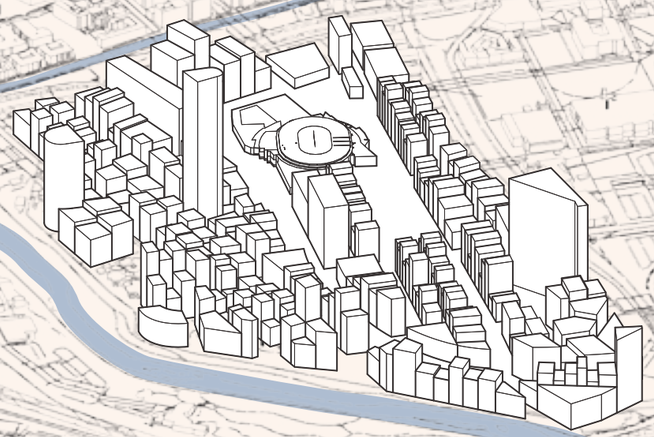


Figure 88 // Reimagined Plan // By Author via TopoExport

8.5.3 - COMPLETE RENDERING

Figure 89 // A Complete Rendering // By Author via TwinMotion

Avalanche and Nuggets logos are trademarks of Kroenke Sports and Entertainment

9.0 - CONCLUSION

Stadia districts remain a contentious type of space in cities. For some, they are entertainment districts, which should have high end restaurants and limited housing. For others, they primarily represent civic pride, a destination limited to gamedays. For others, including myself, stadia should be located in fully functioning urban districts, which simply happen to have an arena at their core. The stadia studied in this thesis fall on a spectrum from effectively malls to functioning, healthy, even historic urban districts. In some places, that mall archetype has been sustainably successful, while in others, it enjoyed limited long-term success. In other places yet, the historic urban fabric around an stadium is responsive to similar factors as any other local downtown district.

In Denver's Lower Downtown and Detroit's Midtown, resurgent development has been lead by recognizable, controversial, public-facing billionaires who's goals align with cities only in limited cases. Meanwhile, in Salt Lake City and the northern suburbs of Atlanta, traditional developers have undertaken the goal of recreating the feeling of urban space from scratch. In both cities, future developments intend to bring new districts to local arenas as well.

This study ultimately finds that of all of these districts, the most successful thrive on a plurality of attractions built by a plurality of stakeholders for a plurality of audiences, build intentional connections for future growth, and engage the public through agency in design. As such, it applies these principles to the original catalyst for the exploration, Ball Arena/River Mile in Denver.

The megaproject in Denver does well in the aforementioned categories. Its public engagement process was substantial, it is connected to its local neighborhoods through new bridges and streets, and recognizes the importance of truly public space through donating its most central green space to the Denver Parks and Recreation system.

However, the project can go further. Under the three axioms of bottom-up design presented here, the most successful version of this project might try to buck the trends followed by its predecessors and return, interestingly, to an older form of city-making. By selling off different parcels to different builders, the owners of BA/RM could establish a more granular and thus more visually interesting urban fabric. By letting each nearby community and institution be thoroughly involved in the design of its connections to the new district, the development could naturally grow into its place in the city. Lastly, by moving to the most public possible process for designing its central park and primary streetscape, it could engage a wider Denver community and culture.

These three axioms of bottom-up design propose:

District Granularity

Connective Partnerships

Collective Public Space

In short, the bottom-up model imagines a paradigm of collective involvement in shaping the built environment around stadium projects as a form of combating corporate-centered urban design in these spaces.

9.1 - ADDENDUM

The urgency of considering the way in which sports districts may reshape Denver has intensified over the course of this research. In September 2025, the Broncos (of the NFL) announced the intention to build a new stadium and district at Burnham Yards, just two light-rail stops south of BA/RM. Unlike the BA/RM site, which has natural barriers preventing its growth on the west and south side and established affluent urban space on the east and north, Burnham Yards will produce gentrification. It is immediately adjacent to La Alma/Lincoln Park, a place I personally worked in for a summer as a high schooler. To many, including myself, the existing neighborhood is the center of Chicano culture in Denver and worth protecting. If a stadium is to be built there, the city government and local organizations must find ways to employ bottom-up strategies of urban governance/planning/design to protect its community and sense of place.

Even so, Burnham Yards isn't the only stadia district being planned in Denver. Two stops south of Burnham Yards, the National Women's Soccer League is in the early stages of proposing a small arena district as well at Santa Fe Yards. The project has been stalled several times by its community benefits agreement, which is a good sign that the developers are being held to some bottom-up standards. Like BA/RM and Burnham Yards, the project sits along transit, near the South Platte River, and is funded by money from both within and outside Colorado.

There are valid reasons to support Denver's ascension to a 'world-class' entertainment destination style city. There are just as many valid concerns and possible pitfalls. This thesis provides just one of many necessary perspectives as the city navigates this complicated time.

- Dennis Swanson, University of Colorado Environmental Design, Class of 2026.

A note: this project was limited by public knowledge of the full plans for Ball Arena and River Mile. As of February 2026, the most recent planning document was released in May 2025, meaning that KSE and its architects have achieved almost another year of design progress on the projects. Some of the suggestions made by this research may have already been undertaken without author knowledge.

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11.0 - LIST OF FIGURES

A.1 - BLOCK SIZE ESTIMATIONS

The Gateway | Block sizes cut by internal mall pedestrianized pathways.
Mean 1.97 acres, Median 1.51 acres

The District Detroit | Block sizes cut by streets.
Mean 2.02 acres, Median 1.71 acres

McGregor Square | Block sizes cut by internal pedestrianized area.
Mean 0.82 acres, Median 0.90 acres

The Battery | Block sizes cut by internal pedestrianized area. Stadium included, unlike others, because it isn't on the edge of the development
Mean 3.38 acres, Median 2.19 acres

Created by Author via ArcGIS Pro

A.2 - HOUSING AND LOCALITY DATA + LICENSES

Housing Unit Count Origins

The Gateway | https://atthegateway.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2023-10-20-GW_brandbook-Reduced-Website.pdf. Graphic on page six shows 152 units in Parc at Gateway and 330 units at Altitude on Fifth, for a total of 482 units.

McGregor Square | Engineering firm for project describes 105 units (https://www.henselphelps.com/project/mcgregor-square/).

District Detroit | Community Benefits Agreement (https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2023-03/DistrictDetroitCBAOnePager030623-final%281%29%20%281%29%20%281%29.pdf) describes 695 new units on page one under "affordable housing".

The Battery | Only internal apartment building is Courtland at the Battery. Press release from 2018 (https://cortland.com/in-the-news/cortland-acquires-home-at-the-battery-atlanta/) describes 531 units.

Restaurant Locality Tables:

The Gateway (via https://atthegateway.com/dineatthegateway/)

Name	Operates outside UT?
Costa Vida	Yes
Crazy Crofles	No
Dave And Busters	Yes
Flanker	No
Flemmings	Yes
Hallpass	No
Lupressa	No
Mr Shabu	No
Neptune's Palace	No
Panda Express	Yes
Pearl Milk Tea	No
Seabird	No
Sweet Rolled Tacos	Yes
The Bruce Pub	No
The Lounge At Wiseguys	No
The Store	No
Tucanos Brazillian	Yes

McGregor Square (via https://www.mcgregorsquare.com/restaurants-bars/)

Name	Operates outside CO?
La Loma	No
Carmines	No
Milepost Zero	No
Starbucks	Yes
The Original	No
Call Me Pearl	No
The Grandstand Café	No
Tom's Watch Bar	No

District Detroit (via https://www.thedistrictdetroit.com/restaurants/)

Name	Operates outside MI?
The Annex	No
Basan Robata	No
Brass Rail	No
Bucharest Grill	No
Cliff Bell's	No
District 78	No
Elwood	No
Frida Batidos	Yes
Good Cakes and Bakes	No
Harry's	No
Hockeytown café	No
Jojo's Shake Bar	Yes
Lefty's	Yes
Lumen	No
Mike's Pizza Bar	No
Revel	No
Sahara	No
Sound Board	No
Temple Bar	No
The Mixing Board	No
The Royce	No
Tin roof	No
Mom's spaghetti	No
Uwm District Market	No

A.2 (CONTINUED)

The Battery (via https://batteryatl.com/dine/)

Name	Operates outside GA?
Garden and Gun Club	Yes
National Anthem (Omni Hotel)	Yes
Goldberg's Fine Foods	No
Superica	Yes
Burn by Rocky Patel	Yes
Blue Moon Brewery	No
Taps@Ph'East	No
26 Thai	No
Poke Burri	Yes
Lifting Noodles Ramen	Yes
Fan T'Asia	No
Kung Fu Tea	Yes
Punch Bowl Social	Yes
Cruz Blanca Beer Garden	Yes
Yard House	Yes
Shake Shack	Yes
El Super Pan	No
EATaliano	No
Walk ON's	Yes
GoodGame (TopGolf)	Yes
Jeni's Ice Creams	Yes
C. Ellet's	No
Cru Food and Wine Bar	Yes
H&F Burger	No
Antico Pizza Napoletana	No
Battle and Brew	No

Shop Locality Tables:

The Gateway (via https://atthegateway.com/directory/shopping/)

Name	Operates outside UT?
White Agent Bridal	No
The Red Balloon	No
The Nerd Store	No
The Store	No
Tresor Jewlers	No

McGregor Square (via https://www.mcgregorsquare.com/shops-services/)

Name	Operates outside CO?
Chained Up	No
Bank of CO	No
The Rally Store	No
Rock Fitness	No
Legacy Saloon	No

District Detroit (via https://www.thedistrictdetroit.com/retail)

Name	Operates outside MI?
Detroit Vs Everybody	No
D Tour Spa	No
Gameday Detroit	No
Little Caesars Team Store	No
The D Shop	No

The Battery (via https://batteryatl.com/dine/)

Name	Operates outside GA?
Dressup	Yes
River Street Sweets	Yes
Savi Provisions	Yes
Braves Clubouse Store	No
Baseballism	Yes
South End Trading CO	No
Mizuno	Yes
Jenis	Yes
Xfinity	Yes
Sitka	Yes
Polestar	Yes

All results as of January 2026. Websites may have been updated or changed.

Topoexport and HistoricAerials assets acquired via legal purchase on each respective database. Requests for proof may be emailed to author at dennisjs77@gmail.com.

Back Cover: All graphics created by author except right-middle (Figure 13).

SECOND DOWNTOWN