GRAND AVENUE PARK DESIGN:
an exploration of urban flexible strategies, possibilities, programs and convictions.

PROBLEM STATEMENT
The focus of this quarter will be investigating the possibilities of a park design for the Civic Center in Downtown Los Angeles. Downtown LA is undergoing rapid change. Many residential buildings are being built or converted from manufacturing/utility/warehouse structures and the population in downtown has surged. In recent years several new commercial and cultural buildings, as well as a sports complex, have been constructed with many more projects in various stages of design and development. Many would say that Downtown LA is seeing a “renaissance” after decades of neglect and ill-conceived development.

As part of this transformation, city officials are in the process of developing a plan for a portion of one of Downtown Los Angeles’ major streets, Grand Avenue, which traverses downtown from Chinatown on the north to the Santa Monica Freeway on the south. It is part of a street grid that ties together several districts in the downtown such as Civic Center, Chinatown, Little Tokyo, the Fashion District, the Convention Center/Staples Center complex, and others. Grand Avenue is also accessible by public transit from many areas of Los Angeles County and beyond.

Recently, Grand Avenue has seen remarkable change, particularly in the Bunker Hill area, brought on by the Disney Concert Hall and the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. This area will continue to transform as a new master plan calls for new skyscrapers and retail space. The plan also calls for a 16-acre park in an area adjacent to Grand Avenue, amidst government buildings including Los Angeles City Hall. Given the changes Downtown LA is undergoing, its rich history, and the city’s deep cultural and social diversity, what should a “park” in this area be?
PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Your role is to plan and design a new urban park for Los Angeles. You should not merely focus on the predefined “16-acre” area, but rather allow the boundaries of the site to be revealed as you move through the process. The final form and program of the park will be up to you and should clearly reflect your specific process. You must consider the context, the appropriateness of current plans, existing uses, and your findings on Downtown LA in order to fashion a concept that reflects a strong rationale. You must consider the social and cultural composition of downtown, existing and proposed land uses, topography, major landscape features (LA River), transportation/circulation, and...?

Some (not all) key questions for you to consider:

What is Downtown LA’s “identity” or “sense of place”?

Who and What should be considered in the design process?

What does “park” mean today?

What does “park” mean in the context of Downtown LA, the city, and the region?

PROJECT GOALS
- Gain an understanding of the physical, cultural, and social forces of the study area
- Define the scale and context to be explored
- Identify issues, problems, concerns, possibilities, and opportunities
- Fashion design responses informed by findings
- Communicate design concepts to a broad audience
- Submit design concepts to USC Annenberg School of Communication/Norman Lear Center

PROCESS
The project will generally assume the following process:
- Exploration/Inventory: 3 weeks
  - Intuitive sketch problem responses
  - Regional to local scale inventories
- Analysis/Synthesis: 3 weeks
  - Analysis of exploration and inventory
  - Development of Grand Avenue Vision
- Site Scale Design: 4 weeks
  - Development of conceptual site plan for the Civic Center Park
PRODUCTS

- **Sketch problem intuitive responses** – Scale, media, format and representation to be determined by student
- **Site inventory maps and data** – Scale to be determined and appropriate for content
- **Analysis/Synthesis/Grand Avenue Vision** – 5’x7’ panel_ 35 s.f. Scale to be individually determined. However, your plans, sections, and all other supporting graphics MUST be drawn to a standard scale! (e.g., 1”=1/4’, 1”=10’, 1”=30’, 1”=500’)
- **Grand Avenue Park Concept Plan** – 5’x7’ panel_ 35 s.f. Scale to be individually determined, minimum 1”=100’
- **Digital Portfolio** – Individual and group_ must be PDF format

WEB RESOURCES

www.grandintervention.org
www.grandavenuecommittee.org
www.pps.org
GRAND AVENUE PARK DESIGN

Civic Center Vision:

Introduction:
As each team has completed an inventory of the study area, you must now conduct an analysis and synthesis of the collected data and information to further your understanding of the physical, cultural and social forces of the study area. This portion of the process will help inform your design response to the study area, and reveal a vision for the area you deem as significant to the immediate “16-acre” project site.

The Task:
Your goal is to develop a vision for an area within Downtown LA that encompasses the “16-acre site”. Your vision must include the “16-acre” site and beyond. What is the geographic extent of the vision; describe these boundaries/extents/thresholds of this vision. What primary elements will it include - major streets, adjacent neighborhoods/districts, the LA River? Be sure to connect the site to the salient issues of its context.

This “vision” plan should read as a strategic map, which addresses the greater project (beyond 16 acres) at hand. Address and graphically express the fundamental design strategies, which your group has gleaned from your inventory and analysis in a preliminary fashion...i.e.: You might determine a need for new transit stops or routes and thusly express this idea diagrammatically across the project extents with some pattern.

As this “vision” plan begins to form each project should also begin to address the design criteria in perspective/section/elevation. This could be done by utilizing case study photos, preliminary site specific perspectives, or preliminary site specific typical sections/elevations...begin to physically define mass and space.

Finally, connect your project team inventory specifically to the plan, (this could mean thumbnail matrices, three dimensional models or any number of other techniques.) Make it apparent as to why you include specific inventory information; do not generally embed your inventories...take the maps you have already developed two or three steps further to where they begin to “speak”.

Considerations:
• Inclusion of three-dimensional models either figurative or abstract
• Expansion or further development/refinement of you sketch problem
• Production either digitally or by hand
Requirements:
Working in your inventory groups or in sub-groups (min. 2-3 students per group) you are to communicate your Civic Center Vision in the following format:

- One (1) composition of images and text on a 35 square foot panel. (Think of a space comprised of 4 - 30"x42" boards/posters contiguously arranged vertically or horizontally.)
- You should incorporate one overall plan image to depict the area defined under your “vision”. Scale to be determined by the extent of the area and the space you have to work with.
- Communicate the critical aspects of your vision through sections, sketches, perspectives, diagrams, etc. NOTE: your images may protrude beyond the edges of your 35 sq. ft. “rectangle”, within reason.
- Demonstrate your process (analysis/synthesis/concept)
- Justify your approach and resolutions
Civic Center Park Design:

Introduction:
As each team has completed their vision for downtown LA, including the “16 acre” site, it is now appropriate to strategically design the park. As your team begins to design the “park” consider all of the previous 6 weeks worth of discovery… inclusivity and equity are key to this portion of the process. The physical form of the park should emerge as a reflection of your altered understanding of the site, its context and the concept of an urban park in L.A. in the most complete sense. The site transformed.

The Task:
Your goal is to develop a specific conceptual design for the park as you determined it to be in your vision plan. It is envisioned that the boundaries of each design teams specific park site will be as diverse as the final designs. Imagine your final park design as a celebration of new urban possibilities.

Where your “vision” plan read as a strategic map, this plan should address the park design with a distinct level of specificity. This plan should address the design criteria set forth by the “vision” plan while simultaneously creating its own conventions poised for urban occupation. This plan should be site-determined in all its flexible strategies, possibilities, programs and convictions.

Considerations:
• Inclusion of three-dimensional models
• Diagrams of site programming
• Film
• Production either digitally or by hand

Requirements:
Final drawing requirements are the same as those of the Civic Center Vision Plan.

Last word:
Be critical in your exploration…ask the hard questions. What is a park in Downtown Los Angeles, what should it be and what could it be…