

Designing Community Interfaces in North Philadelphia: An Evolving Revitalization Strategy

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While new technologies have immensely changed the nature of interacting with and within the city, the discipline of urban design has remained timid in its exploration of how these technologies might reinforce and reinvent cities and neighborhoods.

Considering the many mechanisms still used to classify, systematize and revalidate the notion of urbanity, (such as centrality, locus of wealth, economic power and "industrial" dominance over its surrounding region,) the very idea of "city" lies in question. This paper challenges the top-down, Cartesian notions of control and form-based traditions of urban design by exploring other techniques for bringing about long-term social and physical change that is generated over *time by the actions of the local community*.

This study reflects our ongoing collaborative research and proposals for a challenged inner-city neighborhood in Philadelphia that has suffered from disinvestment, poverty and blight for decades.

Working with the local community-based organization, the authors explore ways of linking the APM community of North Philadelphia both internally, as well as to the larger city, region, and world. Using the idea of multiple interfaces as a starting point, this project explores the integrated uses of technology as a medium for urban revitalization.

The research is comprised of three components:

- An overview of the study area, its political organization, and the role of the authors in the planning and design of the neighborhood.
- A discussion of the driving theory for the research focusing upon emergent behavior as an opportunity for urban design.
- A description of a proposed technology network for the neighborhood that includes interconnected initiatives related to social interaction, new development, education opportunities, art, and information access.