IMAGINE HUMBOLDT
INITIATIVES FOR A THRIVING COMMUNITY

CHILD CARE CENTER
Visualizations for a New Center at the Heart of Humboldt

ChicagoLAB 2016

The University of Utah
College of Architecture + Planning

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION..........................................................5
   Project Overview
   ChicagoLAB Overview
   Humboldt Park Community Partners
   Childcare Center
   Community Engaged Learning Principles

2. SITE ANALYSIS....................................................... 11
   History
   Demographics
   Geography and Location
   Context
   Site

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK................................... 25
   Literature Review
   Case Studies

4. METHODS & DESIGN PRINCIPLES ......................... 29
   Methods
   Design Principles
   Community as a Campus

5. VISUALIZATIONS......................................................... 33

6. CONCLUSION............................................................. 39

7. REFERENCES............................................................. 43
1. INTRODUCTION
This report represents visualizations for a new childcare center location prepared by students at the University of Utah for its Summer 2016 ChicagoLab program, a Community Engaged Learning project that matches students with professionals and community partners on projects in the city. This year’s program focuses on the Humboldt Park neighborhood, and this report will detail work done in conjunction with the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC).

Located near downtown Chicago, Humboldt Park is the current center of Chicago’s Puerto Rican community which has been slowly pushed west over the last century. In response to this displacement a cluster of organizations has arisen that seek to claim space, create a community home, and, for some, stand defiantly against encroaching gentrification and the threat of housing displacement.

The PRCC is moving its current childcare center to a larger facility. We have been tasked with analyzing the new space and assisting community with envisioning potential developments that can enhance the new location.

As a group we have interacted with the community in a variety of ways, including focus groups and conversations with our community partners. We have also done research into early childhood education and the role of the built environment as an educator. Through this process we have outlined three primary design principles to guide us:

1. Connect the facility to the larger community
2. View the project from the eye of a child
3. Elevate the role of play and sustainability in the space

These efforts have led to a series of visualizations, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.
INTRODUCTION

CHICAGO LAB OVERVIEW

ChicagoLab is a six-week summer program that gives University of Utah students studying urban planning and architecture the opportunity to work on real projects in Chicago for a variety of clients and stakeholders. Focusing on different projects each semester, ChicagoLab is administered by Archeworks, an education and design studio in downtown Chicago. Archeworks partners with design firms across the city to provide office space, lectures, tours, and studio critiques for student projects, and also matches students with professional mentors, giving each student the opportunity to receive personal feedback.

The class is led by Ivis Garcia Zambrona, PhD, Assistant Professor of City and Metropolitan Planning at the University of Utah, who also facilitated many of the community partnerships in Humboldt Park. The community-focused projects, combined with lectures and design-centered instruction from Archeworks, presents both planners and architects a unique opportunity to learn in a hands-on, interdisciplinary setting that draws on a broad variety of skills.

The ChicagoLab cohort for Summer 2016 consists of 13 students: Two from the Master of Architecture program, two Architecture undergraduates, two from the Master of City and Metropolitan Planning program, and seven Urban Ecology undergraduates, one of whom is also studying Civil Engineering.

Two additional projects were developed this year for ChicagoLab. One group addressed safe passageway, including techniques for traffic calming and providing space for alternative modes of transportation. The other group worked on community marketing by developing marketing material and strategies for promoting the assets in the area.
ChicagoLab 2016 has worked with several partners within Humboldt Park, most of which are associated with Puerto Rican community organizations. This report focuses on students working with the Puerto Rican Cultural center and the Consuelo Lee Correjier Childcare Center.

Along with the PRCC and the childcare center, we have received feedback from the Puerto Rican Agenda, an association of neighborhood leaders who advocate policies that benefit Puerto Ricans locally and nationwide. Puerto Rican organizations in Humboldt Park are tightly networked and have relationships with each other and with Professor Zambrona, so the group has depended on their knowledge and feedback to shape our projects.

PRCC
The Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) is a grassroots organization that advocates for the promotion of the community in Humboldt Park and around the region. They sponsor and cultivate many educational, health and cultural services. The principles of self-determination, self-actualization and self-sufficiency are key components of their mission as seek development from within the community as opposed to development from without.
INTRODUCTION

CHILDCARE CENTER

Named after the Puerto Rican poet, educator and pianist Consuelo Lee Corretjer (1904-1988), the Center is a bilingual childcare/Head Start, in partnership with El Valor, offering quality Child Care and Head Start services for children ages 15 months to 5 years. The Center was created in 1980 in response to the need for bilingual-bicultural pre-school programs in the community. It places special emphasis on Puerto Rican and Latin American culture as well as language retention.

While the program is designed to help ease the child’s transition to elementary school and aims to provide services primarily to working families, it also seeks to engage the children in discovering their individuality and uniqueness within a community with a rich history and cultural legacy. Thus, allowing the children to understand the world about them; to act responsibly upon the world; and, most importantly, to transform the world.

Self-discipline and self-actualization are encouraged in the program’s curriculum. Parents participate in the entire process of program development. The Center’s staff is in a constant dialogue with parents and attempts to raise consciousness about all aspects of child development. Special emphasis is placed on a child’s rights as a human being, as an individual, and as part of a community.

The Childcare Center promotes the children’s social, emotional and cognitive development by offering appropriate developmental activities that capture their curiosity and stimulate the children’s intellectual development in different areas: arts, blocks, dramatic play, science, music, computers, reading and writing, as well as sensory and fine/gross motor experiences.
The principle guiding ChicagoLab is Community Engaged Learning, which the University of Utah defines as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development.” We focused on an asset-based approach, emphasizing what the community has to offer rather than what it lacks. Assets include individual gifts and abilities, community organizations, and physical infrastructure. Focusing on assets means approaching the community not as a problem to solve, but as an area that offers a tremendous amount that we can learn from and contribute to.

The Childcare Center group organized our Community Engaged Learning around a few key principles, which we’ve adapted from University and class guidelines:

**Education**

Education for ChicagoLab came from many sources, including readings and documentaries on Puerto Rican history and case studies of educational innovations in Chicago. The most important knowledge has been experiential, from spending time in the area and interacting with its members.

**Engagement & Reciprocity**

This principle comes from experiential learning and requires that students communicate with partners as equals, and with humility. Reciprocity assumes a willingness to offer ideas and receive feedback, which we did through multiple iterations of the project.

We believe the process enabled us to develop a deeper appreciation the value and complexity of community engagement, which is extremely valuable knowledge in architecture, planning, and related fields. It should be a useful building block for future collaboration among students, the university, and communities through ChicagoLab.
2. SITE ANALYSIS
Throughout Chicago history, successive waves of immigration saw Humboldt Park become a home for German, Scandinavian, Italian, and Polish communities. These groups, like many immigrants across the city, organized themselves ethnic enclaves that shifted over time. By the mid 20th century suburbanization and white flight saw many residents of European descent move out of the city.

In their place, Puerto Rican migrants began moving into Humboldt Park. Despite their status as American citizens since the 1917 Jones Act, Puerto Ricans had long faced poverty, discrimination, and hostility from European descended residents treating them as unwelcome outsiders. Puerto Rican children were separated in schools, and in some cases were even barred from worshipping in local Catholic churches. In 1966, after years of simmering tensions within the community over government neglect and police mistreatment, a riot broke out after police shot and killed a Puerto Rican man. The riot lasted for three days, and in its wake the first Puerto Rican community organizing began to demand better treatment for the community and agitate for political change. Some of those organizations have persisted through today, including the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and the Spanish Action Committee of Chicago.

In the ensuing decades Humboldt Park, particularly Division Street, became a focal point for Puerto Rican identity and pride. The street's identity was affirmed in 1995 when a public art project consisting of two fifty-nine foot tall steel representations of the Puerto Rican flags was installed, one on each end of the newly christened Paseo Boricua: “Boricua” referring to the indigenous Taíno name for Puerto Rica, and “Paseo” meaning “promenade” or “way.” Today, the flags act as literal gateways to the Paseo, although concerns about rising property values and gentrification in surrounding neighborhoods have created concerns for some residents about the future of the neighborhood.
SITE ANALYSIS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Puerto Ricans as a whole comprise the second largest Latino population in the United States, with about 4.6 million Puerto Ricans in the country as of 2010, compared to 3.7 million in Puerto Rico itself. Puerto Rico is an unincorporated American territory, so all its residents have American citizenship and passports, although residents with residence in Puerto Rico cannot vote in national elections. Throughout its history Puerto Ricans have contested the meaning of their place in America, with many seeking greater local autonomy and some advocating for statehood or independence. In recent years the territory’s economic troubles and debt crisis has led to increasing out-migration.

The Chicago metro area had about 188,000 Puerto Rican residents in 2010, which is the fifth highest in the country. About 55% of that number live in the city. The Chicago 26th Ward, which covers the majority of Humboldt Park, has a population of around 53,000, about 28% of which was Puerto Rican in 2015. Altogether the 26th Ward is 65% Hispanic, 20% white (non-Hispanic), and about 12% black (non-Hispanic).
Humboldt Park is about a mile from downtown Chicago, bounded roughly by Pulaski Road to the West, Western Avenue to the East, North Avenue to the North, and Union Pacific railroad lines to the South. The neighborhood is not contiguous with Chicago’s official Humboldt Park community area, but includes parts of both the Humboldt Park and West Town community areas. In the center of Humboldt Park sits the eponymous 220-acre park, which features open areas, playgrounds, trails, a fitness center, and a large lagoon.
Currently the childcare center is located on the Paseo Buricua at 2743 W Division St. The current facility is a storefront facility that occupies the first floor of a two-story building. The second floor of the building is a charter high school which will be expanding into the current childcare space.

The new site is a few blocks away at 1345 N Rockwell St.
In the surrounding area there are a few other childcare facilities however not an adequate amount for the area. K-12 institutions include Roberto Clemente Community Academy which is fed by 11 elementary schools. Additionally the former Van Humboldt Elementary School which is being converted to a teacher’s village (see page 18) is just across the intersection, making the area a center for childhood education.
There are four bus routes within a quarter mile (5 minute walking distance) of the new site. Many parents use public transit to get to the childcare facility. All four bus routes connect to the L (blue and green lines) within about 10 minutes, making this site highly accessible from public transit.
Van Humboldt Elementary, the central elementary in the neighborhood, closed down a few years ago. This was a huge detriment to the community. The Puerto Rican Cultural Center bought the building recently and are converting it into a teacher’s village. It will be low income housing designed for teachers, as well a community space with shops and cafes. This is a new concept only implemented in one other place in the U.S.
SITE ANALYSIS

CONTEXT - INSTITUTIONS

Large institutional buildings in the area, one shown below being a religious organization, have a strong presence in the community. They are tall and have a minimal setback from the sidewalk, making them stand out.
The main program in the area is residential. Most of the area is single family and small multi-family homes in the standard Chicago style 25’ wide, 125’ deep lots with small (approx. 6’) setbacks from the sidewalk and an alley on the rear.
SITE ANALYSIS

EXISTING STRUCTURE

The new site for the PRCC’s childcare center is a former Child Parent Center (CPC) that housed childcare and parent programs. It was associated with Van Humboldt Elementary and was closed down at the same time, and has been vacant since. It is a 70’s block structure building with high security in mind but minimal connection with the outdoors and community. This makes it very drab and uninviting.

*Front view, showing distance from street, dark entrance condition, and small windows.*

*Interior class room views.*
The current program of the new facility was designed quite well for childcare in a layout sense. It has offices in the front of the building with classrooms on either side. The center space is a community room with a pull-out stage and furniture. The parent classroom and mechanical are in the back. The kitchen, which is a full hot food service kitchen, is in the middle just off from the center of the building.
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Currently the building has a setback of 17' from the sidewalk.

On the north and south ends of the building, connected to the classrooms, are small courtyard spaces. These spaces are too small for proper outdoor play and are unusable in the winter.

Next to the building to the south is currently a dilapidated playground that is entirely separated from the building; infact it seems to be apart of the house next door.
The parents meeting room currently has an instructional kitchen attached to it as well as two adult bathrooms. The bathrooms are poorly integrated with the space.

Daylight enters the space only in small areas. There are a series of high windows in the offices and parent classrooms that bring in minimal light. Eight skylights bring pockets of light into the central community space. The classrooms receive natural light solely from the glass walls that connect to the courtyard spaces.
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
In preparing for our project we relied heavily on research on the role of the built environment found in the book The Third Teacher. Additionally, we have investigated the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education.

**The Third Teacher**

In doing research for our project we reviewed a few different materials to gain an education on our topic of childcare and childhood development. Among these was The Third Teacher: 79 Ways You Can Use Design to Transform Teaching & Learning. This book was developed in collaboration with Cannon Design to address design principles as they relate to education space design. From this publication we gained an understanding of the design principles that are important in planning and designing any space that influences children’s development. The most important topics were: “Basic Needs”, “Minds at Work”, “Bodies in Motion”, “Community Connections”, and “Sustainable Schools”. These gave us a foundation of childcare needs.

**Reggio Emilia Approach**

Childcare education is a complex subject. There are many ideologies that are used but the one that is favored by professionals in the area is the Reggio Emilia approach. This approach is centered around the child exploring. The Reggio Emilia philosophy for children’s exploration is based upon a set of principles:

- Children must have some control over their learning direction.
- Children must be able to learn through experiences of touching, moving, listening, and observing.
- Children have a relationship with other children and with material items in the world that children must be allowed to explore.
- Children must have endless ways and opportunities to express themselves.
- The teacher is there to act as a co-learner and resource to the children. They provide lesson plans based on the child’s wants and other resources that allow the child to research the world in order to gain understanding. The community is also plays a vital role the child’s development. They are incorporated as much as possible; education happens not only in the classroom but also throughout day-to-day life. Parents are apart of the classroom in order to continue the education principles at home.
CASE STUDIES

Several different case studies were evaluated during the course of the project. These included El Valor, The Chicago Children's Museum, and Christopher’s place; all of which were located in Chicago.

**El Valor - Guadalupe Reyes Children & Family Center**

We had the opportunity to tour El Valor’s Pilsen location, which is located in a Chicago Neighborhood with a similar profile to Humboldt Park. The center provides dual language, research based curriculum for children up to age five. They use an integrated approach focuses on children’s social, emotional and cognitive development. We were impressed with the classroom layouts which had several different areas for different activities and lots of natural lights. The specialized infants room had different sensory experiences like water and sand. Windows to the hallway promoted security and opened up the interior space.

**Chicago Children’s Museum**

The Chicago Children's museum is located on historic Navy Pier and features a large amount of different play zones and educational activities. Some areas included construction, vehicles, engineering, and climbing. One of the most impressive areas was the water room, which had areas for kids to experiment with controlling water flow and play with toys in the water. We felt like environment invited exploration, creativity, and play.

**Christopher’s House**

Christopher House is an educational program in Chicago with several locations that works to help kids in poverty. We researched their Logan Square infant and preschool location, that has a similar profile to the PRCC’s Childcare center. The The Reggio Emilia philosophy, discussed in section 4, is implemented throughout their programs. The center is recognized internationally for their work and approach. The facility is bright and airy with neutral colors and many different activities and zones for learning.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

COMMUNITY AS CAMPUS

The “Community as a Campus” (CAAC) education initiative that seeks to create a community-wide educational pipeline from Pre-K to 16, based on International Baccalaureate academic standards. Partner community agencies will provide supplementary services. The Puerto Rican Cultural Center is the lead agency of this initiative which has also been adopted by the Chicago Public Schools, Community Action Council of Humboldt Park Chicago, and endorsed by the Chicago Public Schools Board of education.

The revitalization of Roberto Clemente Community Academy and the enhancement of the 11 elementary feeder schools is the centerpiece of the CAAC initiative is. Three education institutes have been created to work collaboratively across the CAAC as a resource to support school improvement. The institutes will assist to improve educational offerings and outcomes, increase parent engagement and continuing education opportunities, and provide youth opportunities to increase civic participation create pathways to careers.

The Consuelo Lee Corretjer Day Care Center is an important part of this initiative, acting as the first element of educational experience for children. Because of this, the CAAC places the childcare center as an important part of the community.
4. METHODS & DESIGN PRINCIPLES
We conducted two focus group sessions with parents of children who attend the childcare center. One was a discussion with parents who are also students in the family center program. Additionally, we conducted a picture focus group with parents coming to pick up their children. Parents were encouraged to vote on pictures of various themes and appearances. These votes and small discussions with the parents helped guide the design process.
METHODS & DESIGN PRINCIPLES

METHODS

Observation

Walking the community, taking pictures, and having conversations with people in the area was an important part of developing our proposals. Being able to become familiar with neighborhood in a short amount of time was a great opportunity, yielding inspiration and an understanding of the site’s context.

Archeworks Support

Throughout ChicagoLab we received periodic feedback from classmates and Archeworks staff, who helped us develop our conceptual approach and improve our designs and communication. The feedback included both formal pinups and regular, short presentations, along with visualizing exercises like creating collages about Humboldt Park and its built environment.

Community Feedback

We had a few opportunities to get formal feedback from the community. One of those was a meetings of the Puerto Rican Agenda, where we presented an early version of the project and spoke with attendees.
METHODS & DESIGN PRINCIPLES

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Through our research and interactions we developed three design principles that guided our decision making process.

- Connect the facility to the larger community
- View the project from the eye of a child
- Elevate the role of play and sustainability in the space

Community

Because of the childcare centers role as a part of the Community as a Campus initiative and it's additional civic roles, it is important that this be a facility that is visible to the public. A sense of ownership will allow it to serve the public better.

Child’s View

While the center is an important civic building for the community, ultimately it is a place for children. Creating spaces that are comfortable for children that they can relate to will help elevate the building in it’s role as a third teacher along with parents and childcare center staff.

Play & Sustainability

Creating a more sustainable building system is an important message to the children that the community has a commitment to their future on this planet. It will also act as an educational piece for not only the children, but also the public.
5. VISUALIZATIONS
Our first proposal is to bring the entrance and offices out towards the sidewalk as much as possible and add a few feet of height. These changes will give the building more presence on the street and in the community. It will also give a more open, welcoming feeling to the interior.
Natural light is an essential part of healthy living and increases children’s success in learning. Bringing natural light into the classrooms is important and needs to be addressed in some way. This could be done by adding windows to the facade and solar tubes for interior classrooms. (Solar tubes work well due to the amount of mechanical currently criss-crossing the ceiling.)

Next we propose to add a mural for children to the base of the building. Murals are a foundation of this community and we want to promote them for all ages. By adding a screen to the facade the view of the mural is obstructed, but only from adults, giving children a chance to explore. Additionally the screen can have plant life and block the harsh western sun in the afternoons.
Space for children to play outdoors is important to develop motor skills. By connecting the playground to the building there is an increase in accessibility and security. Additionally, covering the courtyards allows for those spaces to be used year round with an opportunity for urban farming, similar to a greenhouse. Having children start this when they are young may lead them to continue sustainable practices later.

The roof is currently an underutilized space that has the potential to increase the sustainability of the facility. This can allow resources to be used more efficiently and improve the future of the children. Solar panels are an effective way to improve the carbon footprint without major structural improvements. Other options that may be effective in the space include a living roof and storm water retention.
In the back of the facility the parent classroom can be divided and the instructional kitchen and bathrooms removed in order to better utilize the space for parent classes. By extending the front of the building an opportunity to add a cafe space for parents becomes possible. Parents expressed a need for space to spend time with their kids. This is reinforced by the Reggio Emelia approach that includes parents heavily in the child’s education.
Additionally, the expansion allow the offices to maintain an appropriate size. A more open and flexible office environment fits with the needs of the administration. Nursing, administration, and a copy room would also be in this area.

Lastly a small but important detail is the adult restrooms in the facility. Parents feel that it is important to have family style restrooms being as it is a childcare facility. These allow for changing tables and parental supervision in all of the restrooms.
6. CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

NEXT STEPS

The visualizations, while presented in this report as a cohesive whole, are designed to be interchangeable. Prioritizing these options and other possibilities needs not explored will be necessary.

Finances

Firstly, financial resources need to be evaluated to determine what scope of work is feasible for the facility. Operating costs will also need to be evaluated. Because the facility was designed in 1978, it is nearly 14 years old and maintenance will be an ongoing concern. Steps should be taken now if economical to reduce future costs.

Programming

More specific requirement for the building use need to be identified to ensure that enough space is allocated for need programs. This includes number of enrolled children, size of parent classes, and the needs of administrators and educators.

Professional Design

Now that some options for the building have been explored, the PRCC will be better prepared to engage with professional design services in moving forward to a concrete design.
CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

We’ve presented a series of interrelated projects that can be independently implemented to promote the Paseo Boricua. Taken as a whole we believe these could represent small but significant contributions to the character and culture of Humboldt Park.
7. REFERENCES
REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY


