

Catalytic Urbanism: Encouraging Urban Vitality in Spokane, Washington Through Modular Development.

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Abstract

By the early 1960's Spokane, Washington's downtown, which had ballooned rapidly with railroad expansion, was faced with a downtown core that was underutilized, dilapidated, and blighted. In a citywide effort to restore the city center Spokane held the 1974 World Exposition. In preparation for the Expo much of the downtown core went through a phase of urban renewal, which led to extensive demolition of existing urban fabric. In some cases entire city blocks were leveled to eliminate the blighted areas and to provide parking for the Expo. Expo 74' was the best thing to happen in Spokane's history and yet 38 years later downtown Spokane maintains a lasting legacy of nearly 20 acres of asphalt parking lots spread throughout the downtown core, which have remained undeveloped since the expo. This thesis explores modular architectural development strategies aimed at increasing urban vitality and property values, while providing infrastructure for micro business, cottage

industries and market rate housing to cultivate and expand the culture within downtown area. With the prevalence of surface parking and the scar that this type of infrastructure has left on the urban fabric of Spokane my project seeks to develop a strategy to rehabilitate these urban voids through aggregate, modular development. Rather than continue to wait for large-scale development my project proposes that smaller incremental growth can happen now and begin to re-knit and re-ignite urban vitality. To achieve this goal, modular units are used. They are supported by an adaptable post and beam structural system, which is capable of accommodating flexible growth over time allowing the building to slowly grow and accumulate occupants. Core elements are programmed with shared amenities, which are aimed at increasing small businesses and entrepreneurial growth. The resulting architecture provides an adaptable environment, which changes and flexes over time as the city core evolves.

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