DUE: 8th Week

The comprehensive contextual analysis of 2 unique sites of interest. To be selected based on your research essay’s problem occurring detectably within space, or obvious cultural and environmental factors stemming from your critical position. Graphically expressed via a combination of hand drawn and digital techniques; you must show your speculative building program layout comparatively across both sites. Provide a conclusive written analysis of pros vs. cons.

4. Contextual Analysis

INTENT:
Contextual Analysis inventories, records, analyzes, and diagrams the physical and cultural site factors inherent within a project’s context. Its purpose is to better inform your design process by making apparent otherwise hidden variables that are location specific to your thesis’s problem statement. Here, a comprehensive understanding of both the opportunities and constraints available to the designer must be mapped-out visually.

DESCRIPTION:
Contextual Analysis allows designers to comprehend the physical and cultural implications of a selected site and in turn communicate a given project’s needs, unique opportunities, and/or limitations. Site data should be collected, analyzed, diagrammed, and communicated in a relevant and logical manner employing both methods of visual storytelling and data visualization.

Analyzing the site is part of an architect’s due diligence and necessary to insure a thorough knowledge and understanding of the physical conditions and cultural implications from which to make rational design decisions. The process implies responsibility on the part of the designer to know and understand the “affordance” a particular site offers the user, program, and project’s life cycle.

CONTENT:
Contextual Analysis results in graphic and textual documentation of the proposed site and surrounding context. It’s a critical component of your design research process that is meant articulate useful factors that will co-determine your design decisions.

Use text and graphics, photographs, maps, charts, sketches, original drawings, and analytical diagrams, as creative expressions of your observations, insights, and understanding about the proposed site for your thesis project. Consider this visual research as a basis for providing insight into a site’s issues and a future design’s value system. Understanding that spaces are built over time, please engage observantly at your site (if possible) examining its commonsense attributes. Additionally, consult institutions such as local historical societies to establish a broader (regional) context for its development. Prepare a formal study expressing the following site factors at minimum:

- Location / Neighborhood Context
- Size / Zoning / Legal Issues
- Natural Physical Features
- Macro / Micro Climate including Solar Geometry
- Man Made Physical Features
- Circulation / Access / Infrastructure
- Cultural Characteristics
- Sensory Characteristics

"Being mindful of both consistency and your client/audience please provide north arrows, graphic scales, legends, titles, captions and photo / sketch orientations as required to communicate clearly the collected data. Summarize information into both a graphic and textual format for each of the site factors referenced above.

“It is a decision coming from commonality that you choose a place out of all places to build where others can also settle. It is a very important decision…this decision of the placing of a building, which has never been there before."

“...a building and its site should complement each other well enough to appear as though they were created for each other.”

Louis I. Kahn

“When we dwell in a place we are simultaneously located in space and exposed to a certain environmental character. Two psychological functions are involved…orientation and identification. To gain an existential foothold in the world we need to orient ourselves in space and identify with our environment.”

Christian Norberg-Schultz
USEFUL SOURCES:

Site Analysis
Edward T. White

Architectural Graphic Standards
AIA

Pre-Design 2
ALS Study Guide

Site Planning
Kevin Lynch

Sun, Wind & Light
K. & B. Brown / Mark DaKay

Design with Nature
Ian L. McHarg

Creating Architectural Theory
Jon Lang

Design & Analysis
Bernard Leupen

Taking Measures: Across the American Landscape
James Corner / Alex S. MacLean

Green Architecture and the Agrarian Garden
Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

Good Mourning California
Barbara Stauffacher Solomon