

New Public Sites Kiosk – MICA

April 8-17, 2009

Transcript

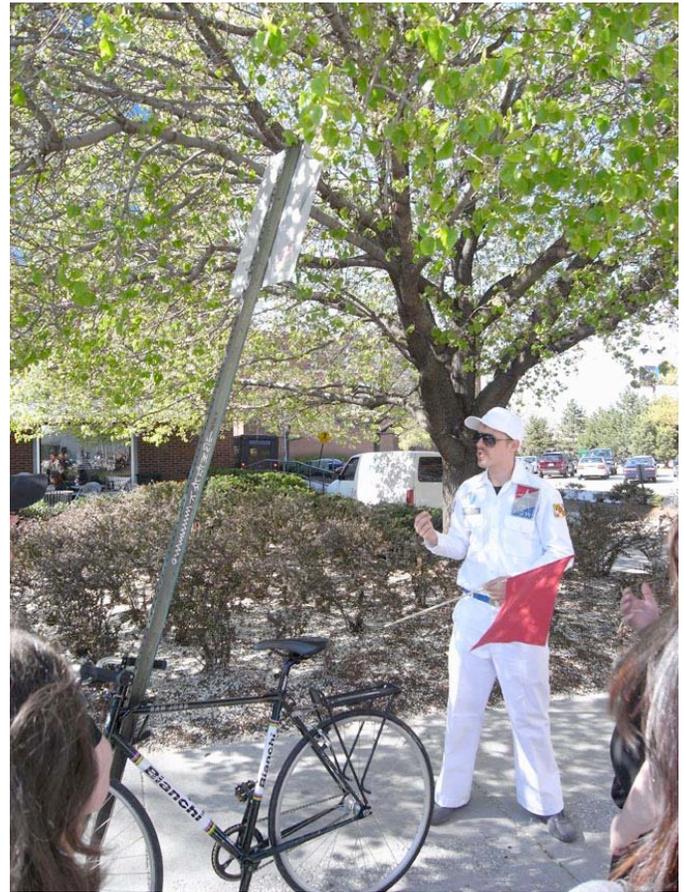
**Graham
Coreil-Allen**





Hello everyone and welcome to the New Public Sites – Kiosk walking tour. Today I will lead us on a short tour around the parking lot directly north of the Bunting Center. During this tour I will be talking about some of the invisible sites and overlooked features of our everyday environment. The tour will last approximately fifteen minutes and all participants will receive a free button. Who would like a button?

Let us begin...



The first stop on our tour is this sign. As you can see this is a 'No Stopping' sign. Beginning at the sidewalk, the signpost is entrenched firmly in the concrete and faces Lafayette Avenue. As we follow the green post upwards, a reddish, oxidized hue appears while the column begins to turn and torque. Continuing upward, the sign no longer faces Lafayette Avenue and instead looks north. Now why is it that the No Stopping sign has turned away from the street? Well, I would conjecture that motorists have been flagrantly disobeying the sign's command and stopping on Lafayette Avenue. So in order to find peace, the sign has chosen to face in this direction, towards I-83, where indeed, there is never stopping.

Lets continue...



The second place I would like to feature on the tour is what we're standing on, Dickson Street. Now at first glance this may not seem like a street, but if you check a map you will find that this is in fact a named road. The reason why this doesn't look like a street is because its missing many of the traditional details that would usually clue us in. There are no continuous sidewalks, curbs, regular lighting or architectural details to tell us that this is a formal street. Instead Dickson Street looks like an over-scaled gutter connecting the rear parking areas of a few buildings. But if we look carefully, we can find a few subtle gestures to the pedestrian.

Let us find one of these gestures...



Here we are midway down Dickson Street. On the south side we see the emergency exit doors for the Bunting Center. The deeply recessed, vertical curtain walls lead down to four quiet steps. These steps meet a short stretch of sidewalk running parallel to the building. This length of sidewalk is not alone. If we directly north, across Dickson Street, we find another sidewalk, this one even shorter. Here we have a three-foot

concrete segment connecting Dickson Street to the adjacent parking lot. The sidewalk has curbs on both sides, each standing about eight inches tall. Framing the sidewalk are two overgrown bushes. The evergreen color of these bushes provides ample camouflage for a nearby box.

Lets take a closer look at this box...



Here we have an impressive green box. The concrete base for this sculptural box sits perpendicular to the asphalt curb of the parking lot. The base is inscribed with what could be the initials of its creator, "MPC". The concrete base supports the horizontal massing of the heavy looking green box. The horizontal mass of the box is balanced by the deep vertical slats that can be found on three sides.



Following these slats upwards, we notice that the weathered, bleached green hue of the box begins to give way to a patina of red streaks. On the top of the box, this oxidized red patina has completely taken over. However, as we move in closer to examine the patina, we begin to realize that harmonious demeanor of the box is ever so subtly undone

by a faint buzzing sound. Can you hear the buzzing? This sound casts a nervous and unsettling tone around this otherwise benign form. And as you listen to this buzzing, you might notice another sound, a sort of humming emanating from somewhere in this direction.

Lets go find the source of this humming...



Now as we move towards the west side of the parking lot, we find ourselves faced with a brick wall. The brick wall tells us nothing. There are no signs, windows, cornices or other architectural details to explain what may be going on in this building. The only thing we can read is the patterning of the brick. Every six layers the brick rotate from a position of north-south to east-west. Following this pattern upward, we find the source of the humming sound that brought us here, another metal box.



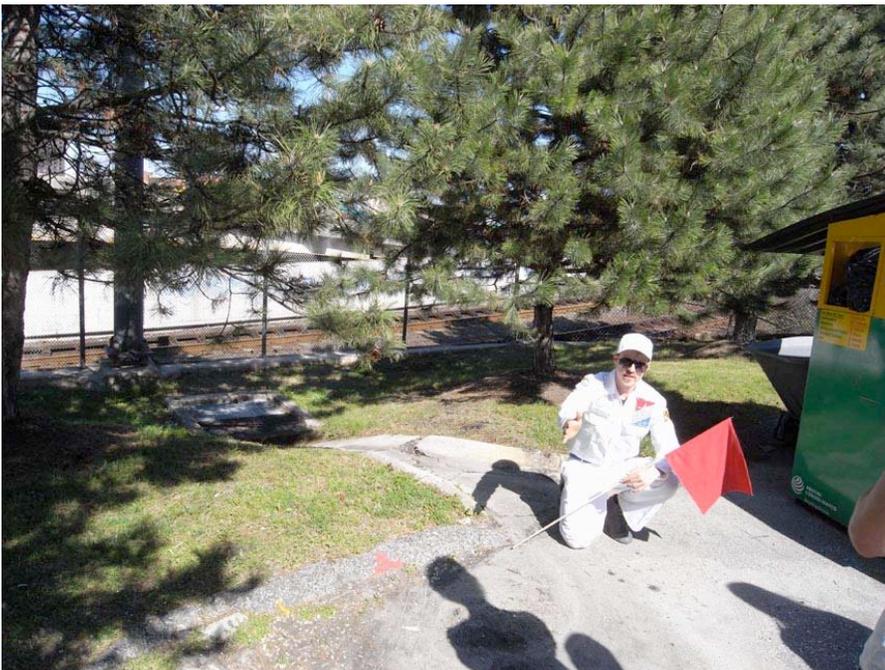
I call this box the Evapco Crown. Not unlike the green box previously discussed, the Evapco Crown sits on a solid base. But rather than concrete, this base consists of an oxidized steel beam. Directly above the beam rests the first layer of the layer of the Evapco Crown, a stainless steel rectangular band. This band supports the next layer, a

perforated metal grate from which escapes the ever-present humming sound. Above this grate rises the polished metal tower. The Evapco Crown tower is adorned with a jewelry of symmetrically laid bolts. Nearby the stands another metal box of similar proportions but opposite connotations.

Let us find this additional metal box...



Here we have the Paper Retriever. As you can see the paper retriever is a dumpster. But unlike most dumpsters, this one does not look foreboding or threatening. Instead, the Paper Retriever appears playful and friendly. The dumpster dons a pastel color scheme of mustard yellow, sky blue and a weathered green similar to

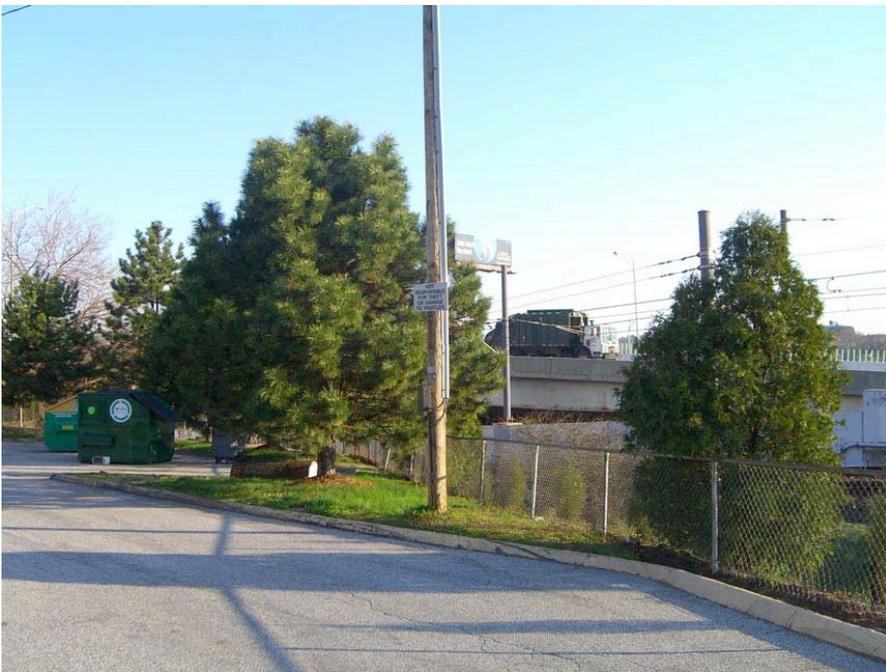


the first box featured. In addition, Paper Retriever includes a fun dog mascot. The only thing contradicting the friendly demeanor of this box is the orangish-red drooling along the left-hand side of its mouth. These streaks force me to ask the question; how is it that a dumpster that consumes only paper and cardboard drools red? ... I don't know.

But the Paper Retriever is not the only thing drooling around here. Indeed, the surface upon which we stand also drools, right over here, into this chute. During rainy weather the parking lot collects water, which flows into this corner. As water streams down the chute it creates a sandbar of sorts. This sandbar contains all sorts of runoff, including dirt, pulverized asphalt, broken glass, a bottle cap and even this battery. If we follow the suggestion of this flow we will reach another special space, perhaps a regal space foreshadowed by the nearby crown. If you would like to join me, I will continue the tour at the bottom of this hill...



At the foot of this drooling, we have what I call the Anti-Throne. Now typically with a throne, you would ascend, but in this case one descends. Rather than being elevated by the full massing of a throne, we are de-elevated into a negative void. Rungs invite us to crawl down into a meditative space and enjoy the majesty of this undone royal seating. But what kind of ruler would sit in this Anti-Throne? ... I don't know.



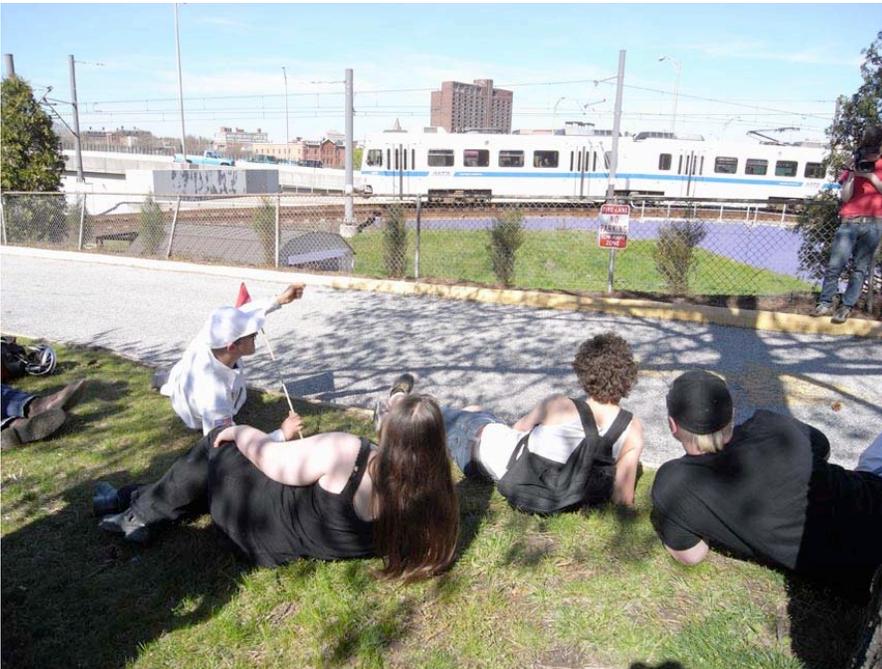
Emerging out of this space we are framed by two sentinel pine trees. Stepping back even farther we can view the full urban forest before us. Now as we walk east through the parking lot I will continue talking. As we move in this direction we can fully appreciate the transition of the forest as it grows eastward. Starting out relatively thick, the forest almost entirely blocks our view of everything beyond. Yet as the forest spreads out, its scale begins to

shrink. Trees begin to be spaced farther apart and while dropping in size. But even as the forest dissolves, there continues a steady rhythm of bushes, perhaps three-feet tall and spaced approximately six feet apart. As we move along, at this point it appears that the forest has entirely dissipated. But that is indeed not the case. In fact, the forest has not disappeared, it has only been displaced...



Fifteen feet to our south, the forest reappears. Here we have a singular tree standing within a teardrop shaped island filled with supple green grass. This tear dropped shaped island provides the perfect place from which can enjoy an impressive view. Join me on this island...

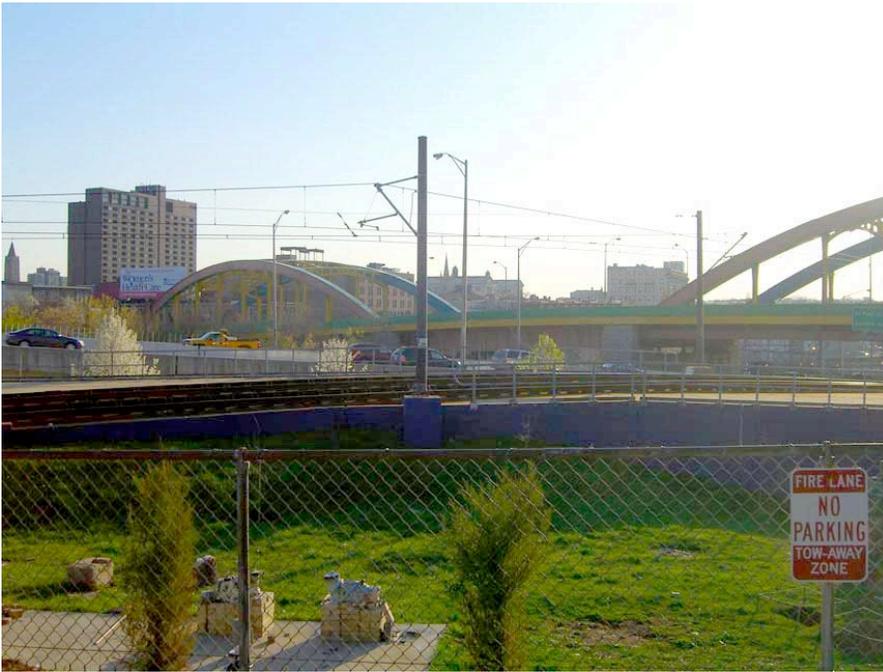
From here we can appreciate the grand vista before us. Behold, the Parallax of Transit! Within the Parallax of Transit we can see many horizontal layers of activity compressed into one flat space. But before I continue, I think these horizontal layers are best appreciated from a parallel point of view. Join me as I recline on the soft grass...



From this position we can truly enjoy the many layers of transit that fill the vast space before us.

Ladies and gentlemen, the light-rail!
[light-rail train passes]

Firstly we have the delicate mew of grass scooping upward where it meets the pastel lavender wall of the light-rail tracks.



Directly behind the light-rail churns the ever-flowing river of vehicles that is I-83. Yawning, groaning, growling and moaning, various cars, trucks, vans and other vehicles pass right while other move left. But in the midst of all this traffic, the urban forest is not lost. In the center of the two competing flows, the forest reappears, not in its organic form, but rather as synthetic representation. Here the rhythm of the bushes is revisited as vertical

green slats. And if we look even farther, the tops of trees indicate the forest's presence once again. Behind the trees we see the northern edge of the Howard Street Bridge. This relaxed and double arched form spans the entire Parallax of Transit. In addition, the bridge is encoded with same color scheme of the Paper Retriever previously examined: rusty red, mustard yellow, sky blue and light green. If we follow the two arches of bridge southward, and look carefully to right and underneath, we can see two more layers of transit: freight and commuter rail. But amongst all this activity there is one thing that we can't see. That which we cannot see is important. This unseen layer is in fact the creator of this intense compression of space. Jones Falls. Jones Falls River created this valley and thus the opportunity for the development of so much movement as Baltimore burgeoned. And while we may not be able to see this river, if you listen closely, between the screeching of the light-rail, the moaning of the cars, and the grumbling of the freight train, you can hear Jones Falls as it babbles into oblivion. Can you hear it?

With that, I would like conclude today's tour. Thank you very much for joining me on this tour. It's been a pleasure walking with you. If you are at all disoriented, simply follow the directional suggestion of the teardrop shaped island as it gestures back towards Cohen Plaza. I will be walking back to the Kiosk now, thank you very much.