TANGIBLE AND AFFECTIVE LANDSCAPE DESIRES: THE SUBURBAN YARD

By

Ian Legge

A Practicum Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the landscape desires of fourteen suburban area case-study subjects residing in new and old neighbourhoods. In particular this study highlights physical and social catalysts that influence the landscape desires of the suburban homeowner. Two types of desires are identified as being present: those which are *tangible*, or amenity driven; and those which are *affective*; or elicit an emotional response. Whether it be tangible or affective, certain landscape desires are unique to both new and old suburban areas. The differences in expressed desires arise from unique physical realities that define each area. Whether it is existing environmental conditions, the character and style of homes, or the expectations and aspirations of individual homeowners, landscape desires are as much a response to surrounding conditions as they are a response to personal choice. Through analyzing the built environment of two suburban areas and the homeowners response to these environments, a series of charts are produced which attempt to visually communicate how desires were influenced by surroundings. Thus the purpose of this project is to identify which qualities (also know as catalysts) of new and old suburban neighbourhoods influence homeowners to respond with a particular landscape desire. By highlighting the catalysts within these charts the research herein may be used to help build better neighbourhoods and communities and could be the impetus for further research into this topic.

PREFACE

When I started my practicum, I had envisioned designing an urban landscape intervention that fused the qualities of suburban and urban areas. The goal of the design was to preserve the urban fabric while at the same time entice people who would like to live downtown but who also enjoy aspects of the suburbs. The rational here was to provide new housing opportunities, help revitalize downtown Winnipeg by increasing its population and to help curb suburban sprawl. A preliminary master plan was produced which responded to the urban condition. What the plan hadn't yet addressed at this preliminary stage was the suburban elements which are deemed of value by suburbanites themselves. What were these elements? For without these key elements in the design, the original objective could not be achieved. This is where the focus of the practicum shifts from design oriented to an investigative work that attempts to reveal "what are the elements of suburbia that suburbanites deem valuable?"

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

"Tangible and Affective Landscape Desires: The Suburban Yard" identifies and examines fourteen landscape desires in suburbia and provides insite into what it is that suburban homeowners really want from their personal landscape. These fourteen desires are broken into two desire types: tangible, or amenity driven, and affective, or those which elicit an emotional response. The desires were identified through a case-study review of fourteen residential landscape designs and the preceding client interviews. The research revealed similarities and some notable differences between the desires of homeowners who reside in new (1980's onward) and old (pre-World War Two) suburban neighborhoods.

Research will reveal that the difference in desires between the two areas can be attributed to differences in overall form, physical appearance, typology and social constituents. After conducting a literature review of the sociological response of people to their environments and analyzing the physical qualities of the two suburban area types, a series of eighteen diagrams was produced. The diagrams are a response to the landscape desires identified by the homeowners in the case-studies and highlight specific physical and social elements which may influence a particular landscape desire for the homeowner. Of the eighteen diagrams, four were unique to new suburban areas, four were unique to old suburban areas and ten were shared between the two. In essence, the diagrams reveal what it is about their physical and social surroundings that cause homeowners to have a particular landscape desire.

Through gaining an understanding of landscape desires and the physical and social factors of two existing suburban areas which influence them, it is hoped that this practicum can be used as a tool for others to make informed decisions for better designed communities and new housing opportunities.

1.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this practicum is to determine what it is that suburban homeowner's desire from their personal landscape. The first objective is to undertake a case-study analysis of fourteen suburban homes in an attempt to determine the landscape desires of homeowners in new and old suburban neighbourhoods. After completing the case-study analysis the next objective is to determine if there are differences in desires between homeowners in the two neighborhoods, and if so to determine what factors

may contribute to these differences. The final objective is to produce a chart that highlights the factors (or catalysts) that may initiate a particular landscape desire amongst homeowners in the two suburban neighbourhoods.

1.2 PRACTICUM ORIGINS

I have lived in Winnipeg my whole life, (see figures 1, 2 and 3) the majority of which was spent living in a suburban area. I rarely ventured towards downtown Winnipeg as there was no reason for me to do so. Friends, family and everyday activities were all within the confines of our suburban environment. This is how I was brought up and for all I knew this is how life was supposed to be, it was great and I loved every minute of it.

Figure 1. Family gathering in my parents backyard.

Figure 2. My childhood home.

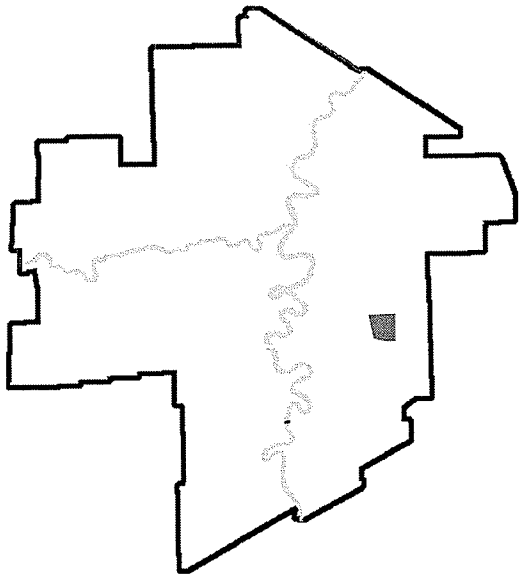


Figure 3. The suburb of Island Lakes within the context of Winnipeg.

This is my common bond with most Winnipeggers: a suburban upbringing. Most of Winnipeg's area is suburban residential neighbourhoods and thus most of its population resides here (see figures 4, 5 & 6). Aside from apartment blocks and condos, there has been little to no variety when it comes to housing choices. This lack of choice can be attributed to a combination of developers' desires for economic efficiency, property tax gain for the city and the fact that the suburban way of life has been

effectively packaged, marketed and sold with great success to the masses who are seeking the promised benefits of both the urban and rural condition (Leo and Brown, 1999). Cynthia Girling (1994), states in her book Yard, Street, Park that this "advertising reveals fundamental appeals . . . and is a commercial aphrodisiac, selling entire project personalities and lifestyles" (p.10). The North American suburb has been sold with such great success, that the suburban way of life has become nostalgic for many and is viewed as a right of passage or birthright to the style of life they enjoy.

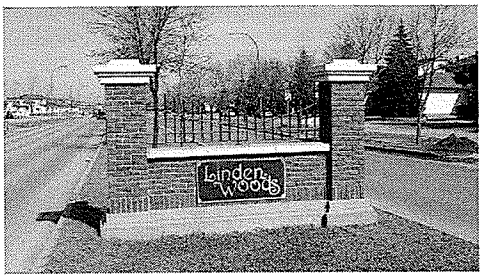


Figure 4. Entrance to Linden Woods

Figure 5. Entrance to Island Lakes

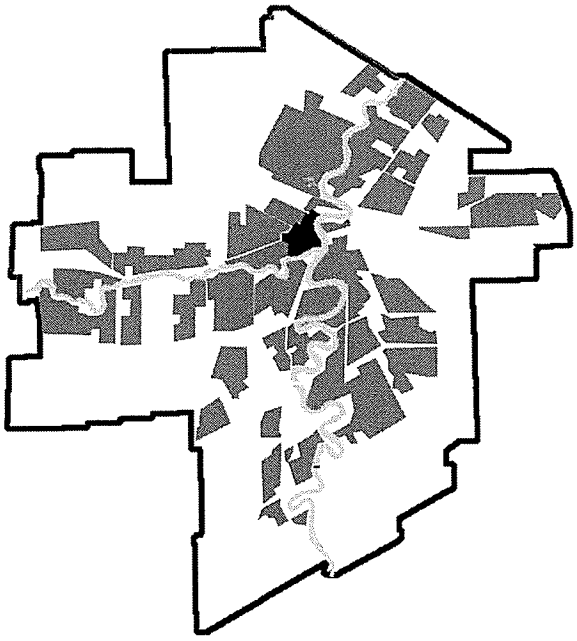


Figure 6. Subdivisions in red show extent of suburban development within Winnipeg

When I entered the landscape architecture program as a pre-master's student in September of 2003, the way I viewed and experienced my surroundings began to change. I was exposed to a world of design in which landscape architecture had an ability to have a positive impact on the places in which we reside. However, part of this education informed me about the perils of poor planning and suburban sprawl. This included the direct and indirect decay of the urban environment. I was shocked: suburbia which I had deemed for so many years to be good for me, was actually contributing to the decay of the City I love. How could this be? As a proud Winnipegger, I wanted to learn more about how Winnipeg could be a healthier and a more prosperous city.

It was during this time that I started to take notice of Winnipeg's downtown and realized that despite its run-down and neglected condition, there was real potential for living opportunities. It has attractions such as the exchange district, the forks, the Alexander docks, old market square, museums, restaurants and shops (see figures 7, 8 and 9).

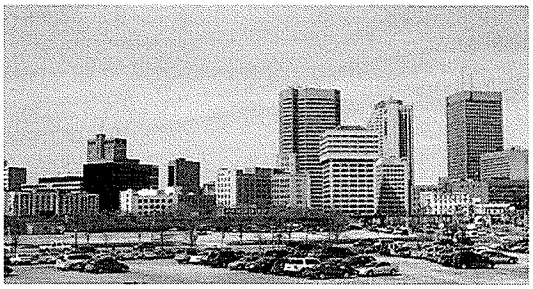


Figure 7. Winnipeg's skyline.

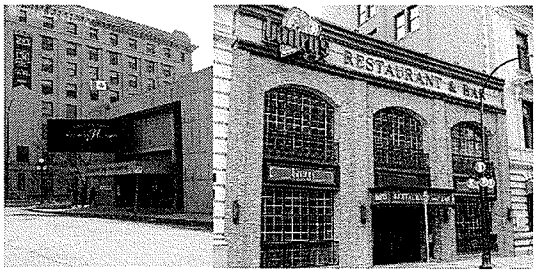


Figure 8. A few attractions found in the East Exchange District.

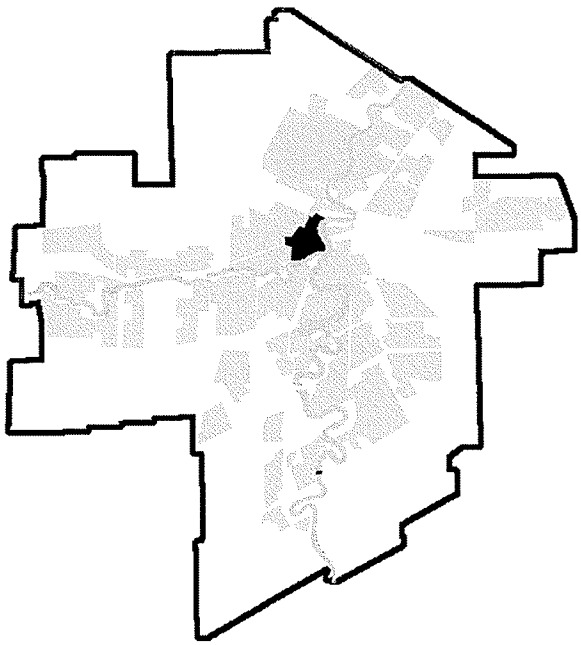


Figure 9. Downtown Winnipeg

Despite all of these great attractions one important aspect of downtown is missing; people who reside here on a permanent basis. As a downtown resident I find it refreshing to see the 60,000 people within the confines of downtown during the work week hours. However this condition is quite ephemeral as at night and on the weekends the downtown seems empty and deserted with only 13,000 residents. David Witty has recently stated that in order for Winnipeg's downtown to become more viable it would need roughly 20,000 permanent residents (Winnipeg Free Press, Sept.17, 2006). This feat may be achievable for a City whose population is growing at a respectable rate, but the sad reality for Winnipeg is that the only thing that is growing here is its sprawl-catered footprint. Despite Winnipeg being a slow growth city, sprawl continues to expand as new subdivisions such as Waverly West and Sage Creek are presently in the initial phases of construction (see figures 10, 11 and 12). Christopher Leo and Wilson Brown in their paper

entitled *Slow Growth and Urban Development Policy*, contend that the issue with Winnipeg is that City Council has an unwillingness to accept slow growth and therefore Council accepts policies that assume rapid growth, thereby damaging the health of the City (1999, pg. 3). With all of this development catered to the fringes of the City, less attention is paid to the downtown as a viable place to dwell.

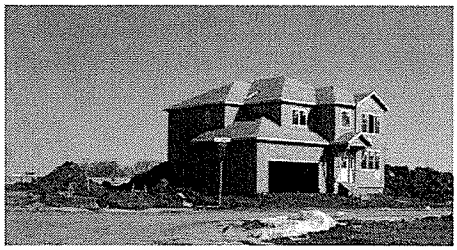


Figure 10. First home constructed in Waverly West.

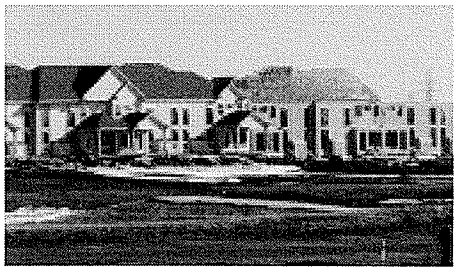


Figure 11. Homes in Sage Creek under construction.

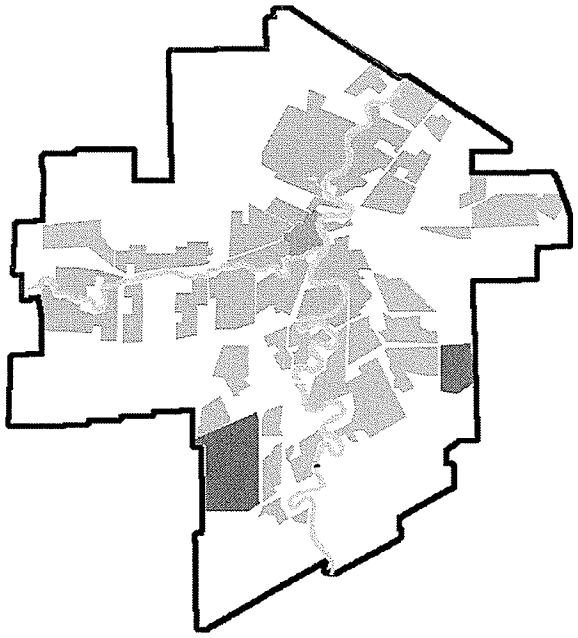


Figure 12. Waverly West (highlighted, left) and Sage Creek within Winnipeg Context.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Therein lays the challenge. How do you entice people from a suburban fabric to an urban fabric where there are no nostalgic suburban elements which people can identify with? For if suburbia has become a right of passage for so many, why would they choose to give this up. How could the practice of landscape architecture entice people to live in Winnipeg's downtown, when the premiere housing option caters towards the cozy suburbs which enclose our city boundaries? Winnipeggers' idealism with suburbia is reflective in the quote from the documentary The End of Suburbia (2004):

"North Americans, by and large, love suburbia. It has promised space, affordability, convenience, family life and upward mobility. After over half a century of constant development more than half of the population has moved here. And as the population of suburban sprawl has exploded, so too the suburban way of life has been embedded in the North American consciousness. Suburbia and all it promises has become the American dream."

How do you initiate change, when a particular way of life has been embedded for the past sixty years within a society's collective psyche? Could there be some way to combine the qualities that people enjoy about suburban life in a downtown context while still maintaining the integrity of the urban fabric? Could this entice more people to the urban environment and help curb sprawl at the same time? These questions initiated my practicum process in which the original goal was to design an urban landscape intervention that fused the two conditions into one, thereby providing new living opportunities.

The first step in my process was to choose an appropriate urban site within the City. The east exchange district would serve as an ideal location for future residential development as it is close to many cultural and natural amenities. Over the next few months, I completed an extensive inventory and analysis of the site and subsequently produced a preliminary Master Plan for the re-development of the area and presented this during my intermediate practicum presentation (see figures 13 &14).

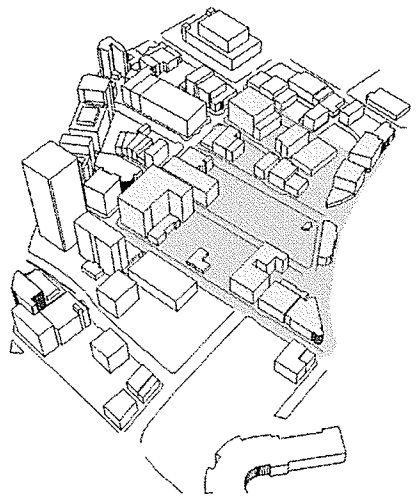


Figure 13. Extent of original design intervention in the East Exchange District.

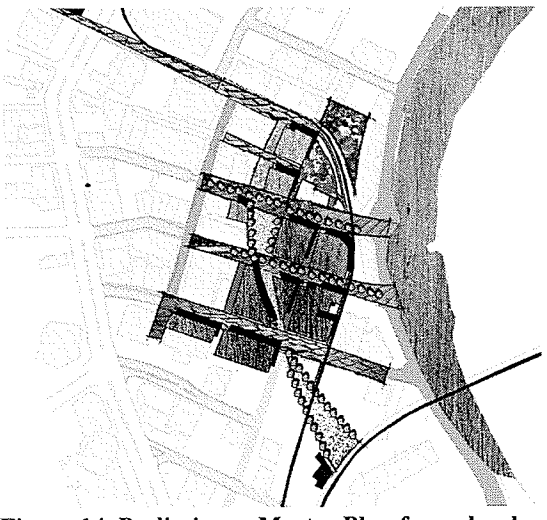


Figure 14. Preliminary Master Plan for redevelopment of the East Exchange District.

One significant question that arose was "where are the elements of suburbia in this plan, and what is it that suburban homeowners desire from their personal landscape?" To answer this question, review of literature regarding the suburban condition was performed. Unfortunately most of the information found was anecdotal and not grounded in research.

This caused me to take a break from my practicum and as it so happened I co-founded a residential design service for the summer. At the time this was not part of my research, but a break that got me designing. It was upon returning to my practicum and reviewing some of the lessons learned that I saw the research potential. This is what changed the direction of the practicum from redesigning an urban landscape to a study of landscape desires in suburbia. I then went back over the design work done in the firm and analyzed the design process – interviews and resultant designs- and their outcomes as a way to see the desires of suburban home owners as they actually (not hypothetically) re-envisioned their landscapes.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

By the end of the summer fourteen suburban yards had been designed within the City of Winnipeg. These fourteen yards, scattered throughout new and old suburban (residential) areas would serve as the basis for original case-studies. Through the research process a variety of physical differences were noted between the existing conditions within older and newer suburban areas including: neighbourhood character, open space, lot size, house size and overall neighborhood layout. These differences of the fourteen yards were then divided into two main categories: new suburban areas and old suburban areas.

New suburban areas are the newer periphery developments that were built from the 1980's onward (see figures 15, 16 and 17). They can be characterized by winding roads, large open park space, homes where the front garage and driveway are emphasized on lots that can range in size from six thousand square feet to twelve thousand square feet and beyond. Of the fourteen yards, ten were characterized as new and were located in areas such as Island Lakes and River Park South.

Figure 15. Aerial photo of Suburb of Whyte Rydge.

Figure 16. Whyte Rydge at street level.

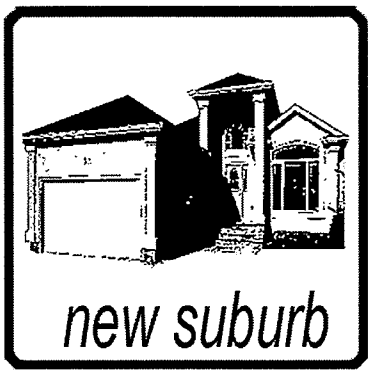


Figure 17. New Suburban Area symbol.

Old suburban areas are considered to be part of what is called first-tier suburbs (see figures 18, 19 and 20).The first-tier suburb is the older, inner-ring communities that largely developed before World War 2 or in the decade and a half immediately after (Teaford, 2008). They are generally characterized by a classic grid pattern, back lanes, mature trees, and homes with unattached garages that sit upon lots and based on the case-studies ranged in size from four thousand to six thousand square feet. Four yards were characterized as old (first-tier) suburbs and were located in areas such as River Heights and Wolseley.

Figure 18. Aerial photo of Old Suburb (Corydon Area)

Figure 19. Corydon Area at street level.

Figure 20. Old Suburban Area symbol.

The proceeding observations revert back to the questions that were raised during my intermediate presentation: What are the key components of the suburban landscape that suburbanites deem valuable? Would there be a difference in what homeowners in these two areas desired; and if so, is this the result of existing physical conditions, social constructs or maybe a combination of both?

After reviewing the interviews for both new and old suburban area case-studies, 14 separate desires were identified as being of importance to the homeowner. In no particular order, they are: block views, play space, circulation, curb appeal, design ideas, vegetable garden, lawn, no maintenance, neighbors, outdoor living, privacy, security, storage, and valued views (see figure 21). The next step in my process was to rank the level of importance of each of these desires as emphasized between individual case-studies in new and old areas. Due to the small sample size of case-studies a scientific statistical analysis was not conducted; rather the ranking of desires was achieved through averaging the overall rank for each desire based on the level of emphasis each case-study placed upon them.

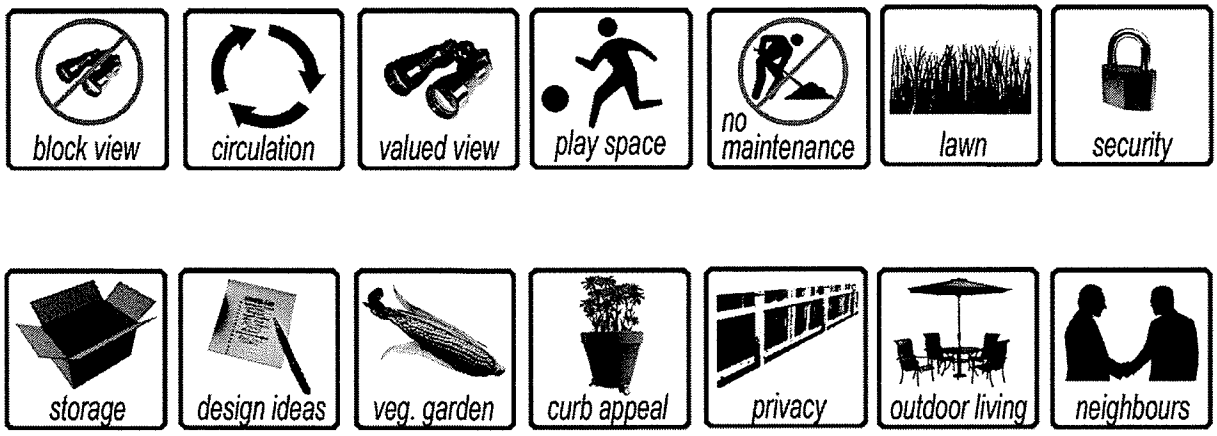


Figure 21. List of landscape desires and associated symbols.

After conducting a literature review of journal articles that focused on the sociological behavior of people in response to their physical and social environments, I found that two types of desires are present within the landscape of the suburban yard: those which are tangible or amenity driven and those which are affective and represent abstract needs.

Tangible desires can be defined as physical realities or objects that elicit a material comfort amongst homeowners. An example of this is the desire to sit under the sun on your outdoor patio – thus the desire for outdoor living can be considered tangible because it is a physical landscape element that the homeowner chooses to physically interact with for the purpose of personal well-being.

Affective desires can be defined as non-physical abstract needs or emotionally appealing

characteristics that relate to the homeowner's sense of well-being. An example of this would be the desire to block the view of windows from back-facing neighbours because the appearance of these windows causes the homeowner to feel exposed and uncomfortable while sitting in the backyard – thus privacy is considered to be an affective desire.

These 14 desires would guide the overall landscape design for each case study of which the aesthetic quality is not of importance for the purposes of this practicum. After analyzing all 14 individual designs, 10 different landscape elements were found throughout the yards (see figure 22). These elements were used as a tool to measure surface areas, proportions and percentages of landscape elements. The resultant measurements for each case-study from the two areas were then added up and the average area of landscape elements was calculated as a means to find further differences and similarities between the two areas. The measurements could then be compared to the desires of the homeowners between the two areas.

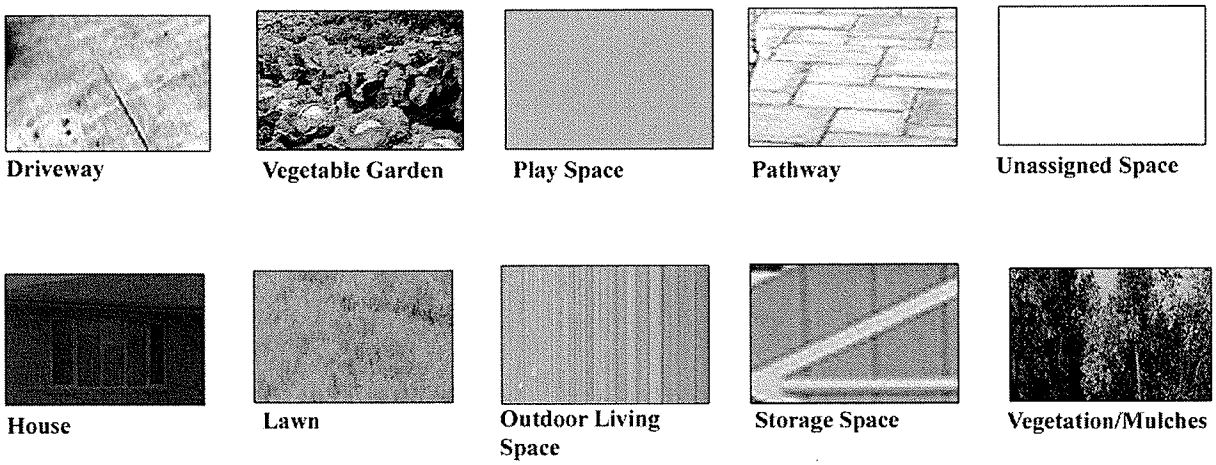


Figure 22. List of landscape elements and associated symbols.

1.5 OUTPUT

The next step in my research process was to conduct a comparison of new and old suburban areas and the two types of desires identified by the case-study subjects for the purposes of finding where the similarities and differences occur in a more precise manner. What this step didn't reveal was what the root cause of these desires was.

Due to similarities and differences in the tangible and affective desires, it can be hypothesized that there are certain physical and social determinants between areas that are affecting homeowners landscape desires. The next step in my process was to determine potential reasons for this. The question arose: what were the catalysts that initiated a particular desire?

What emerged from this practicum research is a series of eighteen hierarchical diagrams that represent research based interpretations and observations about surrounding physical and social environments that affect the need for a specific desire in both new and old suburban areas (see figure 23). Through creating these diagrams and the resultant analysis that the question "what is it that suburban homeowners desire from their personal landscape?" can be answered. For if we can understand what the physical and social forces that influence the landscape desires of suburban homeowners, then this information can be used as a tool for others to make informed decisions for better designed communities and for new housing opportunities.

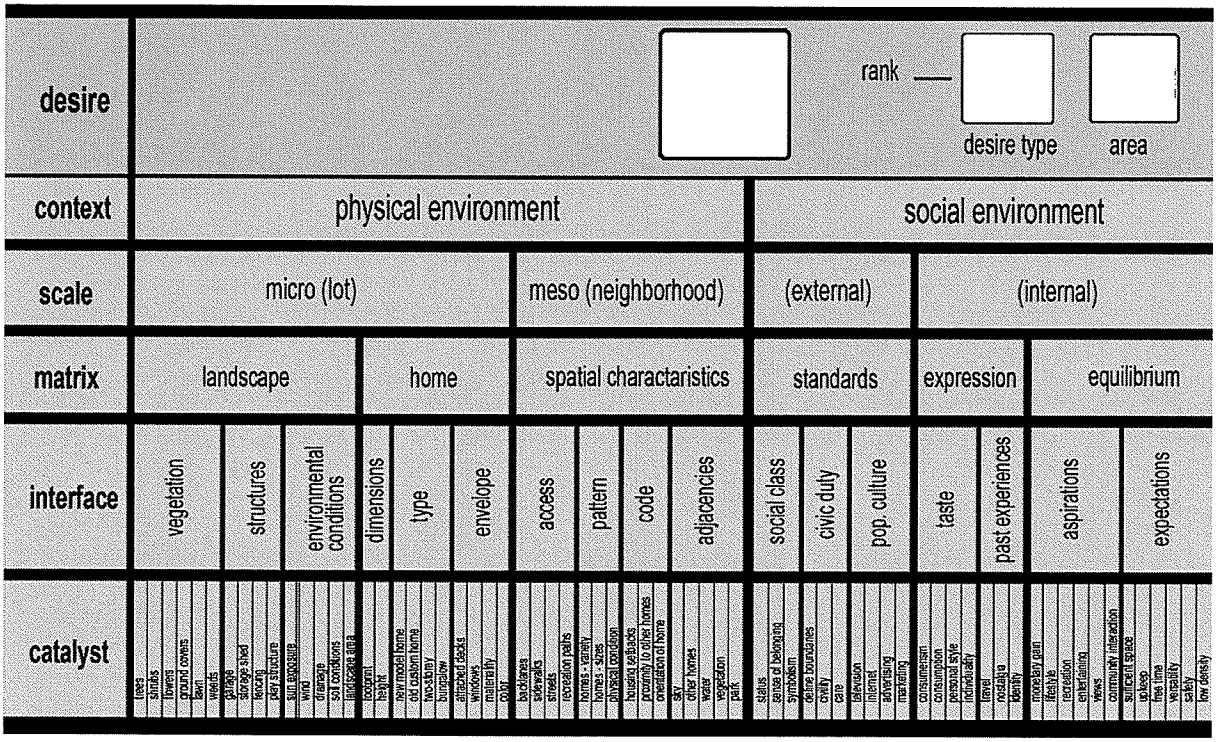


Figure 23. Diagram

CHAPTER 2: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SUBURB

2.0 BACKGROUND

As this practicum explores the desires of homeowners in new and old suburban areas it is necessary to understand what is unique about both areas. This section focuses on providing a general overview of the historical happenings that have shaped the North American suburb over the past century and a half. Research focused on literature reviews and observation based on personal experience.

2.1 THE END OF THE SUBURB?

Suburban life is often associated with open space, winding arterial roads, similar homes, and yards that all together prove to be an inviting cocktail of ingredients that the average consumer just can't seem to resist. In fact, suburbs are home to over half of the North American population (The End of Suburbia, 2004). This number has been steadily increasing since the end of the Second World War as suburbs continue to expand outwards and further and further into agricultural fields and remnant forest patches. Suburbs are so popular that it is difficult to imagine life in the North American context without them.

In recent months, there has been an increasing demand for new housing opportunities within downtown areas throughout many large North American Cities. A June 17th, 2008 broadcast on Global National News reported that due to skyrocketing fuel prices suburbanites are scrambling to save money as the long commutes to work are biting deeply into family budgets. It seems that everything from gasoline and natural gas to food, steel production, asphalt production, and even the sale of clothing are all being affected by the high price of oil. Anthony Perl, author of Transport Revolution proclaimed in this broadcast:

> *". . .when it costs more to drive to work than you earn at work, you're going to stop doing it and you'll either move or find a different type of work and both of these things will mean less people in the suburbs ..... the last person left turning out the lights is going to be the one who loses their shirt in the suburbs - you don't want to be that person."*

In its June 17th, 2008 segment, Global National News reported that the flight out of the suburbs is beginning in the United States and in Canada we would see this trend occurring in two years and that when it does, the suburban home will lose its value by one-third. The decreasing value of home and property in combination with rising costs of nearly everything else we consume could be the impetus for a major shift in settlement patterns that could see a renewed interest in living in and around downtown centres where essential goods, services and employment are all within close proximity (Kunstler, 1994).

Perhaps a shift from the suburban way of life that we have become accustomed to is on the horizon within the next few years. According to noted authors James Howard Kunstler and Richard Heinberg, oil and the invention of the personal automobile made the modern day suburb a possibility and ironically it will be oil, the automobile and our dependence on them that will be the downfall of suburbia. On a recent webcast on www.postcarbon.com, Richard Heinberg, considered to be one of the World's foremost experts on oil depletion, contends that all of these recent happenings are caused by the notion of peak oil. This concept first described by M.King Hubbert in the 50's, is entrenched in the fact that "the rate of which any well (oil), or any country, can produce oil always rises to a maximum. After which point, it begins to fall gradually back to zero." (Campbell & Laherrere, 1998). This means that as demand outstrips production oil prices will surge causing dramatic cost increases of many everyday products we consume and rely on. Richard Heinberg, who, in his book Peak Everything, proclaims that the world is set to face a global economic collapse due to our society's energy demands on oil (2007).

Based on these recent media reports and literature reviews on the subject of oil depletion, it seems that oil prices might encourage people to abandon their suburban way of life. If this occurs, then new housing opportunities may be needed to support an influx of suburbanites into urban locations. This would suggest then that my initial practicum goal of providing new housing opportunities that afford suburban qualities within a preserved urban fabric could possibly become a reality. If such a situation should arise, then where will everyone go, as there are only so many apartments and condominium units within the downtowns of cities. To begin to understand where we are going, we need to first understand

where we have been and how we have gotten here. So, if we are entering a period where the popularity of the suburb may be in the beginning of a decline , then where and how did it start? How did advances in technology morph the suburb from walking-oriented neighborhoods, to the automobile suburbs of today?

2.2 THE ORIGINS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN SUBURB

The North American suburb was born in the United States of America during the mid-nineteenth century. Cities like Chicago, where many planners of the day, such as the grandfather of landscape architecture Frederick Law Olmstead, designed neighborhoods like Riverside. They offered generous lots, rural attractiveness and were sold as places, "to suggest and imply leisure, contemplativeness, and happy tranquility." (Jackson, p.80). These suburbs were made possible by the advent of the railroad transportation system. Despite the technological innovation, the cost to ride the railroad into the city was very high and therefore the average middle-class worker could not afford to live in these areas. Also, while quite effective at transporting goods and people over large distances, the railroads were not very efficient at transporting people at shorter distances as steam engines were difficult to start and stop and took awhile to gather speed. (Friedman, 2002). Because of this, the railroad suburbs were discontinuous, small in size and quite distant from the centre of the City. Due to this, the suburbs were a place for the upper-middle to high class who could afford the high costs of homes, land and transportation. The suburbs "were blatantly elitist, with their large plots, generous open spaces, and expensive homes" (Jackson,year p.86).

For the vast majority of the population, this was only a luxury that could be dreamed of as the North American working middle class were employed largely by industry and lived close to the central core of the city where employment was easily accessible. From the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century, industry fueled the new economies of a burgeoning North American continent. "The rapid growth of the economy – coupled with the quickening pace of the Industrial Revolution – provided the basis for the organization of business on a scale undreamed of in the antebellum period." (Jackson, p. 87). At the time, most of the industry related warehouses and operating plants were located close to the center of the city as the economics of industry-related transportation development influenced location. This, coupled

with the fact that public transportation was not yet developed enough to be effective at transporting people large distances from home to work, meant that living close to places of employment was critical for economic stability. A dwelling near an employment centre may seem like an attractive benefit to living downtown, but the sad reality of the situation of the time is that the housing conditions were cramped, rundown and inadequate. Robert Fishman, in his essay entitled, "The Bounded City" declares that,

> *"Urban workers might enjoy relatively high hourly wages, but this advantage was also negated for them by the insecurity of employment in urban enterprises and by the high rents for inferior housing. Moreover, the very insecurity of the urban job market trapped workers in the most crowded slums, where they would be within walking distance of enough potential new jobs to replace the ones that they would inevitably lose" (Fishman, From Garden City to Green City, p.60).*

The lack of adequate public transportation is precisely the reason that it was critical for home and work locations to be in close proximity to each other so that it would be possible to walk to the place of employment.

As industry grew, more warehouses and operating plants dotted the landscape, resulting in a central city that was becoming an increasingly less desirable place to live. The city was fast becoming too noisy, too polluted and too unsightly, and a desire for change arose as a result. There was the need for the average citizen to get out of the city for places that were less cramped, more tranquil and allowed for a separation of home and work. Robert Fishman, in his book, Bourgeois Utopias states that the birthplace of the suburb ". . . grew out of a crisis in urban form that stemmed from the inability of the pre-modern city to cope with explosive modern urban expansion"(p.19). This escape from the city to more tranquil locations would be made possible by a technological innovation in transportation.

With the introduction of the electric streetcar in the late nineteenth century, the possibility for the mass-transportation of people within urban centers was enabled as now flight from the city for the masses could be made a reality. The streetcar entered the heart of the city in a radial manner thereby allowing

people into the city core from numerous outer communities. This enabled developers to create suburban rings in the immediate vicinity of the central core. "By the turn of the century, a new city segregated by class and economic function and encompassing an area triple the territory of the older walking city, had clearly emerged as the centre of the American urban society" (Jackson,1985 p. 115). This was the beginnings of the modern day suburb and with that the notion of the American Dream was born. "The individualistic ideal has manifested itself in a quest for a small piece of land. Suburbs offer a response to that desire" (Girling and Helphand, 1994, p.3).

The suburbs of the early twentieth century were quite different from the suburbs we know today. For the most part communities were laid out in a gridiron pattern, porches adorned homes of modest size, alleyways provided the main means of service accessibility and walking was the main mode of transportation (Ames, 1995). Peter Calthorpe proclaims that in the early suburbs, "front porches, along with back-alley garages, shallow setbacks, and narrow tree-lined streets, enhanced a sense of community and safety while re-invigorating the suburban street for pedestrian use" (Brown, Burton & Sweany,1998 p.581). Pedestrian use of sidewalks, coupled with front porch use meant that the focus of the house was toward the street where neighbours would interact and people watching was an everyday activity. This all lead to a strong sense of neighbourhood and community. It would seem though, that as technology advanced, sense of neighbourhood and community would decrease due to, in part, the introverted nature of the personal automobile.

Throughout the twentieth century, the economy grew at a steady rate where technological advances in telecommunications, agriculture and transportation in combination with the abundance of oil increased the quality of life and wealth for the average citizen. Of these advances in technology, perhaps the most influential was the advent of the personal automobile, as this created new possibilities and personal freedom to move throughout the city. As the physical range of personal mobility increased, so too did the range to which suburbs extended further outward from the centre of the city.

The small-scale suburbanization of North America was taking shape as new communities began sprouting up, pushing the boundaries of cities further and further outward. However, this development would be suppressed by a number of world events that crippled progress. The first of these events

occurred in 1929 when the Stock Market crashed and hurled North America, and the world for that matter, into the Great Depression. A world wide economic downturn caused a decrease in International trade, personal incomes, tax revenues and profits. As a result food rations, unemployment and poverty had forsaken the continent and all forward development was halted (www.msn.encarta.com, 2008). The Great Depression lasted for over ten years into the early 1940's, when Germany invaded Poland, triggering the Second World War and a new war economy (www.pbs.org 2008). During the span of these years housing production was slowed to help offset the effects of the Depressions' economic downturn followed by a focus on munitions and armor production for the War effort. It was not until after the end of the War where the beginnings of the modern day suburb took shape.

2.3 THE MODERN DAY SUBURB

Today's automobile suburb origins arose in the United States after the Second World War when the government launched the Veterans Emergency Housing Program. Due to the increased mobility of society, cheap fuel, and the re-emergence of millions of men back to North American society, adequate and affordable housing was to be constructed in the immediate years following the war. This was the reward to all of America's soldiers who had fought during World War Two. In the documentary, The End of Suburbia (2004) Peter Calthorpe proclaims that, ". . . [soldiers] get to come home and don't have to live in the City anymore. [They] can live in a brand new home in the suburbs. . . for this is their payoff for their service and sacrifice." In fact, the Veterans Emergency Housing Program aimed at creating nearly five million affordable homes within the span of four and a half years. Cheap oil and automobiles meant that developers could exploit the hinterlands surrounding cities and with that the large scale suburbanization of the North American continent had officially begun. Cynthia Girling and Kenneth Helphand state that, "The post-war American suburb has been supported and developed by national government policy, which offered financial incentives and the material resources for the suburban settlement patterns and highway building while ignoring the needs of inner cities. (1994 p. 8). In Canada, the same thing was happening as Christopher Leo, professor of politics at the University of Winnipeg points out in his blog:

> *"At the end of World War II, the federal government feared that the return to civilian life of large numbers of veterans would trigger a housing crisis, and feared, at the same time, that the abrupt end of wartime industrial production would lead to a return of the terrible depression of the 1930s. To meet those twin threats, federal policy-makers decided on a series of measures designed to stimulate the housing market"* (http://blog.uwinnipeg.ca/ChristopherLeo, 2008).

Of these measures, perhaps the most significant was the changing of government policy that allowed better mortgage rates as well as kickbacks for developing new roadways and encouraging personal automobile use (Leo, 2008). Due to this, the new suburbs would pour out of the inner cities through large arterial roadways that accommodated the influx of cars. The car and the road took centre stage when it came to developing the suburb which was evident in the way the modern suburb was being planned.

The suburb generated a huge housing boom and in the United States, the government produced so many affordable homes and marketed the suburban ideal and way of life with such success that by nineteen fifty alone half of the population had moved there (Ames 1995). To build so many homes in such a short amount of time, was a monumental task, as homebuilders and developers needed to find a cheap, fast and efficient way of constructing many homes in a short period of time. A formulaic approach to home design, building and establishment would be needed to achieve the goals set by the United States government. From one city to the next, planners, land developers and builders created neighborhoods by amassing single-family detached homes in a seemingly straightforward and simple manner (Chow, 2002, p. 1). Efficiency was needed in order to meet demand, and that meant producing individually unique homes on a mass scale would not be economically feasible to design, plan and build. The most economical way to achieve efficiency and increased rate of production was through the emergence of the model home. The model home, as its name suggests, was proto-typical, mass-produced and was sold as an affordable option for owning a home on a small plot of land. "The single-family detached home offers light and air from all sides. Access to the ground and to the street is direct, providing intimate connections with a range of 'natural' settings . . . . (as well as) providing the autonomy to build, maintain,

remodel, buy, or sell their houses" (Chow, 2002, p. 27). Over the years the concept of the model home remained, yet its style and function would evolve as the automobile became more and more significant within our society.

Grid-iron street patterns gave way to softer, curvilinear road systems that served to enhance the driving experience by not allowing the driver to see far into the distance on the road ahead. The curving nature of the roads aimed to create a sense of anticipation and reveal, much in the same way a scenic drive through a meandering parkway would. As the form of the roadways changed over time, so to did the way in which one would arrive at one's home in the automobile. The first suburbs had no driveways and the backlane would serve as the means of access to the house for the home owner. This meant that if one was arriving at their house, they would more often than not enter their home through the backdoor, leaving the front door as a visitor's entrance. Visitors would arrive, park the car on the street, preferably somewhere close to the destination and enter the property with the entire home as the focal point.

As the automobile gained importance in society a shift occurred which saw the garage move from being an unattached entity of the backyard to the distinguishing main feature of the house as a symbol of the suburban lifestyle. With the garage now at the front of the house, the emergence of the driveway as a major feature of the yard occurred as well and the back lane became a thing of the past. The suggestive importance of the car and driveway meant that less of the house's façade was emphasized, thereby introverting the exterior of the house from the street. Visitors would now arrive and pull up onto the driveway, walk around the garage and towards the front door. With older suburbs the entire home could be viewed from the street at a distance, whereas nowadays, due to the protruding garage, the house is only viewed once you turn around the corner of the garage. This has the effect of introverting the home away from the street and therefore encouraging less social interaction

For the past six decades, the model home has become one of many elements that are synonymous with suburbia. Through time the modern day suburb and its amenities has physically evolved to accommodate advances in technology, changing interests of society, environmentalism and personal values. Communities created through the American Federal Housing Administration of the nineteen fifties, the master-planned communities of the nineteen seventies and eighties and right through to today's

walkable communities have kept up with the sociological trends. The mass production of model homes allowed for the everyday citizen to own their own private plot of land. The model home was good for the homebuyer, yet is considered by some to be visually detrimental to their neighbourhoods as their monotonous nature created homogeneity from house to house, street to street and community to community. The monotony of suburbia can be further compounded by proto-typical planning and design of elements such as roads, cul-de-sacs, and parks right down to the single-family detached homes that are situated within. This has effectively created overhomogeneity across space that diminishes national, regional and local differences (Duncan, 1999). Critics have long proclaimed that the sense of place, or genius loci, is missing from individual subdivisions. William Fulton, in his essay on the garden suburb and new urbanism proclaims,

> *". . . somehow American architects and planners fell into a kind of amnesia in the post war years . . . from which they did not recover until sometime in the 1980's. Seduced by the car and by modern suburbia, they "forgot" all the universal truths by city design that had been practiced across cultures and over thousands of years" (2002, p.159, from Parsons & Schuyler, eds.).*

Despite these criticisms, the ideals and lure of suburbia have remained strong and it is as popular today as ever.

2.4 MONOTONY OF HOMES AND PLACE

The individual home and suburban way of life have lured the middle class from the noise and chaos of the city, for a promise of country living on a plot of land close to nature. This idealized notion of living is a romanticized modern day version of the suburban neighborhoods of privilege from years gone by (Fishman, 1999). The suburb and its formulaic nature have become so popular that it is often difficult to discern one suburb from the next within cities and even between cities and for that matter between countries.

At the local scale this can be seen within the context of Winnipeg, as the suburbs of Island Lakes, Whyte Ridge and Linden Woods are all quite similar in appearance and form. This monotony can be seen through a variety of scales. First, at the macro-scale, the view from the air reveals the sinuous formation of suburbs and collections of aggregate subdivisions creating a sprawling pattern across the landscape (Girling & Helphand, 1994, p.8) (see figures 24, 25 and 26). Some suburbs have a lake or retention pond system which collects all of the runoff including, herbicides, pesticides, oil, dirt and grey water from the subdivision. In suburban planning today it is now common place to have these ponds act as a water filtration system where native water plant materials serve to remediate, some of the polluted water that enters here from the streets. In the past, this was not the case as the water remained in situ, becoming stagnant and dingy – in fact, in my experience during the summer months the lake near our house became a breeding ground for algal blooms. Usually connected to the lake is a park or open field along with some sort of pathway that connects users to sidewalks between the large arterial roads that from the air look like randomly placed pieces of spaghetti. From the air suburbs looks quite similar. If we make a shift to the meso-scale, the monotony continues.

Figure 24. Columbus, Ohio suburb.

Figure 25. Calgary, Alberta suburb.

Figure 26. Winnipeg, Manitoba suburb.

At ground level, roads wind and weave through a landscape of scattered parks, artificial nature, (retention ponds, grasslands, etc.) and apartment buildings, while arteries of cul-de-sacs, bays and secondary streets act as connectors to the sea of lawn upon which the homogeneous homes of suburbia are proudly displayed. Homes have traditionally been placed equal distances from each other in the middle of equal sized lots, creating a clear separation of space and ownership between neighbors. Renee Chow (2002, p.1) explains that the manner in which homes are produced and located has a deceptive

simplicity that lulls the design professions, policy makers, and, ultimately, suburban dwellers into an inattentive acceptance of house-by-house development of the residential landscape. The architecture and form of the suburban home is probably the single greatest contributor to the monotony of the suburb as in many regional areas, there are few variations from individual home to individual home. In a recent Winnipeg Free Press article, Ian Tizzard proclaims, "A common, and legitimate, criticism of many modern subdivisions is that all the houses look the same. Behind the garage that's protruding out front, blocking much of the curbside view, one house's layout often matches the neighbour's. Frequently only mirror image layouts next to each other break the monotony" (Winnipeg Free Press, Oct.6, 2007). The other manner in which the monotony is broken is through slight changes in building orientation, exterior materiality and color of identical homes. This lack in variety of housing choices originates with the post war introduction of the model home. It is, by definition "a home that is intended to be used on many sites" (Chow, 2002, p.29). Its popularity stems from the fact that it allows for more housing choices between perspective home buyers while at the same time affording economies of scale to the developer (Leo and Brown, 1999). Affordable to the consumer, some would argue that the mass production of model homes creates an awkward aesthetic within the suburb as it lacks sufficient character to contribute to any sense of neighbourhood charm that could otherwise be achieved.

The monotony of suburbs becomes somewhat subdued in the shift from meso-scale to micro-scale. This shift occurs where the publicly owned street transitions to the individual lot and yard of homeowners. It is at the micro-scale where variation in the suburb occurs. The micro-scale landscape of individual homeowners provides for differences in design and character in the suburb. Mature trees and landscaping can have the effect of muting similarities of construction and design amongst the homes of suburbia. It is here where the individual homeowner can customize his/her yard to suit individual needs, display personal tastes and preferences, signify identity, status and the pride of ownership (Girling & Helphand, 1994, p. 25). For the distinguishing feature of individual suburbs is the residential landscape.

2.5 THE YARD

The residential home is framed by the lot on which it sits – referred to as the yard. Both yard and home vary in size according to location, environment, municipal setbacks, zoning and size requirements of the homeowner. Yards can range on the small scale from about four thousand square feet to the large scale of twelve thousand square feet and beyond. The yard is an extension of the home, and can be split into the realm of private (backyard) and public (front yard).

2.5.1 The Front Yard – The Public Realm

The front yard can be thought of as a green public show piece that dresses up and emphasizes the front façade of the home within a park-like setting. In his book Bourgeois Utopias, Robert Fishman (1999) explains, "The front lawn is not family space, and family members rarely venture out into it except to maintain it. It belongs, rather to the community. The lawns, in conjunction with the roadside trees, create an illusion of a park. Their greenery transforms an urban street into a country lane" (p. 147). Fishman goes on to describe the notion of having a park, essentially "in your yard," is part of what makes suburbs so popular. The promise of being "closer to nature" through the creation of parks, artificial ponds and tree-lined streets is a modern day version of the picturesque landscape. The aesthetic of the picturesque has thus become the design language in which the idea of "a natural setting" has been expressed in the suburban setting, so much so that today we can hardly conceive of a suburb without the winding lanes and "scatterings of park scenery" that derive from it." (p.49) Because the front yard seeks to blend into the community fabric of the street, the landscaping for each particular home is generally quite modest, with each house using a range and variety of trees, shrubs, flowers and mulches to retain a sense of individuality and pride with homeownership and in the community. The front yard mimics visually what the suburban public park sets out to attain – a representation of nature. This nature is an artificial one and is completely utilitarian. The utilitarian aspect of the front yard is further emphasized by the driveway. The driveway is both a storage place and display mechanism for cars; a gathering place for neighbours to meet and talk; a play space for children; and the starting point for circulation to the backyard.

2.5.2. The Backyard – The Private Getaway

The backyard is the antithesis of the front yard. Generally, it is a private introverted outdoor extension of the home. Fences, vegetation and definitive property lines serve as a function of ownership over the land. The backyard is where people can truly, as suburb marketing states, "get away from it all." Girling and Helphand (1994) defines the North American backyard as "a self-contained unit, a private wonderland walled off from the rest of the world" (p.28). It can be a homogeneous landscape serving one function, or it can be a place of zoned and programmed elements serving a number of functions catering to the different tastes of household participants, whether it be a place of escape, relaxation, play, recreation, work and dining. Backyards are multifaceted, unique extensions of the household family and can provide for a great many opportunities for activity.

2.5.3. Yard as Park

The front and backyard can provide the homeowner and neighbourhood to engage in a variety of activities. So much so that they have essentially become small personalized parks that suit the particular needs of each family living within any given suburb. The public park has always been intended for the masses to participate in recreational and leisure activities, picnicking, relaxing and viewing nature. Within suburban neighbourhoods these activities are still offered by the park. Yet it seems that the park is hardly used to its fullest potential. The public park has traditionally been planned as the community space within a subdivision. Ironically, the popularity of the front and back yard acts to minimize community interaction on a broader scale that would otherwise occur within a park. Girling and Helphand (1994) ask the question, "What is the role of parks for people dwelling in the suburban landscape? What kind of park do you have when you already live in houses in a park? What might be the characteristics of the suburban park, when each yard is a micro or miniature park with facilities for passive and active recreation complete with everything conveniently adjacent to kitchen, refrigerator, music and television?" (p. 40).

In my suburban experience I observed the parks near where I lived as being hardly used to their fullest potential. The park would sometimes have children playing on the swings and monkey bars, but it was rare to see people using the park on a regular basis. Of course there would be organized youth soccer

and baseball games, but this only occurred a few nights a week for a few months of the year. In fact, I lived very close to a park, but myself, my brother and my friends rarely, if ever, used it. We chose to play on the street and front lawns of our house and neighbours houses. It was in this sense that the street and yard was our Park and the actual Park was something that was viewed from the car as we made our daily commutes to school and work.

So we know the general reason why the suburban yard is so popular amongst suburbanites. Next we need to ask the question, what is it that homeowners want specifically for their yards? How do they want to use it? How much time do they want to spend maintaining it? This comes back to the question that was raised during my intermediate practicum presentation of, "what is it that suburban homeowners desire from their personal landscape?" In order to better understand the trends and uses of the residential suburban landscape it is imperative that we analyze how people value, view and use all aspects of their yard. An analysis of what the suburban homeowner values in their yard and how they choose to utilize it are necessary. An examination of several case-studies would prove to be the most efficient and accurate way to obtain the necessary information.

CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

3.0 BACKGROUND

Part of what this practicum attempts to answer is what are the specific landscape desires of suburban homeowners? The first step in understanding what these desires are was to conduct a literature review on the residential landscape. The literature reviewed generally focused on overviews, generalizations, historical precedents, planning, critical evaluations, and how-to-design-type guides for the suburban context. The information gathered was anecdotal and not grounded in research. In order to gain an accurate understanding of what the landscape desires of the average homeowner are, a series of fourteen case studies would be conducted from homeowners who actively sought out to make changes to or develop their yards based on the specific desires they deemed of value. The information gathered for these case-studies was obtained through residential landscape design from the company that I co-founded here in Winnipeg during the summer of 2007. This allowed me to gather information first hand and use relevant data regarding individual residential landscapes.

3.1 LIMITATIONS

This section relies on research based on qualitative and quantitative data gathered from fourteen case-studies obtained during my work at the design firm. It should be noted that a number of limitations factored into the analysis process. First, is the sample size. Only a limited number of case-studies were available based on the design firm's output for the year. A larger sample set would have been desirable to allow for more information gathered, but given the resources available, this would have been difficult. I had considered distributing a random questionnaire in order to obtain additional information, but determined that the responses given would not have been consistent with the other case-studies. Where the case-studies actively sought out a change in their landscape, a questionnaire is random and respondents may not have been considering a change to their landscape. This would have skewed results. So, despite the small sample size, I felt that the case-studies alone would be the most accurate means of gathering pertinent information.

Second it may be perceived that because I was directly involved in the design of the yards, that I perhaps influenced the outcome to suite the needs of the practicum. This is not the case, as the interview

process and design work occurred at a time when the case-studies approach to my practicum had not yet been conceived. Therefore my influence was strictly external and had no bearing on what the homeowner's desires were and design decisions were strictly a response to those desires. The last point is that I was not the sole contributor to the design of the fourteen yards.

3.2 DATA AQUISITION

After being contacted by the homeowner, an initial meeting was set up in order to discuss their wants, needs, desires and expected outcomes from the designs. Along with providing subjective information, they would also (if possible) provide quantitative information such as a direction oriented scaled lot plan, complete with lot lines, measurements, driveway and house location. The next step in the process would be to produce preliminary designs and to then present the designs, during which the homeowner(s) would have the opportunity to fine-tune or change any of the elements within the design. After this meeting, the final step would be to produce the master plan and associated construction drawings and present them to the homeowner. The information gathered therein, would serve as the basis for the research and analysis in determining the landscape desires of the suburban homeowner. After reviewing the information gathered over the summer, it was evident that there were two categories of suburban areas: those which are new and those which are old. The old suburban areas pre-dated World War Two through to a few years after and were part of what is considered to be first-tier suburbs. As discussed previously, these suburbs were laid out in a gridiron pattern, porches adorned homes of modest size on small lots, back alleys provide the main means of service accessibility, and when originally planned, walking was to be the main mode of transportation. Of the fourteen case-studies it should be noted that four fell into the category of old suburban area. The new suburban areas were built from the 1980's to today and can be characterized by winding arterial roads, large open areas of green space, similar homes with the front garage emphasized and larger lot sizes where the automobile is the main mode of transportation. Of the fourteen case-studies ten fell into the category of new suburban area.

3.3 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The objective for examining the case studies was to uncover and rank the specific landscape desires as expressed by the homeowners, based on the preliminary interviews conducted during the design process. After compiling interview notes, each case study would have its desires ranked based on the level of importance as emphasized by the homeowner. This was done for all fourteen cases, and once complete, a matrix was developed that enabled me to accurately rank the overall desires within the category of new and old suburban areas. Due to differences in how the yard is used from front to backyard, two other matrices were developed to address the difference in typology of the yard as a whole. This gave a total of three charts: entire yard, frontyard and backyard. This would help uncover more valuable information on the desires and intended use of the yard by the homeowners in the two areas.

Once the desires were uncovered and ranked, the next step was to determine how the desires influenced the overall design of the yard, based not on the design itself, rather the overall material composition of major elements within the yard. The intention here was to determine if different desires would cause there to be major differences in the material composition of yards. The first step in this process was to re-visit the resultant designs and determine what the major landscape elements were that constituted the design. After completing this phase of the research it was found that there were ten major elements within individual lots that constituted the designs of the yards. The next step was to determine the square footage and overall proportion that each element constituted within each yard. These numbers were then added up and an average was produced for both new and old suburban areas. This information could then be compared to the desires of the homeowners in the two areas, thus providing further insight into how desires between the two areas affect the overall composition of the yard. After compiling all of this information, it was evident that there were both differences and similarities between the two areas in what was desired for the landscape as well as the material composition of the finished designs. This information would be the stepping stones for the next step of determining what the reasons for the differences between the two areas are.

3.3.1 New Suburban Area Case Studies

The new suburb can be considered as the periphery developments that were built from the 1980's to today. Of the fourteen yards, ten were characterized as third-tier and were located in areas such as Island Lakes, Royal Wood, River Park South, Amber Trails and Linden Ridge. For the purposes of this chapter, one case-study will be examined in close detail highlighting major components of the home and lot including: year built, lot size, home footprint, landscape area, location in city, home occupants, and value of the home. Included is background information on the yard in relation to its surrounding context and a list is given ranking specific landscape desires as emphasized by the homeowner. The information gathered from the other nine case-studies is presented in the Appendix.

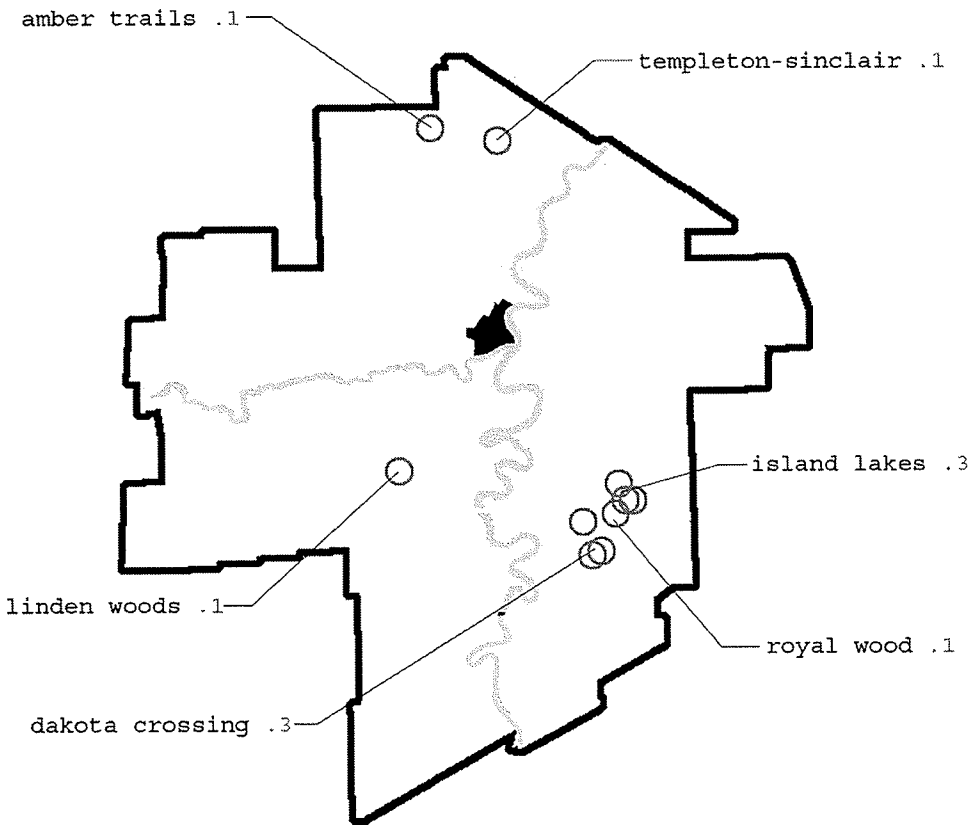


Figure 27. Locations of the ten case studies within the City of Winnipeg.

NEW AREAS: CASE STUDY 10 - LINDEN WOODS

-Year Built: 1997
-Lot Size: 11221 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 1853 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 9368 sq. ft. (frontyard: 5149 sq. ft., backyard: 4219 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Linden Woods
-Home Occupants: middle-aged couple with two young adults and a dog
-Value(2005): $270,300

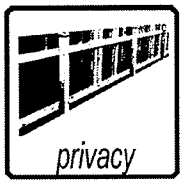
Background Information: The lot was situated on an outside bend in a bay. This resulted in a very large front yard and a smaller backyard. Existing landscape elements such as a few trees, a deck, shrubs, and lawn were located in the backyard and retaining wall, trees, shrubs, and lawn were established in the front yard. All of the existing landscape elements seemed to float independently of one another as there was no overall design or flow to the yard. The homeowners wanted to keep certain elements and others they were willing to part with in order to create a cohesive design for the landscape.

The following ranks the desires in terms of relative importance as emphasized by the homeowner(s).

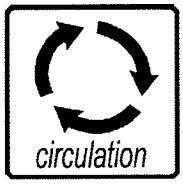
1. Low Maintenance: The homeowners viewed having lawn (this particular lot had a very large area) and the resultant caring for it (watering, weeding, mowing) as a major concern as they spent much of their time maintaining it. There was the mindset that a trade off of a large amount of lawn for more vegetation, even if this required intermittent maintenance as well as spring and fall preparation was acceptable.

2. Curb Appeal: The homeowner's felt that because the front yard was set back far from the road that the current curb appeal was not emphasized enough. There was already some landscaping completed in the front yard, but client felt that there was not enough "wow" factor to it. They wanted planting beds to expand out from the house to the road. The curb appeal served a dual purpose as it was viewed that having more planting beds equated to less lawn to mow – so there was a equal trade off between lawn and plants.

3. Outdoor Living Space: The homeowners had an existing deck (which actually dictated the form of the design, due to its orientation), but wanted more variety in entertainment choices. They felt that the deck became too much of a storage area, and therefore more space for barbeque was required. They had noted that in the late evening the back corner of their yard was quite sunny and wanted to be able to enjoy that aspect of the yard. This environmental factor dictated the placement of a large patio space in that particular area. They also requested to have an enclosed space for outdoor entertaining; therefore an appropriate placement of a gazebo was suggested. At the homeowner's request, the gazebo was to be set away from the house as a means to provide more variety within the backyard.



4. Privacy: Existing vegetation within the backyard provided a visual screen from view of the neighbors to one side of the property. Also, mature vegetation in the backyards of homes behind their property added to a sense of enclosure and privacy. The mature vegetation that was in their yard and their neighbor's yards was something that the clients valued highly. It should be noted that the existing vegetation in other yards somewhat dictated the location of proposed vegetation in the design of their backyard.



5. Circulation: The homeowner's desired to move people from front yard to backyard through the landscape instead of through the house. Their request was unique to the other homes that circulated people to the backyard because they chose to have two paths, one on either side of the house, in order to connect the front and back yards.

After the interview was conducted and list of desires reviewed a design was produced. As previously mentioned that aesthetic quality of the design is not of importance, rather the material break down of landscape elements is of importance. Figure 28 shows the design emphasizing the landscape elements which are present. Figure 29 shows how the percentages, proportions and area of the elements are broken

down within the yard. The chart highlights proportions for the entire yard on the left and the frontyard and backyard to the right. (The general characteristics of how Figure 29 works will be explained in section 3.3.4).

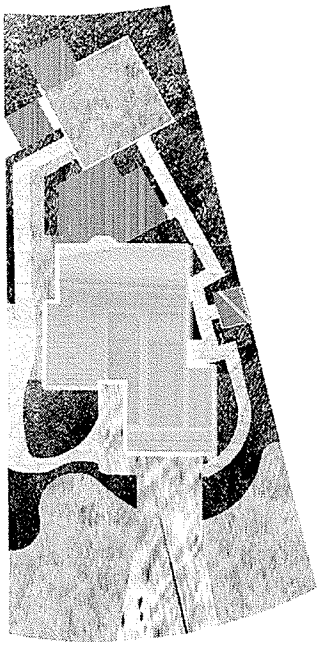


Figure 28. Design of case study with landscape elements emphasized.

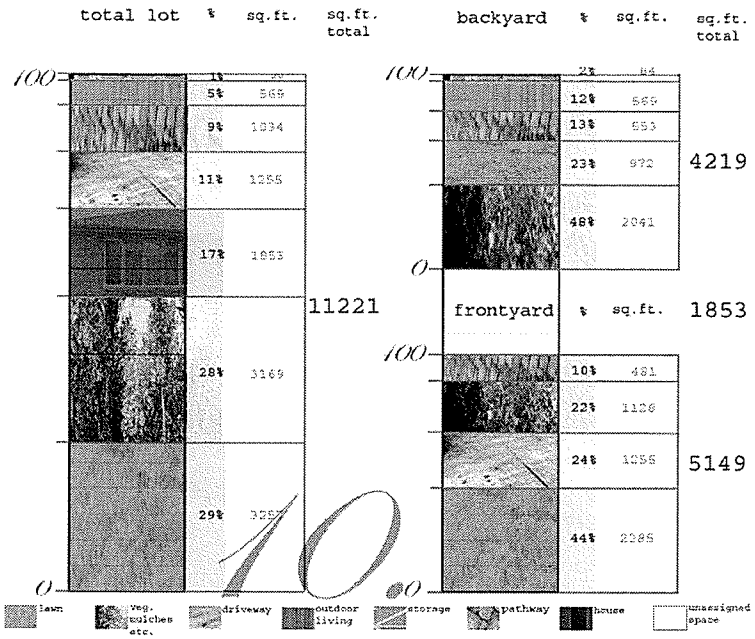


Figure 29. Proportions of landscape elements based on design. Total yard proportions on left, with frontyard and backyard proportions on the right.

This step was completed nine more times, the results collected and an average of landscape elements and ranking of landscape desires was completed which is highlighted in section 3.7. Also within that section the results from the new suburban area case-studies are then compared to the old suburban area case-studies.

3.3.2 Old Suburban Area Case Studies

As previously mentioned, old suburban areas are considered to be part of what is called first-tier suburbs. The first-tier suburb is the older, inner-ring communities that largely developed before World War 2 or in the decade and a half immediately after (Teaford, 44). They are generally characterized by a classic grid pattern, back lanes, mature trees, and homes with unattached garages that sit upon lots that ranged in size

from four thousand to six thousand square feet. Four yards were characterized as old (first-tier) suburbs and were scattered throughout the City of Winnipeg in areas such as River Heights, Wolseley, Riverview and Shaughnessy Park. Likewise with the new suburban area case-studies, one old suburban area case-study will be examined in close detail. The information on the other three case-studies is presented in the Appendix.

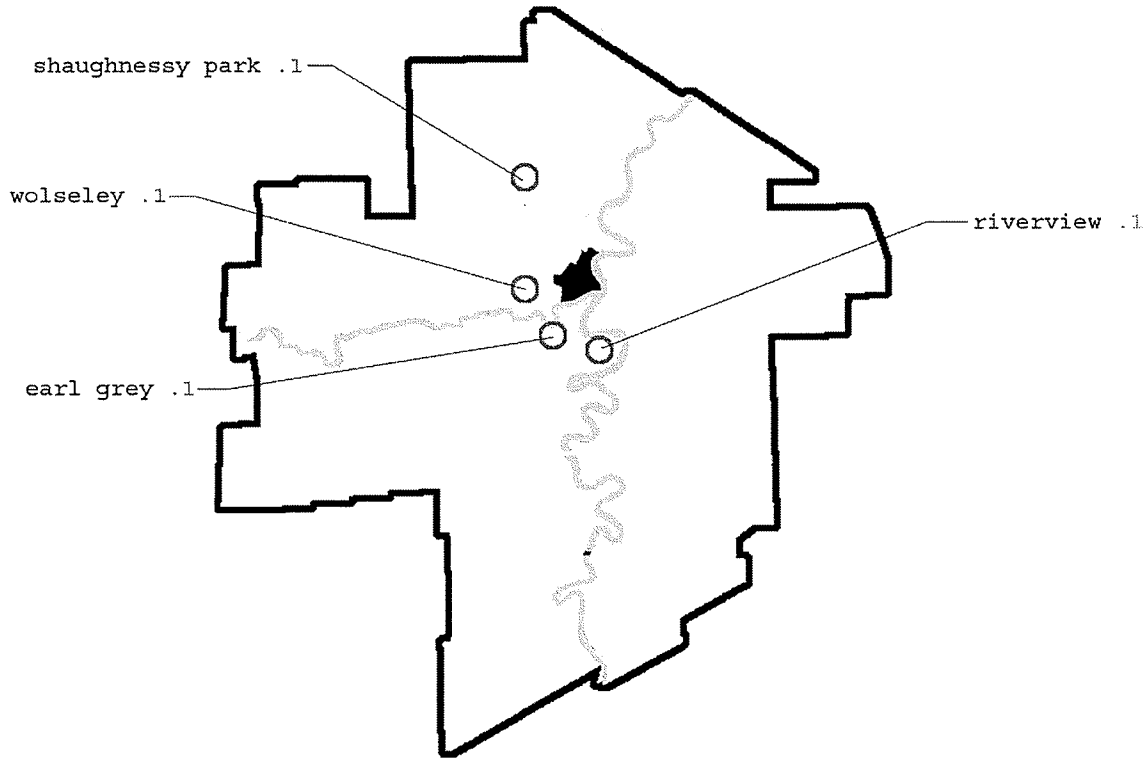


Figure 30. Location of the four case studies within the City of Winnipeg

OLD AREAS: CASE STUDY 1 - WOLSELEY

-Year Built: 1920
-Lot Size: 3036 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 791 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 2245 sq. ft. (frontyard: 1000 sq. ft., backyard: 1245 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Wolseley
-Home Occupants: single mother with two children
-Value(2003): $102,100

Background Information: The homeowner was in the midst of renovating her house. She was going to remove the mud-room portion of her house to make room for a large outdoor deck. The existing landscape

was unkempt, messy and overgrown. It consisted of a small hedge at the front boundary of the lot, some lawn, a few small trees and some perennials. In the backyard, a mature elm tree, a hastily constructed limestone patio and an unkempt fish pond were the main features. There was also a small parking pad large enough for one vehicle. The fencing around the back portion of the lot was chain link and the backlane diminished the private aspect and made it more of a semi-public/semi-private space.

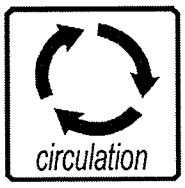
The following ranks the desires in terms of relative importance as emphasized by the homeowner(s).

1. Outdoor Living Space: The homeowner was undertaking home renovations. This involved removing the existing mud-room to make room for a new backyard deck. She already had a small pond area in the back corner of her lot, but now requested a larger gathering space around the pond. She also requested a front-yard living space in the form of a bistro patio space.

2. Design Ideas: The homeowner had a specific "feel" that she wanted the yard to portray. She enjoyed native plants and wanted to use them and natural stone (limestone slabs) to achieve a "dense, wild look" within her yard.

3. Curb Appeal: The homeowner wanted to emphasize the architecture of the home through the landscape.

4. Security: The homeowner's backlane was a source of concern and as such she wanted to make the parking pad visible from the home, while trying to somewhat conceal the full view of the vehicle.



5. Circulation: She did not want to bring people through the house to get from front to backyard. This was of concern because she was going to be undertaking renovations and did not want to have anything that was new to be damaged. Having a good flow from front to back was of importance.

As with Section 3.3.1, a design was produced and the material break down of landscape elements was completed as per figures 31 and 32.

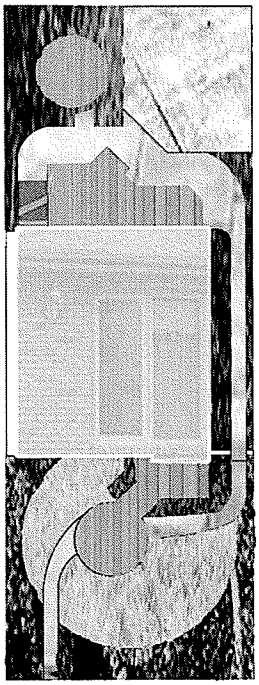


Figure 31. Design of case study with landscape elements emphasized.

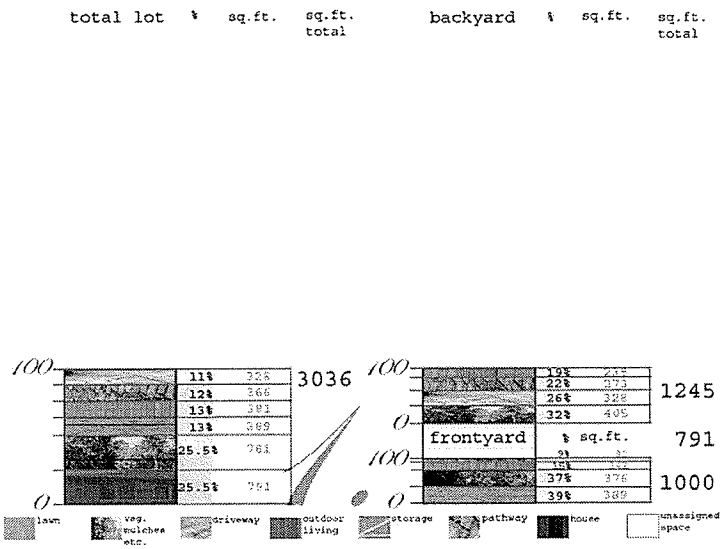


Figure 32. Proportions of landscape elements based on design. Total yard proportions on left, with frontyard and backyard proportions on the right.

This step was completed nine more times, the results collected and an average of landscape elements and ranking of landscape desires was completed which is highlighted in section 3.7. Also within that section the results from the new suburban area case-studies are then compared to the old suburban area case-studies.

3.3.3 RANKING DESIRES

After compiling and analyzing the interviews it was interesting to note that homeowners in the older suburban areas had differing desires than those homeowners in newer suburban areas. Potential reasons for this will be explored in Chapters 4 and 5. It was found that there were, in total, twelve different desires/concerns that homeowners in new suburban areas expressed regarding what they wanted from their yards. These desires/concerns varied from the front yard to backyard. They are, in no particular order: design ideas, outdoor living space, play space for children, storage, lawn, curb appeal, no maintenance, circulation, privacy, vegetable garden, neighborly considerations, and valued views.

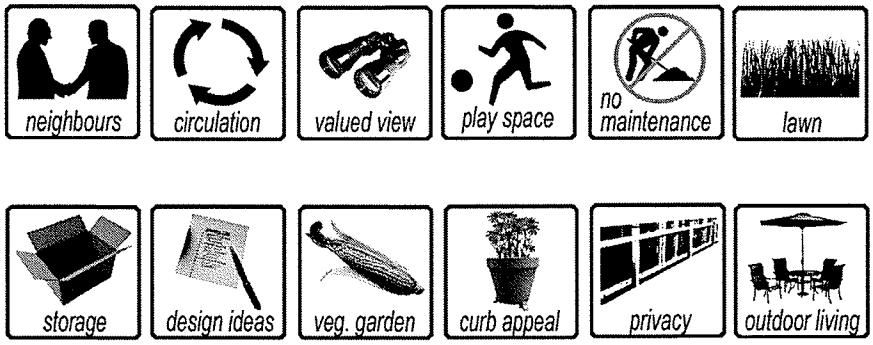


Figure 33. 12 desires identified by homeowners in new suburban areas.

Homeowners of older suburban yards had eight different desires/concerns that were of relevance. In no particular order, they are: security, design ideas, outdoor living space, curb appeal, circulation, play space for children, lawn and blocking undesirable views.

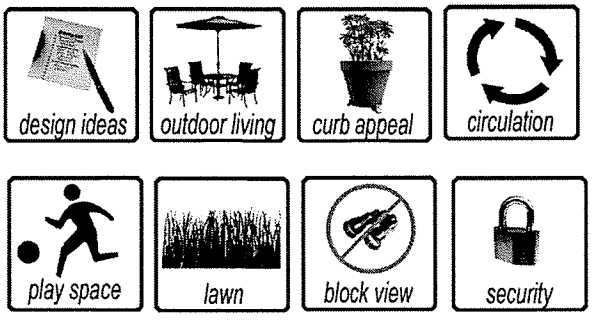


Figure 34. 8 desires identified by homeowners in old suburban areas.

In total, there were fourteen desires/concerns that homeowner's from both old and new suburban areas had regarding their yards. Of the fourteen desires/concerns, it is interesting to note that only six were shared between the two categories: outdoor living space, design ideas, curb appeal, circulation, play space, and lawn.

I will now explain how the ranking of desires was determined for the two suburban areas. The first step in the analysis was to examine the interviews from both old and new suburban areas and to rank the importance of desires/concerns from each of the homeowners. This was done three times for each

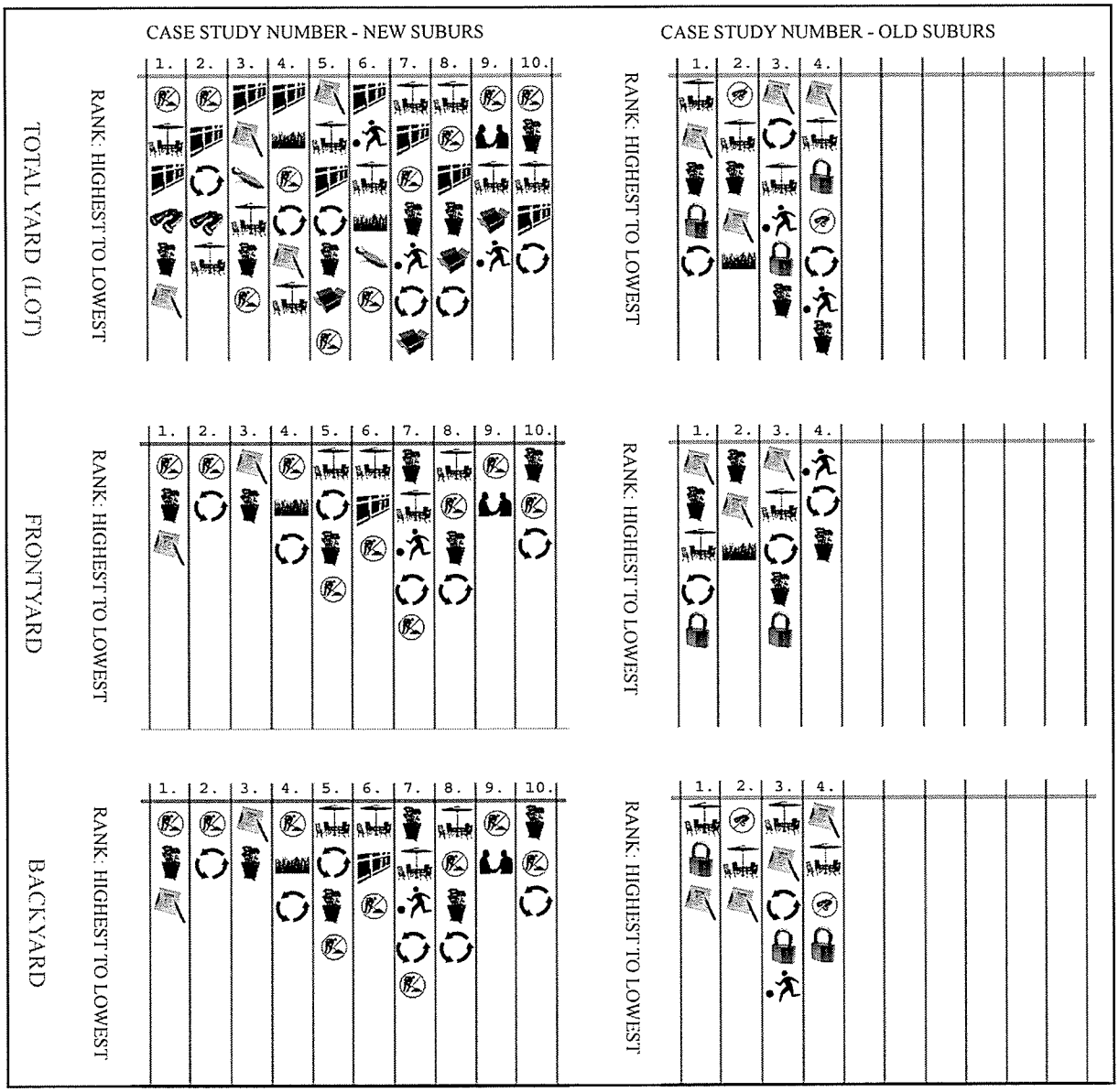


Figure 35. How individual case studies in both areas ranked desires for front and backyard and as a total (lot).

suburban area – entire yard, frontyard and backyard and was achieved by creating a chart with the rank of the desire as determined by homeowner on the vertical axis compared to the corresponding case-studies on the horizontal axis (refer to figure 35).

In order to rank the desires a method had to be devised that took into consideration not only the number of times a desire had been mentioned, but also the level of emphasis placed upon that particular desire by the homeowners. For this a matrix was developed which identifies how many times a desire was mentioned and the number of times it was ranked within a given position by the homeowners. Within the matrix a point system was devised which enabled me to quantify the desires and achieve an accurate ranking system. Desires that were ranked as most important were given seven (7) points with points decreasing as the level of importance decreased with subsequent desires. *(Seven was chosen as an appropriate number because that's the maximum number of desires identified by any one case-study during the interviews)* Refer to figure 36 for an example. Privacy was ranked as being the most important desire three (3) times by homeowners in new suburban areas. This gives *three (3)* x *seven (7)* for *twenty-one (21) points*. It was ranked second two (2) times. This gives *two (2)* x *six (6)* for *twelve (12) points.* It was ranked third three (3) times. This gives *three (3)* x *five (5)* for *fifteen (15) points.* And it was ranked fourth only once (1). This gives *one (1)* x *four (4)* for *four (4) points*. This gives a total of **forty-nine (49) points** and ranks it as the second most important desire by homeowners in new suburban areas.

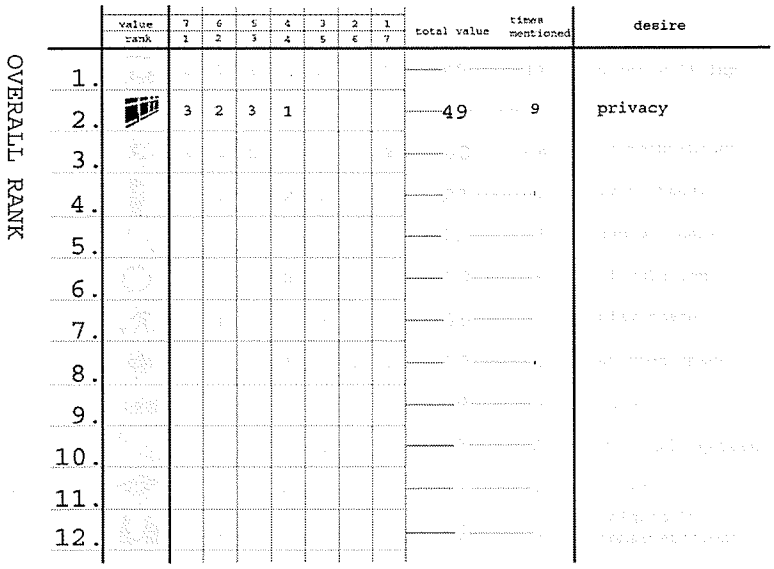


Figure 36.
Example of how desires were ranked. *Value* refers to the points given as it relates to rank. The higher the rank, the higher the points given. *Rank* refers to how many times a desire was ranked in a certain position. *Total Value* is a summation of *Value* + *Rank* (the higher the number the higher the overall rank). *Times Mentioned* refers to the number of times a desire was mentioned within the case studies for a particular area.

This method of ranking has its advantages. Take for instance, the case-studies in old suburban areas. Now because there were only four to choose from, it was difficult to rank desires based strictly on the number of times a desire was mentioned. For example, out of the eight identified desires three were mentioned four times, one was mentioned three times, three were mentioned twice and one was mentioned once. This would have resulted in a ranking system that had three desires tied for first, one in second, three in third and one in fourth place. This insinuates complacency amongst homeowners regarding their desires, when in fact; there were certain desires that were of greater importance to them as identified in the interviews. By including the level of emphasis placed upon the desires a more accurate method for the overall ranking of desires was achieved.

Desires were ranked as total (lot), frontyard and backyard for both new and old suburban areas giving a total of six matrices that will be used to make comparison between the desires of homeowners in new suburban compared to those in old areas (refer to figure 37).

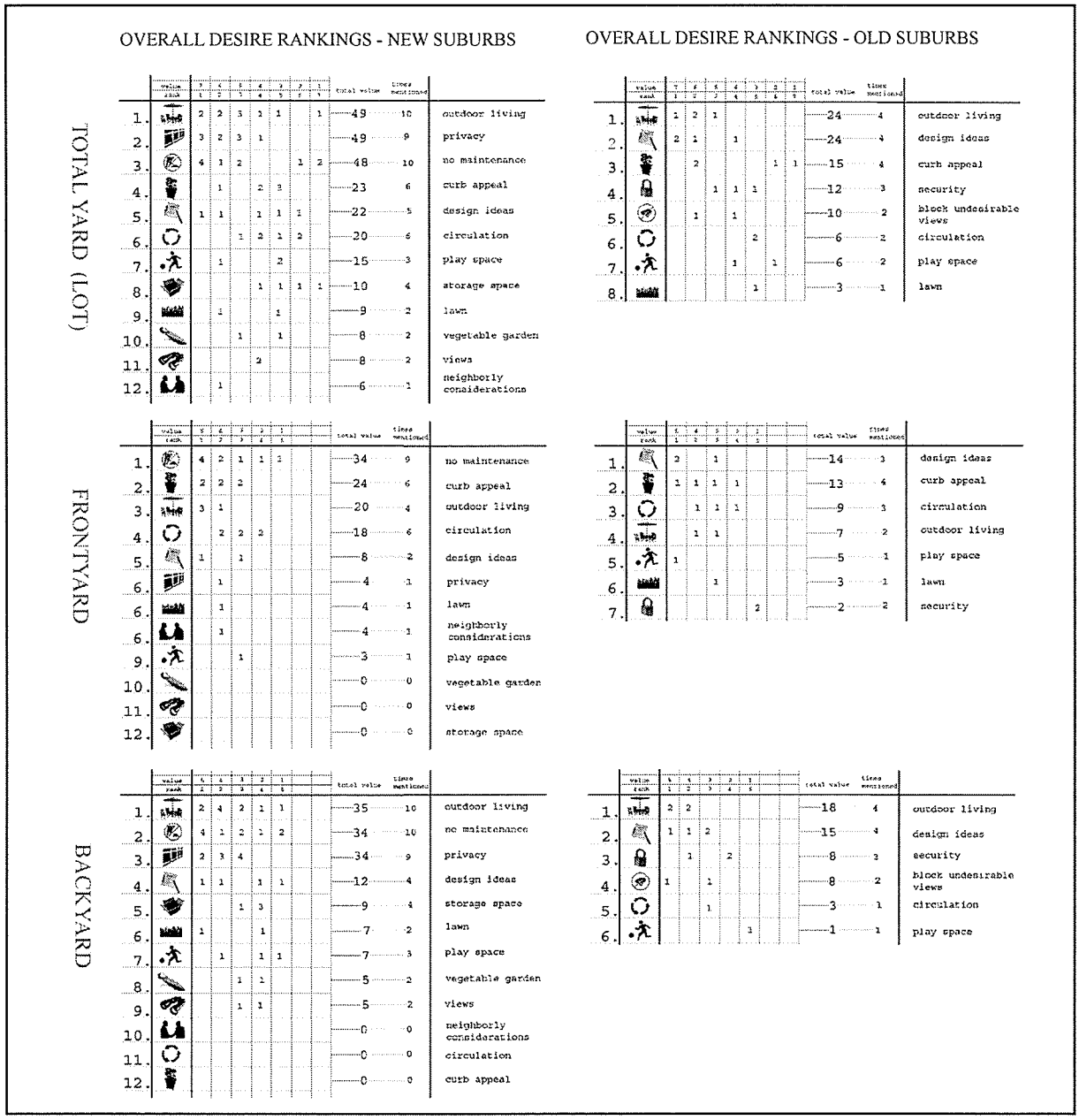


Figure 37. Ranking of overall desires between suburban areas and through lot, frontyard and backyard.

3.3.4 RANKING LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

Historically, the front and backyard have been used differently, and as such, it was appropriate to create three sub-categories from which to compare trends and differences between the two main categories. They are: entire yard, front yard and backyard. The entire yard encompasses the whole lot and includes within it the surface area footprint of the home and driveway, and includes the total amount of

surface area in the landscape upon which to build. The front yard's surface area to be analyzed includes all landscape elements (driveway included) within its boundaries which are determined by the property lines on the periphery and through the visual connection from the street to the landscape and front façade of the home (see figure 38). The front yard boundary transitions to the backyard when fencing and/or a vegetative buffer is present. It is at this point where the public space of the front yard concedes to the private space of the backyard. The definitive boundaries of the backyard are determined by property lines in combination with fencing and/or vegetative buffers and include the total amount of surface area in the landscape upon which to build (see figure 39).

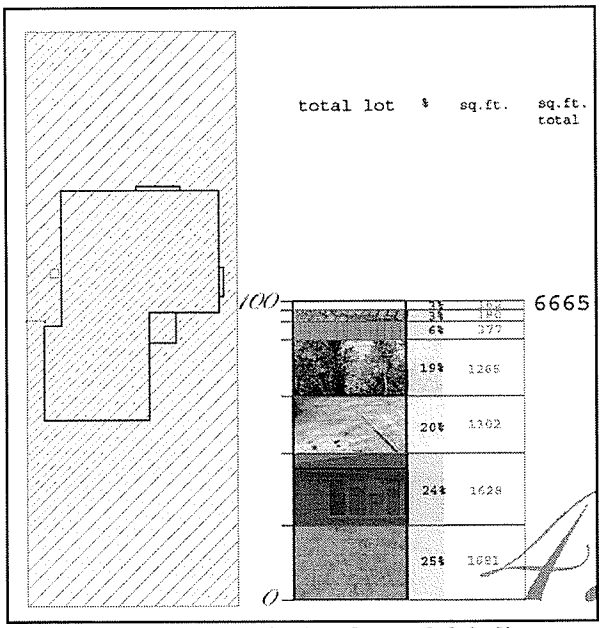


Figure 38. Cross-hatch in the plan on left indicates how much of the entire lot was measured when determining landscape elements based on a finished design. This corresponds to the chart on the right.

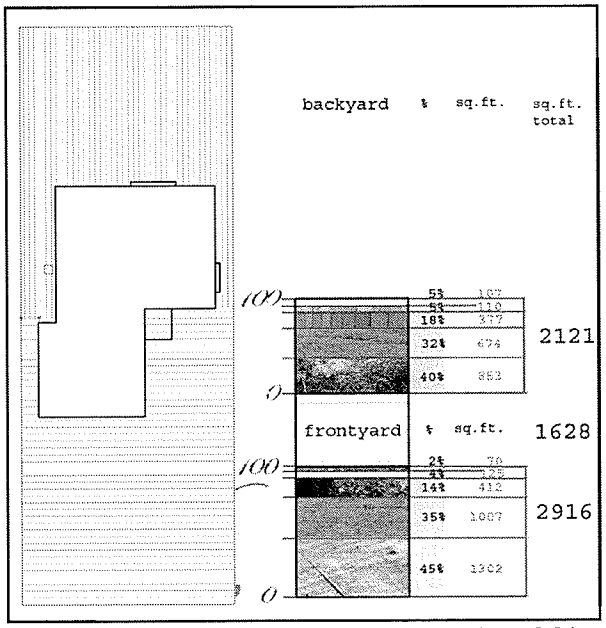


Figure 39. Vertical-hatch in the upper portion of this plan indicates boundaries of backyard for measuring elements. Horizontal hatch in lower portion of plan indicates boundaries of frontyard for measuring elements.

For each case-study the resultant design was deconstructed, breaking it into landscape elements, or the physical parts of the yard. The deconstruction of the design measures square footage for each element as well as the overall proportion / percentage to which elements constituted the yard. Again this was done for the entire yard, frontyard and backyard. Once all fourteen case-study landscape designs had been deconstructed, then an overall average of elements was produced for new and old suburban areas for the purposes of comparing and contrasting between areas as well as to help decipher the landscape desires.

After analyzing all 14 individual designs, 10 different landscape elements were found. They are: outdoor living space, lawn, vegetation and mulches, house, pathway, driveway, storage space, play space, vegetable garden, and unassigned space (refer to figure 40). These categories were used as a tool to accurately measure areas, proportions and percentages of landscape elements. The resultant measurements for each case-study were then added up and the average area of landscape elements was calculated as a means to find further differences and similarities between the two areas. The measurements could then be compared to the desires of the homeowners between the two areas.

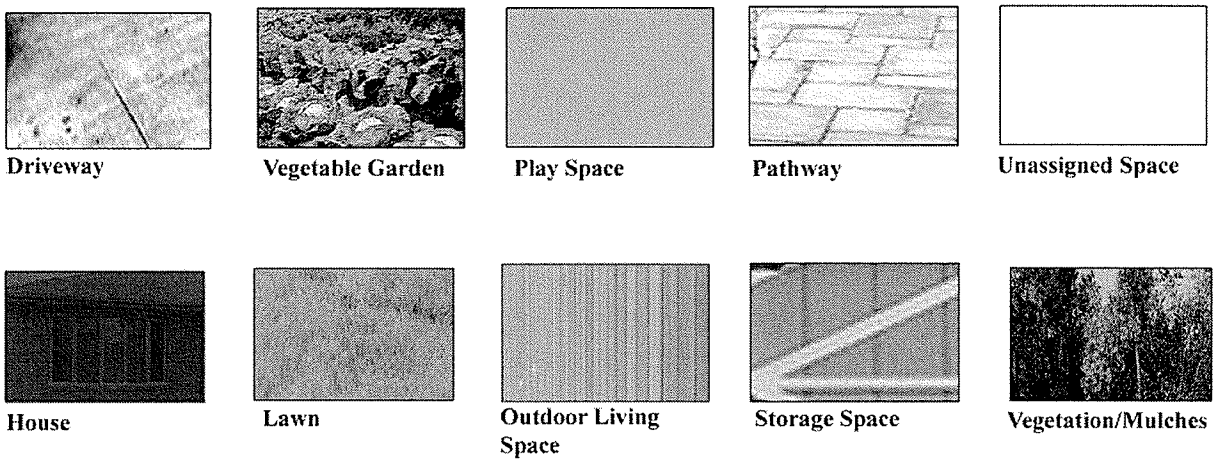


Figure 40. List of landscape elements and associated symbols.

The comparisons were communicated through a series of charts that highlight the material make-up of the yards in both new and old suburban neighbourhoods. The chart can be read as follows (refer to figure 41). The numbers zero (0) and one-hundred (100) on the left hand side of the chart represent a percentage of the entire yard. To the right is a visual reference that indicates the overall percentage of landscape elements situated with the yard. Elements located at the bottom of the chart have the greatest overall proportion, percentage and area within the entire yard (or lot). As elements move up in the chart, the less proportion, percentage and area within the yard. With that in mind, the number next to the images of the landscape elements represents the overall percentage to which the elements take up within the yard. Next to that number is the corresponding square footage measurement of the particular landscape element. And the number at the right-hand side of the chart is the overall square footage of the lot. A second chart

was constructed in the same manner to measure the front and backyard respectively, with the only visual difference being that the house was not included as a landscape element. With this second chart, the bottom portion represents the frontyard and the upper portion represents the backyard.

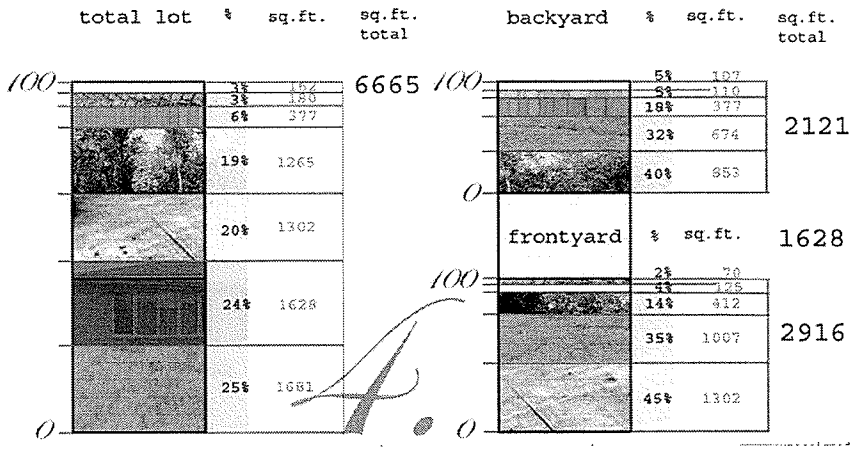


Figure 41. Example of landscape elements chart (the large number in the middle of the chart indicates which case study case number the chart corresponds to).

Within this process the charts were created 16 times, 14 for each of the case studies and a 15th and 16th which represented an average of the two suburban areas (see figures 42 and 43). These charts in combination with the matrices initiates the exploration of similarities and differences of landscape desires amongst homeowners in the two suburban areas.

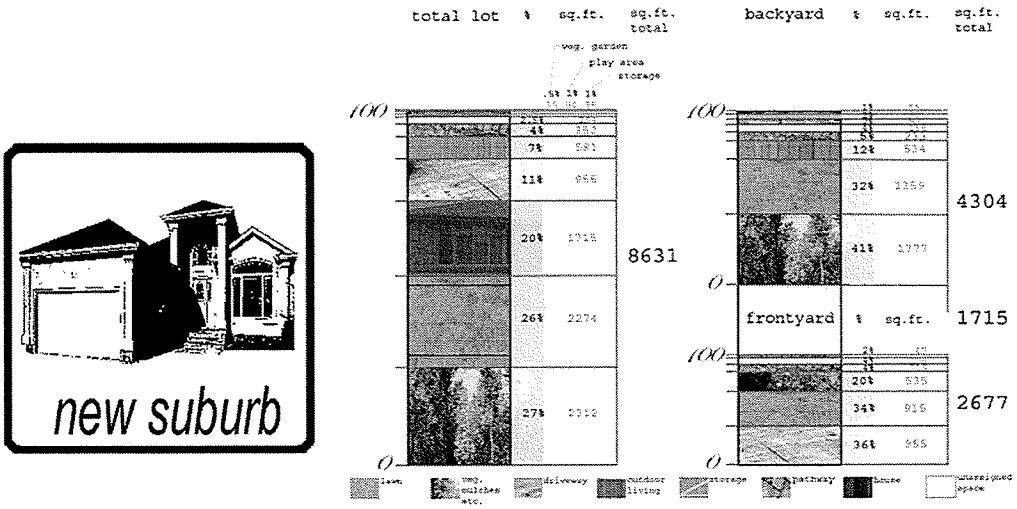


Figure 42. Landscape element averages for new suburban areas (entire yard on left, front & backyard on right)

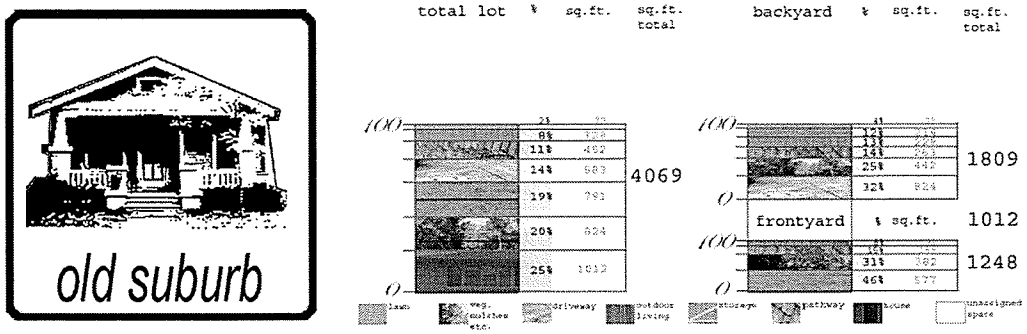


Figure 43. Landscape elements averages for old suburban area (entire yard on left, front and backyard on the right.

3.4 ANALYSIS RESULTS

Upon examining the matrices it can be said that two types of desires are present within the landscape of the suburban yard: those that are tangible or amenity driven and those that are affective and represent abstract needs. This was an interesting development and will be explained further in Chapters 4 & 5.

Of the 14 identified desires eight can be categorized as affective (figure 44). They are: privacy, block undesirable views, valued views, curb appeal, design ideas, no maintenance, neighbors and security. Affective desires can be defined as non-physical abstract needs or emotionally appealing characteristics that relate to the homeowner's sense of well-being. An example of this would be the desire to block the view of windows from back-facing neighbors because the appearance of these windows causes the homeowner to feel exposed and uncomfortable while sitting in the backyard – thus privacy is considered to be an affective desire

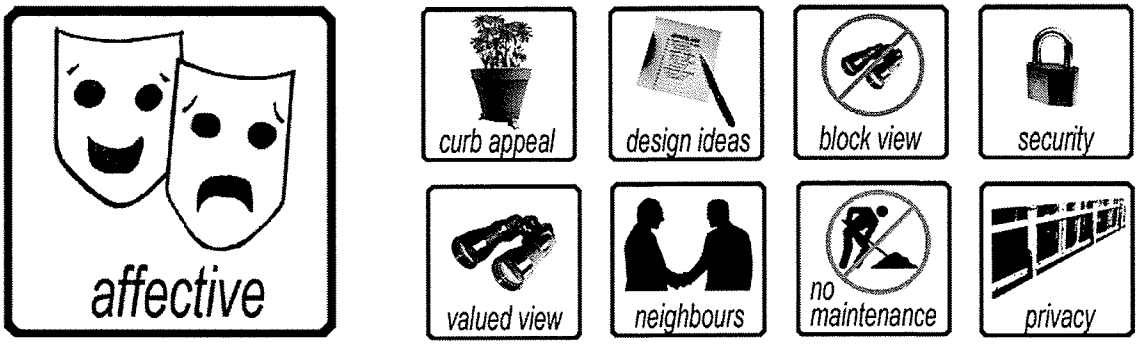


Figure 44. Affective landscape desires.

Of the 14 identified desires six can be categorized as tangible (figure 45) and are, in no particular order: lawn, outdoor living, play space, circulation, vegetable garden and storage. Tangible desires can be defined as physical realities or objects that elicit a material comfort amongst homeowners. An example of this is the desire to sit under the sun on your outdoor patio – thus the desire for outdoor living can be considered tangible because it is a physical landscape element that the homeowner chooses to physically interact with or the purpose of personal well-being.

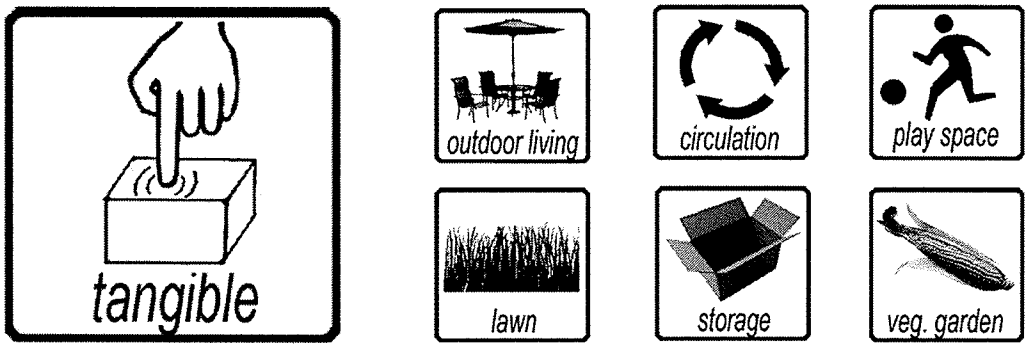


Figure 45. Tangible landscape desires.

Upon first observation the analysis of the landscape elements revealed only one major trend between the two areas: the proportion of outdoor living space. New suburban yards had on average 4304 sq.ft. of backyard space and of this, 534 sq.ft. or 12% was allocated for outdoor living space. Old suburban yards had on average 1809 sq.ft. of backyard space and of this, 214 sq.ft. or 12% was allocated for outdoor living space. This is an interesting development, especially considering old suburban areas had on average 3.75 people / household compared to 3.4 people / household in new suburban areas. At this point, further investigation would be needed to determine possible reasons for this, and will be explored further in Chapters 4 & 5 along with other observations about tangible desires and landscape elements.

By comparing new and old suburban area desires and desire types identified by the case-study subjects in a chart format we can notice where the similarities and differences occur in a more precise manner (see figure 46).The column on the left hand side of the chart gives averages of quantifiable data for the two suburban areas including: people per household, square footage of landscape area (excluding

house footprint), landscape area (sq.ft.) per person for the entire yard, frontyard and backyard. The chart is first split into two halves: an upper half representing the results gathered from the new suburban area case-studies and a lower half representing the results gathered from the old suburban area case-studies. The chart is then split again from left to right, with the left hand side representing tangible desires and the right hand side representing affective desires. (Desires are ranked most important from left to right for both desire types) So, the upper left hand side of the chart represents the tangible desires of new suburban area homeowners, whereas he upper right hand side represents the affective desires of new suburban area homeowners. The lower left hand side of the chart represents the tangible desires of old suburban area homeowners with the lower right hand side representing affective landscape desires (again desires are ranked left to right). Numbers attached to the tangible desires represent the average square footage of landscape elements for both areas. Desires highlighted in red represent desires that were identified as of importance for homeowners in both areas (the dotted lines help make this connection) and desires that are not highlighted, represent those which are unique to both areas.

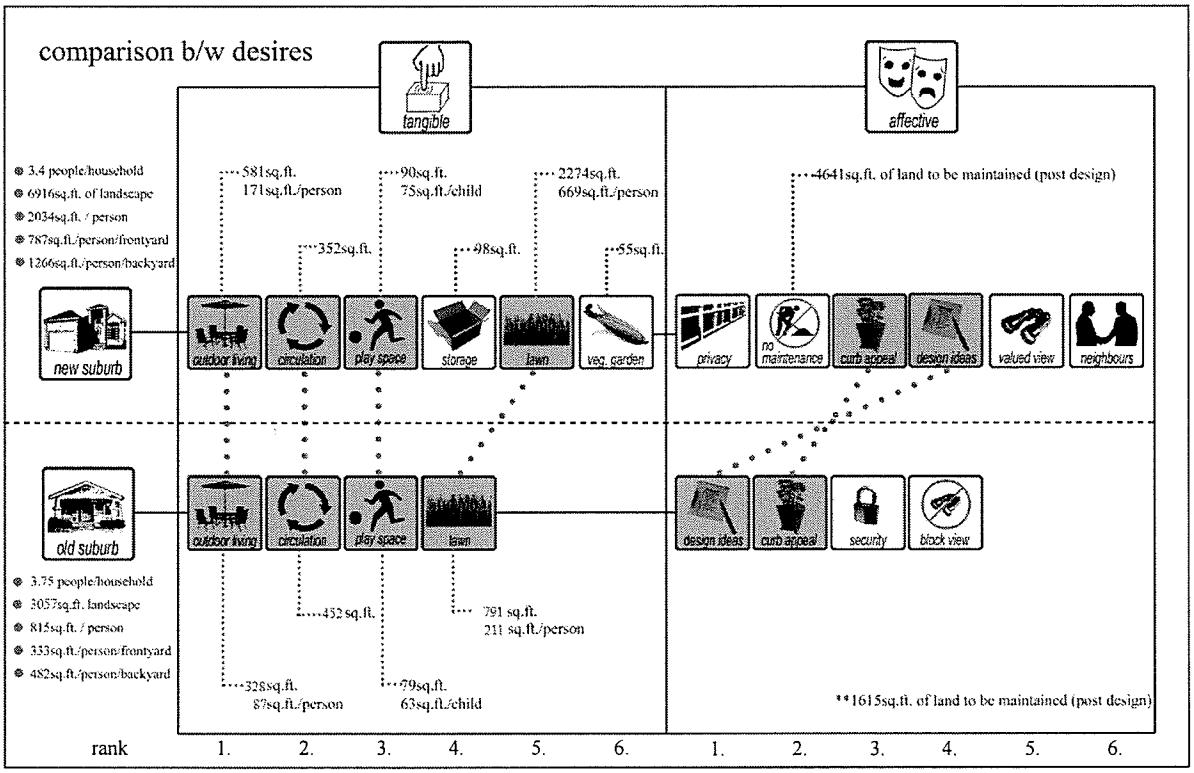


Figure 46. Comparison of landscape desires and element averages between new and old suburban areas.

This chart therefore allows for visual comparisons to be made between the two suburban areas by combining the information gathered on desires and landscape elements.

Upon reviewing this chart, the first observation that can be made is that tangible desires between the two areas are quite similar. The only difference being that new homeowners desired extra storage and vegetable gardens. However, these desires were low in the overall ranking and it can be insinuated that if there was a larger sample of case-studies for old suburban areas, that perhaps these desires would have been present in their rankings as well. If we compare landscape elements and landscape desires it can be noted that the amount of circulation space needed for old suburban yards is much larger in terms of square footage and proportion compared to circulation space needed in new suburban yards. The other landscape elements (including outdoor living space previously mentioned) all have proportionately less space allocated to them. Again, research and further insite will be required to understand why this is and these reasons will be explored further in Chapter 5.

Where there are major differences were in the affective desires. Out of the eight desires there were only two similarities between the two areas: curb appeal and design ideas. The other six desires were different for the homeowners. The case-studies in new suburban areas revealed a strong desire for privacy and no maintenance with a lesser desire for valued views and neighbours (consideration of neighbors). Unique to case-studies in the old suburban areas was desired security and blocking undesirable views. Reasons for this will be explored in Chapter 4.

As we can see, the case-studies revealed specific desires in both areas, but what it didn't reveal was what the root cause of these desires were. Due to similarities and differences in the tangible and affective desires, it can be hypothesized that there are certain physical and social determinants between areas that are influencing homeowners landscape desires. The next step in my process was to determine potential reasons for this. The question arises: what were the catalysts that initiated a particular desire?

CHAPTER 4: AFFECTIVE LANDSCAPE DESIRES

4.0 BACKGROUND

Affective Landscape Desires can be described as, non-physical abstract needs or emotionally appealing characteristics that relate to the homeowner's sense of well-being. Eight have been identified through the research process. It is critical to determine potential reasons why it is that these particular desires were identified by homeowners in both new and old suburban areas and why there were some discrepancies between desires in the two areas. The order to which each desire is presented herein is random and of no particular importance in regards to each desire.

4.1 CURB APPEAL, DESIGN IDEAS AND NEIGHBOURS

Curb appeal, design ideas and neighbours (or consideration of) have been grouped together as they represent the homeowners desire to personalize their yards to suite their particular tastes, activities and lifestyles. Here curb appeal is strictly related to the public domain of the front yard and denotes the attractiveness of the property when viewed from the street. Whereas design ideas refers to specific design elements homeowner's wanted to see in their yard - a certain feel, theme, etc., and neighborly considerations is the homeowners awareness to ensure that their landscaping does not impair or conflict with the interests of their neighbours. All three of these elements can be interspersed with each other. For example it is possible for a homeowner to have neighbourly considerations for specific design ideas about curb appeal.

4.1.1 Curb Appeal

In the design interview process with homeowners, the word "curb appeal" came up time and time again. Based on my field observations, homeowners defined it quite simply as the front yard "looking nice." But if we look at what curb appeal means in the broader context of today's consumer culture we will see that there is more to it than simply "looking nice." The term curb appeal is a relatively new term originally used by the real estate industry to signify the overall impression of the house to perspective homebuyers. In this context, it has a broader definition

to include the overall appearance and cleanliness of the architecture of the home in combination with the landscape. In recent years, media and popular culture has impacted upon society an increasing pressure to "invest in your home and maximize its value." There are endless shows on television that entice people to improve upon the visual quality of their home through renovations for this exact purpose. In a recent web broadcast of the value of street trees, Shirley Trier, Senior Urban Forester for the City of Kent, Ohio stated that landscaping has been shown to increase the value of ones home by 10 – 15% (American Public Works Association, 2008). Thus, the term curb appeal could best be described as a media catchword that encourages homeowners to achieve an increase in home value through expressing individuality and pride in homeownership through the aesthetic improvement of the residential yard. One of the homeowners in the case-studies was looking to sell his home and it was his prerogative to use curb appeal strictly as a means to generate interest and increase the value of the home. In the other case-studies curb appeal refers to improving the overall impression of the home and yard, more so for the pride of homeownership and adhering to community standards. Case-study research reveals that homeowners desired the landscape to emphasize certain architectural elements of the house. This usually involved requests for foundation planting with bright annuals and perennials as well as low shrubs for aesthetic purposes, while keeping the view to the house from the street unimpeded. Girling and Helphand (1994, p.26) states that a good foundation planting serves to, ". . . screen the undesirable and objectionable while dressing up the place, making a cozy and homelike appearance." The foundation planting also makes the space more identifiable, more distinctive, and more closely associated with a particular occupant (Brower, et. al., 1983, p. 420). Homeowners wanted their front yard to be unique to their tastes while at the same time adhering to the aesthetic of the neighbourhood. Comments such as "I don't want it to look like we're trying too hard" were common. The front yard thus becomes a symbol for self-definition in the dialogue between neighbors, community, and street.

In a paper on symbolism in housing Sadalla, Vershure, and Burroughs (1987) summarize the work of Hartung (1960), Baumeister (1982), and Schlenker (1980) by stating that "The environment of human interaction is a symbolically defined environment; communication depends upon a shared symbol system. Using this symbol system, individuals engage in acts of self-presentation that are aimed at establishing,

maintaining, or refining a particular identity or image in the minds of others." (p.572) Landscape symbolism communicates, among other things, a sense of belonging to community, identity, and the pride of homeownership. Of the three communicative qualities that curb appeal displays to others, perhaps identity is the most important in the eyes of the individual homeowner. In a paper on appropriation and interpersonal relationships, Moser et al. (2002) states that identity expresses itself as "settlement identity" in a society that implies the mobility of its members, as attachment to a type of settlement seems to remain strong even in the face of mobility. Therefore, it could be suggested that the landscape of the front yard elicits feelings of being at home which is closely connected with a sense of well being.

Upon first review my case-study research revealed that curb appeal was very important for homeowners in both old and new suburban areas, with homeowners in older areas having a stronger affinity towards it. All of the homeowners in the old suburban areas listed curb appeal as one of the top priorities for the landscaping. Whereas six out of the ten case-studies in new suburban areas listed curb appeal as a concern. The lower incidence of desired curb appeal in the new suburban areas can be attributed to the fact that two of the ten case-studies had existing front yard landscaping and it could be concluded that these two homeowners were already satisfied with their perceived curb appeal. One of the ten homes was located on a pie-shaped lot in a cul-de-sac. Due to its orientation and very small area of frontyard, curb appeal was not of concern because the homeowner thought it could not be achieved. Due to this information it is possible to conceive that there is a higher overall demand for curb appeal than the original results would indicate. Thus curb appeal would appear to be equally important for home owners in new and old suburbs. However, a greater overall level of importance was placed upon desired curb appeal in the older areas. This could be attributed to the fact that all of the homes were undergoing major interior and exterior renovations.

Research by Baum and Hassan (1999) indicates that when homeowners perceive a sufficient level of residential dissatisfaction they can: adjust their aspirations and not move; adjust their current housing and not move; or choose to relocate. The case-study subjects in older suburban neighborhoods decided to adjust their current housing and not move. Baum and Hassan go on by stating that ". . .as a home ages it no longer meets the needs of the homeowners in terms of size, facilities or overall design, and

hence households renovate in order to bring the dwelling up to present design standards" (p.24). Home renovations can create newness or new-like qualities and modernity in the old home. The new home is part of the suburban draw because with no previous owners and history, the home and landscape are blank canvases, from which original memories, relationships, style and new experience can be forged. For homeowner's who buy an older home in an older suburban neighborhood, the act of renovating or updating the home is the next closest step to achieving the quality of newness that is present in the new suburban developments. Another possible reasoning for the renovations is put forth by Madigan and Munroe (1996), in their research on the interior spaces of homes, they reveal that for some, ". . . the need to change was part of an unfulfilled desire to achieve a new look and reflected either a sense of failure because they were unable to achieve the 'show house' style, or alternatively, a simple rejection of anything that looked slightly worn" (p.51). Other reasons for renovations are that materials do have a life expectancy and need to be replaced / updated after a period of time, which can therefore reflect an increase in the value of the home.

In addition to adding more space and updating the home to modern-day living standards, replacing aging architectural features and structures is another rationale for renovation as it prevents the home from looking impoverished. Homes that look old and rundown are often associated with poverty, so the act of renovating home and landscape communicates a certain social reputation and the desire to distance oneself from perceived poverty. Signs of poverty communicate to people a breakdown in local security and increase the feelings of perceived local threat. The cosmetic facelift of the home communicates to the rest of the neighborhood that a certain level of care, pride and establishment of identity is being undertaken. These qualities therefore need to be reflected in the landscape to complete the total transformation from old to new. Therefore the homeowner's (both of old and new areas) desire for curb appeal can be directly connected to the established cultural objectives of respectability, manifest in the cleanliness and tidiness that is reflected in the new home and suburb (Madigan & Munro, 1996, p.51). Otherwise, "People see neglect and abuse of the physical environment as signs of a breakdown of accepted civil behavior. Litter, trash, weeds, sagging porches, and peeling paint . . . speak of such a breakdown and so create a sense of fear in people who use the area" (Brower, et. al., p. 435). In order

to encourage cleanliness and good neighbourhood aesthetics, the City of Winnipeg has recently passed a by-law which states that yards are to be kept neat and tidy. *The Maintenance and Occupancy By-Law (No. 4903/88)* states, among other things, that "A yard shall be kept free and clean from: a) rubbish, garbage, junk and other debris; and b) wrecked,. . . . . unused vehicles, trailers and other machinery or any parts thereof; and c) excessive growth of weeds or grass; and d) objects and conditions, including holes and excavations, that are health, fire or accident hazards . . . . " (City of Winnipeg, 2003). These negative characteristics are less common in new suburban areas than in old suburban areas where many of the homes are approaching 100 yrs of age. With new houses, less home-maintenance is required due to new materiality. It can then be said that there is a positive correlation between homes that appear new and sense of safety. This notion will be further illustrated in the section about desire for security and safety amongst homeowners in older suburban neighbourhoods. Sense of safety and security is correlated with the ability to have control over one's environment. Landscape elements of the front yard – and therefore curb appeal – double as symbolic barriers, which gives homeowners a sense of control over outsiders and discourages intrusion onto personal property (Girling and Helphand, 1994). Low fences, trees, shrubs and boulders serve aesthetic purposes and allow homeowners to control their physical and social environment through strategic placement of these elements. By being able to control unwanted interaction and potential trespassers, homeowners can heighten their sense of safety and security. When multiple homeowners have curb appeal, it reinforces residents' notions that their neighbourhood is in an environment of safety and civility. Thus curb appeal is an important aspect of the home whose symbols of care, identity, personalization and control are highly sought after for homeowners in both old and new suburban neighbourhoods.

4.1.2 Design Ideas

Design ideas refers to specific elements, themes and the overall look that certain homeowners wanted to see in their yards. Design ideas in the context of this study are subjective. They suite personal tastes, gained influence from television shows, neighborhood context, and even arise out of environmental and ecological concern. With all of the

television shows that center upon home improvement, interior and landscape design it is easy to see why they have an influence upon the home owner. In a recent British study, Taylor (2002, p.484) states that from the years 1994 to 1999 there was a national increase from seven to twelve garden improvement television shows that catered to what she calls "lifestyle" entertainment. Lifestyle entertainment could best be described as "makeover television" where a homeowner's personality is interpreted by a team of gardening experts then their ordinary yard is transformed into a "dream yard" (Giles, 2002, p.606). Some homeowner's in the newer suburban areas had stated that they enjoyed watching home improvement shows on HGTV and were influenced from the finished product from shows such as City Gardener and Take it Outside. Whereas homeowners from older suburban areas had indicated that they drew their inspiration from visuals and personal experience.

Based on the case-study results there was a much higher affinity for expressing descriptive design ideas in older suburban homes than there was in new ones. Design ideas were rated as the second most important desire for homeowners in older suburban areas as opposed to the fifth most important for homeowners in new suburban neighborhoods. Design ideas for the frontyard in older homes was the most important aspect and in backyards it rated second. In new areas design ideas for the frontyard was rated as fifth most important and backyards was rated fourth. Again, as with curb appeal, there seems to be a strong correlation between home renovations, landscape and specific ideas people have regarding their yards.

Specific design ideas can be influenced by the potential to maximize profit from property sales by making structural and decorative improvements based on current popular trends. Giles (2002) supports this notion, by ascertaining that attempting to increase property values through increasing lifestyle amenities has been ". . . reflected in recent years by the rapid growth in lifestyle programming about home improvement, and property buying and selling" (p. 607). In the case of buying and selling, design ideas are a tool used to implement tangible elements within the yard that act to persuade a specific audience of homebuyers to take interest in the house. For one homeowner in an older suburban neighbourhood this was in fact the reason for the landscape design in the first place. However, this was not of concern with new home owners as there was no interest amongst them to sell.

In regards to renovations, homeowners stated in the client interviews that they wanted a complete update of the entire property – house and yard. They may figure, "if we're remodeling the house we might as well redo the landscape to match the newness of the home". In the case for older suburban areas, it was found that homeowners had very specific ideas regarding their yards, and include: an English-style garden to match the style of the home; a Tuscan themed seating area inspired by a trip to Italy, and; a wild-looking garden with specific native plant species that was reminiscent of a previous residence. These ideas relate to specific preferences, tastes and experiences of the homeowner. In contrast, homeowners in new suburban areas had more general design ideas, including: wanting to emulate what a neighbor had done; connect the existing landscape together; wanted something unique, but not sure what, and ideas influenced specifically from a television show.

So why is there such a difference in the nature of design ideas between the homeowners in the two different areas? For one, homeowners in new suburban areas are often sitting on an empty lot full of mud and weeds with no valued vegetation and no fence. Based on this, many homeowners have an urgent sense to rid the visual landscape of anything unsightly and bring the desired housing satisfaction up to a level they see fit. At this point, just having lawn would be much better. Having no discernable property boundaries or valuable focal points (other than more of the same houses), it is difficult for the layperson to visualize specific landscape elements they would like to see within their yard. They might have an idea of what they would like, but are not sure how to describe it or put it into context. For what is inspirational about similar stucco homes with large windows looming down on you in a field of dirt and mud? Contrary to this, there is an existing context in older suburban areas of mature vegetation, a wide range of housing styles and sizes, and an established neighborhood character from which to draw inspiration and vision. For example, take the following fictional description of a backyard;

> *The existing yard consists of a fabulous carpet of lush lawn, a mature elm tree in the back corner, cedar fencing covered in vines and a hedge of flowering lilacs that snake around the back of the garage and up along the eastern edge of the fence.*

Compare that to this description of a backyard;

> *The existing yard consists of mud with a view to the windows on the backs of neighbors homes.*

It is much easier to visualize the potential for specific design ideas when there is already something of inherent value to work with. It is much easier for a homeowner to say,

> *I can envision creating a Tuscan-style patio in the back corner of the yard while sitting under the shade of the large elm tree nestled between the virginia creeper and the flowering lilacs.*

Due to acceptable and valued existing landscape elements it can therefore be argued that amongst homeowners in old suburban neighborhoods there is less urgency to implement the new desired landscape and therefore more time to envision landscape design ideas. It can also be argued that these visual elements make it easier for people to envision their yard transformed into their ideal outdoor living space. Renovating an existing home requires much thought, effort, planning and coordination, and it can be suggested that homeowners will spend just as much time thinking about and planning ideas regarding their landscape.

4.1.3 Neighbours (Consideration Of)

Neighbourly considerations represent the homeowners concern that their personal landscape does not impair or conflict with the interests of their neighbors. This affective desire was listed as important only once out of the fourteen case-studies (in the new suburban area) and was thus, the least important desire throughout. Further insight into considerations between neighbours indicates that ". . . individuals responding to one another in the course of social interaction are involved in a 'conversation of gestures' which may make use of objects as well as

linguistic symbols" (Sadalla et al., 1987). The conversation of gestures can only exist between two people if they both share points of view regarding the meaning of actions, gestures and objects. This suggests then, that the homeowner and his neighbour had previously discussed certain ideals and agreed upon a certain landscape code between them. In this particular case, the homeowner did not want any tall plants, shrubs or trees in his front and backyard because he feared that the height of the vegetation would be a symbolic gesture of inconsiderateness and introversion towards that particular neighbour. As a result the homeowner, in a gesture of conversation, requested low-growing vegetation to show openness between the two. This is of significance because it is the only occasion where any consideration towards neighbours was given. Most conversation of gestures act to do the opposite – keep neighbors out of their yards – socially and physically with fences and vegetative screening.

4.2 NO MAINTENANCE

In today's suburban society yard maintenance refers to the homeowner's concerns regarding the amount of time required to upkeep the entire yard. More specifically it can be defined as ". . . the prevention of decline and the preservation of the status quo" (Meeks & Firebaugh, 1974, p.116). In a study conducted in 1998 it was found that homeowners spend an average of 10.1 hours per week on total home maintenance with 6.3 hours of that dedicated to the yard (Baxter & Western, 1998). Maintenance in the context of today's residential landscape is interpreted as physical labour and includes, yet is not exclusive to, the following activities: mowing, watering and fertilizing the lawn, weeding, pruning trees and shrubs, watering all vegetation, applying herbicides and pesticides to vegetation, raking leaves, pool care, picking up fallen fruit, sweeping, replacing / removing plants, maintaining ornamental yard features like bird baths and water features, and spring / fall clean-ups. Most suburban homeowners see these activities as nothing more than household chores and civic duty. Yet in the past, maintenance was less of concern to the suburban homeowner as the residential yard was a working landscape and accepted as a necessary way of life. "The backyard was once the primary site for outdoor housework, where clothes dried on lines and, when weather permitted or kitchen heat demanded, food was prepared. Remnants of the barnyard might persist: chicken coops,

vegetable gardens. . . throughout it all children played" (Girling and Helphand, 1994, p. 26).

Throughout the years as technology has improved and people have become more mobile, the working landscape has given way to the recreational landscape which affords more leisure activities, relaxation time and has become a place of getaway. For some homeowners the recreational landscape and the personal garden, amounts to a labour of love. For the gardeners at heart, this is a very satisfying form of leisure activity where working the soil, watching things grow, nurturing plants and making changes to the garden is of great value and reward. But the avid gardener is in the minority of current suburban homeowners and for the vast majority, their increasing desire for leisure activities is accompanied by the need to keep effort and time for yard maintenance to a minimum. The notion that gardening is no longer popular is supported by the case-study research as gardening was mentioned only twice out of the fourteen case-studies. Whereas the notion that there is an increasing desire for leisure activities is confirmed through the case-studies as "outdoor living space" was listed by all fourteen homeowners as of major importance and was in fact rated the number one desire for both categories of homes. People seem to want more variety and as such, there is large demand for more patio space where people can sit, relax, gather, prepare food, eat, drink, watch the kids and enjoy the view of the backyard. In fact, there is an increasing trend that the view of backyard is treated in much the same way as a picture on the wall within the living room is. As Bhatti & Church (2001) ascertain, "Today gardens (British for yard) are for some people at least becoming things to be looked at, used and enjoyed, rather than to be actually worked in . . ." (p. 371). Where using the backyard for food production used to be quite common, only two of the fourteen case-studies indicated a desire for a vegetable garden, and none of the case-studies indicated that they were avid gardeners. This trend does not appear to be strictly local or even North American. A recent British study found that there had been a 15 per cent drop in vegetable gardening amongst residential homeowners between the years 1986 (35 per cent) and 1996 (20 per cent) (Bhatti & Church, 2001). This further backs the indication that people desire to do less yardwork and be able to enjoy more of the outdoor living space.

This was echoed in the case-study results as all ten homeowners in new suburban areas cited maintenance as a major concern. Overall, it was rated as the third most important desire; first for the

frontyard; and second for the backyard. There were a few common beliefs amongst homeowners regarding materiality they perceived would keep yard maintenance to a minimum. Among them: less lawn; increases in patio space and planting areas; establishment of mulches with landscape fabric underneath; no water features; minimal fruit bearing trees, and; few annual flowers. Contrary to this, it is interesting to note that none of the homeowners in older suburban areas listed maintenance as a concern for their yard.

The demand for decreased maintenance can be related to changes in work patterns, household structures, new home buying and the emergence of our consumer culture. Where yard maintenance was once accepted as a way of life, it is now touted as an inconvenience which interferes with the amenities of today's recreational landscape. For the suburban "way of life" is rapidly morphing into a suburban "lifestyle."

As defined by Webster's Dictionary, lifestyle is "the way people live at a particular time and place" or "as the typical way of life of an individual, group or culture". Gidden (1991) describes a lifestyle " as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfill utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self identity" (p. 81) "Changes in employment, conceptions of the family and gender relations; the development of mass society; increased secularization; and new urban landscapes in the form of suburbia, have meant that lifestyles offer a set of expectations which act as a form of ordered control' in the face of uncertainties wrought by modernity (Chaney, 1996). These definitions of lifestyles will help to explain why it is that homeowners who live in new suburban neighbourhoods have listed yard maintenance as a major concern compared to home owners of older suburban neighbourhoods where maintenance is not of concern (Giddens, A., 1991).

When people are in the market for a new home, they have a certain set of standards and expectations that they wish to be fulfilled in order to meet their desired lifestyle. Of these expectations, the idea that the new home affords little maintenance to the owner is of great importance. This sentiment is reflected in the view of the landscape as well. The societal shift to the "lifestyle" of consumer culture emphasizes, now more than ever, symbolism between the home, suburbia and the American Dream. The location and house type that people choose to move into is a result of the aspirations to achieve

their personal lifestyle goals. "The symbolic significance of home ownership is highly emphasized, particularly ownership of the 'dream house'. It is an important source of self-esteem, a visible sign of one's accomplishments, and success as well as a source of recognition from peers and neighbours" (Dholakia & Levy, 1987, p. 43). People's housing decisions are made based on a perceived "housing disequilibrium." This occurs when there is dissatisfaction and unacceptable standards between the current combination of dwelling and location and some preferred combination (Baum and Hassan, 1999, p.23). Housing equilibrium will only occur once all environmental conditions are met within the defined range of acceptable standards, (Meeks & Firebaugh, 1974, p.114) and occurs in one of three ways: the homeowner's stay where they are and renovate; homeowner's move and renovate; and, the homeowners move to a new home.

While the achieved "housing equilibrium" is unique for each individual and/or family, there are a number of perceived general benefits, or acceptable standards that owning a new home in the suburbs affords. It is a blank canvas for which styles, memories and experience can be molded. It is an investment and leads to equity. As well, it is more energy efficient and will save costs, has perceived safety and security, achieves nostalgia, and there is the assumption that maintenance will be kept to a minimum. Once achievement of the set of standards has been realized, Maslow (1954) states, in relation to this theory on hierarchy of needs, that this will lead to new desires and needs, which in turn encourages further consumption and new aspirations. Once indoor aspirations have been achieved, the homeowners will more-often-than-not turn their aspirations to the landscape, thereby creating a new disequilibrium, which will lead to stress and the need to achieve the desired aspirations (Meeks & Firebaugh, 1974, p.115).

Landscape aspirations are first realized by careful planning of the yard, either through professional design or by the homeowner, to best fit their needs and expectations. Based on the discussion regarding housing disequilibrium and the case-study research the conclusion can be made that maintenance should be kept to an absolute minimum due to the assumed standard that the new home should have minimal maintenance. If the desired maintenance level is not achieved, then there will be a shift to housing disequilibrium, resulting in homeowner dissatisfaction. This helps to explain why people who choose to renovate their home accept yard maintenance as part of their lifestyle. The case-study research allows us

to conclude that their acceptable set of standards is influenced by their knowledge that the home was, prior the start of renovations, in need of repair and maintenance and therefore the associated time required to uphold the house was part of their chosen lifestyle.

Aiding in the housing equilibrium standards set forth by homeowners in old suburban neighbourhoods is the fact that the lots on which the homes sit are much smaller than those of the lots in new suburban neighbourhoods. Quite simply put, the less land there is the less time spent in maintaining the aesthetic of the yard and therefore less maintenance concerns. The average lot area for homes in old suburban neighbourhoods was 4069 square feet as opposed to 8631 square feet for lots in new suburban neighbourhoods. If we look at the total area that is strictly landscape (lot area minus house footprint area) old suburban neighbourhoods had on average of 3056 square feet compared to 6916 square feet to neighbourhoods in new suburban areas. This is roughly 2.3 times more landscape area than old suburban areas. Of these nine categories of landscape elements previously mentioned, lawn and planting areas represent areas where the most maintenance would occur as they need consistent upkeep and care. To find out what the time requirements are for each of these two elements a report entitled: Residential Landscapes: Comparison of Maintenance Costs, Time and Resources (2000) provided data analysis and mean annual values (measured in min. per meter squared) for lawn and plant care. Based on their research they found that the average time to care for a conventional lawn was 4.24min/ m2 and for planting beds 20.6min./m2. If we apply these numbers to the averages from the two suburban areas we find that: For the older lots these are the following average areas for the two maintenance zones:

1.) Lawn: 791 sq.ft. = 73 m2 x 4.24 min./m2 = 309.5 min/yr. / 60 = 5.15hrs/yr

2.) Planting areas: 824 sq.ft. = 76.5m2 x 20.6min/m2 = 1576 min/yr. / 60 = 31hrs/yr

For newer lots, these are the following average areas for the two maintenance zones:

1.) Lawn: 2274 sq.ft. = 211m2 x 4.24 min/m2 = 895 min/yr. / 60 = 15hrs/yr

2.) Planting areas: 2312 sq.ft. = 215m2 x 20.6min/m2 = 4429 min/yr. / 60 = 74hrs/yr

As we can see there are some significant differences in the amount of time require to be spent the average

yard between these two areas.

4.3 PRIVACY

Privacy, as explained to me by numerous homeowners, reflects the "need to feel secluded while enjoying time in the backyard." A more exact definition of privacy is "a voluntary condition of separation from the public domain" (Newell, 1988, p.357). Privacy has been widely accepted as a universal need of which three variables regarding its condition can be identified: 1.) context, whether physical, social and motivational which leads the individual to require privacy; 2.) the affective mood (feelings) of the individual and 3.) defining elements of the actual condition of privacy; being undisturbed, quiet, control, maintaining secrets and not being seen (Harris et al., 1995; Newell, 1995; Newell, 1998). In the suburban condition, outdoor privacy relies heavily on controlling one's own environment to the extent that the physical and social context will not interfere with one's sense of seclusion and enclosure. This is part of the lure to suburban life and its associated backyard living.

Of the fourteen case-studies ten raised concerns about privacy in the backyard. These ten case-studies happened to be located in new suburban areas. This was an intriguing finding, because the density – measurement and awareness of the number of people per unit area – of new suburban areas is less than old areas. Density and privacy are perceived as being related to the effect that if an increase in density occurs, then a decrease in privacy will follow, and vice-versa. If this were true then one would conclude that people residing in older suburban areas would have a lower sense of privacy than those people living in new suburban areas.

It was found that the new suburban areas had a density of 3.4 people/household compared to 3.75 people/ household for those in older suburban areas. This is also compounded by the fact that new suburban homeowners occupy 2.3 times as much land per lot than homeowners of older suburban areas. This conflicts with the basic notion that perceptions of privacy will decrease when an increase in density and crowding occurs. Amos Rapaport (1975) disputes the notion of measuring people per area as an effective means to determine density and therefore privacy, declaring ". . . a simple ratio model does not

seem adequate to predict either behavioral or subjective consequences (of density and perceived privacy)" (p140). He states that density is an acute measure of other people through the senses or through physical cues, as well as cultural and physical 'defenses' which help to control the awareness of others (Rapaport, 1975).

Let us now examine the reasoning behind these findings. As we will see, the notion that lower density equals greater outdoor privacy for the homeowner does not apply in this situation. Based on my case-study research, I found that in new suburban areas the average amount of land (sq.ft.) per person per dwelling is roughly 2180 square feet– based on an average landscape size (lot minus house footprint) of 7416 square feet and 3.4 people per household. If we break this down further into the public and private realm we see that for the front yard this number is 853 sq.ft./person/dwelling and the backyard is 1510sq. ft./person/dwelling. If we compare this to older suburban areas we see this number is much lower. The average amount of land is 1085sq.ft./person/dwelling for the total yard, based on an average landscape size (lot minus house footprint) of 4069 square feet and 3.75 people per household. If this is broken down further into the public and private realm we see that this number shrinks to 333sq.ft./person/dwelling for the front yard and 482sq.ft./person/dwelling for the backyard. This indicates that there is a greater amount of square footage per person per dwelling within the new suburb comparative to older suburbs. These numbers back the claim of Rapaport (1975) that density and privacy is more a result of cultural and physical cues, than a simple ratio measurement. So what are the cultural and physical cues that drive the increased desire for privacy in new suburban areas?

Part of the draw of suburbia is the notion of getting away from it all, being closer to nature, privacy – the chance to combine all the qualities of country living with the modern conveniences of urban living. With true country living privacy is attainable as neighbours are considerable distances apart from each other. The notion of privacy in suburbia is somewhat of a false promise because backyard facing homes are in close proximity to each other.

In suburbia, the view from a back window or the backyard is not private as one may hope. It is not an established forest or a field of wheat; rather it is a view right into your neighbour's kitchen or living room. Issues of privacy for homeowners arise because as developers try to get a higher density of

homes within a suburban area, lot sizes and therefore backyards are getting smaller. As lots decrease in size, it is interesting to note that homes are getting larger, taller and closer together. This is evidenced from the City of Winnipeg's Zoning By-Laws from years past. In 1994, page 50 of *Zoning By-Law No. 1994-6400* sates the following regarding new home construction: a) Max. height of homes = 30ft, and; b) Min. lot width = 25-60ft (depending on lot size), and; c) Min. side yard width = 3-8ft (depending on lot size). This is contrasted by the 2006 City of Winnipeg *Zoning By-Law No. 200-2006* which states the following regarding new home construction: a) Max. height of homes = 35ft, and; b) Min. lot width = 25ft (for all lot sizes), and; c) Min. side yard width = 3ft (for all lot sizes) (p. 89 of the By-Law).

The height of homes are increasing because the base upon which they are built are getting closer to ground level. Basements are becoming less subterranean and it is not uncommon to see actual basement more above ground than it is below. The reasoning for this is that Winnipeg and its surrounding area is located on a floodplain and coupled with the fact that its clay soil prevents adequate drainage of water. New homes are required to be constructed in a manner that will lessen the effects of potential basement flooding. Based on field observations it would appear that newer homes are built upon an artificial grade that is anywhere from two to four feet above the level of the street and surrounding grade. According to the City of Winnipeg *New House Construction Guide,* new homes are required to have a basement depth whose foundation is at minimum 4'6" below grade and a maximum of 7'. This means that the floor of the basement is only 3'6" below existing grade. The maximum allowable basement height is 8'. With this in mind that means that the main level of the house is one foot above the 8' basement height. Therefore, in some instances the main floor of the home is at an elevation that is about 5'6" above the existing outdoor grade. And although the City of Winnipeg *Lot Grading By-Law No.7294/98* indicates that the level of perching (raised grade immediately surrounding the home) only need be 3" minimum in height, it would appear that this grading scheme is rare in newer homes. To give the appearance from the outside that the home has a basement the grade levels (or perching) immediately surrounding the house need to be raised to significant levels. This creates a situation where the house becomes taller and therefore windows, decks and people are at an elevated vantage point within the home giving a broader view over the surrounding landscape thereby decreasing the perceived privacy of surrounding neighbours.

Windows are an essential part of any home, apartment, condo, store and office. They let in light and heat from the sun, they frame views to the outdoors, and they have the psychological effect of increasing feelings of safety and security to the person outside. This sense of safety – knowing that watching eyes are upon you – is important for public spaces such as the street and front yard in the suburb. While inside the home looking towards the street, homeowners are assured a greater sense of security knowing that they can keep a safe watch on the street, property, car and children. Windows in the rear of the house gives a view to the backyard and allows parents to keep a watchful eye on their children. Unfortunately, rear windows of other homes diminish the sense of privacy in the backyard that most residents desire. Windows that look into a private space can create feelings of intrusion and uneasiness for the user of that space even if no one is watching from inside. According to the City of Winnipeg *Maintenance and Occupancy By-Law No. 4903/88* "Every habitable room shall have. . . . a minimum window glass area not less than 10% of the floor area for living and dining rooms and not less than 5% of the floor area for bedrooms" (1988). Since homes are getting larger, this By-Law suggests that windows are becoming larger as well, thus further contributing to the lack of privacy in new suburban areas.

New suburban areas are very often void of mature vegetation of notable size, thus leaving the backyard exposed for a number of years before vegetation can establish. Vegetation not only provides privacy for users of the backyard it also provides desired views from inside the home. Research shows that of all the views out of a window, the most desirable is that of nature. People have a high affinity for viewing nature and found that it gave a calming affect when viewing it. In her research on the benefits of viewing nature through windows, Rachel Kaplan explains, ". . . having a view of trees and preferred scenery to look at, were important to people's sense of being relaxed and not irritable" (Kaplan, 2001, p. 530). Unfortunately for new suburban areas there is no valued scenery of trees, vegetation and gardens to look at and therefore no privacy screen.

Older suburban neighbourhoods were constructed during a time when the car was not the main mode of transportation. In the early twentieth century, sidewalks and front porches dominated the streetscape of neighbourhoods. These were the necessary components for social interaction amongst community at that time. As the automobile was of little importance to families of this era it was delegated

to the semi-public/semiprivate space of the backyard through the establishment of back lanes. Back lanes are public alleys that bisect backyard-facing properties allowing residents' access to park their cars in small, detached garages at the periphery of their yard. Based on the case-study results, there is a strong correlation between presence of a back lane and an increased sense of privacy. The potential reasons for this are three-fold.

First, the alleyway creates a buffer of about fifteen feet between backyard facing properties which gives the homeowner an increased perception of control over environmental conditions and social interaction. The larger the distance between individual space and property the greater the sense of control of choice and freedom over unwanted interaction. This has the socio-cultural affect of lowering perceived densities, control over environment, and therefore increased privacy (Rapaport, 1975). In new suburban areas the buffer between back facing neighbors is generally the thickness of a fencing post or a hedge. The result being that there is less physical space separating backyard facing neighbors. Even though a fence will block the view of neighbors in their yard, it does not allow for a sense of control over the environment, which therefore decreases the sense of privacy.

The second reason is that the detached garage creates a space within the backyard that is both private and enclosed and therefore buffers views from neighbors behind and to the side of the property. Research on height to space ratios suggests that the organization and characteristics of vertical elements (e.g., walls, colonnades, trees) distinguish an undifferentiated, open area from a confined space (Hayward and Franklin, 1974). These garages are modest in comparison to today's standards, as they occupy both smaller footprint and building height. This translates into a low height to space ratio (i.e., little subtended building in the field of vision) which Amos Rapaport (1975) contends that as a perceptual cue creates a lower perceived density and therefore increased privacy.

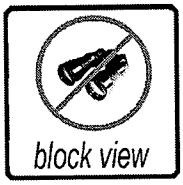
In older suburban areas one of the valued assets are mature trees. Rapaport (1975) hypothesizes that natural elements, such as trees, could help reduce the perception of density in a residential neighbourhood as they create a sense of enclosure. As their canopy drapes an opaque boundary above the property, it allows the space to feel both enclosed from above and open along the ground-plane. The form of the tree creates intimacy through perceived enclosure and a sense of privacy as its canopy blocks the

view to neighbour's windows. With no mature trees occupying space in new suburban yards, the elements of enclosure, intimacy and privacy are much more difficult to attain than in those of older suburban yards. Trees and nature for that matter are sometime seen as a detriment to suburban development as they occupy space that would otherwise be taken up by homes. "Community planning is limited by nature because it focuses nearly exclusively on those regional needs and that may affect the value of the master-planned community's products" (Moudin, 1990, p.53). The products referred to are houses. This is ironic because the closeness to nature, country living and privacy that new suburban areas promise is therefore not available.

4.4 SECURITY, BLOCKING VIEWS AND VALUED VIEWS

Security, blocking views and valued views have been grouped together as they are somewhat interconnected to the sense of safety that residential homeowners desire. Part of any homeowners concern, regardless of location, is the notion of home security and knowing that your possessions are safe from the threat of theft. People implement preventative security measures in a number of ways to protect their home, well-being and collective sense of safety. Be it through fences, electronic security systems, guard dogs, motion detection lights or through the watchful eyes of friendly neighbours.

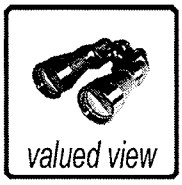
4.4.1 Blocking Views



Aside from preventative actions, people may visually block any indication of environments that are perceived to be unkempt and rundown. Blocking undesirable views, is beneficial to homeowner's as it has the psychological effect of increasing peoples sense of safety and therefore sense of security. Blocking undesirable views was a desire that only occurred in older areas as some of the case-studies neighbours homes and yards were identified as being less than desirable. Blocking views was not an issue in new areas for the simple reason that all of the homes are new and aside from the odd unkempt yard there are very few decrepit scenes. The fact that there are no run-down houses or overgrown yards in new areas can add to ones sense of safety. Recently, a survey conducted through the Winnipeg Free Press backs this claim as 97% of polled suburbanites

reported feelings of safety and contentment (Rabson, 2006).

4.4.2 Valued Views



Creating valued views within a yard, or having a clear view to a valued landscape; gives people a sense of control over the environment and can therefore help ease concerns over safety and security. Aside from decreasing security concerns valued views of nature have been shown to decrease stress levels, increase blood flow and improve moods (Kaplan, 1973). Sheets and Manzer (1991) reported that when viewing nature, or elements of nature, people will experience two important sets of feelings. The first is a general feeling of positivity (happy, etc.) and the other is a feeling of arousal (interest, desire to be active, etc.). Valued views were mentioned only twice by homeowners in new suburban areas and were not mentioned at all by any of the homeowners in old suburban areas. For one home owner in new suburban areas, the backyard faced a public park and lateral to that was located a large retention pond. The homeowner had expressed his high regard for the view to the pond and as such the resultant design of the yard was oriented in the general direction of the pond. The other homeowner did not have an explicit view of existing natural elements rather she had requested that the design include some dominating focal points. Based on these findings two conclusions can be made. The first is that there is no nature that the suburbs promise and the second is that people view their yard as nature and anticipate valuing the views created once the design has been built. This would then suggest that every homeowner desires valued views but doesn't explicitly say so, because there is the assumption that the landscape design will be providing their own personal view of nature.

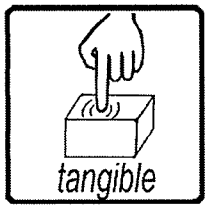
4.4.3 Security

As previously noted in the section on curb appeal, the ability to transform ones personal home and surrounding property through controlling the physical and social environment can create a sense of safety and security for the homeowner (Baum & Hassan, 1999). This is achieved through strategic placement of landscape elements to prevent movement of others through the property. If controlling one's environment equates to an increase in

feelings of safety and security, then it can be concluded that losing one's sense of control over one's surroundings, would contribute to the increased need for security. Based on the case-study results it was found that this may in fact be a contributing factor to the three out of the four homes in older suburban areas who desired security. The case-studies reveal that the need for security was of concern for both the front yard and the backyard. Issues with backyard security could be attributed to the semi-private/semi-public back lane which prevents homeowners from having total control over who can and can't come onto their property. Compounding this is research by Herzog and Flynn-Smith (2001) who have reported that the effects of the shadows of mature trees along backalleys have contributed to people's sense of not feeling safe. Desires for security in the frontyard can be attributed simply to major renovations occurring & the homeowners felt this to be somewhat of a sign of wealth & therefore feared theft & vandalism of the property.

CHAPTER 5: TANGIBLE LANDSCAPE DESIRES

5.0 BACKGROUND



Tangible can be defined as, "Discernible by the touch; palpable." (American Heritage Dictionary). While tangible desires can be defined as physical realities or objects that elicit a material comfort amongst homeowners. They are the elements of the yard that the homeowner chooses to physically interact with – spaces where the body is physically connected or momentarily rooted firmly within the landscape. Tangible desires in the suburban yard can be considered to be events such as outdoor lounging, dining, relaxing, recreation and working. The materiality which compose tangible desires are generally reserved for patio blocks, concrete, retaining walls, wood decking, lawn, vegetation, external structures (sheds and play sets), decorative mulches, and site furnishings. Tangible desires are programmable and can be zoned into a variety of different compositions and orientations depending on environmental conditions, available space, and ideals of the homeowner.

My research revealed that six tangible desires were deemed of importance to the suburban homeowner and are identified as: outdoor living space; storage; play space for children; circulation; vegetable garden; and lawn. After reviewing the case-studies it was noted that four of the six tangible desires were identified as being of significant importance to homeowners in the two suburban areas: Outdoor living space, circulation, play space, and lawn (in that particular rank). The other two desires, storage and vegetable garden, were identified as being somewhat of importance to the homeowners in new suburban neighbourhoods. Due to the small sample size of the old suburban neighbourhoods, it can be insinuated that perhaps with a larger sample size, these desires would be identified as well. However, there are a few legitimate reasons as to why they may not have appeared within the listed desires. These will be examined in the proceeding sections within this chapter. The following chapter explores the factors which can lead to an influence in tangible desires amongst suburban homeowners.

5.1 OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE

The case-study interviews revealed that the number one desire for both new and old suburban areas was outdoor living space. Despite there being some overlap between other desires, this was the only one where a definitive correlation existed between the two areas. We can conclude, based on the information gathered, that outdoor living space was the impetus for the homeowner to desire a change in the landscape in the first place. It is the main node(s) of the yard or gathering space(s) where all other elements radiate out in such a manner that the senses (visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and even taste) are ideally stimulated for the homeowner.

The outdoor living space is an extension of the interior of the house and is used as a place to escape and relax in an idealized aesthetic where an abstracted nature is imposed upon the yard. Elements of nature have been found to soothe or remedy negative moods in people as well as have beneficial health benefits. Natural elements have such an effect on people that just the mere sight of idealized nature pictures has been proven to be beneficial. As Kweon, Ulrich, Walker, & Tassinaryn (2008) show in their research on the effects of wall-mounted landscape pictures in the office:

> *"Several investigations have found that exposure to nature such as trees, grass, and flowers can effectively reduce stress. A prospective controlled experiment showed that stressed blood donors had lower pulse rates and blood pressure on days when a television in a waiting room displayed a nature videotape compared with days when an urban videotape or daytime television was played. Individuals sitting in a room with views of trees experienced more rapid declines in diastolic blood pressure, indicating greater stress reduction than persons sitting in a viewless room. Individuals exposed to nature-dominated roadside environments, compared with those exposed to built-dominated roadsides, subsequently evidenced less physiological (sympathetic) reactivity when they worked on challenging tasks." (p.358)*

Outdoor living space, or outdoor room as it is also known, is the main piece of the backyard puzzle. It is where entertaining, interaction, dining, socializing and relaxation for individuals and small groups take place and is where most passive time is spent for the homeowner. In their book, Residential Landscape

Architecture, Booth and Hiss (2002) state, " there should be one central theme that guides all reflections about residential design: the creation of usable space. Creating usable outdoor space, perhaps more clearly understood as outdoor rooms, should be the principle way of thinking about a residential site and the basic building block for developing a design solution" (p. 25). The validity of this statement is echoed by the case-study homeowners, who, for the vast majority stated that they wanted better functional use of their outdoor space, but didn't know how to initiate a change that would benefit them the most.

The outdoor living space, in the context of this research, can be characterized as one of or a combination of the following: patio, deck, gazebo, small seating area, hot tub and swimming pool. These spaces are often accentuated or enhanced by objects such as pergolas, trellis, arbors, outdoor furniture and decorative pieces, such as planters and statues. An outdoor living space can be of any size, but some typical numbers for comfortable outdoor living space is: 25sq.ft. for two people sitting; 100sq.ft. for two chairs and a couch; and 144sq.ft. for a group of people having conversation on a bench arrangement (Booth & Hiss, 2002). This is not to say that outdoor living space is limited to these sizes; square footage numbers can go as high as the homeowner sees fit based on the number of people anticipated to use the space.

After reviewing the designs in new suburban areas, the average amount of outdoor living space assigned to the yard was 581sq.ft. or 7% of the total landscape area for the lot. This number is broken down into 534sq.ft. or 12% of the backyard space and 47sq.ft. or 2% of the front yard space. Old suburban areas had an average amount of living space of 328sq.ft. or 9% of the total landscape area for the lot, where the backyard represents 228sq.ft. or 13% of the backyard space and 99sq.ft. or 8% of the front yard living space.

In the new suburban areas, most of the backyard living space was located on average 10ft. away from the rear façade of the house. However, three out of the ten case-studies had, in addition to this space, another area towards the back of the yard. The additional living spaces were located, on average, 51 ft away from the back of the home and averaged out to be 159sq.ft., indicating a desire for large group gatherings. The backyards with additional living space had an average size of 5,761sq.ft. which is 1500sq. ft. larger than those backyards who did not have additional living space. In the older suburban areas, one

case study, had a living space located 22 ft away from the backdoor and used 80sq.ft. out of the available 1245 sq.ft. that composed the backyard. This indicates that this was a space for solitude, or small group gatherings. There was a higher overall incidence of new area homeowners desiring for additional living space within the backyard than there was for old suburban area homeowners. This can be attributed to the fact that yards in new suburban areas were much larger than older areas, therefore allowing more use of the yard for additional spaces.

The desire for outdoor living space was also requested in the front yard for homeowners in new suburban areas. Where backyard living spaces focused on large social gathering, interaction and sensory stimuli, the front yard living space was strictly visual as it focused upon people watching in the neighborhood. In old suburban areas, homes were traditionally adorned with front porches. When street cars were the main mode of transportation the front porch was the place for neighborhood interaction as most people were walking on the sidewalks to get to the street car stop (Brown et al, 1998). This provided much opportunity for people watching and conversation as the front yard was the place where most leisurely time was spent. In a study on environment-behavior in relation to front porches, Brown et al (1998) discussed how front porches could provide individuals with needed respite, families with quiet times together, and neighbours with opportunities for casual conversation. "Porches can support and enhance not just neighbourhood cohesion but much prized leisure time for individuals and families"(p.591). Despite there already being front porches in old suburban neighbourhoods, two out of the four case studies requested additional outdoor living space. This could be attributed to a lack of space in the back yard for additional living space.

As previously mentioned outdoor living space was desired to be located close to the house and other amenities, such as a deck. In new suburban areas, the deck is the most prevalent means of outdoor living as all new homes are built in such a manner that a raised deck is necessary to make the backdoor and surrounding area a functional space. In fact, every one of the ten new suburban area homes already had, or will have in the near future an elevated deck. The average deck size in new suburban areas is 271sq.ft., suggesting that large group gatherings are anticipated by the homeowners. The largest deck was 527sq.ft. and the smallest was 85sq.ft. It was found that the backyard deck consumed 6% of the average

backyard size of 4239sq.ft. and was exactly half of the overall amount of backyard outdoor living space of 534 sq.ft.

In old suburban areas only one out of the four homes had a deck that was factored into the final design for the yard. This deck was 150sq.ft. and proportionately consumed 12% of the overall backyard area. This deck was only possible because the rear of the home was going to be undergoing major renovations which would see the removal of a mud room and elevating of the backdoor. The elevated deck is more a feature of new suburban areas as opposed to older areas as most old suburban homes have backdoors only inches above ground level. This would make building a deck not only awkward, but also impractical. Therefore the remedy for this is to have a patio in close proximity to the backdoor. Since yards in old suburban areas did not have decks, they had proportionately more patio space per yard than homeowners in new areas. But, as an average measurement or percentage of the overall amount of space used within the yard, the two areas had equal proportions of outdoor living space. The element "driveway" was the only other component that had roughly equal proportions between the two areas. This would suggest then, that outdoor living space is largely influenced by existing physical conditions of the site – most specifically the size of the yard.

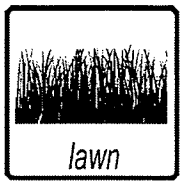
Also influencing the smaller size of outdoor living space in the backyards of older homes is the fact that the driveway, or parking pad had on average the largest percentage of space allocated at around 32% of 1809sq.ft. (583sq.ft). Based on the comparison between proportions of area of land used for outdoor living space it can be insinuated that people are willing to sacrifice some outdoor living space for other desired components of the yard. For, if old suburban yards had allocated the same amount of space for outdoor living as in new suburban areas, then other valued landscape elements such as lawn and vegetation would be drastically reduced, thereby decreasing the overall desired visual character of the yard. Aside from physical determinants there are a few social influences which can affect the desire for outdoor living space.

Other aspects which affect the desire to have outdoor living space are the influences of television, marketing and advertising. This notion is echoed in chapter 4 in the discussion on Design Ideas. Similarly, the influence of "lifestyle" television is witnessed on networks such as HGTV and TLC where a myriad

of different shows emphasize outdoor entertaining and living. The tv show Take it Outside on HGTV features an Interior designer who transforms a portion of people's backyards into quite literally an outdoor room. The outdoor living spaces that are produced in this show are more about fussy details and decoration and strictly the outdoor living space. Within the show, quite often, the outdoor room is enclosed by cedar planked walls and is located right in the middle of the yard. The room essentially turns its back on the rest of the yard and landscape, thereby creating a yard that is disconnected, forgotten about and inadvertently made much smaller. Yet, the outdoor room that is created does have a certain quality to it that the homeowner finds attractive. Other landscape oriented shows include: City Gardener, Eco-Eden, Room to Grow, Landscapers Challenge, While You Were Out, Gardeners Diary, Gardening By The Yard, Landscape Smart and Outer Spaces. Aside from television influences, large retailers such as Home Depot, Rona-Revy and Wal-Mart all cater to the suburban homeowner and emphasize home improvement, while enhancing the suburban lifestyle.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 4 in the discussion on maintenance, certain housing expectations and aspirations may influence the homeowner's decision to enhance their yard for the purpose of bettering their quality of life. Aspiring to live a certain idealized "lifestyle" within the suburbs is something that may influence the homeowner. For example, one of the most popular accessories for the outdoor living space is the outdoor fire pit. In the client interviews it was very common to hear comments such as, "oh, so-and-so has a fire pit and its great – we would love to have one as well." The fire pit was a common aspiration for homeowners in both areas. This suggests then, that certain aspects of the need for outdoor living space are more a desire of popular culture, status and sense of belonging and connection with other homeowners and less to do with area context. This would also suggest then, that social factors are the primary catalyst for desiring a change or improvement within the landscape.

5.2 LAWN



The lawn is made up of a variety of different species of turf grass, of which perhaps Kentucky blue grass (Poa pratensis) is the most well known. The lawn is used for a multitude of applications within the context of North America and the World for that

matter. From athletic fields, parks, golf courses, city boulevards, to corporate headquarters and the suburban landscape, the lawn is a truly versatile plant. In suburbia, everywhere there aren't roads, driveways and houses, there is a lush carpet of lawn acting to soften edges and to encourage recreation and leisurely use amongst its residents. Perhaps no other physical feature within suburbia defines suburbia as much as the lawn does. The lawn has been seen as, "the great equalizer and symbol of the American dream of self-reliance and control. In this carefully contrived patch of 'nature' a multitude of uses and meanings have converged, from domestic haven or civic showplace to economic force or national playground" (Teyssot, 1999, ix). Within the suburban context the lawn creates a continuous visual connection from one house to the next, only to be broken up momentarily by driveways and walkways. The lushness of the lawn is the key piece in creating the suburban ideal of "houses in a park" (Fishman, 1987).

Suburban homeowners invest much time, energy and money into ensuring that their lawn is healthy and visually appealing as it is meticulously cared for, watered, trimmed, fertilized, aerated and treated for herbaceous and insect invaders. Since the introduction of the lawn to the North American suburban landscape in the mid-nineteenth century, it has become a symbol of prestige and status amongst suburbanites, reflecting wealth, status, and community belonging (Robbins & Birkenholtz, 2003). In the context of this practicum, "lawn" refers to the desire of the homeowner to maximize its area within the design and visual impact within the yard.

After compiling and analyzing the interviews and resultant designs it was found that in new suburban areas, "lawn" was ranked as being the ninth most important desire out of twelve and was mentioned only twice out of the ten case-studies as a whole. This is not to say that just because homeowners didn't explicitly express lawn as a desire, that they didn't want lawn in their yard. Rather it implies that the lawn wasn't a main feature of their yard that they wanted emphasized.

For the front yard, lawn was mentioned only once and for the backyard it was mentioned twice. Within the lot measurements of the entire yard, the lawn consumed 26% or 2274sq.ft. out of 8631sq.ft.. In the front yard it represented 34% or 915sq.ft. out of 2677sq.ft.. In the backyard it represented 32% or 1359sq.ft. out of 4303sq.ft.. In a recent study in Franklin County in Ohio, it was reported that on average

lawn consumed about 23% of the total landscape area for yards in that region. Further to the study, it was suggested that lawn size has been decreasing in proportion per yard due to the increasing footprint of residential homes. (Robbins et al. 2003).

In addition to increasing housing sizes having a direct impact on the proportion of lawn per yard, my research suggests that there is a widespread belief amongst homeowners that less lawn equaled less maintenance and therefore more leisure time. This was discussed in Chapter 4 in the section on No Maintenance. The homeowners wanted more plantings of shrubs and perennials in place of lawn for the purposes of creating an idealized landscape. What most homeowners don't realize is that the lawn has been shown as the element within the suburban yard that actually takes the least amount of time to maintain. A study in 2000, revealed that over a ten year periods it was found that lawn would take 844 hours to maintain, whereas flowerbeds take 1707 hours and trees and shrubs 1249 hours per year (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2000, p.87). This misconception was probably the greatest influence in determining the amount of lawn for homeowners in new suburban areas.

For the homeowners whom desired lawn as being the focus of the yard, a few influences came to light. Because the lawn is soft and has some give, it is the ideal play surface for children. Safety of children was of concern for one homeowner and thus a request for adequate lawn space was made. This same homeowner also had a dog and mentioned that they needed extra lawn space for the dog.

Another potential influence is the simple fact that the lawn is universally accepted as the groundcover of the residential yard. Booth and Hiss (2002) state that, "the tranquility of the open lawn encompassed by plant materials and structures is an attractive setting, somewhat reminiscent of a natural meadow surrounded by taller plants and trees. The simplicity of the lawn in contrast to the complexity of its edges is most appealing to the eye" (p.86). Could this could be considered a nostalgic influence? Since the inception of the first elite suburbs in the mid-nineteenth century, the lawn has been the ideal setting and forefront to which the house and garden are portrayed. "As early as 1837, Thomas Bridgeman arrived at the solution that would be repeated for a century and a half: If there are lawns or grass walks, they should be frequently . . . mowed and rolled . . to give the whole a neat, regular carpet like appearance." (Teyssot, 1999, p. 5). Having a lawn in your yard is quite simply part of living in the suburbs. The lawn

creates the setting for the "houses in a park" ideal to which suburbs were conceived. Having and caring for a lawn is a community and civic duty as it symbolizes pride in homeownership, sense of belonging and status amongst homeowners. For if the lawn is unkempt, then a visual disconnect occurs from surrounding homes and yards and the idealism of "houses in a park" is tarnished.

The suburban ideal and the symbolism of the lawn had less importance in old suburban neighbourhoods as revealed by the case studies. Only one of the four homeowners expressed an interest in having a lush lawn. The reason for this was that the existing lawn was dehydrated, pock-marked and incredibly hard. A pristine, green lawn was deemed highly desirable. This particular homeowner was renovating the home and yard for the purposes of selling it right away, so a new lush lawn was perceived as helping to increase curb appeal, overall value and sell-ability of the home.

Another potential reason for lawn being of less desire in these areas is that it is harder for grass to grow in this context. Competition for nutrients, moisture and light is much greater for plants in older suburban areas as opposed to new suburban areas where very little vegetation has been established. In new suburban areas blank canvases allow for equal opportunity of all new plantings. In older areas, mature elm, ash and basswood trees adorn the streets and backyards of the neighbourhoods. Quite often these trees have mature heights of fifty to sixty feet with canopies which stretch out thirty to forty feet. This makes growing lawn a difficult task as there is little nutrients and light left for necessary growth. It would seem that competition from other plant species is a main factor in there being less opportunity for lawn especially in the backyard. Competition also arises from other landscape elements within the yard.

As mentioned in the Outdoor Living Space section in this Chapter, because a parking pad consumes 32% (583sq.ft. out of the 1809sq.ft. available) of the backyard there is very little space left for other valued landscape elements. It is interesting to note that proportionately, lawn was emphasized more in the front yards of old suburban areas as opposed to those front yards in new suburban areas. Lawn consumed 46% (or 577sq.ft. out of 1248sq.ft.) of the front yard in old suburban areas compared to 34% (or 915sq.ft. out of 2677sq.ft.) in new suburban areas. Again this can be attributed to the placement and size of the driveway in new areas as it consumed 36% (or 955sq.ft. out of 2677sq.ft.) of the front yard. This therefore leaves less space for lawn and other elements such as tree and shrub beds. This

fact is further proven because on average old suburban areas had 31% (or 382sq.ft. out of 1248sq.ft.) of the space designated for tree and shrub beds compared to 20% (or 535sq.ft. out of 2677sq. ft.) in new suburban areas.

Lawn was ranked as the least important desire for homeowners residing in old suburban areas. The desire for lawn in the backyard was non-existent as none of the homeowners identified it as being of importance. In the front yard it was ranked as the sixth out of seven identified desires. Overall, lawn consumed 19% of the lot or 791sq.ft. out of a total average lot size of 4069sq.ft. The lawn was much more prevalent in the front yard than the back, as it made up 46% or 577sq.ft. out of 1248sq.ft. ,as opposed to 12% or 214sq.f.t out of 1809sq.ft. in the back. Compared to yards in new suburban areas, the older area yards had much less lawn coverage. On average the new suburban yards had 2.9 times as much lawn throughout the entire yard than old suburban area yards. This is disproportionate when compared to the fact that new suburban lots were 2.1 times as large as old suburban lots.

From this, two conclusions can be made. The results suggest that homeowners in new suburban areas place more overall importance on the lawn than do homeowners in old suburban areas. This can be attributed to desiring more curb appeal and play space for children. Regarding housing equilibrium, homeowners have certain expectations and aspirations for their new homes. Second, lawn is one of the less expensive applications for the suburban yard. Based on my cost estimates for the designs of yards, the average material cost to buy lawn in 2007 was $0.48/sq.ft.. The material cost for the alternative of tree, shrubs beds, mulches and groundcovers would cost $2.56/sq.ft., Therefore homeowners in new suburban neighborhoods spent on average $1091 for 2274sq.ft of lawn (and soil) and $5920 for 2312sq.ft. of tree and shrub bed. This gives a total average of $7011 spent in vegetative landscape elements for the yard. If yards in new suburban areas had the same amount of lawn coverage (19%) and tree and shrub bed coverage (34%) as yards in old suburban areas, then lawn would cost $787 and trees and shrub beds would cost $7512 giving a total material cost of $8300. This is a difference of $1300, a substantial saving for the homeowner. In old suburban areas the average cost to install lawn was $380 for 791sq.ft and $2110 for 824sq.ft. of tree and shrub beds, giving a total material cost of $2490 for vegetative elements. A fine balance exists between economical considerations, time, environmental conditions and space

requirements when comparing the desires of lawn between new and old suburban area yards. The desire to decrease the amount of time spent maintaining the lawn is echoed in the next desire of vegetable garden.

5.3 VEGETABLE GARDEN

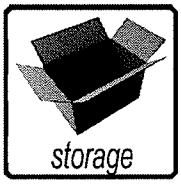
When suburbs were first conceived, the backyard was a working yard where clothes dried on the line, small farm animals were tended to, food was prepared, maintenance materials were stored and vegetable gardens allowed for personal food production (Girling and Helphand, 1994). Tending to a vegetable garden has historically been a functional and utilitarian activity which allowed people to feed themselves and their families. In today's world many of our fruits and vegetables are imported from other countries , made possible by the establishment of the North American highway system with trucks traveling long distances to transport our food (The end of Suburbia, 2004). Because vegetable gardening is no longer a necessity of survival, today it is seen more as a leisurely activity or hobby. In recent years, there has been a decline in the popularity of vegetable gardening in the residential neighbourhood. As previously noted in Chapter 4 in the section on No Maintenance a recent British study found that there had been a 15 per cent drop in vegetable gardening amongst residential homeowners between the years 1986 (35 per cent) and 1996 (20 per cent) (Bhatti & Church, 2001). Based on research generated from this practicum it was found that only 3 case studies (or 30 per cent) in new suburban areas desired a vegetable garden. The homeowners cited personal interest, enjoyment and environmental values as reasons for wanting to establish a vegetable garden. One of the benefits of tending to a vegetable garden is the positive psychological affects research has shown to induce upon participants of this activity.

> *"One theme running through the anecdotal reports of the value of gardening and the value of nature experiences in general is that of fascination. People describe themselves as fascinated by growing things, and so on, Such feelings evoke . . . descriptions of involuntary attention. While voluntary attention requires effort and is difficult to sustain,*

involuntary action is effortless. If nature in general and gardening in particular can lead to involuntary attention, this has several obvious benefits. First, it provides a rest from the effort otherwise required for attention. Second, since attention by definition excluding competing thoughts, a rest is provided from whatever worries or cares of the day might otherwise be uppermost in a person's mind" (Kaplan, 1973, p. 146).

Based on an overall average of the ten case studies, vegetable gardens consumed only 1% (55sq.ft. out of 4304sq.ft.) of the backyard area. For a more accurate depiction of how much space was really used it would be beneficial to average the three homes that desired vegetable gardens for their yards. The average square footage of the backyards of these three homes was 5608 sq.ft., and of that the vegetable garden consumed 183sq.ft. or 3.3% of the total landscape area. In older suburban areas none of the case-studies indicated a desire for vegetable gardens. Due to the small sample size of old suburban area yards, it can be argued that perhaps this number would increase given a larger sample size. This however, is strictly speculative and there is evidence that establishing a vegetable garden in these older areas would be difficult. Just like with a lawn, a vegetable garden is hard to establish when mature trees block the ground plane from receiving sunlight. Also, due to the small size of the backyard, it is difficult to find room to grow vegetables when other desired landscape elements take up so much of the backyard.

5.4 STORAGE SPACE



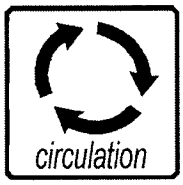
Storage sheds have become an integral part of the suburban yard. They store everything from patio furniture, lawn mowers, weed whackers, garden tools, wheelbarrows, bikes, shovels, snow blowers, toys, and other garden accessories. More often than not the storage shed is tucked away in the back corner of the yard, as they are strictly functional and are usually unsightly as their style and color can be mismatched from the architecture of the home. Storage defined for the purposes of this practicum includes not only sheds, but also non-enclosed areas of the yard which are hidden from view where additional items are stored.

The case-study research found that four out of the ten homes in new suburban areas identified

storage space as a desire. It should be noted that in addition to these four homes, three additional homes already had a storage are designated within their yards. These three yards were not factored in the overall ranking of desires because the homeowners did not explicitly state that they desired storage. This is obviously because they had already achieved the desired storage space they required. If these three yards had been included in the overall ranking of desires, storage would have been ranked higher. Thus, storage was ranked as the eighth most important desire overall and the fourth most important tangible desire.

Based on the overall average of the ten case-studies storage space consumed 2% of the backyard (or 98sq.ft out of 4304sq.ft.). Homeowners in old suburban neighborhoods did not desire storage space for their yards. This might be attributed to the difference in the overall size of the yards. The average lot size in new suburban areas was 2.12 times greater than in old suburban areas. More yard space can equate to more accessories, maintenance tools and equipment needed to maintain the yard. Also, the combination of mud rooms off the backdoor and backlane garages often serve as places to store outdoor items, thus the outdoor storage space may not be entirely necessary for homeowners in older suburban areas. These storage spaces were often connected via circulation paths within the yard.

5.5 CIRCULATION



Booth and Hiss (2002) states that two types of circulation are present in the residential yard. He states that Primary Circulation is of major importance and occurs with moderate to high frequency. The front entry walk between the driveway and front door is an example. The other type of circulation is that of Secondary Circulation which Booth states is of lesser importance and occurs less frequently. Here the movement of people along the side of the house is an example. For the purposes of this practicum circulation refers to the desire of homeowners to bring people from the front yard to the backyard via an outdoor pathway along the side of the house. In the context of Booth and Hiss' (2002) work, secondary circulation is of importance to the homeowner within these case studies.

Circulation around the side of the house was seen as an attractive alternative to bringing people inside, thereby allowing for a transition between the front and backyards. Homeowners desired patio blocks, step stones and decorative mulches as the materials of choice for their circulation pathways,

serving as a visual cue for people to enter the backyard when arriving at the house. In new suburban areas circulation was identified by six homeowners as being of importance and was rated as the sixth most important desire. It should be noted that three yards in new suburban areas had pre-existing circulation paths already in place. In old suburban areas it was rated as the fifth most important desire and was identified by three homeowners. One yard already had a pre-existing path and so was not identified as a desire by the homeowner.

When comparing the average proportions of space allocated for circulation between the two areas it can be noted that old suburban yards used more square footage for circulation paths. On average these yards used 452sq.ft. (or 11% of 4069sq.ft. of total lot space) compared to 352sq.ft. (or 4% of 8631sq.ft. of total lot space) in new suburban yards. This can be attributed to the fact that old suburban homes do not have a front driveway and homes in new suburban areas do. The driveway acts as a storage place for cars as well as a pathway for people. Therefore, more circulation space needs to be created for yards in old suburban homes. This can be demonstrated when looking at the averages for linear feet of circulation pathway. It was found that on average 84 linear feet of circulation space was needed for yards in new suburban areas as opposed to 140 linear feet for yards in old suburban areas.

In new suburban areas, desired placement of the circulation paths was determined by the amount of available space between homes and where the location of the garage in comparison to the front door was. On average the space between home and lot line was found to be 4.5 feet on either side. The design of the homes in new suburban areas is such that the garage protrudes forward dominating one side of the house. Based on the case-studies herein, the front entrance is recessed back on average 19 linear feet, thus creating a situation where it becomes most desirable and efficient to want to have the main circulation mode to the side of the house where the front door is located. If this does not occur then the façade of the home is never really seen as guests going to the backyard will only pass by the front of the garage. As it turns out five out of the ten homes had circulation paths that addressed the front door of the house and five did not. This is due to the placement of pre-existing landscape elements such as decks and storage sheds. The orientation of these pre-existing elements dictated where circulation should flow to and where it should come from. If the stairs of a pre-existing deck were oriented to one side of the yard, the pathway

would be placed so that it met the stairs in the most efficient manner, regardless of where the front door was located on the house. This created logical connections to spaces within the yard such that pre-existing elements and proposed elements would flow seamlessly into each other for a more comprehensive design.

5.6 PLAY SPACE

Play space in the context of this practicum refers to two designations. The first is a designated area within the yard set aside exclusively for children's play where the parents had planned to locate a play structure. The second is the lawn. It should be noted that play space was measured based on the designated play areas and not the lawn because from the lawn, play could infiltrate into other neighbours yards, the street and driveway. Measurements were made based on definitive play boundaries set forth by the case-studies. Play space was measured in this manner because all other measurements were based on definitive boundaries, so measuring lawn as a play space would skew the results and actual proportions.

Play space was rated as the seventh most important desire for homeowners in new suburban neighborhoods. Three of the case-studies identified it as being of importance. Out of these three, only one had a designated play space for the children where 900sq.ft. of backyard was an overall average. Play space occupied 2% (or 90sq.ft. out of 4304sq.ft.) of the backyard space. If we were to treat all playable surfaces within the yard (ie, play space, driveway, and lawn) then the average play space available for children would be 38% of the lot size (or 3319sq.ft out of 8631sq.ft.) Five case-studies had children and it should be noted that one of these homeowners already had an existing play structure for their children and thus, plays pace was not expressed as a desire. Another case-study had commented that the yard "was for them (adults) and if the kids wanted to play they could go to the park." In old suburban areas, play space ranked as the seventh most important desire. Two case-studies had requested a play space be set aside Three of the four case-studies had children. The case-study who did not choose a play space as a desire did so because there was not enough space within the backyard for one. In these instances, plays pace occupied 4% (or 79sq.ft. out of 1809sq.ft.) of the backyard. If we considered all playable surfaces to be play space then the average would be 36% of the lot size (or1453sq.ft.out of 4069sq.ft.).

Having a play space in the backyard can give parents a sense of security and safety as they are able to keep a watchful eye over their children. A private backyard playspace is also beneficial for convenience purposes. If a child goes to a playground a parent may often need to accompany them so as to keep a watchful eye for any perceived danger. This takes time away from other household chores and leisure activity. If a playspace is in the backyard, then the parent can keep a watchful eye from a kitchen or living room window, or an outdoor deck or patio. Also, for the children, a playspace within the confines of their backyard means convenience for getting food, water, toys and getting to a bathroom. The downfall to this is that there may be less opportunity for social interaction that would otherwise occur in a public park.

CHAPTER 6: DE-CODING DESIRES

6.0 BACKGROUND

What emerged from this research is a series of hierarchical diagrams that represent research based interpretations and observations regarding the physical and social environments of new and old suburbs that were found to influence a specific desire (refer to figure 47). The diagrams help to answer the question as to what are the components and catalysts of each landscape desire identified by suburban homeowners. These catalysts are organized in the diagram according to categories which reflect a change in scale from general characteristics at the top of the diagram to specific characteristics at the bottom. This allows the reader to identify and understand where the catalyst originated. The diagrams summarize information about the desires as identified in Chapters 4 & 5 as a means to visualize the factors that may cause homeowners to choose a particular landscape desire.

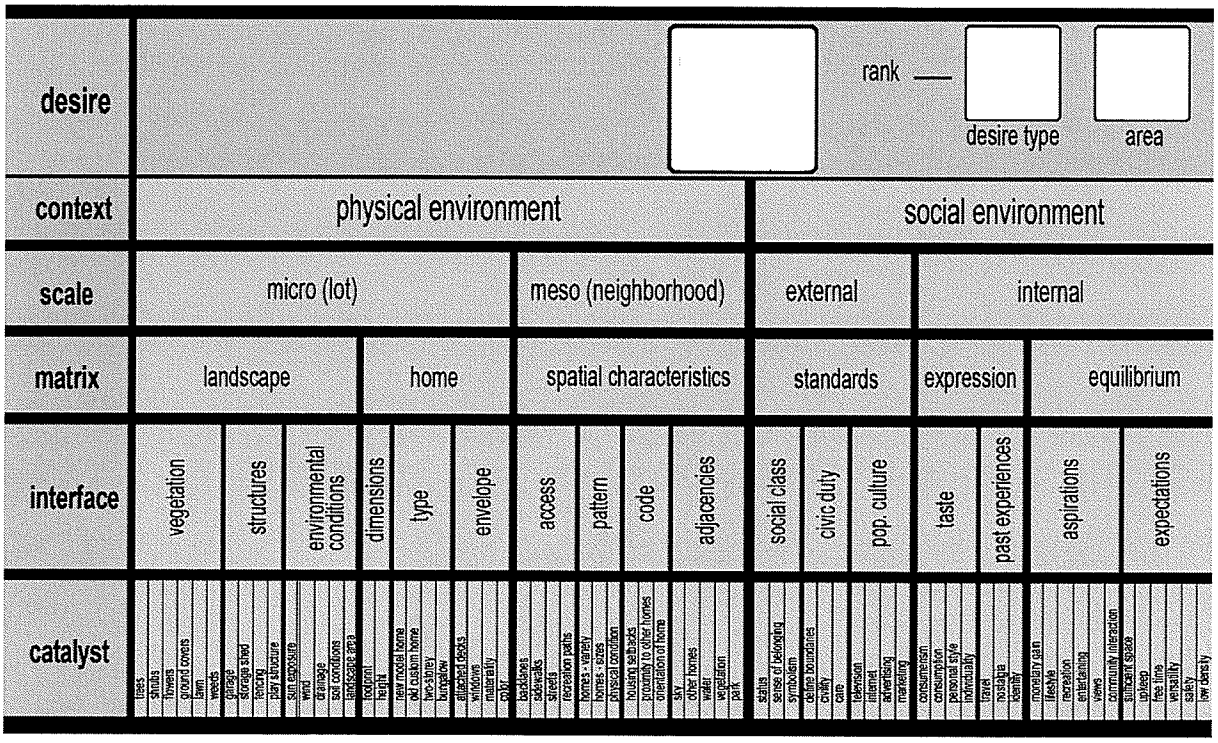


Figure 47. Base diagram from which the landscape desires are explained

Eighteen diagrams were produced. Fourteen of these represent each desire, where the other four represent desires that were not explicitly identified by the case studies. For example, the case-studies in new suburban areas expressed a high desire for privacy, whereas there was no mention of privacy in

old suburban areas. Other non-desire diagrams produced were, maintenance not being an issue, specific design ideas and no security concerns. This was of value because these diagrams could then be compared to identify what physical and social catalysts are present in each situation. If the diagrams privacy and no privacy needed are compared, the catalysts which contribute to each situation can be explored further. For example, by understanding which catalysts contribute to privacy (the diagram no privacy needed), they could then be applied to the planning of new neighbourhoods and communities. Likewise, by understanding which catalysts contribute to the lack of privacy (the diagram privacy), they could be omitted from future planning of neighbourhoods. The same could be done for every other diagram produced. This is what makes this diagram unique from other research on the suburban condition. The diagrams are an expression of a desire, which represents the homeowner's reaction to their lot, neighborhood and social surroundings which is essentially a response to the design and layout of the suburb in which they live. By understanding how people react to their built environment as well as social influences this information can be applied to creating new communities and neighbourhoods which improve upon the design and layout of existing ones.

The diagram is intended to be read from top to bottom, identifying whether a particular desire is influenced by physical or social factors, or both. The physical and/or social influences are refined into more precise details, eventually arriving at (one of) the main influencing factor(s) (or catalyst) which impacts a homeowners choosing of a particular desire. Take for example, the desire for curb appeal.

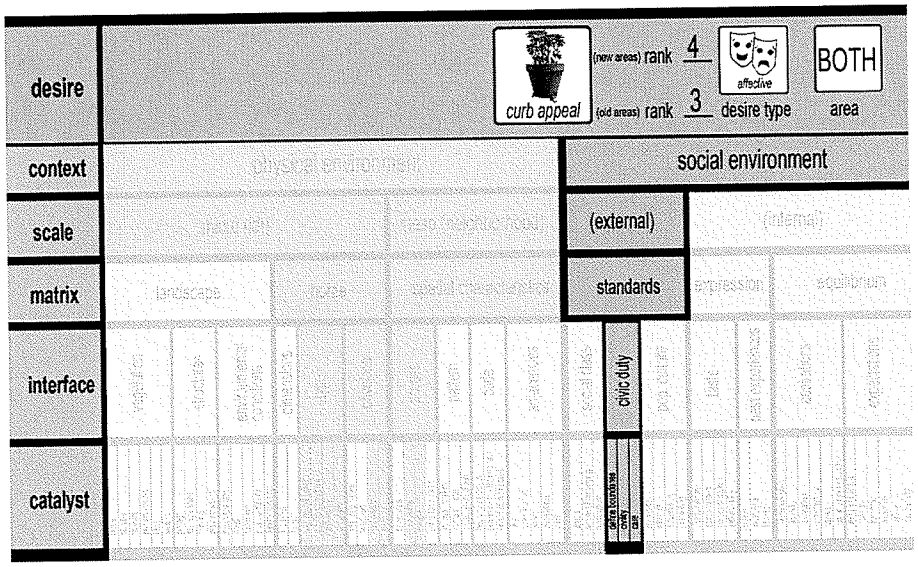


Figure 48. Diagram for curb appeal highlighting the catalysts of *civility*, *care* and *defined boundaries*

In Chapter 4 one of the factors that were identified as influencing this desire was the notion that "landscape symbolism (curb appeal) communicates . . . . the pride of homeownership." After researching housing symbolism and the pride of homeownership as it relates to curb appeal, a number of factors were found to influence the homeowner. This is translated into the diagram (refer to Figure 48) which reads: the desire for curb appeal arises, in part, within the realm of ones *social environment* where *external factors* such as *neighbourhood standards* regarding *civic duty* influence homeowners to communicate about themselves *civility*, *care* and *defined boundaries* through the landscape. So we can say that civility, care and defining boundaries are all socially influenced factors (or catalysts) which relate to the homeowners decision to want to achieve a perceived level of desired curb appeal. Now take the example of circulation as described in Chapter 5.

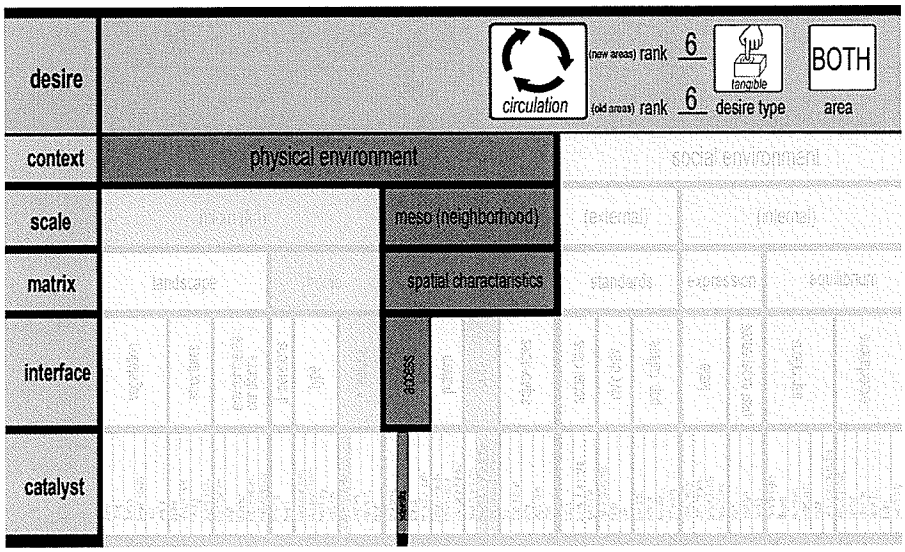


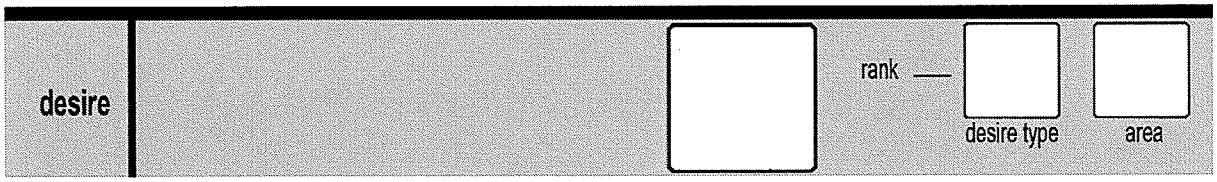
Figure 49. Diagram for circulation highlighting the catalyst of *sidewalks*.

The research indicated that more circulation space was needed for people in old areas, despite the fact that they had smaller lot sizes. This was attributed to the fact that old neighbourhoods had sidewalks with no driveway. This meant that to get to the front door, a pathway would be needed. In new areas the driveway acts as this pathway, so more circulation space is required for older neighbourhoods. Therefore, the diagram reads that the *physical environment* of the *neighbourhood* has *spatial characteristics* in which

access to the front door is determined by the placement of existing *sidewalks*. So the sidewalk is the catalyst for a circulation path for homeowners in old suburban areas. Explaining where the catalysts originate from in this hierarchical manner allows for a more specific understanding of how the catalyst affected the desire. Now that the general characteristics of the diagram have been explained, it is important to break the diagram down into its component parts in the manner to which it is supposed to be read – from top to bottom.

6.1 THE HEIRARCHICAL DIAGRAM

1. The Desire Bar: **(Figure 50)**



This represents which desire is being decoded. The square in the middle represents the desire, to its right its rank of importance, which desire type it is and which area it is located in.

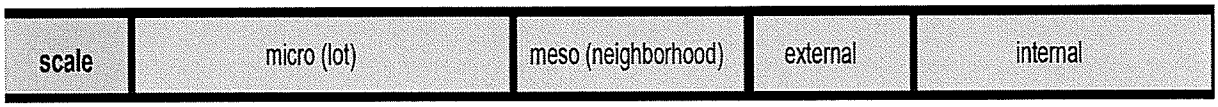
2. The Context Bar **(Figure 51)**

The next bar is the largest scale of influence: the context of the physical and social environments in which the case-studies exist.

+ Physical Environment: is referred to what is called the fabric, or in this case the "suburban fabric". The "suburban fabric" here refers to how the residents experience and use natural and built environments through movement, dwelling, and sight as a cohesive whole (Chow, 2002) through different scales.

+ Social: in this situation is referred to as the interaction of personal, inter-personal, community, and media network elements that together influence the bearing of a particular desire.

3. The Scale Bar: **(Figure 52)**



Context can be broken down into the realm of Scale, which can be defined simply as the spatial proportions of the physical and social environment. Here the physical environment represents the micro-scale (the lot on which the house sits) and the meso-scale (the surrounding neighborhood). The social environment represents the external (outside influences) and the internal (personal choice).

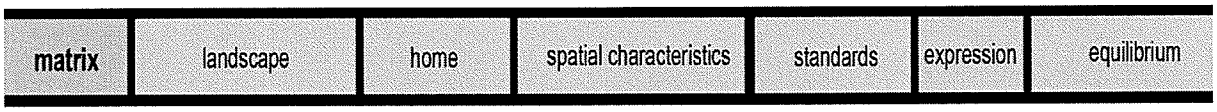
+ Micro (lot): refers to the scale of the individual lot and includes all physical elements within.

+ Meso (neighbourhood): refers to the built environment of house-to-house relationships, house-to-street relationships, yard-to-yard relationships and nature-to-yard relationships, the differences between these relationships and how this impacts individual homeowners landscape choices.

+ (external): refers to the impacts external sociological influences at the community and media levels have upon homeowner.

+ (internal): refers to the internal (or personal) sociological choices which homeowners are influenced decision making regarding their landscape.

4. The Matrix Bar: **(Figure 53)**



Scale can be broken down into the realm of Matrix, which is defined as the " shapes and conditions which affect the nature of the neighborhood and in turn have a profound impression on those who inhabit it" (adapted from Porter, 2004, p.15). Under the physical environment the micro-scale is representative of the landscape and the home, whereas the meso-scale is representative of spatial characteristics. Under the social environment, the external is represented by community standards, whereas the internal scale is represented by personal expression and housing equilibrium.

+ Landscape: refers to all situational elements within a particular housing lot.

+ Home: refers to all characteristics of an individual house within a given lot.

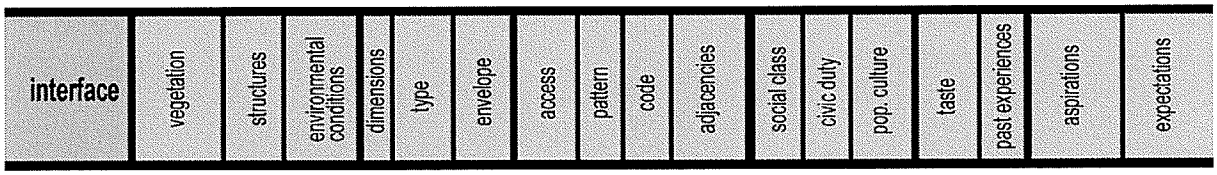
+ Spatial characteristics: refers to the spatial qualities in relation to each other of all landscape elements (houses included) within a given neighbourhood.

+ Standards: referring to community; it is an accepted outward visual and sociological projection of the status-quo.

+ Expression: The coherent articulation of ideas and preferences that together have suggestive physical , visual, and social influences upon the individual personal landscape.

+ Equilibrium: is central to much housing market analysis and is a measure of meeting all environmental conditions within a defined range of acceptable standards set forth by the homeowner. (Meeks & Firebaugh, 1974)

5. The Interface Bar: **(Figure 54)**



Matrix can be broken down into the realm of Interface, which can be defined as the point of contact where interaction takes place between two forces, processes or subjects. Under the physical environment, the landscape can be broken into vegetation, structures and environmental conditions. The home can be broken into dimensions, type and envelope. Spatial characteristics can be broken into access, pattern, code and adjacencies. In the social environment standards can be broken into social class, civic duty and popular culture. Expression can be broken into taste and past experiences. Housing Equilibrium can be broken into aspirations and expectations.

+ Vegetation: plant cover or plant life.

+ Structures: "also known as a 'non-habitable structure' is a constructed building or form that is not used to house people" (Morrow,1987, p.220)

+ Environmental conditions: The various natural parameters related to the overall state of the outdoor

environment.

+ Dimensions: "is one of a number of measurements that must be specified to identify a point on a line or a surface, or a space. A surface…is two dimensional" (Porter, 2004, p. 137)

+ Type: refers to a specific form of a home

+ Envelope: refers to a human body building analogy that refers to the outer layer of a building. This is the exter¬nal cloaking of all the layers of the building envelope that covers roof, walls, and underside. (Porter, 2004, p 173)

+ Access: A means of approach to an entry way through different scales of movement, pedestrian, bicycle, car.

+ Pattern: refers to the character and overall built form of surrounding homes.

+ Code: "refers to regulations imposed on design and work made by governing agencies" (Morrow, p.78)

+ Adjacencies: refers to the physical relationship between surrounding larger scale landscape elements.

+ Social Class: refers to a group of individuals who occupy a similar hierarchical position in society or culture, based on similar economic, political, or social interests.

+ Civic duty: The sense of community responsibility due to social forces.

+ Pop.Culture: what is popular within the social context, pertaining to elements that society may deem important or desirable.

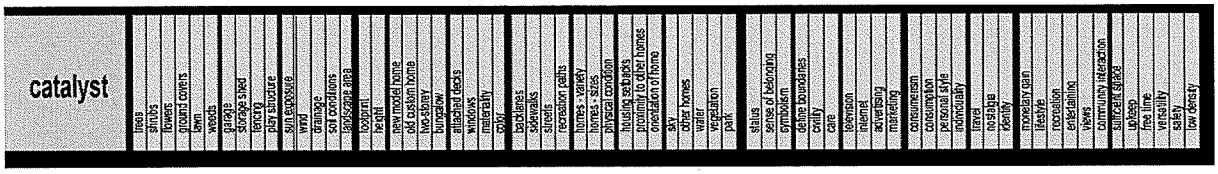
+ Taste: refers to an expression of individuality, personal style, consumerism and consumption.

+ Past experiences: refers to the homeowners past personal experience or events that may influence their current attitude, behaviour and desires.

+ Aspirations: are a set of goals on objective desires identified by the homeowner as being obtainable over time (Meeks & Firebaugh, 1974).

+ Expectations: a certain set of housing ideals that the homeowner has regarding their current living situation.

6. The Catalyst Bar: **(Figure 55)**



Interface can be broken down into the most important scale in the diagram: the catalysts. Catalyst can be defined as the specific physical and social conditions or elements that precipitate an event or change leading to a landscape desire. There are 69 catalysts in total, with 40 being of a physical nature and 29 being of a social nature. The catalysts were identified through the research conducted in Chapters 4 & 5 and through on-site observation. After compiling and reviewing all relevant information regarding the landscape desires of suburban homeowners 18 individual diagrams were produced. Fourteen for each desire and four extra diagrams. They are: Curb Appeal, Storage, Outdoor Living Space, Lawn, Vegetable Garden, Circulation, Neighbors, Play Space, Block Views, Valued Views, Maintenance, Maintenance not of Concern, Privacy, Privacy not of Concern, Security, Security not of Concern, General Design Ideas and Specific Design Ideas. The four extra charts produced were in response to gaining an understanding as to why a home owner in one area had a particular desire, yet another homeowner in a different area did not require that desire. This was a valuable tool in determining what physical conditions within the context of the home had a profound affect on people's perception of place.

6.2 DECODING PRIVACY

As there are 18 different diagrams it would be impractical to explain them all. So for the purposes of this practicum one will be described in detail to illustrate in greater detail how the diagram works and how it can be useful as a tool for creating better communities.

Privacy is defined as a voluntary condition of separation from the public domain and has been widely accepted as a universal need. Privacy was rated as the second most important affective desire in new suburban neighbourhoods. Based on this diagram, we can make the general assumption that the lack of privacy is more a condition of the physical environment than a social one (refer to Figure 56). We can break these general observations into a more detailed explanation by looking at the catalysts which as

described earlier are the elements of existing conditions which influence the expression of a desire by the homeowner.

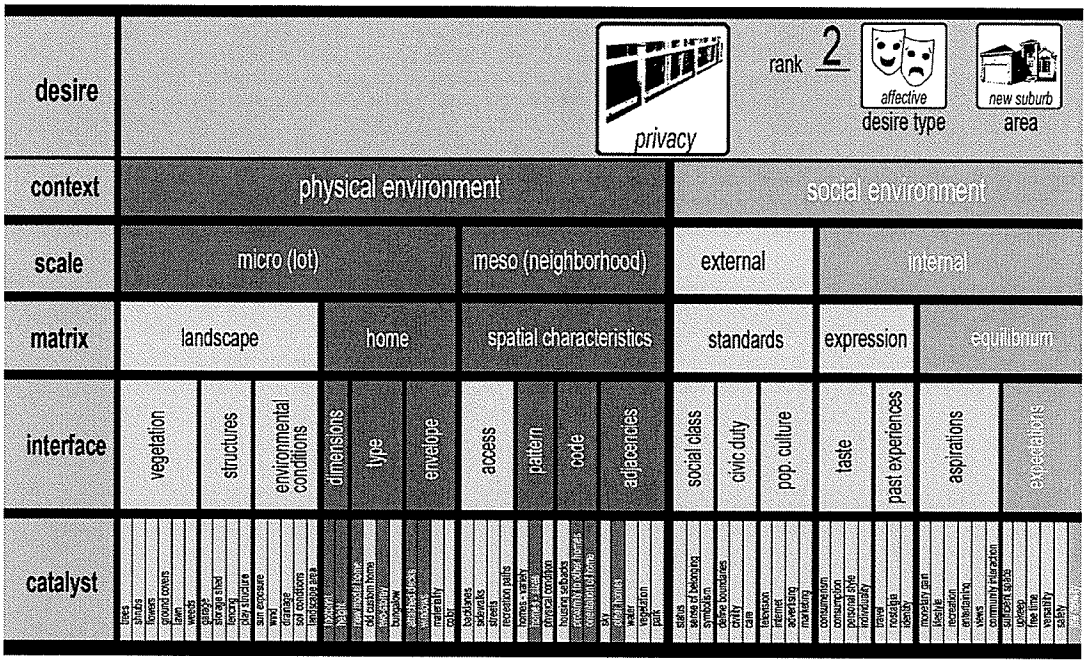


Figure 56. Privacy Diagram.

1. Home Footprint: As suburban homes have evolved over the years, variations in home width and height have changed as well. It is now common practice to maximize the allowable building footprint, thereby creating a situation where homes are now wider than they have been in the past. Based on the case studies presented in this practicum, it was found that homes in newer suburban areas have a rear façade whose average width is 36 feet. This is an increase of 7 feet over the average of the four homes in older suburban areas.

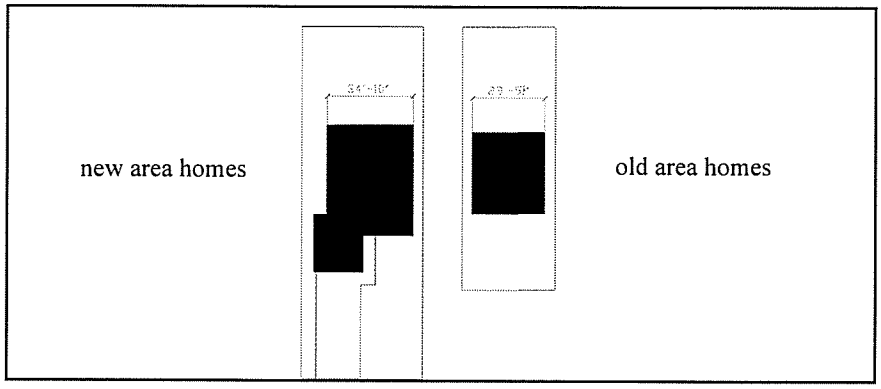


Figure 57. House width comparison between new and old suburban area homes (width determined by average measurements of case study homes).

This creates a situation where the rear façade of the home presents increased opportunities for the placement of larger and increased numbers of windows.

2. Height of Homes: The height of homes is increasing because the base upon which they are built is getting closer to ground level. New homes are required to be constructed in a manner that will lessen the effects of potential basement flooding. To achieve this, homes are built upon an artificial grade that is anywhere from two to four feet above the level of the street and surrounding grade. This creates a situation where the house becomes taller and therefore windows, decks and people are at an elevated vantage point within the home giving a broader view over the surrounding landscape thereby decreasing the perceived privacy of surrounding neighbours.

Figure 58. House heights of some new suburban area homes.

3. Style of Homes: With two storey custom homes, they become the focus of the visual field thereby creating a greater sense of exposure while in the backyard. This sense of exposure is diminished when surrounding homes are of a shorter bungalow style.

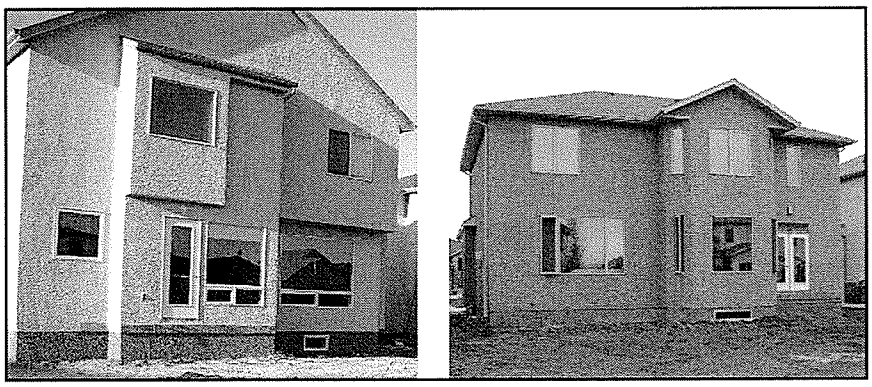


Figure 59. Housestyle of new suburban area homes.

4. Attached Decks: As previously discussed, decks are now raised three to four feet above ground meaning that people are viewing their surroundings from a height that is roughly eight to ten feet above the ground level. When every house on the block has decks built in this manner, the level of perceived privacy in a yard decreases dramatically.

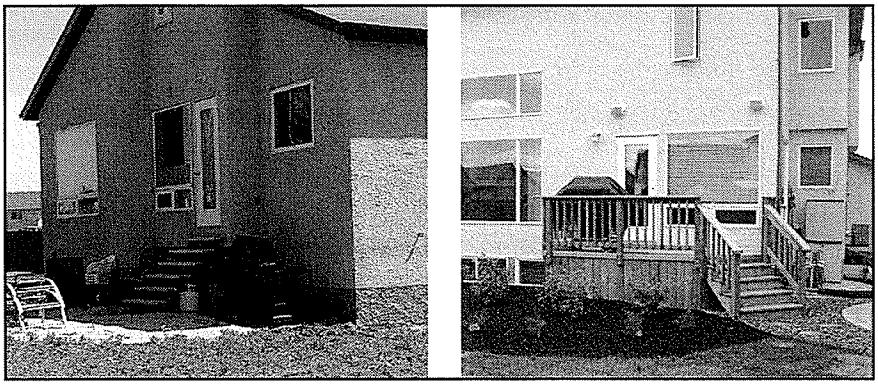


Figure 60. Photo showing heights of decks.

5. Windows: From the inside of a home, windows at the rear of the house give a view to the backyard and allow homeowners and parents to keep a watchful eye over their children and property. Unfortunately, the dialogue of rear facing windows creates a situation where a sensation of exposure occurs, thereby reducing the sense of privacy. Even if no one is looking through the windows from other homes, the windows themselves can still have the affect of creating feelings of intrusion.

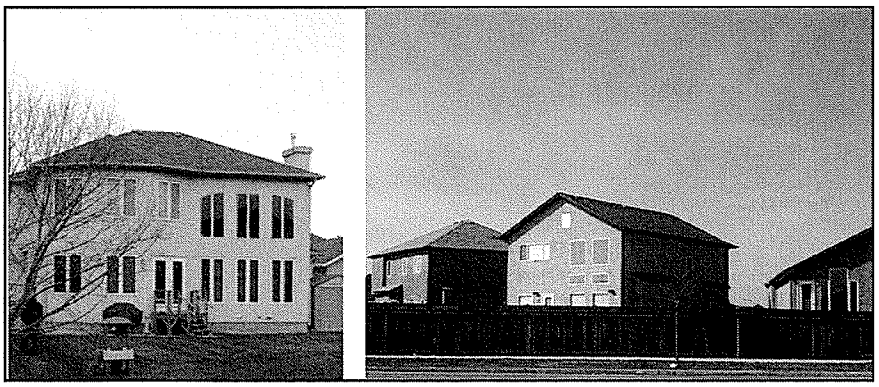


Figure 61. Photo showing extent of windows at backs of new suburban homes.

6. Sizes of Other Homes: The sheer size of some homes in new suburban areas in combination with short backyards can create a less than desirable width to height ratios in the backyard, thereby contributing further to decreased sense of privacy.

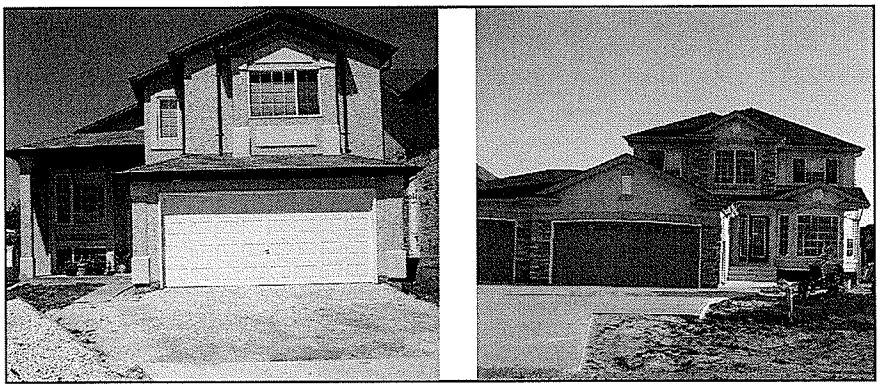


Figure 62. Photo showing sizes of surrounding homes in new suburban areas.

7. Proximity to Other Homes: Throughout the years, developers, in an effort to increase profitability, have been shrinking lot sizes for the purposes of increasing the number of homes they can include within a given area of land. The result being that back facing homes are getting closer to each other. This, in combination with the fact that homes are getting larger, helps to further decrease the sense of privacy people can achieve in their backyards.

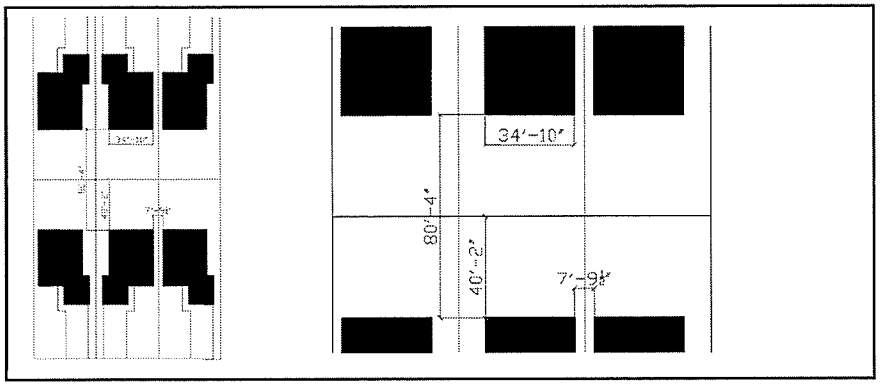


Figure 63. Proximity to other homes (numbers based on average measurements for case-study homes).

8. Orientation: Homes located on corner lots are much more exposed to more homes facing the backyard than homes that are oriented in a linear fashion to one another. This is illustrated in the diagram and photo here.

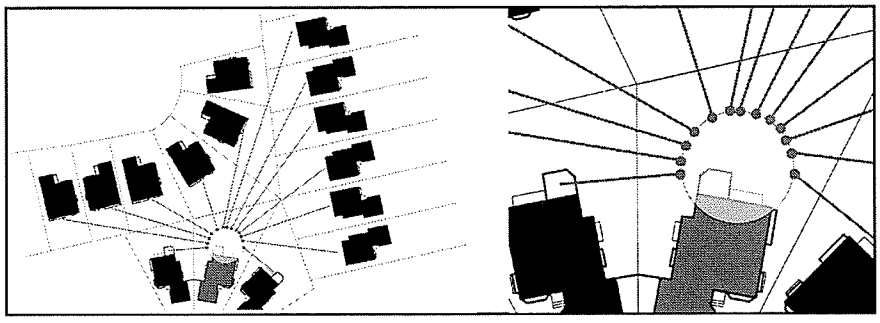


Figure 64. How orientation can affect privacy.

9. Density: The one social catalyst is the notion of density. Research shows that density and privacy are perceived as being related in that if an increase in density occurs, then a decrease in privacy will follow, and vice-versa. Suburbs are typically marketed as places that are close to nature that "allow people to get away from it all." This alludes to notions of privacy and decreased density which can generate expectations about privacy with homeowners in new suburban areas. The notion of increased privacy in new suburban areas is a false promise. When we examine the quantitative data from the new and old suburbs, it was found that the new suburban areas had a lower density of people/household than those in older suburban areas. It is also interesting to note that new suburban homeowners occupy 2.3 times as much land per lot than homeowners of older suburban areas. If it were true that a decrease in density resulted in a decreased need for privacy, then, it would be homeowners in old suburban areas who would require privacy, not homeowners in new suburban areas.

Now that the catalysts that contribute to the issue of no privacy in new suburban neighborhoods have been identified, it would be beneficial to de-code privacy not needed. By being able to compare and contrast the catalysts that contribute to each, it is hoped that design ideas and strategies regarding the privacy of residential space can better be planned for in future communities.

6.3 DECODING NO PRIVACY

Based on figure 65 it is obvious that the lack of a need for privacy appears to be more a condition of the physical rather than the social environment. However, in this situation there seems to be an equal influence between the micro scale of the landscape and the spatial characteristics of the meso-scale. If we compare this diagram to the privacy diagram it can noted that there are some physical elements that are present in old suburban neighbourhoods that were not present in the new suburban neighbourhoods.

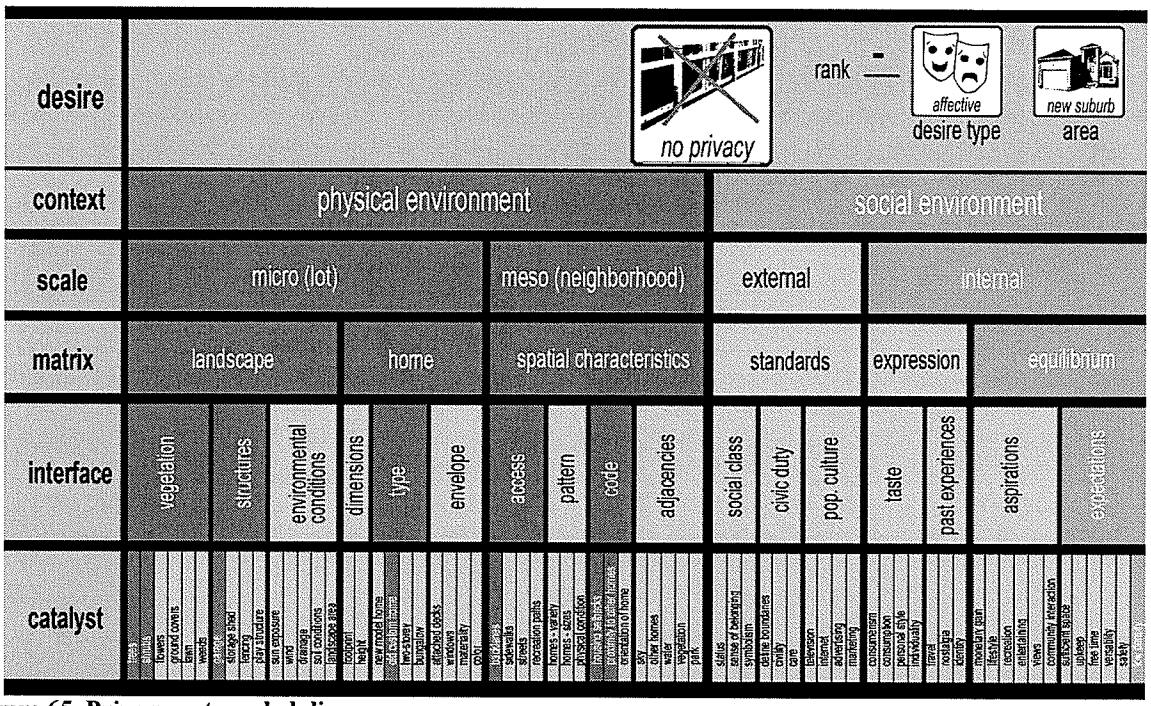


Figure 65. Privacy not needed diagram.

1. Vegetation: The inclusion of natural elements such as trees could help reduce the perception of density and therefore the need for increased privacy in a residential neighbourhood. Trees create a sense of enclosure as their canopy drapes an opaque boundary above the property allowing the space to feel both enclosed from above and open along the ground plane thereby filtering the views to surrounding homes.

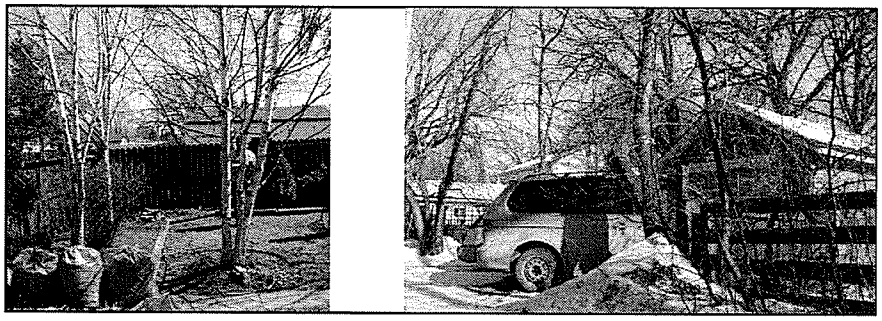


Figure 66. How vegetation can contribute to privacy.

2. Garage: With the small garage being tucked away in the back corner of a lot an enclosed private space is created which further buffers views from neighbours behind and to the side of the property. This creates a greater sense of enclosure and intimacy for the homeowner which equates to a greater degree of achieved privacy.

3. Old Custom Home: Old custom homes were found to have less windows that were smaller than new homes. Also their building footprint was roughly 1.7 times smaller than new homes.

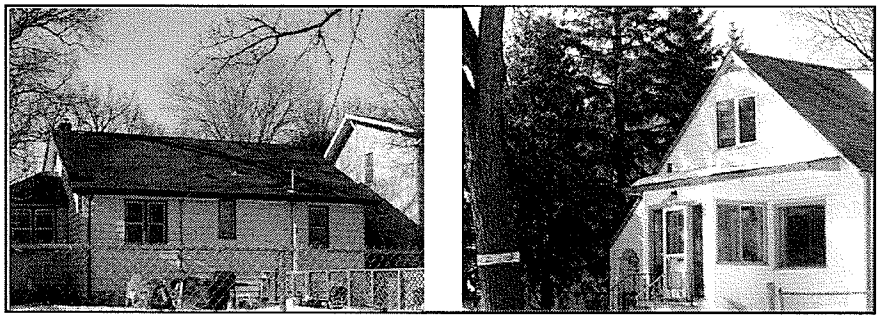


Figure 67. Old Custom homes.

4. The Back lane: The back lane creates a buffer of approximately fifteen feet between backyard facing properties. This gives the homeowner an increased perception of control over environmental conditions and social interaction. The larger the distance between individual space and property the greater the sense of control of choice and freedom over unwanted interaction. This has the socio-cultural effect of lowering perceived densities, control over environment, and therefore increased privacy.

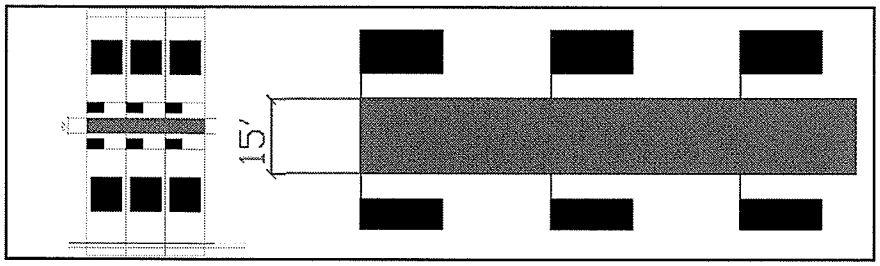


Figure 68. The buffer of the backlane can increase one's sense of privacy.

5. Proximity: The proximity of back facing homes in old suburban areas was twenty feet greater than those in new suburban areas. This greater distance between the rear facades of backyard facing homes, gives a greater physical buffer between properties, resulting in an increased sense of privacy.

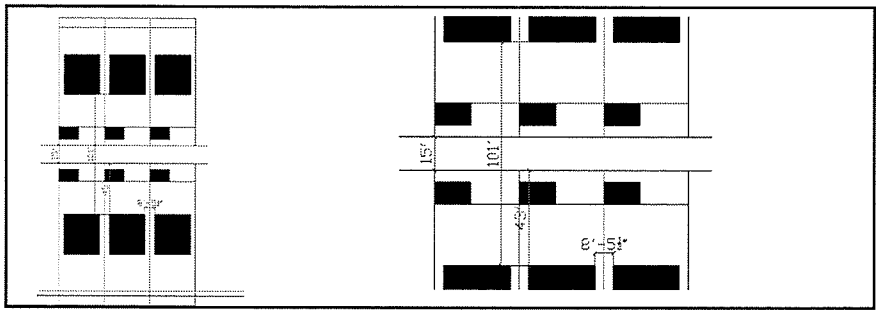


Figure 69. Distance between back-facing homes.

Now if we compare the two catalyst bars from the old and new suburban areas, we can see where the differences in the physical environment are that help to explain why there is needs for privacy in new suburban areas and why privacy isn't an issue in old suburban areas.

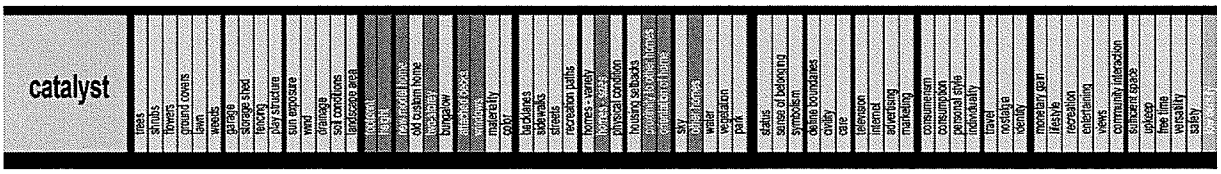


Figure 70. The catalysts which influence the need for privacy.

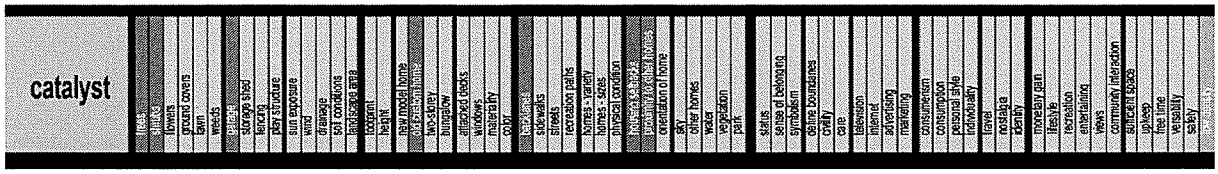


Figure 71. The catalysts which help to achieve sense of privacy.

6.4 SUMMARY

The development of this diagram and subsequent decoding of desires was deemed an integral part of the practicum process as it achieved a number of goals and objectives. First it identified the components or catalysts which impacted a homeowner's decision for a particular desire. It also helped to visually communicate to the reader how both tangible and affective desires were influenced through both physical and social conditions. In addition it provides a greater understanding of the similarities and differences between old and new suburban areas and how it is these differences affect the way in which homeowners perceive their built environment. Perhaps most importantly it helps to identify which aspects of the two suburban area types are deemed to be attributes that should be included in some form or another for future neighbourhood development. The proceeding pages list the remaining desires.

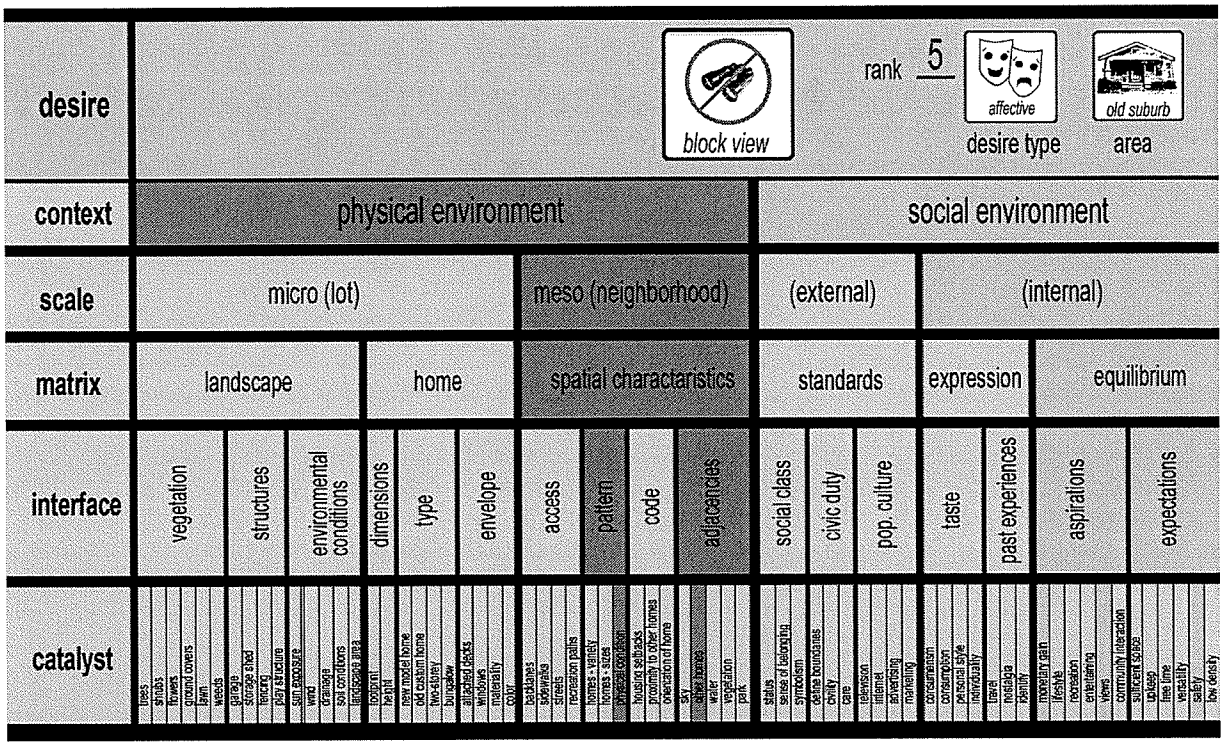


Figure 72. Block Views as desired by homeowners in old suburban neighbourhoods.

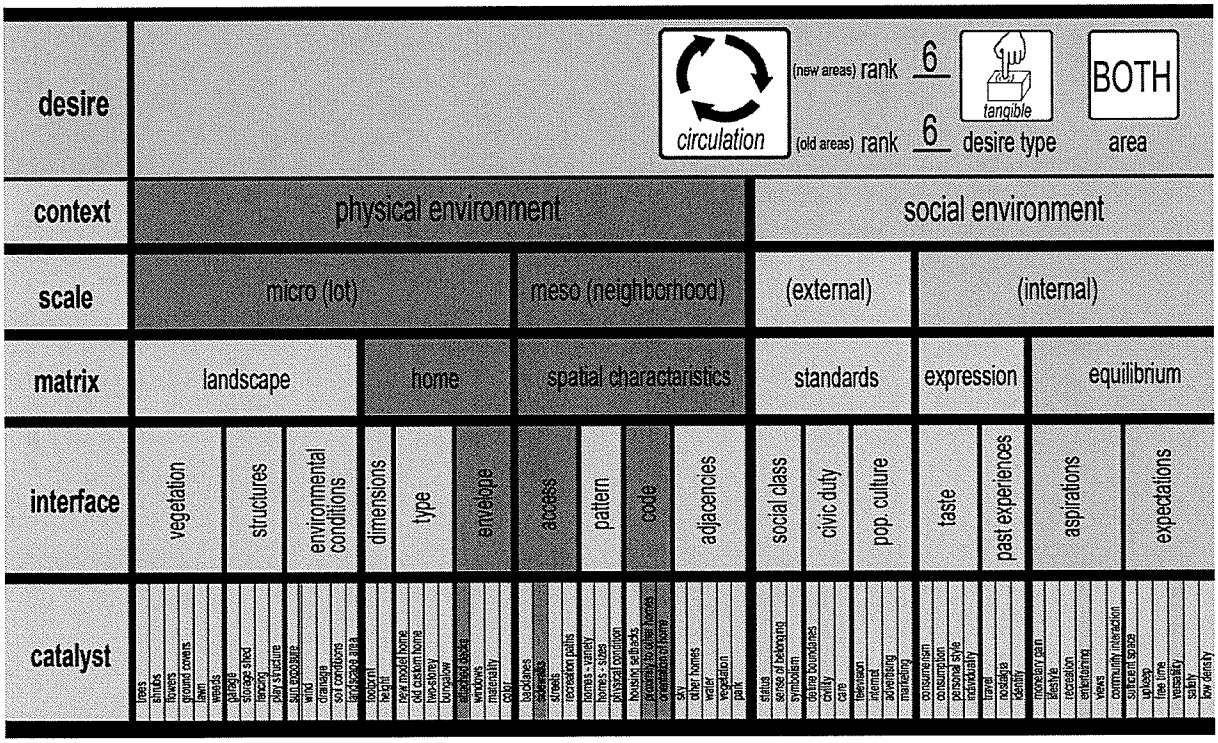


Figure 73. Circulation as desired by homeowners in new and old suburban neighbourhoods.

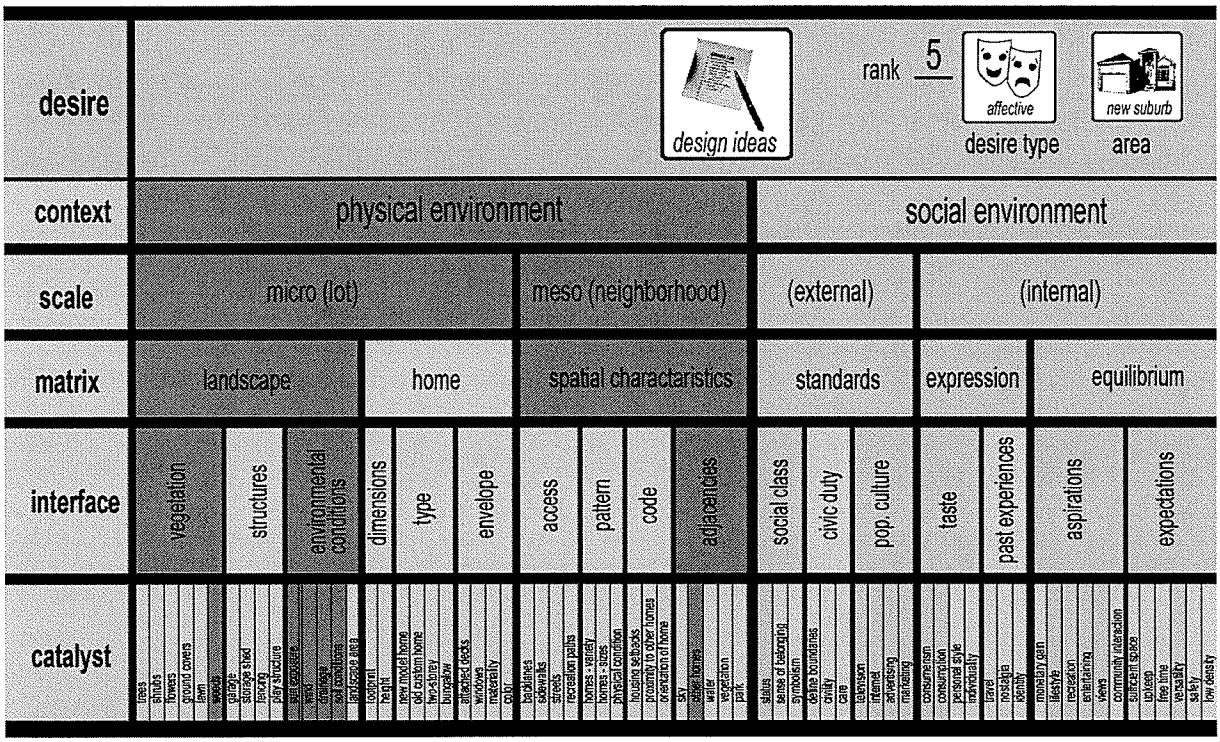


Figure 74. General Design Ideas as expressed by homeowners in new suburban neighbourhoods.

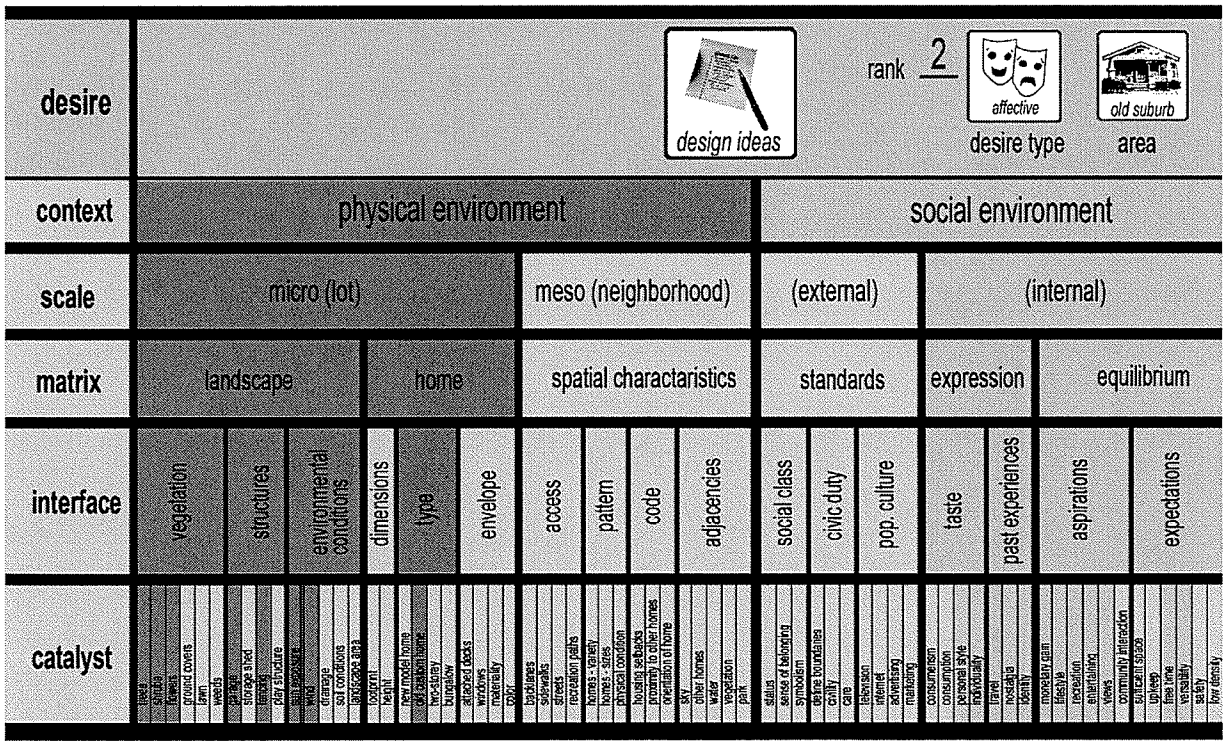


Figure 75. Specific Design Ideas as expressed by homeowners in old suburban neighbourhoods.

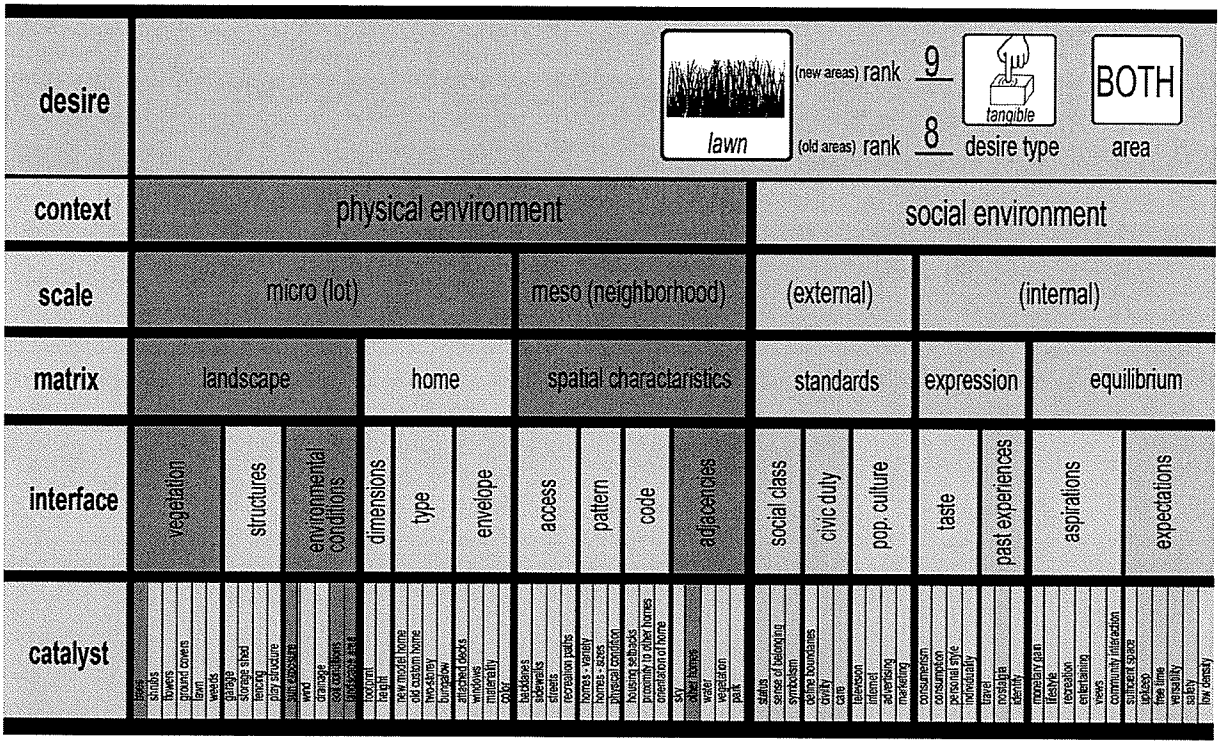


Figure 76. Lawn catalysts

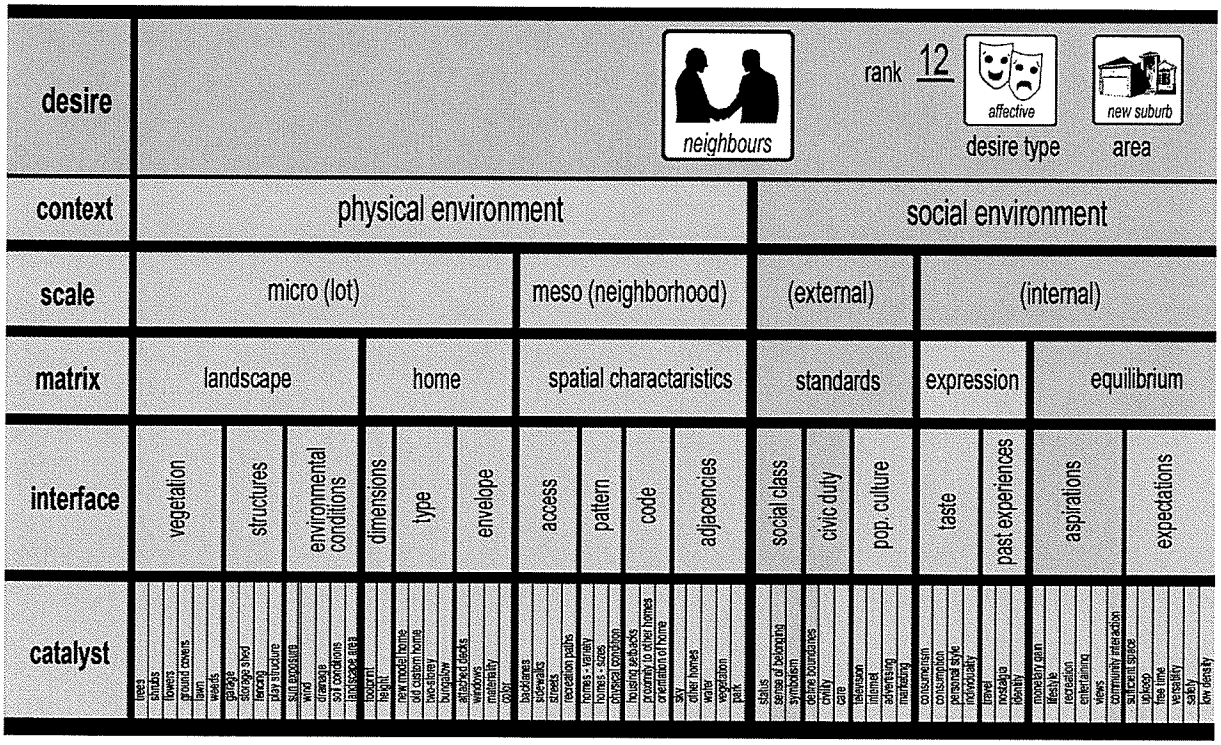


Figure 77. Catalysts for Neighbours (Consideration Of).

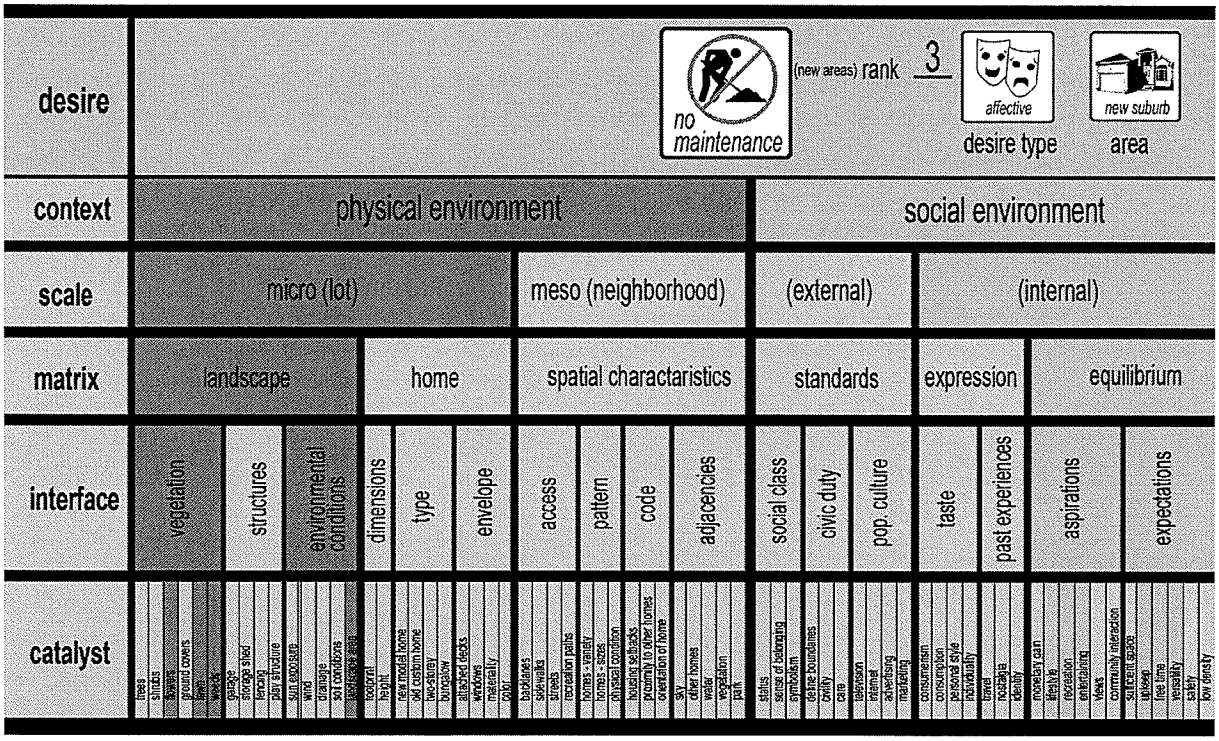


Figure 78. Catalysts which influence a homeowner's desire for no maintenance (as expressed in new areas).

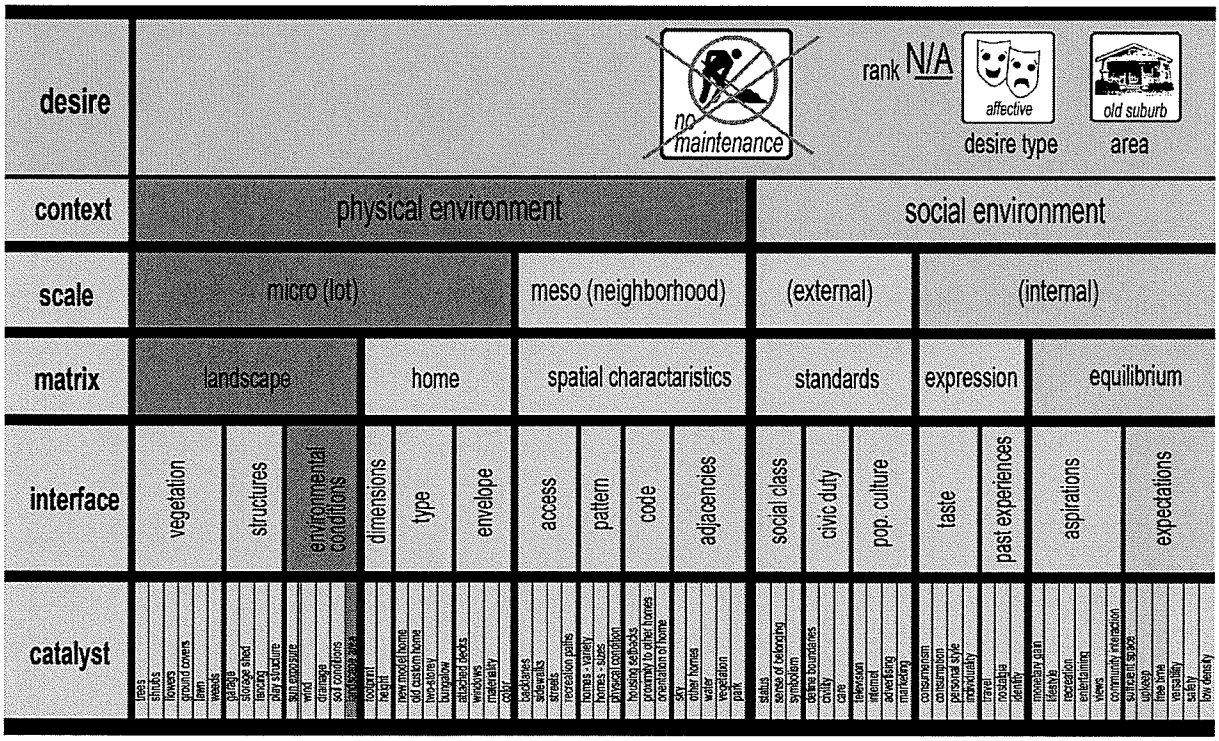


Figure 79. Catalysts which may influence homeowners to have no concern for maintenance.

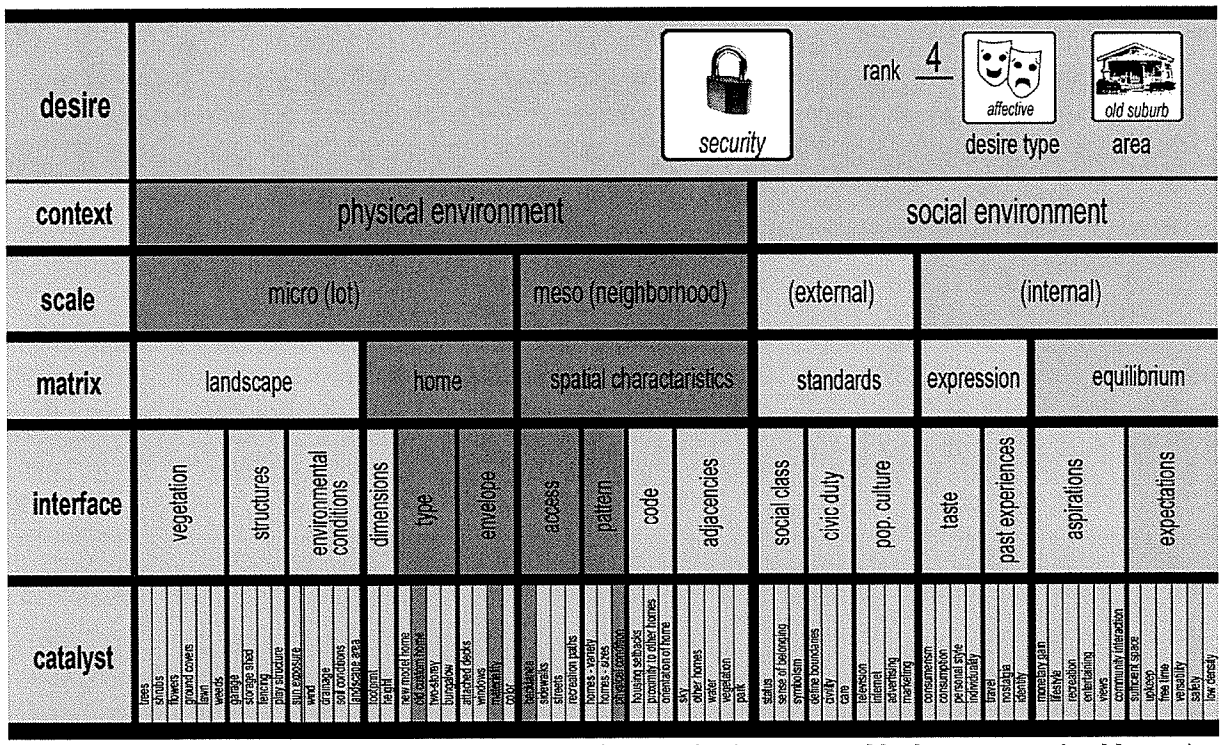


Figure 80. Catalysts which may influence the desire for security (as expressed by homeowners in old areas).

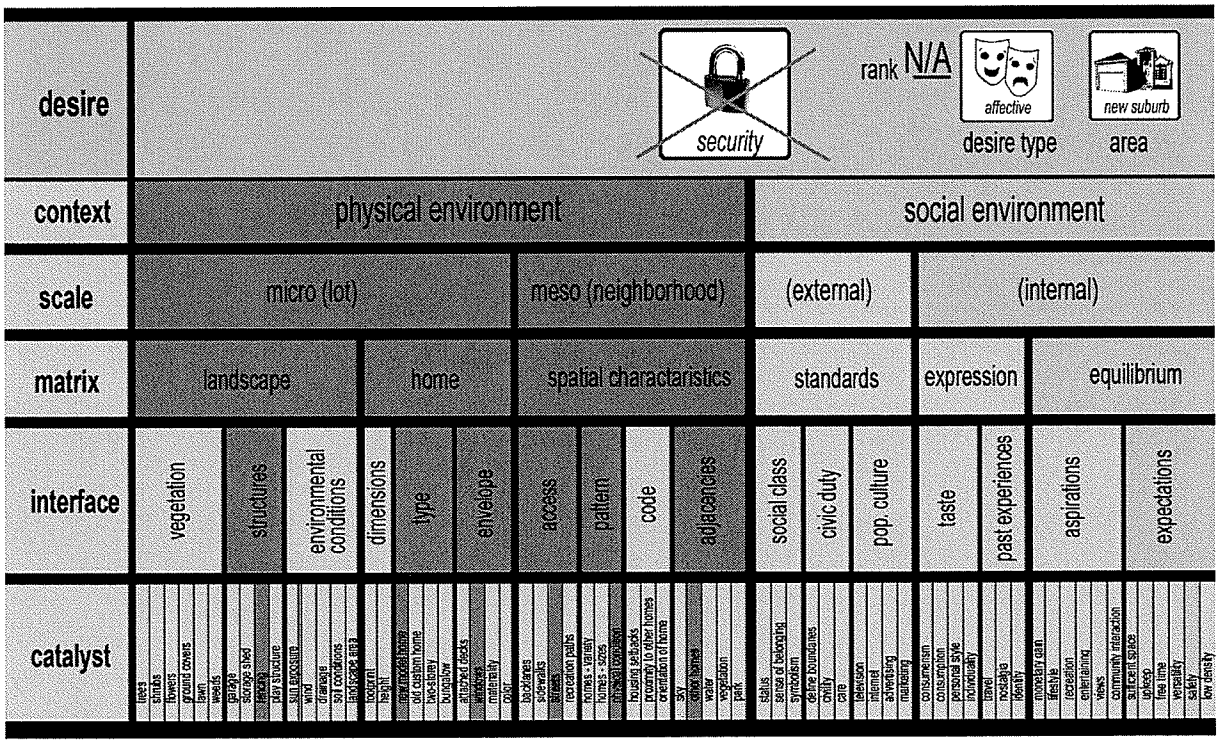


Figure 81. Catalysts which may influence homeowners to have no security concerns (new suburban areas).

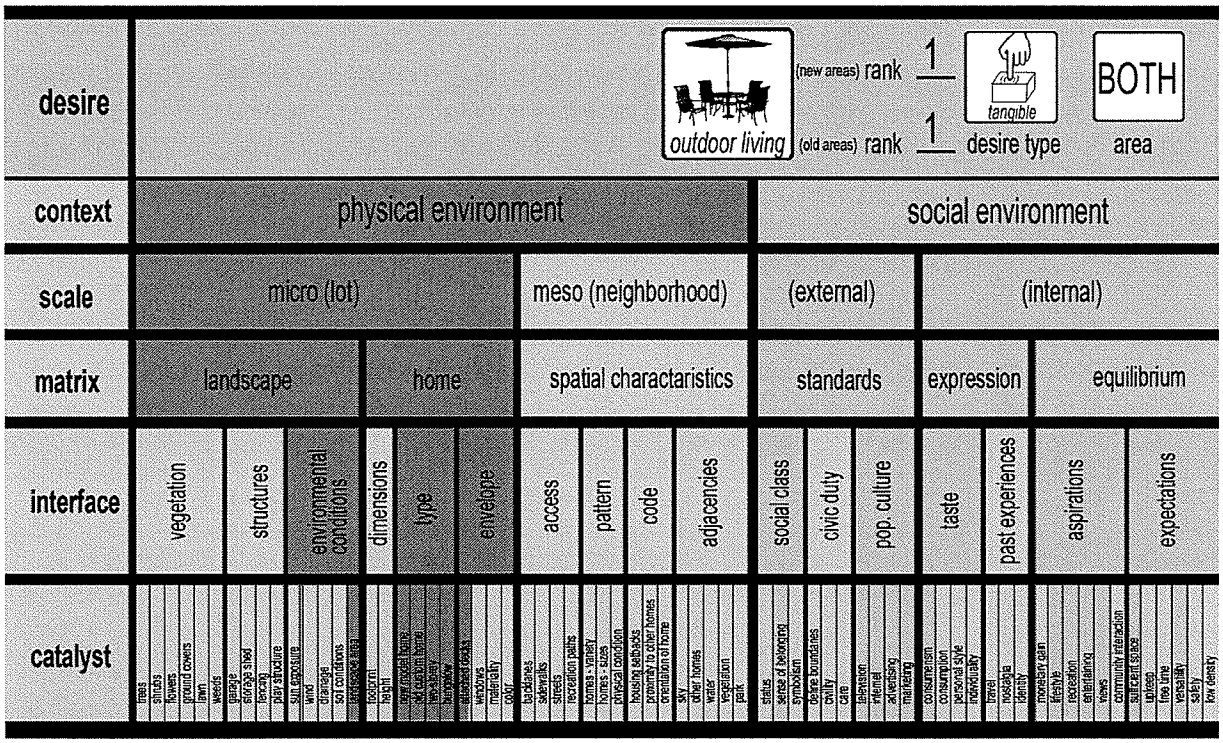


Figure 82. Catalysts which influence the desire for outdoor living space.

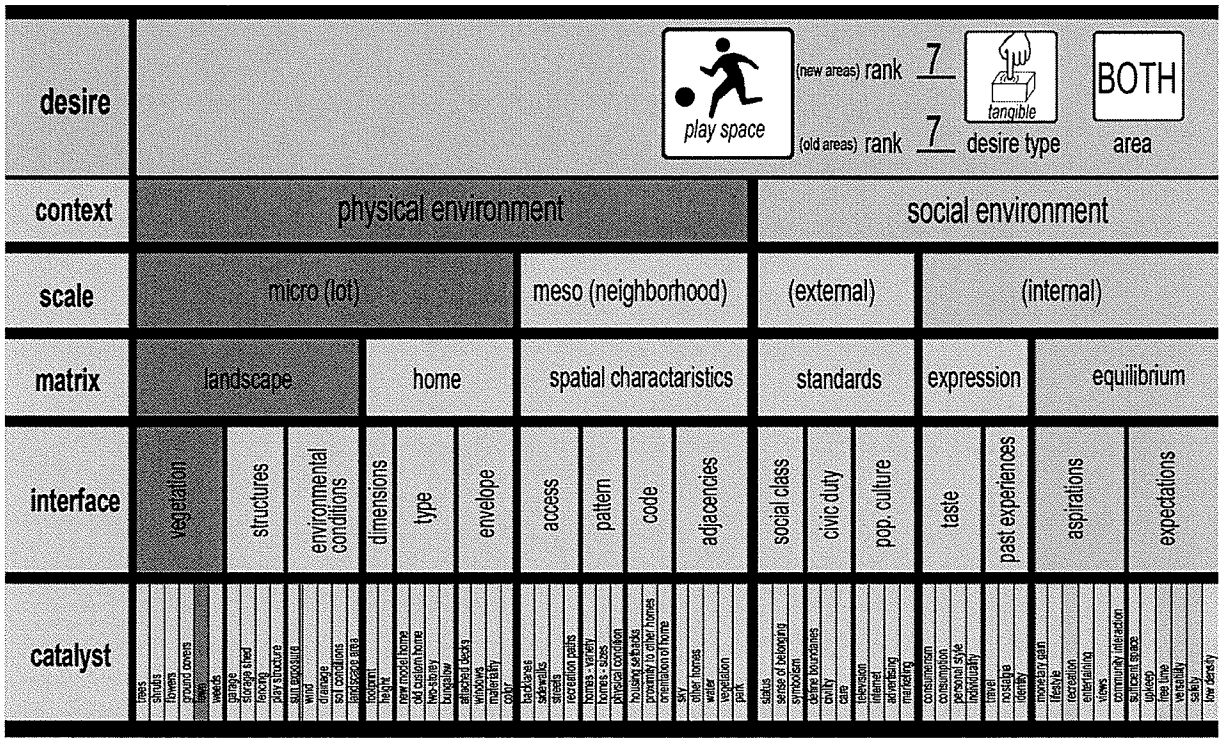


Figure 83. Catalysts which may influence the desire for playspace.

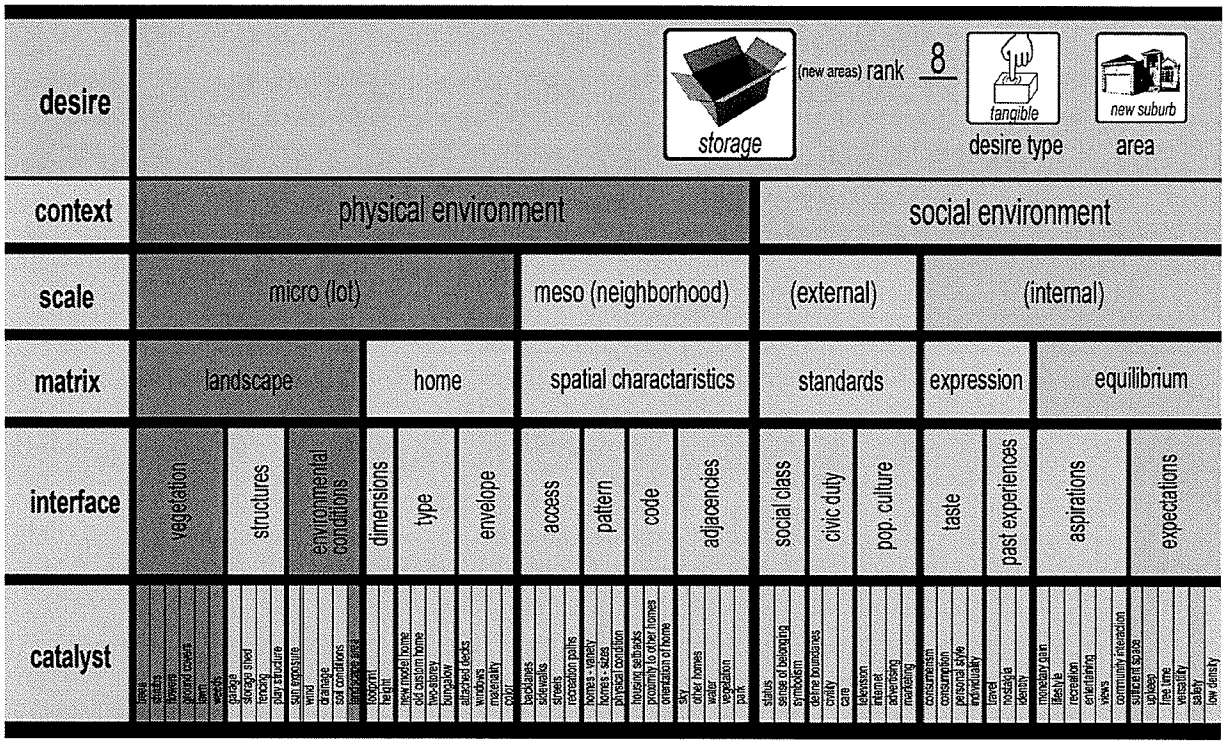


Figure 84. Catalysts which influence the desire for storage space.

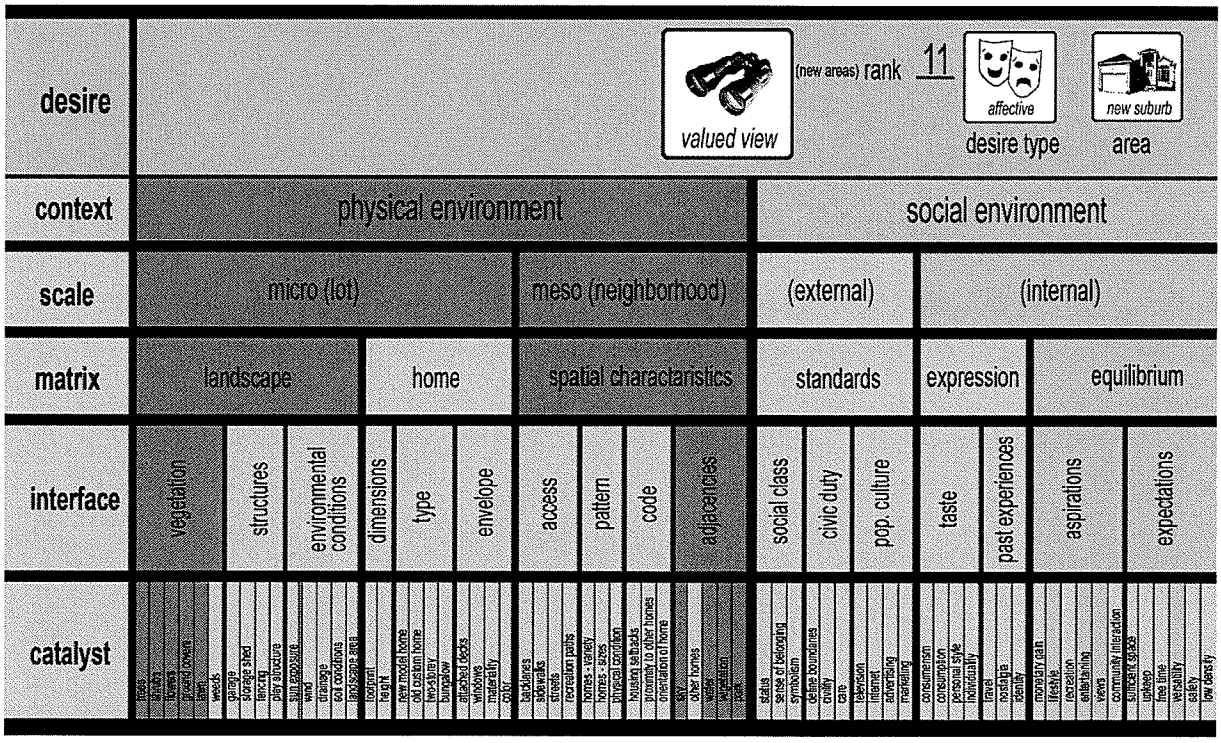


Figure 85. Catalysts which may influence the desire for valued views.

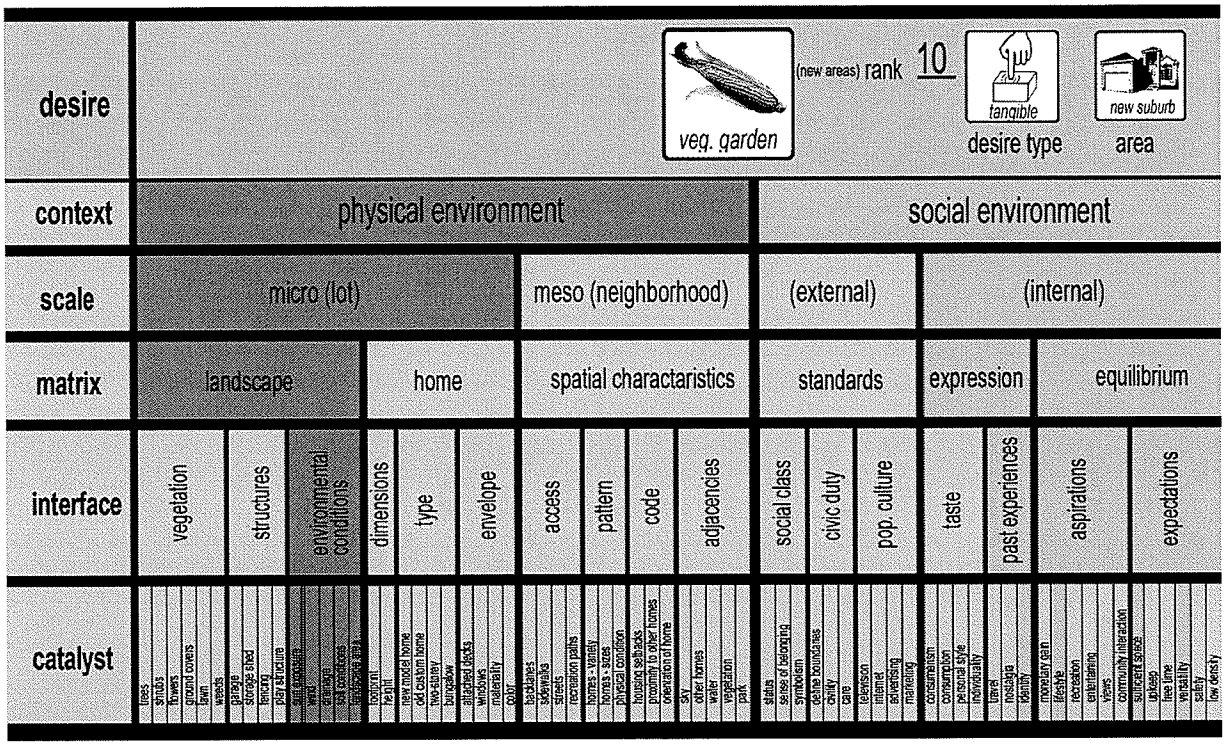


Figure 86. Catalysts which influence the desire for a vegetable garden.

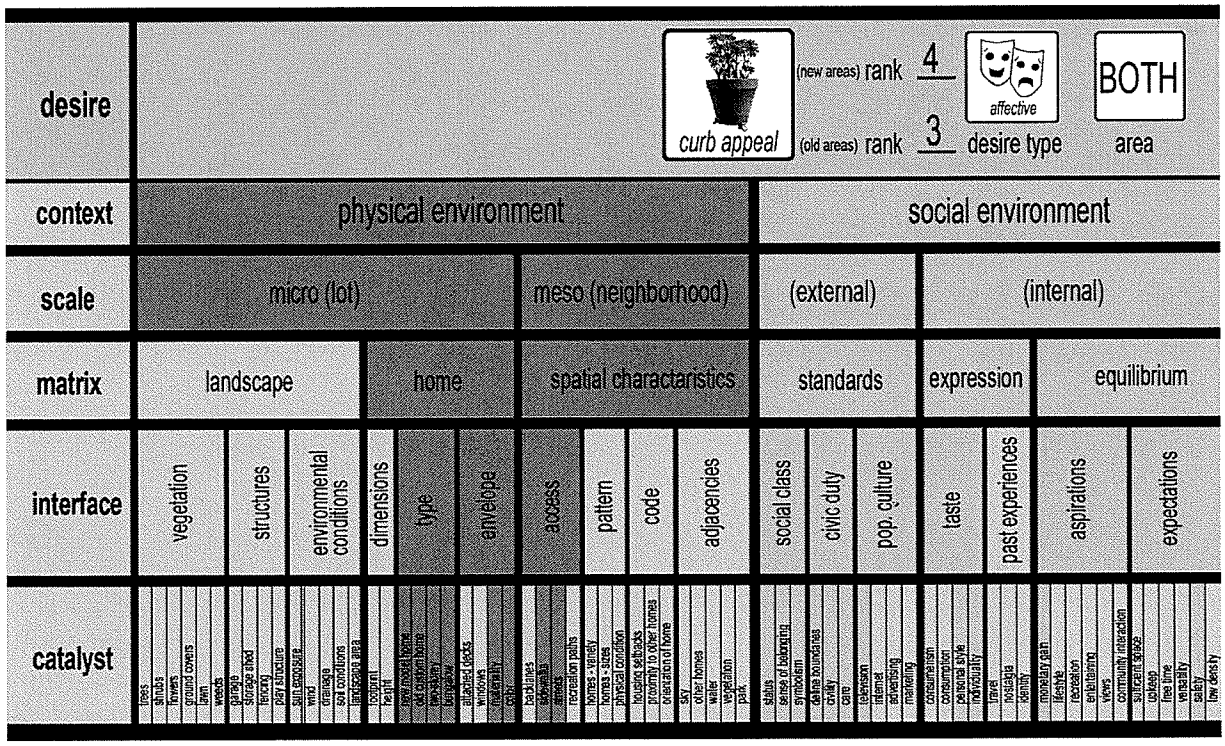


Figure 87. Catalysts which may influence the desire for curb appeal.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this practicum has revealed a number of connections between landscape desires and the suburban homeowner in new and old neighbourhoods. Physical and social catalysts were found to drive the landscape desires of the suburban homeowner. Whether it be tangible or affective, it was found that certain landscape desires were unique to both new and old suburban areas. The difference in expressed desires arose from unique physical realities that define each of these areas. Whether it is existing environmental conditions, the character and style of homes, or the expectations and aspirations of individual homeowners, landscape desires are as much a response to surrounding conditions as they are a response to personal choice. My practicum has explored the Winnipeg suburban condition and has attempted to answer the question of "What is it that suburban homeowners desire for their personal landscape?" and has provided a graphic tool for exploring these tangible and affective desires. It is hoped that by answering these questions that this practicum can be used as a tool or reference by others for the purposes of designing better communities.

The case-study analysis revealed fourteen landscape desires as identified by homeowners in the two suburban areas. They are: privacy, outdoor living space, curb appeal, valued views, security, block views, design ideas, play space, consideration of neighbors, circulation, no maintenance, vegetable garden, lawn and storage. Further investigation into these desires indicated that two types of landscape desires existed: those which are tangible, (amenity driven desires) and those which are affective (emotionally appealing characteristics). Of the fourteen desires the following six were categorized as tangible: lawn, outdoor living space, play space, circulation, vegetable garden and storage. My findings suggest that tangible desires between the two areas are quite similar as four of the six desires were identified as important by both sets of homeowners. The only difference being that new homeowners desired extra storage and vegetable gardens. However, these desires were low in the overall ranking and it can be insinuated that if there was a larger sample of case-studies for old suburban areas, that perhaps these desires would have been present in their rankings as well. My findings suggest that the desires of lawn, outdoor living space, play space and circulation are important aspects of the suburban residential yard for homeowners in both suburban areas. The difference in lot size between the two areas influenced

the amount of space allocated to tangible elements within the yard, with new suburban area yards having larger areas of these elements (with the exception of circulation space). It is interesting to note, however, that as a measure of proportion or percentage of the yard space, the elements between the areas were close to equal, suggesting that lot size is influential for homeowners determining how much space for a particular tangible desire is deemed acceptable.

Of the fourteen desires the following eight were identified as being affective: privacy, no maintenance, valued views, blocking views, consideration of neighbours, security, curb appeal and design ideas. The case-study analysis revealed that only two of the eight desires (curb appeal and design ideas) were viewed as important between new and old suburban area homeowners. The other six desires were different for the homeowners. The case-studies in new suburban areas revealed a strong desire for privacy and no maintenance with a lesser desire for valued views and neighbours (consideration of neighbours). Unique to case-studies in the old suburban areas was desired security and blocking undesirable views. My findings suggest that the differences in affective desires may be most influenced by physical catalysts that are unique to each area.

This uniqueness is a measure of the differences in building and land use zoning, by-laws and codes that were in place at the time of construction for these two suburban areas. The desires of homeowners are, in essence a response to their built environment. Through analyzing the built environment of two suburban areas and the homeowners response to these environments, a series of charts was produced which attempted to visually communicate how desires were influenced by surroundings. The eighteen charts produced herein highlight catalysts that may influence a homeowner's decision for a particular desire. By highlighting the catalysts within these charts it is hoped that my practicum research may be used to help build better neighbourhoods and communities and could be the impetus for further research into this topic.

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APPENDIX

NEW AREA: CASE STUDY 1 – TEMPLETON-SINCLAIR

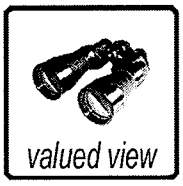
-Year Built: 1984
-Lot Size: 8824 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 2100 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 6724 sq. ft. (front yard: 2771 sq. ft., backyard: 3953 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Templeton-Sinclair
-Home Occupants: single middle-aged woman with young adult daughter
-Value (2003): $166, 500

Background Information: This home had an existing landscape that consisted of a few mature crab apple trees, small shrubs, lawn, a deck, a patio and a path that connected front yard to backyard. All of these elements could be described as "piece-meal" as they were installed at different times by different contractors, thereby creating a fragmented landscape. The client wanted something to pull the pieces together and make the yard look cohesive. The homeowner wanted to be able to enjoy more outdoor living, yet the landscape was seen as somewhat of a detriment to the homeowner as low maintenance was of the utmost concern. Using river rock and fabric around the periphery of the yard was the main request in terms of materiality by the client. Evergreens (cedars) were requested because they do not drop leaves and therefore less maintenance was perceived by the client.

1. Low Maintenance: The homeowner requested a decrease in the amount of lawn and to increase the amount of river rock, fabric, mulches and to a lesser extent, shrubs and perennials. To minimize the amount of maintenance native wildflowers were suggested. There were two mature crab apples in the backyard that had great form and provided the only focal point within the existing yard. Due to crab apples falling off in the autumn, the client requested that the two trees be removed.

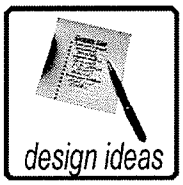
2. Outdoor Living Space: The homeowner requested the addition of a portable fire-pit while at the same time emphasize certain existing landscape amenities (deck, patio) with planting accents.

3. Privacy: The homeowner wanted to "fill in gaps" with vegetation where neighbours trees left open spaces above the fence line. She felt exposed and wanted backyard to be entirely private from neighbor's eyes.



4. Valued Views: The homeowner anticipated creating new focal points within her yard as she was going to remove the two mature crab apple trees which presently served as the yards focal points.

5. Curb Appeal (with very little maintenance): The homeowner wanted a pristine lawn and for her it was very important to have an equal mix of lawn, curb appeal and low maintenance. Too much lawn equated to not enough curb appeal and too much curb appeal (zones of planting) equated to too much maintenance. There needed to be a perfect balance between maintenance and curb appeal. The homeowner already had an in-ground sprinkler system in place, reducing the amount of maintenance needed to care for the lawn.



6. Specific Design Ideas: The homeowner wanted her front yard to blend in with the other residents front yards. In fact, she had requested that I take a look at a neighbors yard four doors down from hers for inspiration. She also anticipated a time in the future where she would have an in-ground pool in her backyard. There was some concern as to the amount of sunshine the pool would get, so the pool location was to be set back far away from the house to maximize sunlight. However, the homeowner did not want the pool too far away from the house as she did not want to walk any great distance to get to the pool. So a reasonable compromise had to be met.

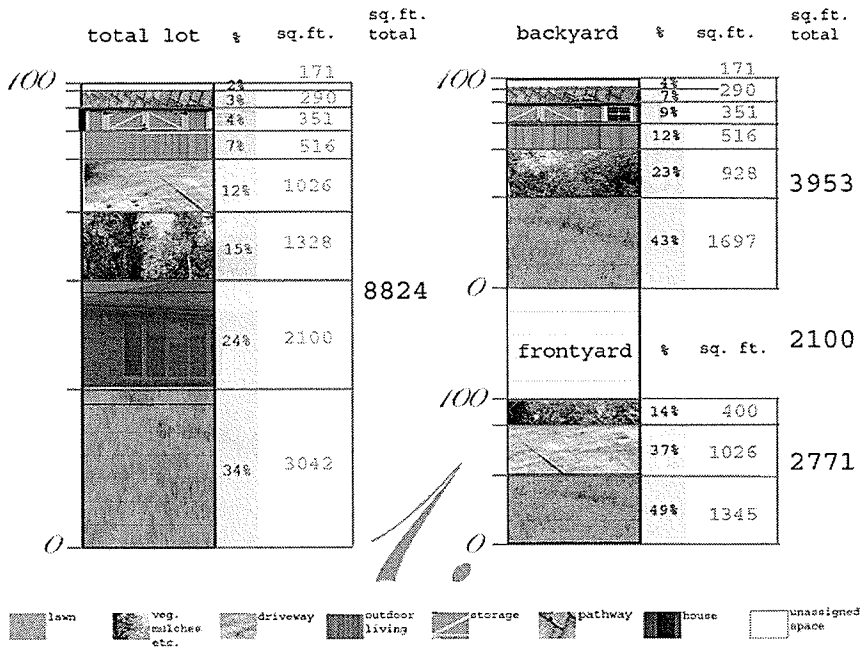


Figure 88. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 1.

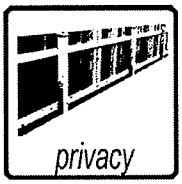
NEW AREA: CASE STUDY 2 – AMBER TRAILS

-Year Built: 2004
-Lot Size: 5850 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 1868 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 3982 sq. ft. (front yard: 1914 sq. ft., backyard: 2068 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Amber Trails
-Home Occupants: middle-aged couple
-Value (2006): $231,100

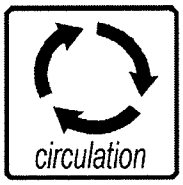
Background Information: The landscape served a functional purpose as a means for both movement and privacy. A public park was an element that the client valued (in terms of views) but was also of concern due to a lack of privacy and feeling exposed. The result was to filter views and provide privacy at the same time. The client wanted to be hidden from view of public park users, yet still be able to enjoy the views to the park and artificial pond. This desire was hampered because the deck in which they spent their time was raised 30" off the ground thus enhancing visibility – both in and out of the yard. The home essentially had two public facades and no real sense of privacy. The landscaping was a key element in establishing a private realm for the client. The landscape also served as a means to compliment the

existing deck and to enhance the surrounding space around it as the deck was the really only usable space for entertaining and relaxing (part in due to its large size compared to the small backyard).

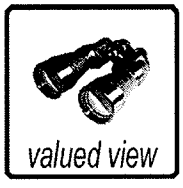
1. Low Maintenance: The homeowner did not want to spend any time weeding, watering, tending to plants, and wanted to cut as little grass as possible. Therefore a request for large areas of river rock, wood mulch, and paving was made by the homeowner. Other features that already existed within the landscape were a large deck and a built-in hot-tub.



2. Privacy: Behind the backyard was a large public park with a pathway running through the middle of it. A four foot tall chain link fence was all that separated the homeowner's private backyard and the eyes of park users, and neighbours. This created a feeling of being especially exposed. The design response was to use tall narrow trees in combination with privacy elements (a series of five tall trellises).



3. Circulation: The homeowner envisioned guests getting to the backyard from the front yard and felt it unnecessary to bring people through the house. The result was to use step stones set in river rock in the front yard and along the side of the house. The increase in amount of river rock in the front yard greatly reduced the amount of lawn needed to be mowed/watered/cared for.



4. Valued Views: Valued views towards the artificial pond from both the deck and from inside the home (view from the living room) is something the homeowner wanted to maintain. The pond itself was located diagonally from the backyard and situated behind a busy road. The result was to have an unimpeded view towards the pond. This view decreased the amount of privacy, but this was deemed a reasonable trade-off for the value of the view.

5. Outdoor Living Space: This was low on the homeowner's wish list as they spent all of their time outdoors on an existing large deck. The client wanted to emphasize the deck further by using planting accents.

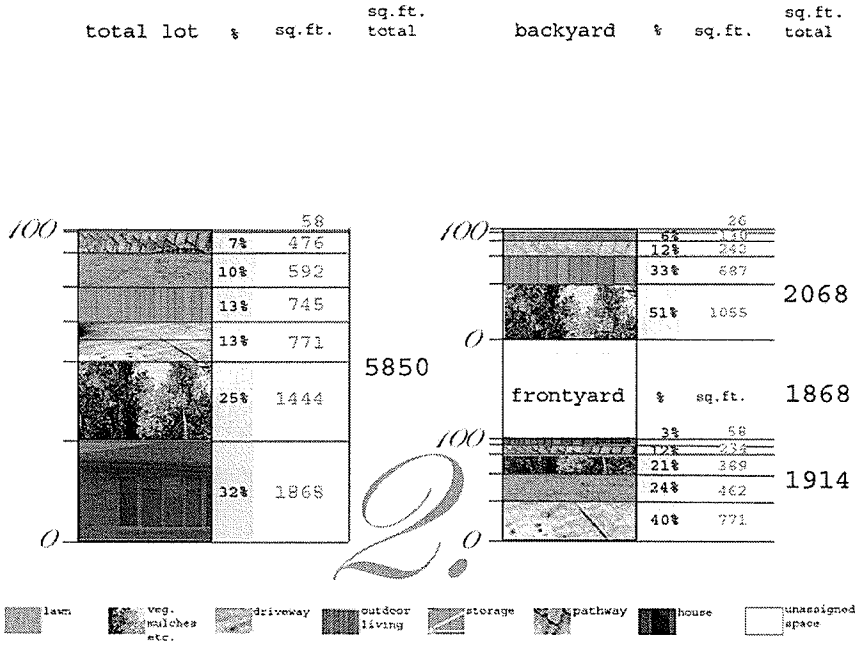


Figure 89. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 2.

NEW AREA: CASE STUDY 3 – RIVER PARK SOUTH 1

-Year Built: 1987
-Lot Size: 7109 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 1657 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 3982 sq. ft. (frontyard: 1691 sq. ft., backyard: 3761 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: River Park South (Dakota Crossing)
-Home Occupants: young professional couple
-Value(2003): $166,500

Background Information: The homeowner's yard already had existing elements within it when I interviewed them. Features such as mature trembling aspen, crab apple trees, lawn and a deck all seemed to float independently of one another as there was no overall design or flow to the yard. The main concern for the clients was to block the unsightly view behind their yard and to give a greater sense of privacy.

The clients really valued the mature trees in their yard and wanted to further enhance them by using native plants in the design.

1. Privacy: The homeowner's property backed onto a trailer park and the views out from the yard were deemed undesirable. Providing some sort of visual buffer was of utmost importance for both blocking views as well as providing more privacy for their existing deck (deck was raised roughly 30" above grade)

2. Specific Design Ideas: The homeowners valued and believed in environmental sustainability and wanted to use native plants exclusively within their yard. They had a list indicating native plants they wanted used in their yard and where they might want to see them located. The homeowners wanted to blend a "natural look" in a "manicured way."

3. Vegetable Garden: As part of their environmental values they valued having a vegetable garden to produce their own food.

4. Outdoor Living Spaces: The homeowners have an existing deck off the back of their house. Part of enhancing that outdoor living experience is to provide better views to the back of the yard. This involved a strategic planting plan that would emphasize native plants that would act as a vegetative buffer. The homeowner's also wanted to increase outdoor living space in the front yard by locating a small patio close to the entrance to the house. This for the purpose of people watching.

5. Curb Appeal: The existing landscape in the front yard was run down and overgrown. A new selection of size appropriate plants (shrubs and perennials) was requested to liven up the space.

6. Low Maintenance: This wasn't a main concern, they just didn't want their yard to be too labour intensive, as they enjoyed the outdoors and gardening.

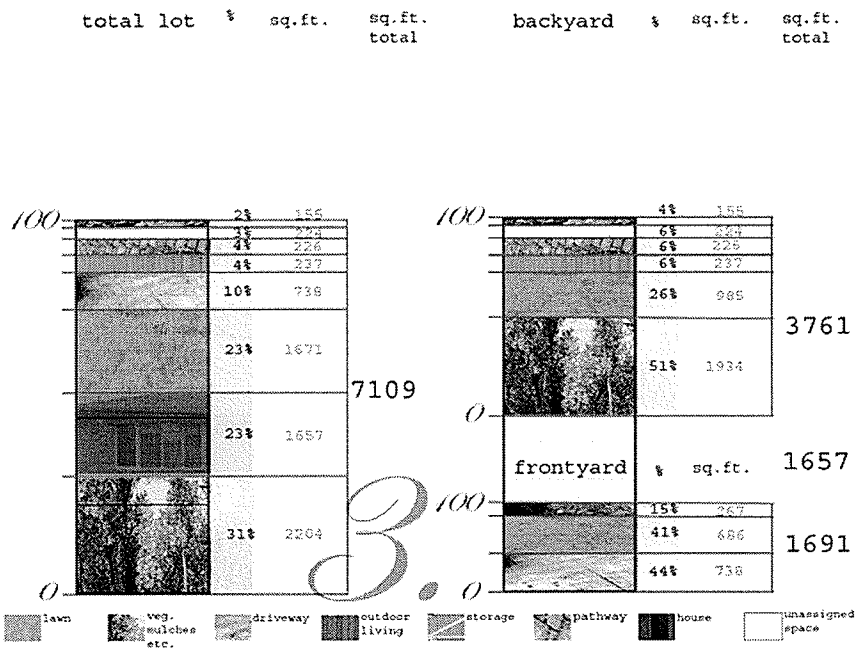


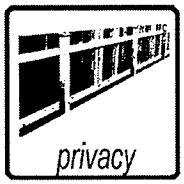
Figure 90. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 3.

NEW AREA: CASE-STUDY 4 – RIVERPARK SOUTH 2

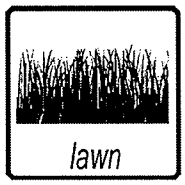
-Year Built: 2003
-Lot Size: 6665 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 1629 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 5036 sq. ft. (frontyard: 2916 sq. ft., backyard: 2121 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: River Park South (Dakota Crossing)
-Home Occupants: young professional couple
-Value(2003): $238,200

Background Information: The lot had an established lawn along with landscaping (mulches, shrubs, one tree) in the front yard. A public park was located within a one minute walk from the home. Despite this the couple wanted to provide play space for their nephews within their yard. There were privacy issues as backyards in this particular area were quite small. Having a sufficient lawn for their nephews was a main concern. This somewhat conflicted with the need for privacy as the homeowner's were unwilling to

sacrifice a sufficient amount of lawn for the space required to plant tall vegetative screening. The existing deck and patio in the backyard were built by different company's, therefore the two elements seemed quite disconnected (in a design context) from each other. On a side note, the established outdoor living spaces were located in very close proximity to the house (right up against its walls).

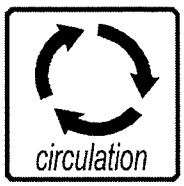


1. Privacy: The homeowner's neighbours have backyard decks that were raised 3-5' above grade, therefore they felt quite exposed. Also, some of the surrounding homes were quite tall with large windows that seemed to loom over their backyard. This was of major concern as there was no sense of privacy.

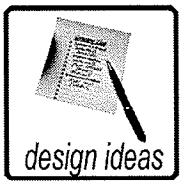


2. Lawn: The homeowner's valued a large amount of lawn in the backyard (even though the backyard itself was quite small). The large lawn to lot area ratio was requested because the couple had small nephews that would visit often and enjoyed playing in the backyard on the lawn. The couple also really enjoyed the look of lawn which influenced their decision making. The homeowner's had a difficult time trying to come to an agreement between sufficient lawn space and planting bed space for vegetative screening.

3. Low maintenance: The homeowner's viewed having lawn as not a maintenance issue, rather new plantings were an issue of concern. They did not want to have too many leaves falling on the lawn in the fall so they requested the use of evergreen trees.



4. Circulation: There was a desire to move people from frontyard to backyard through the landscape as opposed to through the house. An existing paved pathway connected the driveway to the front of the gate into the backyard. The path terminated there, and the homeowner's requested the path continue into the backyard and connect to the patio.



5. Design Ideas: In the interview, one of the homeowner's had mentioned that they had been inspired by a show on HGtv called "Take it Outside." It was this show that had influenced her to want a clean and modern look. She had also requested a plant color palette that had deep reds and purples.

6. Outdoor Living Space: The views in the backyard were deemed to potentially help with the outdoor living experience.

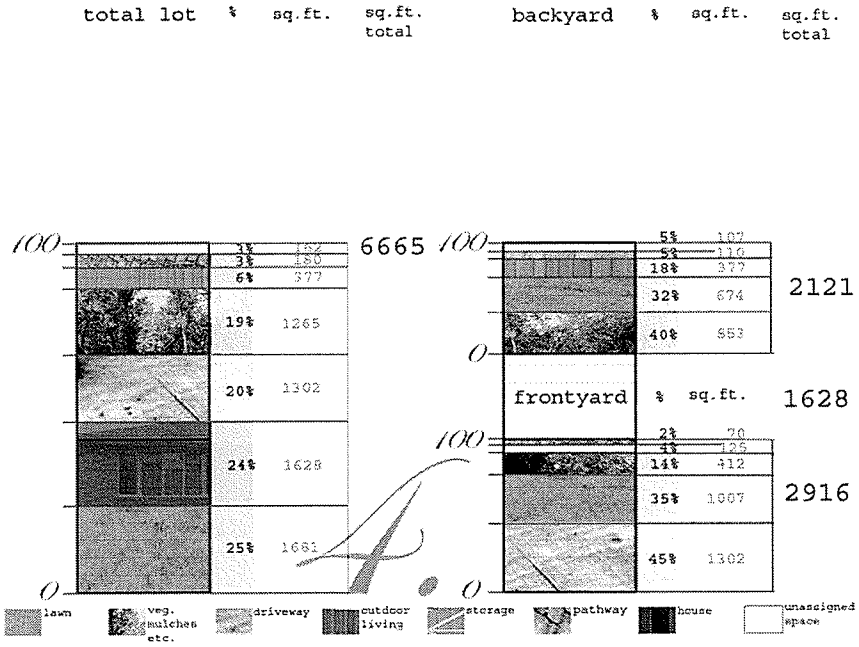
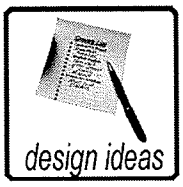


Figure 91. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 4.

NEW AREA: CASE STUDY 5 – RIVERPARK SOUTH 3

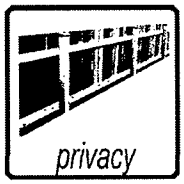
-Year Built: 2004
-Lot Size: 12241 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 1736 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 10505 sq. ft. (frontyard: 2117 sq. ft., backyard: 8388 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: River Park South (Dakota Crossing)
-Home Occupants: young professional couple with 3 small children
-Value(2006): $284,700

Background Information: The lot was located on a cul-de-sac, from which the homeowner's children would play in the backyard, driveway and streets. The backyard was significant, not just because of its large area, but because it also backed onto a large public park. Interestingly, the client stated that the park was quite underused and that their children would rather play in the backyard than the park. This particular homeowner wanted to do the landscaping work himself.

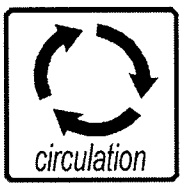


1. Design Ideas: The homeowner's had an established yard with existing elements that had been placed in a random fashion thus creating a landscape with no flow. Located within the yard was a 30'x 30' area for the children's play structure, deck, vegetable garden, and garden shed. Of major concern for the homeowner's was to connect existing elements to new ones, thus creating a cohesive landscape. They also knew of a few trees and shrubs (by description) that wanted to see planted in their yard.

2. Outdoor Living Space: The homeowner's had an interest in frontyard living. They wanted a bistro patio set for people watching as well to watch their children who would often play on the street as they lived on a cul-de-sac. Also a "bar space" for an existing hot-tub that was located adjacent to an existing deck. Due to the large amount of space in the backyard the homeowner's felt the need to make more use of it, so they requested an additional patio space to be located away from the house in order to create a different view and experience within their yard.



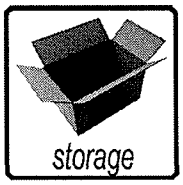
3. Privacy: The homeowner's neighbours had bungalow style houses, so most of them had raised decks between three to four feet above grade. They therefore felt exposed in their backyard and required an increased sense of privacy.



4. Circulation: The homeowner's liked the idea of bring people to the backyard from outdoors and therefore wanted to make a physical connection from frontyard to back.

Also, the lot was situated in the corner of a cul-de-sac, thereby creating larger than average spaces along the sides of the houses.

5. Curb Appeal: There were no specific requests– just to not have larger trees in front as they felt this could be a safety concern for their children. They just wanted the front yard to look 'nice'.



6. Storage Space: The homeowner's needed an additional storage shed to the one they already had. They also wanted to be able to move the barbeque off the deck to a separate barbeque location.

7. Low Maintenance:

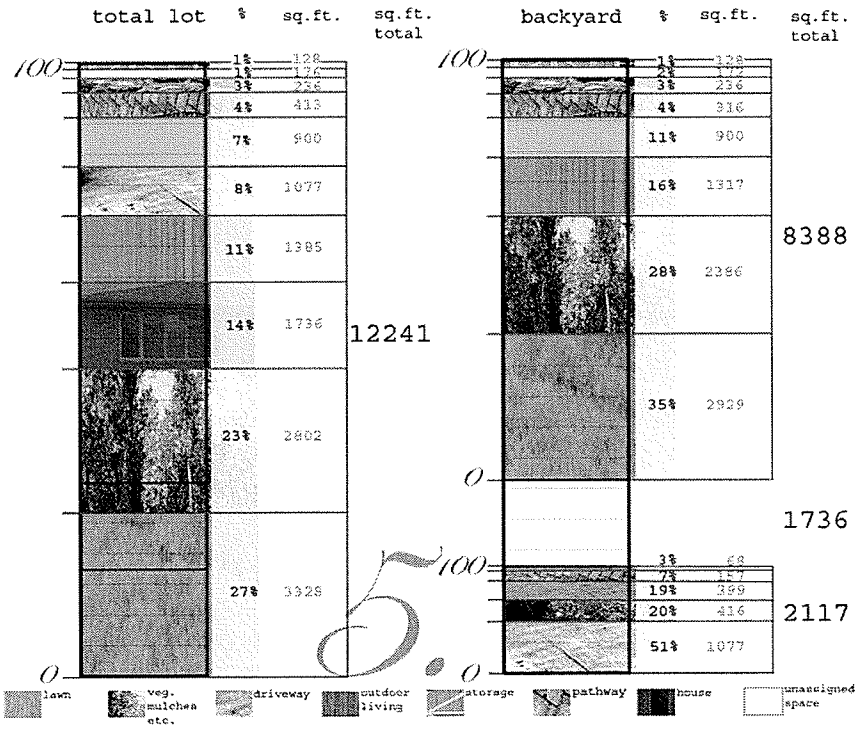
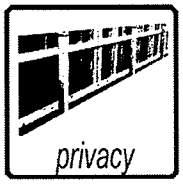


Figure 92. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 5.

NEW AREA: CASE STUDY 6 – ROYAL WOOD

-Year Built: 2004
-Lot Size: 8405 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 1557 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 6848 sq. ft. (frontyard: 2172 sq. ft., backyard: 4676 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Royal Wood
-Home Occupants: young professional couple with two small children and a dog
-Value(2006): $169,700

Background Information: The existing lot was composed of just mud with an existing deck. The lot has a yard that backs onto a rail line, thereby creating some unpleasant noise. The backyard is bisected by a five foot tall berm that serves to mitigate some of the train noise. The backyard was quite long, but you could not get a sense for the size of the yard as the height and dominance of the berm created the illusion that the backyard is about half the size it actually is. To create a sense that the backyard is bigger, the homeowner's wanted to cut into the berm and create more outdoor living space (large patio area) in front of the berm. (A retaining wall would have to hold back the earth of the berm on either side of the patio) A medium sized deck is raised roughly five feet above ground giving a great overview of the yard, but at the same time resulting in a lack of privacy from surrounding neighbors. All of the neighbours have raised decks. In fact each household with a deck can see into the backyards of four or five other lots on either side. The homeowner's wanted river rock along the side of the house as it is the prevalent feature with surrounding residential landscapes.

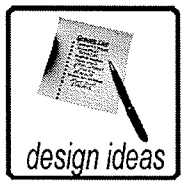


1. Privacy: To distance themselves from an unruly neighbour and to provide a greater sense of enclosure and privacy a vegetative buffer was suggested along the edge of the fence on both sides in such a manner that you could not see into neighbor's yards from the deck. A vegetative buffer was also established in the front yard along the property boundary where the unruly neighbour lived.

2. Children's Play Space: The result was to create interchangeable landscape functions so that the children could use adult space and the children's space could also serve as a multi-functional space within the landscape. High visibility was key so that views to

and from the house (windows) were intact.

3. Outdoor Living Space: The result was to create two patio areas. One to be just off of the deck and the other to be located about forty feet away from the house and built into the berm. The couple enjoyed entertaining friends and relatives and therefore they wanted their outdoor living spaces to have a large area. The small concrete patio at the front of their home was used to people watch and enjoy sunsets. They wanted a sense of enclosure while still being able to view the things they valued.



4. Design Ideas: The homeowner's wanted something unique from other residential landscapes in the neighbourhood. They also had ideas about details they would like to see in their yard such as waterfeatures, plants and patio materiality.

5. Lawn: The homeowner's valued lawn for a number of reasons. First, they both liked the aesthetic look of a pristine, lush green lawn. Second, they required a soft play space for their children to play on and third, their dog enjoyed running on grass. The result was to create pockets of lawn that were programmed for different functions and users.

6. Vegetable Garden: The homeowner's valued having a vegetable for cooking and preparing jams. They wanted this to be located relatively close to the house for ease of movement to and from the kitchen.

7. Low Maintenance: Both homeowners enjoyed yard work, but at the same time did not want to spend all of their free time maintaining it.

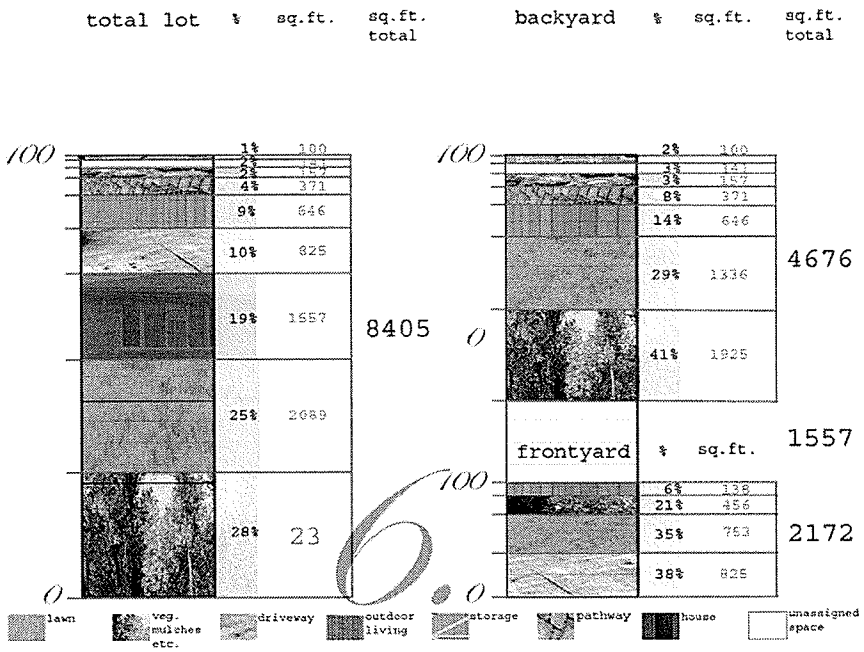


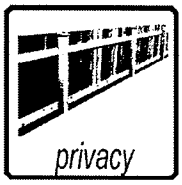
Figure 93. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 6.

NEW AREA: CASE STUDY 7 – ISLAND LAKES 1

-Year Built: 2006
-Lot Size: 8284 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 1346 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 6938 sq. ft. (frontyard: 4680 sq. ft., backyard: 2258 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Island Lakes
-Home Occupants: young professional couple with two small children
-Value(2006): $183,000

Background Information: The homeowner's resided on a corner lot. The result was that they had a very large front yard that was highly visible and exposed from the street. Subsequently, their backyard was significantly smaller in comparison. Their lot faced north, but to the west a valued view of aspen and oak patch was located about five-hundred feet away across the street and railroad tracks. The lot was undeveloped and the landscape was entirely mud. An existing deck four feet above the ground, 120 sq. ft. in area, was the only landscape feature within the property. The surrounding homes also had decks that were raised above the ground roughly three to five feet. This created a privacy issue as windows and decks gleamed down into the backyard.

1. Outdoor Living Space: The homeowners wanted to have additional entertaining spaces in both backyard and frontyard. In the front yard, the client requested a small bistro patio close to the house for people watching and sunsets. In the backyard client requested to have a patio come off of the existing deck with placement of a movable fire pit.



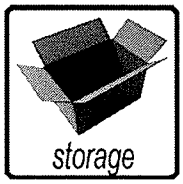
2. Privacy: Surrounding neighbours could peer into backyard from raised decks and high windows. The need to provide vegetative privacy screening was of high importance.

3. Low Maintenance: The homeowner's requested space for annuals to be planted yearly. Other plants were requested to require minimal maintenance for upkeep. A balance between lawn and planting area was also an issue. They wanted to spend as little time as possible tending to things like weeding and watering. Yet they enjoyed planting flowers.

4. Curb Appeal: Their lot was situated on the corner of a street thus was in very high visibility to the neighbourhood. The client had a great amount of pride in the appearance of their home and landscape. They wanted to be able to stand out in the neighbourhood and wanted some real "wow" factor to the front yard.

5. Play Space for Children: The homeowner's purchased a large play structure for the kids. The structure itself consumed about half of the space available in the backyard. There was concern for safety of the kids – so the material under the play structure was grass as it was deemed to be the most kid-friendly material. They also felt that due to the size of the frontyard, that it would serve as an excellent place for the children to run around on.

6. Circulation: Due to the fact that the frontyard was so large and open, it seemed necessary to create a path from the bistro patio along the side of the house to the backyard. The area where the path would be located needed a retaining wall, due to the slope of the land away from the house. This wall, located along the path, doubled as a seating area for people gathering at the house.



7. Storage Space: The homeowner required a small to medium sized shed in the backyard for storing yard maintenance equipment.

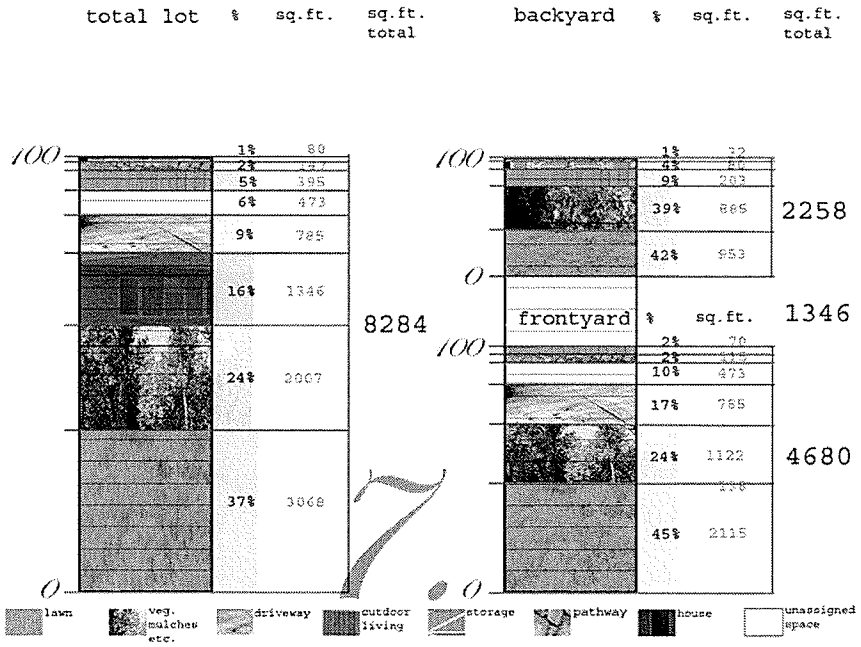


Figure 94. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 7.

NEW AREA: CASE STUDY 8 – ISLAND LAKES 2

-Year Built: 2005
-Lot Size: 9372 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 1840 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 7532 sq. ft. (frontyard: 1826 sq. ft., backyard: 5706 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Island Lakes
-Home Occupants: young professional couple with four older children
-Value(2005): $206,300

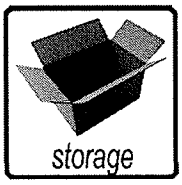
Background Information: This was a corner lot within a cul-de-sac. This created a small frontyard area and a large backyard area. A large park was within a five minute walk from the house. The lot had only mud as the landscape. It was a completely blank canvas – not even the deck was built at this point. The yard backed on to an older home and lot (early 1990's). This older lot had mature trees which hung into the homeowner's yard – the client valued these trees and there was a sense of ownership over them (the view towards the trees). The homeowner's really liked to entertain at night and on the weekends so there was a high demand for very social spaces within the yard. The clients had requested that a space be set aside for a hot tub. The homeowners and their neighbors to the west had wanted to leave their borders open to create a sense of a larger yard. This reinforced the need for a greater sense of social interaction for client. The couple had children, and when asked if they wanted space set aside for them to play they suggested that the children can use the nearby park if they so choose.

1. Outdoor Living Space: The homeowners requested a hot tub, deck and two new patios in the back and a front yard entertaining space that is also used for people watching on the street. All of these spaces (in the backyard) were requested to be in close proximity of each other.

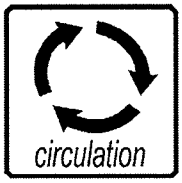
2. Low Maintenance: The homeowners requested to use low maintenance plants (front yard faced south, therefore xeriscape perennials were suggested and no lawn was to be included in the front). In back yard amount of lawn was reduced.

3. Privacy: The homeowners requested that the back side of the property be sheltered from neighbours, whereas western side of property be open with no fence – this was a result of the client and neighbour having a mutual agreement between them. Both client and neighbour wanted to have their yards seem bigger. (It should be noted that the neighbour also had a hot-tub in their backyard)

4. Curb Appeal: In the front yard was a small patio, so the homeowners wanted to have that particular area to be further emphasized with planting.



5. Storage Space: The homeowner wanted a large garden shed (192 sq. ft.) placed in the back corner of yard as well as space for storage underneath the deck



6. Circulation: The homeowners wanted to get people from the front yard to the backyard through the landscape as opposed to bringing them through the house.

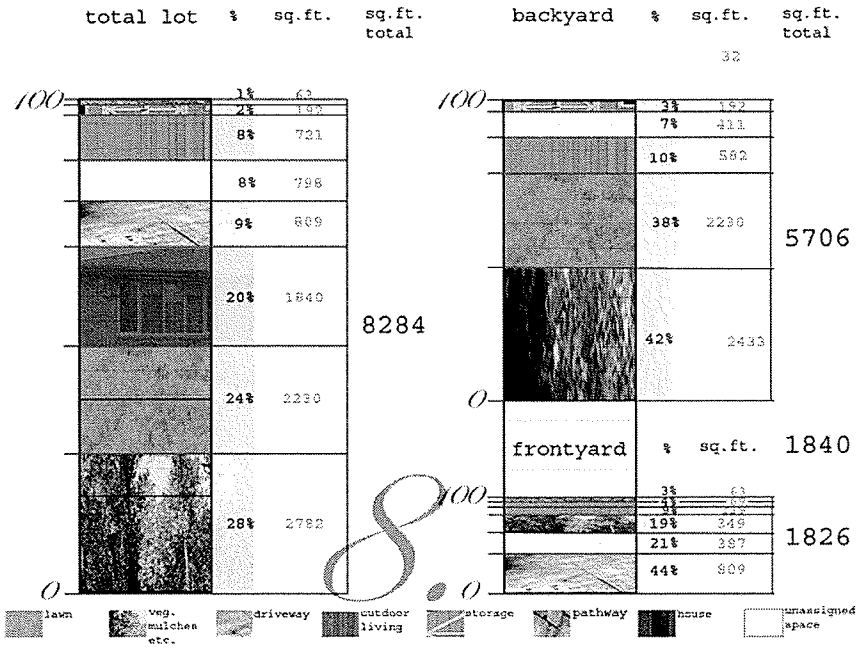


Figure 95. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 8.

NEW AREA: CASE STUDY 9 – ISLAND LAKES 3

-Year Built: 2005
-Lot Size: 8342 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 1564 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 6778 sq. ft. (frontyard: 1564 sq. ft., backyard: 5237 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Island Lakes
-Home Occupants: young professional couple with one small child
-Value(2005): $222,200

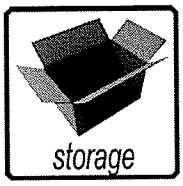
Background Information: This was a corner lot within a cul-de-sac. This created a small frontyard area and a large backyard area. A large park was within a five minute walk from the house. An existing deck and lawn were the only landscape features within the yard. In the future, they anticipated getting an in ground pool in the backyard. Due to this, enough space would need to be allowed for future equipment to get through to the backyard. The homeowners participated in a lot of outdoor gathering and entertaining with surrounding neighbours.

1. Low Maintenance: The south-facing home was located on a corner creating a small and narrow front yard. The homeowners did not want to spend much time watering and tending to plants so a mix of native xeriscape plants and evergreens would be used to ease maintenance. The homeowners requested that the backyard have a mix of evergreens and low growing deciduous shrubs under which wood mulch and landscape fabric would reduce the amount of weeding. Lawn was reduced in the backyard by creating larger planting beds along the periphery of the property.

2. Neighbourly Considerations: The homeowner's were really good friends with their neighbour to one side and due to this they were concerned with being perceived as not "neighbourly enough". Therefore, they requested that (in the front yard especially) only small shrubs and low-growing perennials be used so as not to seem too closed off from their neighbour. They also wanted to use smaller trees with a mature canopy height of no larger than ten to twelve feet. This height requirement also served as a

means for less maintenance as the client did not want to spend too much time raking up leaves in the fall. Contrary to this need to remain open, there were some privacy issues because his neighbours could see directly into his entertaining area, as their decks are raised about three to four feet above grade.

3. Outdoor Living Space: An existing deck served as the main outdoor entertainment space, but the homeowner's felt that this was inadequate. They requested a patio space for entertaining be located right beside the deck. They wanted a fire pit within this space as well. Additional Outdoor living space would be added when a pool would be added in the future. Due to this, the layout of the backyard design was dictated by the pool's shape (they had a specific style in mind and the landscape was designed in such a manner to accommodate this new addition in the future).



4. Storage Space: The homeowner requested space be set aside for a large garden shed (store tools, bikes, etc.) as well as to create a space for bbq storage and to use space under deck as additional storage.

5. Play Space for Children: The homeowner's valued the lawn as a play space and they also changed the final design to include a pea-gravel area in the back corner of the lot to be a designated play space for their child.

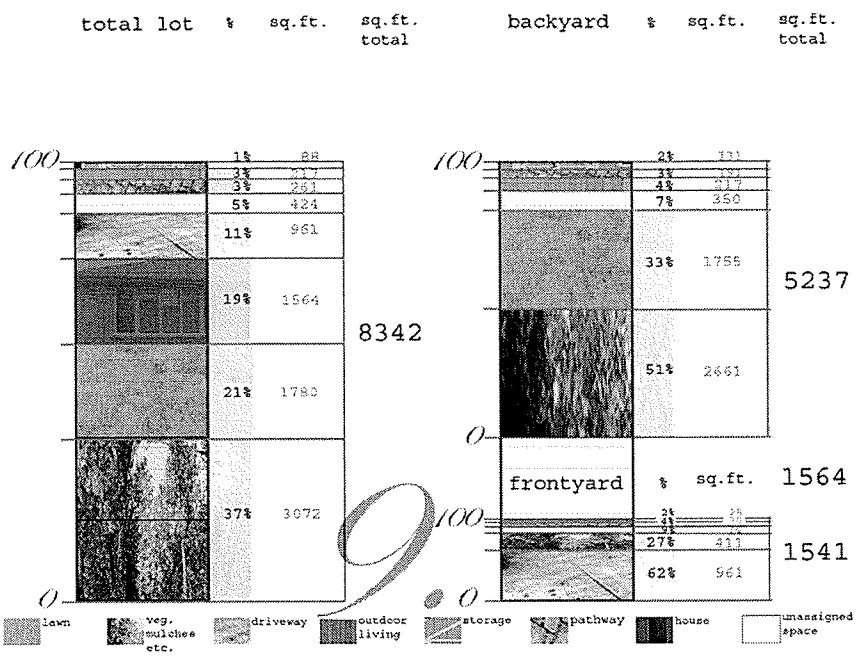
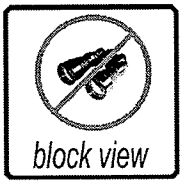


Figure 96. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 9.

OLD AREAS: CASE STUDY 2 – SHAUGHNESSY PARK

-Year Built: 1956
-Lot Size: 3762 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 957 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 2805 sq. ft. (frontyard: 1141 sq. ft., backyard: 1664 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Shaughnessy Park
-Home Occupants: Single adult male
-Value(2003): $78,300

Background Information: This particular case study is unique in that the owner was renovating and looking to enhance the home and landscape for the purposes of selling it to make a profit (flipping). The yard had a somewhat established landscape with a lawn, small flower bed area and a clothesline as the main elements. The backyard was of fair size, but close to one half of it was occupied by a garage and parking bad. The parking pad had a damaged chain-link fence around it which, in combination with the garage, created a sense that ownership over the backyard was less than it actually was.

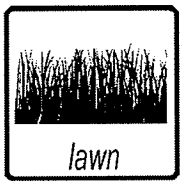


1. Blocking Undesirable Views: Along the eastern property of the lot a chain link fence served as the demarcating line between homes. This was unfortunate because the neighbour to the east had a backyard that resembled a junkyard, so it was of most importance to build a screening structure to block that particular view. To the south, there was a clear view to a run down garage across the back lane. It was therefore suggested to use a six foot tall cedar fence along the eastern and southern property lines of the lot.

2. Outdoor Living Space: The homeowner requested some outdoor entertaining space as the yard had little to offer in terms of outdoor living. The location of the patio in the design required the removal of the existing clothesline in the backyard. The yard was quite small so there was the opportunity to create an excellent intimate space for gatherings.

3. Curb Appeal: Due to the fact that the homeowner intended on selling his house, major curb appeal was needed. He cited that other homes on the street had recent work done, so it was very important that the front yard look as good as possible with the addition of new shrubs and bright flowers.

4. Design Ideas: The homeowner wanted a clean modern look to appease to potential home buyers.



5. Lawn: Perhaps this could go under curb appeal, but the client's existing lawn was dehydrated, pock-marked and incredibly hard. A pristine, green lawn was deemed highly desirable.

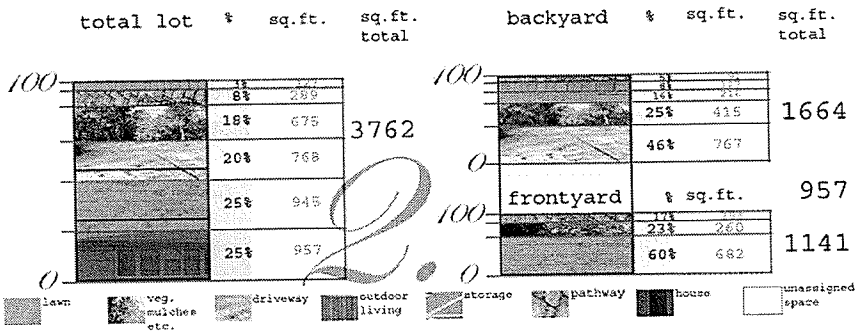


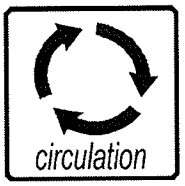
Figure 97. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 2 in old areas.

OLD AREAS: CASE STUDY 3 - RIVERVIEW

-Year Built: 1911
-Lot Size: 6400 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 1309 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 5091 sq. ft. (frontyard: 1902 sq. ft., backyard: 3189 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Riverview
-Home Occupants: Young professional couple with two children
-Value(2003): $198,300

Background Information: The lot is a backlane property with a small one-car garage. The homeowners were in the middle of major upgrades and renovations. They were in the process of adding more square footage to the home by adding an extra living space. They had also recently added a large ornate porch to the front of the home. The homeowners had stated that the reason they wanted a landscape design was so that the landscape would match the newness of the renovations. Existing landscape elements in the backyard include lawn, shrubs, step stones, play structure and some mature elm trees. Existing landscape elements in the front yard include a concrete path from the side walk to the porch, lawn and a few shrubs.

1. Design Ideas: The homeowners live in a Victorian-style 2 storey home. It was very important to them that the landscape match the historic architecture of the home. A Simple and classical garden is what they were specifically looking for. They also wanted their yard to fit in with the rest of the neighborhood. The neighbour's landscapes had a certain character and the client wanted to create a similar character that fit in with the neighbourhood.



2. Circulation: It was very important for the homeowners to have access from the frontyard to the backyard from either side of the home. There was to be a primary circulation path intended to be for visitors and home owners. A second path was to be designated to be for home owners – this was of less importance as related to the landscape design and the architecture of the home. This path led to a door at the side of the home.

3. Outdoor Living Space: The homeowner's had recently replaced the small porch with a new large and detailed one for frontyard living. They were looking for an equally large space for backyard living (barbeque, tables, chairs, fire pit, etc.)

4. Play Space for Children: An existing playstructure for the kids tucked away in the back corner of the yard. The homeowners wanted a slightly larger space for the children to play on and around the structure The location of the structure was to remain in its original place, with there being more grass for running around the structure.

5. Security: The homeowners had some security issues – mostly because their house was undergoing a major renovation and were concerned about theft. They requested a fence along border of the backlane driveway.

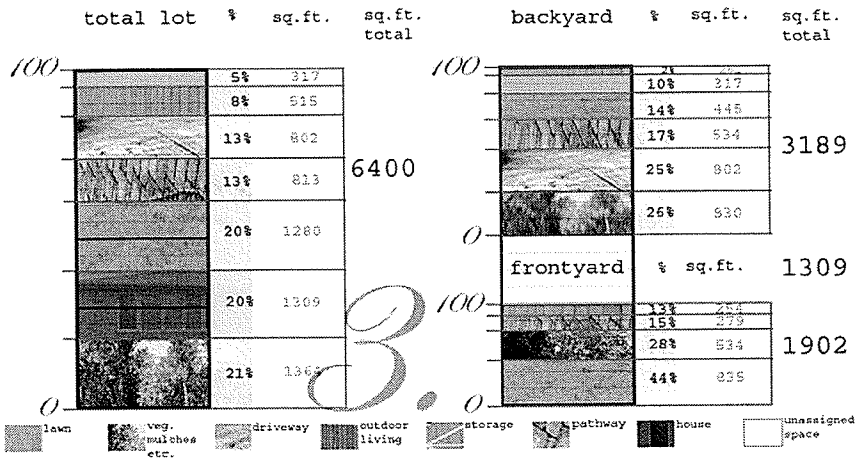


Figure 98. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 3 in old areas.

CASE STUDY 4 – EARL GREY

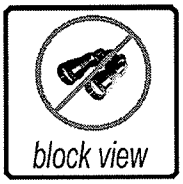
-Year Built: 1910
-Lot Size: 3079 sq. ft.
-Home Foot Print: 993 sq. ft.
-Landscape Area: 2086 sq. ft. (frontyard: 948 sq. ft., backyard: 1138 sq. ft.)
-Location in City: Earl Grey
-Home Occupants: Single mother with two children
-Value(2003): $98,200

Background Information: The homeowner was about to start interior renovations and decided that she would also update her yard. The lot was quite small and had a backlane and parking pad which made the already small backyard even smaller. Existing landscape elements in the front yard include lawn, shrubs, concrete path from sidewalk to steps, small sandbox and a mature elm tree. Landscape elements in the backyard include a gravel parking pad, lawn, chain-link fence with grape vines and two mature elm trees.

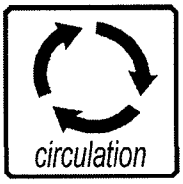
1. Design Ideas: The homeowner requested a Tuscan themed landscape in the backyard. Due to the small size of the backyard, this seating area would be quite intimate.

2. Outdoor Living Space: The homeowner wanted to utilize her backyard for entertaining purposes. She also required some landscape considerations for the entrance to her enclosed frontyard porch to make it more livable and inviting.

3. Security: There were some concerns regarding theft as there was no fence along the back edge of the property. The homeowner stated that she would have a better piece of mind if a secure fence was implemented.



4. Block Undesirable Views: The neighbours yard to the west of the property yard quite messy and in a state of disarray which prompted the homeowner to request some type of visual screen (vegetative or structural) block the view.



5. Circulation: The homeowner wanted a pleasant experience for house guests moving from frontyard to backyard and vice-versa

6. Play Space for Children: An existing small sandbox was located in the frontyard and the homeowner wanted to change that to a small lawn space for the children to play.

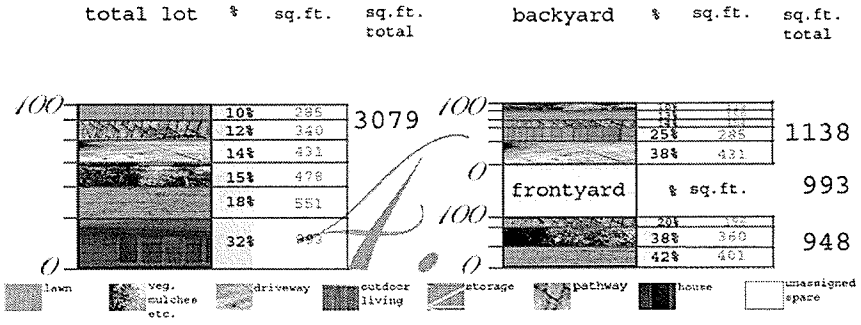


Figure 99. Landscape Elements for Case-Study 4 in old areas.