NEW WALKS DOWN OLD PATHS:
A GUIDEBOOK TO SACRAMENTO ALLEYS
Amie Patel // June 14, 2013 // Senior Project

Presented to the Faculty of the Landscape Architecture Program at the University of California, Davis in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelors of Science in Landscape Architecture.

ACCEPTED & APPROVED BY:

______________________________
Stephen Wheeler, Senior Project Advisor

______________________________
Michael Rios, Committee Member

______________________________
Sahoko Yui, Committee Member

______________________________
Julie Young, Committee Member
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MICHAEL RIOS  Thank you for your support and encouragement of this project and for sharing all of your knowledge with me.

SAHOKO YUI  Thank you for consistently listening and talking me through the gaps of my project.

JULIE YOUNG  Thank you for helping me, I truly appreciate the time you have taken out to help.

LDA C/O 2013  You guys are so great, I could not have asked for a better group of people to graduate with. Thanks for all the laughs, late night company, advice, and most importantly your friendship.

MICHELINE C.  Thanks for all the stories and for being the best venting buddy.

MOM DAD  Thank you for everything. I owe you guys everything, thank you for the endless love and support.

BHAI  Christine A.  Thank you for always being there for me, at all hours of the day.

EVERYONE  Who has listened to me talk about alleys for the past 6 months. Thanks for listening, even though I probably didn’t give you a choice.
Urban Alleys are seen as dark and dangerous places, often abandoned, littered with trash and without a soul in sight. But they are often the only space in a dense urban environment where people can step out of their comfort zones and explore something new. The general public has the misconception that alleys are dangerous and should be avoided at all costs. However, through recent examples it has been proven that they can become great escapes from the city atmosphere.

This project is an exploration of designed urban alleys, to highlight the key factors used in various case studies as guidelines for the future of alleys in the city of Sacramento. With this project I am hoping to eliminate any negative connotations attached to urban alleys by creating a standard for all future alley improvement projects in Sacramento. I compiled these suggestions from examples set by precedent alley improvement projects around the country and from standards set by other cities. I hope to inspire others to think of new and exciting ideas in the challenge to reinvent urban alleys. With this in mind, I implement my research and findings through design strategies in two different types of alleys in Sacramento to provide an example of what the future could hold for the alleys of Sacramento.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

01. Signature Page
01. Acknowledgments
01. Abstract
01. Table of Contents

## BACKGROUND

02. History
02. Current Issues
02. Project Goals

## CASE STUDIES: ALLEYS

03. Sacramento Alleys
03. Types of Alleys

## CASE STUDIES: CITY

04. Pocket Park Alley
04. Walkway Alley
04. Plaza Alley
04. Cafe / Living Alley
04. Educational Alley
04. Temporary Events
04. Mural / Forest Alley

## CITY

05. Seattle, WA
05. Chicago, IL
05. Portland, OR
LIST OF FIGURES

1.1 Buglose Old Allee
1.2 Ostia Antica
1.3 Employees in Baltimore Alley, 1920
1.4 Old Chicago Alley
1.5 New York City Figure Ground
1.6 Washington DC Figure Ground
1.7 Freiburg, Germany Alley
1.8 Down Croft Alley
1.9 Austin, Texas Alley Party

2.1 Sacramento Alley Dimensions Diagram
2.2 Diagram of Alleys in Sacramento
2.3 Matrix of Goals + Alley Types
2.4 High Density Mixed Use Alley
2.5 Low Density Mixed Use Alley
2.6 Nightlife District
2.7 Commercial District
2.8 Multi Family District
2.9 Single Family District

3.1 View of the Alley
3.2 View of the Alley
3.3 Market in the Alley

3.4 View into the Alley
3.5 View of the Path into the Alley
3.6 World Cup Viewing Party in the Alley
3.7 Art Gallery in the Alley
3.8 View of the Alley

4.1 Alley Network Project Logo
4.2 The Green Alley Handbook Cover
4.3 Alley Allies Logo

5.1 Alley Traffic Diagram
5.2 Safety Graphic
5.3 Fire Code Diagram
5.4 Utility Graphic

6.1 Alley Suggested Improvements Concept Plan
6.2 Trees Graphic
6.3 Bulb Outs Graphic
6.4 Lighting Graphic
6.5 Furniture Graphic
6.6 Paving Graphic
6.7 Curb Ramps Graphic
6.8 Plants Graphic
8.9 Open Facades Graphic
8.10 Canopy Graphic
6.11 Chicane Graphic

7.1 Sacramento Region Figure Ground, Site Highlighted
7.2 Aerial View of N St. O St. Block
7.3 N St. O St. Figure Ground
7.4 Pictures of the Alley
7.5 Site Analysis Diagrams
7.6 Master Plan
7.7 Concept Plan
7.8 Detail Cafe Extension
7.9 Detail Gathering Area
7.10 Detail Performance Area
7.11 Lighting in the Alley
7.12 Paving in the Alley
7.13 Vegetation in the Alley
7.14 Perspective

8.5 Site Analysis Diagrams
8.6 Master Plan
8.7 Concept Plan
8.8 Detail Children’s Play Area
8.9 Detail Gathering Area
8.10 Detail Planter Garden Area
8.11 Lighting in the Alley
8.12 Paving in the Alley
8.13 Vegetation in the Alley
8.14 Perspective

8.1 Sacramento Region Figure Ground, Site Highlighted
8.2 Aerial View of O St. P St. Block
8.3 O St. P St. Figure Ground
8.4 Pictures of the Alley
01. INTRODUCTION
HISTORY OF ALLEYS

What is an alley? Merriam-Webster defines an alley as “a thoroughfare through the middle of a block giving access to the rear lots or buildings” (Merriam-Webster, 2013). More specifically, the word alley is derived from the French verb allee, which means to walk. Allees being more commonly associated with tree-lined walks that came into fashion in 16th century France. These tree lined walks create narrow lanes that extended beyond the confines of the private gardens to lead out into public spaces, a variation of today’s definition of an alley (Winslow, 2012). However, alleys had been in place around the world for years prior to allees in France.

One of the first known cities to incorporate alleys into its original plan was in the Ancient Greek city of Olynthus, established in 430 B.C. The city was laid out in a grid pattern and alleys were planned for drainage of sewage and trash. Romans took example from the Greek and used alleys in their incredibly sophisticated city plans. The Romans created cities with main commercial streets that were lined
In the early 19th century, alleys began to show up in American grided cities. Cities such as Philadelphia and Washington D.C. included alleys in their city plans to break up large blocks into smaller parcels. This not only created smaller, more intimate blocks, but the alleys also provided space for services to get through to units, place for utilities to be separated from the major streets, and a location for low-income housing to support the poor (Winslow, 2012).

In the 1800s, the planning of cities into plots of land strongly with shops and living quarters in front to create active street fronts. However, more impressive were the alleys that were in the back of such shops and living quarters. The Romans built 10’ wide facing alleys for workshops, to produce and store goods, as well as for delivery service without causing traffic congestion in the front mall space (Robinson, 1994). The Romans used alleys to control the traffic flow in the main streets by limiting the traffic congestion to the back alleys.
encouraged the addition of alleys; Sacramento was one of those cities. When gold was found in 1849 at Sutter’s Mill, Sacramento became a town overnight, meaning the city plan had to be laid out quickly and efficiently in order to accommodate the rapidly increasing population. Sacramento planners at the time created a grid with alleys through the back of properties to allow for livery, horse and carriage stables to keep the odors away from the front of the properties and the main streets (Michel, 2009).

Over time, the purpose of these alleys changed. Today, the presence of alleys in a city indicates that the town was developed prior to World War I, as after 1910 the inclusion of alleys in city designs began to dwindle. Although not one reason alone can be credited for the abandonment of alleys, a major contributing factor was suburban sprawl and the Industrial Revolution. With the automobile becoming more popular, those living in the city began to move out into the suburbs where they had plenty of private space.
As suburbanization took over the country, people saw the unsanitary and dark conditions in which people were living. The conditions of not only alleys, but the post-industrial revolution city was strongly opposed. Residents wanted to get as far away from the city, and the dark alleys as possible (Winslow, 2012).

As more people moved out of the city, the less attention the city and alleys got, and the conditions in the alleys worsened. Now those living adjacent to the alley had other problems. Who was in charge of the upkeep? Alleys are in the middle ground between public and private land; the public believed it was privately owned land, while the private owners believed it was publicly owned land. This did not help the conditions of alleys, and has led to how most urban alleys today are regarded (Corbett, 2002).

Today, most alleys are forgotten. They are serve as a place to throw out trash, park cars, or are just completely ignored. However, recently there has been a slow resurgence in the support of urban alleys through the New Urbanism movement. New Urbanists are seeking to reverse the effects of urban sprawl and are looking to do so by creating a connected community. Alleys play a role in the connectivity of a community, they serve as an access to personal garages, as well as provide to the overall framework of a connected neighborhood (Ford, 2011).
Currently, alleys are avoided. Most people would not chose to walk through alleys because they feel uncomfortable, unsafe, and there are better, more interesting things happening outside of the alley. Alleys have become an eyesore in the landscape of almost all urban settings in which they exist. Because they are located at the back of most buildings, they are forgotten and misused. Often littered with trash, alleyways become dark and dangerous. Lighting is either nonexistent or at a larger scale than is effective in an alley. The lack of any physical features also makes the alley feel larger and the pedestrian smaller, further discouraging users from going through the alley.
PROJECT GOALS

This project is an exploration of designed urban alleys. My goal is to reshape the image of urban alleys and to provide a vision for the future of Sacramento alleyways.

This project is intended to be the base point for future alley improvement projects in Sacramento. The considerations and standard improvements outlined are meant to inspire and start the thought process on how and where to begin with an alley redesign.

Overall, my main vision for this project is to:
- Create safer alleys
- Improve the quality of the alley
- Create intimate public spaces
02. BACKGROUND
The City of Sacramento has an abundance of alleys. The original plan of the city, created shortly after the discovery of gold in the area in 1848, was laid out in a grid. The planners included alleys to relieve the main streets from too much congestion. Created as a mid block separator, alleys are much more narrow and less systematic than the regular street, but they are used as access ways for trash pick up, deliveries, emergency access, utilities, and back parking (Michel, 2009).

Every alley is special and different in its own way, but in Sacramento they all have the same dimension: 20’ wide by 320’ long, separating one large block into two smaller blocks. They are all a typical “back alley,” meaning they are used for cars and parking access. In much of the city, including residential areas, garages are limited to the back of home to keep the aesthetic of the outer, main streets uninterrupted by parked cars and slow car traffic. This means that most alleys in the city need to be accessible by car.

The standard improvements and considerations outlined later are all up to the Sacramento standard code, and will all help reform the alleyways of Sacramento.
As defined by Fialko and Hampton in their 2011 study of Seattle Alleys, there are 6 types of alleys:

1. High Density Mixed Use
2. Low Density Mixed Use
3. Nightlife District
4. Commercial District
5. Multi Family District
6. Single Family District

These classifications are based upon studies of alleys from all over the country. In general, there are 6 types of alleys based on the surrounding buildings. The location and programs along the block play an important role for the tone of the alley.

Each of these classifications can be found in Sacramento, and each brings a different realm of possibilities that can occur.
HIGH DENSITY MIXED USE

These alleys are tucked behind very large and dense buildings. They do not receive much direct sunlight and seem very long and narrow, making visitors feel unsafe and small (Fialko, 2011).

There is a lot of potential for these alleys though, because there are a large number of people in the surrounding buildings. These alleys have great potential for becoming extensions of the street.

LOW DENSITY MIXED USE

The buildings surrounding these alleys are lower and more spread out with street parking and gaps between the buildings and the alley (Fialko, 2011).

These alleys are more geared towards parking, and have the most car traffic on a daily basis. These alleys can nurture vegetation, as there is more sunlight in the alley. These alleys have great potential for becoming shared thoroughfares.

NIGHTLIFE DISTRICT

These alleys are in the midst of very social and active bars, restaurants and cafes (Fialko, 2011).

These alleys are not as active during the day, but there is the potential for the surrounding uses, i.e. restaurants and cafes, to expand their business out into the alley. The alley could then transition into an outdoor gathering or bar space at nightfall when the area becomes more active.
These alleys are surrounded by retail and businesses (Fialko, 2011). The current conditions of these alleys are typically the worst as there is not much foot traffic or any reason for people to use them. However, these alleys can be great plazas by piggy backing off of the surrounding businesses.

These alleys are surrounding by apartment buildings and complexes, with the occasional business (Fialko, 2011). These are especially important in urban settings as many of the residents do not have much access to open spaces, and an open alley can help to create a great network between residents.

The potential to create open space as a sort of living alley for the surrounding residents can create a unique and special experience.

These alleys are seen in the outskirts of the major urban areas, in the residential neighborhoods (Fialko, 2011). These are typically used as an entrance to garages and backyards.

These alleys are important spaces in urban residential areas because they can be made into an extension of a private yard into public space to foster community networking, as well as giving children a space to explore away from the busy streets.
I wanted to explore the different possibilities of an alley design through case studies of what has already been done. A design can create an identity for a place and set the tone for all future activity within the alley. I looked for alleys with different themes including, but not limited to:

Pocket Parks, Pedestrian Walkways, Plazas, Cafe Extensions, Shared Public Ways, Mural / Artistic Centers, Forested Alleys, Temporary Events Place, Educational Spaces, Children’s Play Spaces, etc.

I analyzed precedent studies of alleys where the design took the space to a different level and created a unique identity different from anywhere else.
03. CASE STUDIES

alleys
The Creative Little Garden is a great example of a pocket park in an alley. The Creative Little Garden refers to itself as a community backyard, a place for anyone to come and enjoy the glories of being outdoors (Creative Little Garden). The garden was built by local community members in 1950 who were looking to create a space in an urban neighborhood where the residents and visitors could escape into a created “natural” environment (Creative Little Garden). The Creative Little Garden is very successful in creating an intimate community space. The Garden is closely monitored and has hours of operation, but has a large local following. Residents of the neighborhood can rent out the garden for private parties, private classes or various other activities.

The design of the Creative Little Garden allows the visitor to escape the city life and into an unknown of dense plantings surrounding a main curvilinear path running down the middle of the alley. This invites the explorer to come in, to experience the different side of the city, in the alley. However, this is also a negative; because of the dense plantings, the alley is very dark, which can mislead visitors.
Hotaling Alley originated as a service space for horse stables and as a relief for service and delivery stops from the major streets. Today, it serves as a reminder of the original shoreline of the bay and a main pedestrian walkway between three major thoroughfares in San Francisco (Alleyways of SF).

The design of Hotaling Alley is simple. The pavement pattern through the alley serves as a representation of the receding seawater line. The undulating lines in the pavement are meant to represent the water and original shorelines. But the major design strategy is the single level paving. The alley paving is flush with the sidewalk of the blocks, and a step up from street level. In this particular alley, the single level paving serves as a way to block car traffic and make the alley pedestrian only, but this technique can also be used in shared alleys as a traffic calming measure. The alley is more welcoming and open to pedestrians because of the open facades, having open doors and windows that enter into the alley opens up the space and makes the pedestrian feel more comfortable (Switzky, 2010).

However, the design of the alley still has a few issues. Aside from the open facades and potted plants, there is not much else for the user to be intrigued by. The lack of details leaves the space feeling bland and forgotten.
Mint Plaza is an example of both an alley transformed into a sleek urban plaza, but also of a cutting edge sustainable design. Located between Fifth and Mint Streets, Mint Plaza was designed for a variety of uses. The design of the alley itself is simple, yet accommodating for many different activities (Mint Plaza).

The success of this design is the simplicity. The sleek look of the steel provides drama, but the absence of site specific features allows the visitor to use the space in whichever way they please. The freedom to move the tables and chairs is a new strategy that is successful; it allows the visitor to be an active participant in the design and circulation pattern of the plaza.

A huge achievement that was accomplished in Mint Plaza is the storm water management system in place on site. All of the runoff from the plaza and neighboring buildings drain into two rain gardens on site. There, the runoff is filtered to a level that is far better than the standard filtration levels in the city. In addition to the two rain gardens, the plaza has porous paving where runoff that does not drain into the rain gardens is directed toward a maple grove at the end of the plaza. With these two filtration systems, the site does not add runoff into the city sewers, making Mint Plaza an incredibly sustainable site (Alleyways of SF). CMG Landscape Architecture set the bar for alleyway and sustainable design with Mint Plaza.
Linden Living Alley is the first shared public way alley in San Francisco that is completely ADA compliant. The alley was redesigned as a community-gathering place to help accommodate the ever growing Blue Bottle Coffee Cafe, and various other cafes, that had customers continuously coming into the alley. The major feat about Linden Alley is that not only does it offer a space for community gathering, but it also balances the traffic in the alley between automobiles, pedestrians and bicyclists. Traffic was controlled with the simple strategy of removing on-street parking on one side to widen the sidewalks on both sides, making the road narrower. This tactic, as well as having the entire alley at the same level, helps to control the automobile traffic through the alley, allowing for the alley to be a safe shared thoroughfare (City & County of SF, 2012).

The open facades creates a light, open feeling to the alley and gives the alley its name: living, as the users feel as though they are in an outdoor living room.
Toyota Children’s Learning Garden was funded by Toyota to transform the site from a basic vegetable garden into an educational experience for children (NYRP, 2013). The garden represents four different plant habitats, bringing environmental education to the neighborhood children. The learning garden is located in Manhattan’s East Village in the midst of one and two-family homes, a neighborhood filled with children. The shiny bright path that leads through the center of the alley catches people’s attention as they pass by, and invites them into the garden. The steel chairs and tables convince visitors to stay, along with the lush green vegetation. Designed by a landscape architect, Toyota Children’s Learning Garden serves as a great educational center for urban children to learn about the different habitats and ecosystems outside of what they are accustomed to seeing in the city (NYRP, 2013).
Nord Alley is special in that it does not have any permanent design elements implemented. Nord Alley survives purely off of the successes of the events that occur within it. Supported by the Alley Network Project in Seattle, WA, Nord Alley is an experiment to see if simply putting people in an alley can improve the conditions of it. The alley is used for events that are temporary and available for only a few days at a time. For example, in the past it has been used for Soccer World Cup viewings or site-specific art installations (Alley Network Project).

The original design of the alley is basic and allows for a multitude of different activities to occur on site. Enveloped between two old-fashioned brick buildings, the alley also has raised brick paving, making it a pedestrian only thoroughfare. Small planters and benches line the sides of the buildings and bring the alley down to a pedestrian scale, making visitors feel safer in the environment. However, the major design challenge that still faces Nord Alley is the placement of the trash cans.
The Tenderloin National Forest is an example of an alleyway that has undergone great transformations with the help and support of a community. Once a dark and dangerous alley, today it is a space where community members can gather to experience public art, performance, experimental art projects, take classes and participate in activities (*Tenderloin National Forest*).

The design of the alley is successful in that it provides a little bit of everything. The alley does not have one specific program, but a combination of activities through which the design is driven. Murals cover the sides of the buildings and lanterns run above the alley creating a peaceful ambiance. The alley is pedestrian only as the road in the center has been turned into a wild forest, with the sidewalks as routes for pedestrians and bicyclists only.

The only design challenge that remains for the Tenderloin National Forest is where to place the trash receptacles. As one of the buildings is residential, the trash is placed in the alley, blocking pedestrian traffic and hampering the aesthetics of the alley.

Figure 3.8 // View of the murals and vegetation of the alley.
While alleys can be designed at an individual scale, and from alley to alley, it is important to also look at how to design alleys cohesively to create a network between all alleys in a given region.

I looked at different groups set in different cities to see what strategies and techniques each group is using in their region. It was interesting to see how focuses and strategies differed from city to city, yet every group had the same goal: to create useable active alleys in their urban settings.
04. CASE STUDIES
The Alley Network Project in Seattle has already launched 4 incredibly successful alleys. This group relies heavily on the energy and feel of the alley, and less on the physical additions. The main goal for this group is to create a space that boosts healthy activity in the alley, and also boosts the social, economic and environmental quality of the neighborhood. The Alley Network Project does this by creating a vibrant active atmosphere in the alleys (Alley Network Project).

Many of the alleys that the Alley Network Project have launched have been so successful because of the hype and programmatic side behind them. Each of the alleys have very little added features, but the group has built excitement and a large following behind the activities that are held in the alleys. From screenings in the alley to art walks, the Alley Network Project has started a revolution in Seattle where the residents are planning activities in their own alleys. With all of the activity and attention in the alleys, the alleys are receiving the attention and cleanse that they need.
Chicago is famously known for its alleys, as the city has more miles of alleys than anywhere else in the country. The main goal for the Chicago Green Alleys Program is to improve the quality of life of the communities through best management practices (BMPs). The city created a handbook filled with BMPs that specifically highlight the most sustainable design solutions to an alley improvement project (City of Chicago, 2010).

The Green Alleys Handbook is trying to employ new and innovative environmental technologies to protect the environment, while also improving the quality of life for communities.

The handbook is beneficial to residents looking to improve their alleys because it specifically outlines different techniques and measures that should and should not be taken in an alley. The handbook is very informative and gives the public the best options and explanations for an alley.
PORTLAND, OREGON

ALLEY ALLIES

The Alley Allies is an organization started by a group of graduate students looking to support the communities of Portland by reimagining their alleys. While the group is looking to improve the quality of the alleys, the main goal is to bring the community together (Alley Allies).

The Alley Allies are working very closely with their community. Through public forums, they are getting the core ideas and beliefs straight from the residents themselves. They are looking to reshape the alleyways of Portland through the concerns and desires of the community.

Still early in their program, the Alley Allies are working at creating a list of what is to come. With a few preliminary design visions, the group is gaining support and generating excitement for the future of Portland’s Alleys.
05. CONSIDERATIONS
TRAFFIC

Because most of the alleys in Sacramento are back alleys, they function as thoroughfares for the buildings along the block. In addition to this, many garages, parking, and loading and unloading zones are located in the alley, making car access a necessity in almost all alleys in Sacramento. This can be a constraint when thinking of a site-specific design in an alley. Currently, alleys are 2-way thoroughfares; however, by converting them to 1-way streets, more space is opened up for design opportunities. At the minimum, there should be 11’ of space for vehicular traffic, and an extra 3’ for turning a radius (City of Sacramento: Title 12, 2013).

SAFETY

Safety is the biggest component to consider for any alley design. Ensuring that the design will improve the alley so that users will be and feel safe is important to the future success of the alley. Currently, most of the general public would say that they do not feel safe in an alley, but with these standard improvements, the goal is to make anyone and everyone feel safe in the alley.

Safety in an alley can be achieved through any and all of the standard improvement features outlined later.
Fire access through the alley is an important consideration. In case of emergency, a fire truck has to have the ability to easily move through the alley. Stated in the Sacramento municipal code, there should be a width of at least 14’ for emergency vehicle access. However, there are ways around having 14’ dedicated solely to vehicle traffic, while still keeping the alley emergency accessible. This can be done by keeping a 11’ width for daily vehicle access, and have the remaining 3’, be through planters, that are designed to be at grade with the street paving. This allows emergency vehicle access in case of an emergency, while keeping a smaller traffic lane for every other day (City of Sacramento: Tile 8, 2013).

Alleys were originally created as a hidden source for parking, unloading and loading as well as a safe place to direct utility lines away from the major roads. This is why it is important to consider the utilities that run through the alley in all design decisions. It is important to keep the utility lines and their suggested safe zones clear in order to keep the original purpose of the alley strong (Martin, 2009).
06. SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS
Trees provide a more natural environment for urban wildlife, as well as natural shade in the summer to help reduce the urban heat island effect (EPA, 2013). Trees also add value to the property and the neighborhood. The existence of trees in a commercial area allows pedestrians to stroll more comfortably, increasing the likelihood of shopping. They also add a pleasing aesthetic to the environment and bring the scale down to a pedestrian level (Duany, 2010). The city of Sacramento has specifications for street trees that be abided by.

Bulb Outs are an extension of a curb into the driving lanes. This technique not only provides more space for landscaping and pedestrian only access in the alley, but it also serves as a traffic calming method as it narrows the road, forcing drivers to slow down. This is important in an alley because we want to make sure that the pedestrians in the alley feel safe (SF Better Streets, 2012).
LIGHTING plays a large role in how safe people feel in the alley. Lack of lights in an alley makes people uncomfortable and unsafe, lights can fix this. However, regular streetlights are not the preferred choice in an alley. The safest environments today usually have streetlights that have full spectrum, low wattage bulbs that are on shorter poles than the classic streetlight (Duany, 2010). Lights should be located on the sidewalk closer to the curb and should be aligned with the street trees. It is important when designing that the place of lighting coordinates with the trees so that at full maturity the canopy does not block the light (SF Better Streets, 2012).

FURNITURE is a simple way to bring an alley down to a pedestrian scale and to invite outsiders in. By adding furniture to an alley, it invites people who would otherwise walk straight through to stop and take a moment in the alley. When paired with some other strategies like canopies, plants and bulb outs, adding furniture can add to the interest of an alley and keep people in the space longer.
PAVING sets the mood, and can do so much for the condition of the alley. In most cases permeable paving should be added to an alley. The best option would be permeable pavers, however permeable asphalt and concrete can be a cheaper option. Permeable paving allows water to pass through the surface and filter into the existing soil under the surface instead of going into the city sewer system. Paving is an important factor in an alley design as it adds the environmental impact and the aesthetic appeal to the alley (Fialko, 2011).

CURB RAMPS are an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirement. They provide a pedestrian access for any person to easily move between a raised sidewalk down to a street level crossing. Curb ramps need to be parallel to the direct path and direction of travel. This allows all pedestrian travel to safely cross from raised down to street through an intersection. Curb ramps should be placed at every intersection, except for intersections with raised crossings (SF Better Streets, 121).
PLANTS bring in many different environmental, economic, circulation and aesthetic benefits. In addition to that they increase the interest to outsiders inviting them in. However, it is important to choose plants that are capable of surviving in alley conditions, ones that can tolerate shade, and are preferably native (SF Better Street, 2012).

OPEN FACADES create a more dynamic atmosphere in the alley. By opening windows and doors that face the alley, you can create a more personal space and improve the quality of the alley. This add to the “eyes on the street” theory. By putting more windows from the inside looking out, you create a safer environment because there are more views into the alley (Martin, 2002).
**Canopies** are a small strategy that create intimate spaces in a very narrow space. They create interest and draw attention towards the alley, which will not only bring people in, but will also create a safer environment. Canopies also shut out the height of the buildings and make pedestrians feel more comfortable in the area. They also serve as very effective shade structures (Switzky, 2010).

**Chicanes** are similar to bulb outs, but do not provide as much pedestrian accessible space. Chicanes are a series of alternating islands extended from the curb that create an S-Curve in the road. They are an effective traffic calming method, but also provide small pockets of design ready spaces. Chicanes would be a positive addition to shared alleys where the main function of the alley is still car access. In such a case, the alley would still be used for cars, but the chicanes could become pockets of space for users (SF Better Streets, 2012).
The culmination of this project ends with two alley designs in Sacramento. I chose to implement the use of the standard improvements outlined in one low-density mixed-use alley and one single-family district alley.

I chose the alleys based on the location and the surrounding uses of each block. I wanted to choose areas and locations where the alley activation would not only aesthetically improve the alley, but also create a more active network between the communities.
07. DESIGN

LOW DENSITY MIXED USE
This alley is located in the middle of the block between N & O Streets and 16th and 17th Streets. Its official title is N St., O St., Alley. But was one of the alleys renamed by the city to Neighbors Alley in 2011.

As a mixed use alley, there is more than one use in the block. The western half of the block, closer to 16th Street, is more commercial. This side of the block has an Enterprise Rent-a-Car, Simon Chan’s Bar & Restaurant, Mercury Dry Cleaners, and Hand-in-Hand Child Development Center. The eastern half of the block, closer to 17th Street, is completely residential, ranging from low-income affordable housing, to single family townhouses.
16th street is a major commercial street in Sacramento, making it busier than 17th, where it is mostly residential. Interestingly though, the alley entrance on 16th is much less inviting than the entrance on 17th. The eastern entrance was bare, and the view looking in was less than exciting. The western entrance was not much better, but there are plantings on either edge that adds a little more interest, and lessens the hard lines of the alley more.

I did a further analysis of the existing conditions of the alley and found that because the western portion of the block is primarily residential, there is far more car traffic on that end, but the on street parking on the eastern edge is also important to protect as it is the employee parking for the businesses.

I also found there was no lighting in the alley that is specifically for the alley. The only light that would be in the alley at night is from the surrounding buildings that makes its way into the alleys.
Figure 7.4

VIEW FROM 16TH STREET

EMPLOYEE ON-STREET PARKING

RESIDENT PRIVATE PARKING

BUILDING ENTRANCE FROM ALLEY

PRIVATE GARAGES OFF THE ALLEY

VIEW FROM 17TH STREET
SITE ANALYSIS

GARAGES

ON STREET PARKING

FENCES + EYES ON STREET

OPEN SPACE

CIRCULATION

ZONING + DENSITY

Figure 7.5
This design is meant to create an outdoor cafe / community gathering space. The design strategies used in this alley are meant to attract users who intend to spend time relaxing in a space away from the rest of the city. This design also brings in more of an active, art participatory element. The design allows for space in alongside the walls of the buildings to invite local artists and community members alike to create wall murals.

In order to create such an atmosphere, the alley was turned into a one way street, with the entrance being from 16th Street, the use of chicanes in the designs turns the alley into a one-way and naturally creates the programmable space.
Cafe Area
- Cafe
- Table
- Bench
- Outdoor Artist Studio
- Potted Plant
- Covered On-Street Parking

Gathering Space
- Garbage Cans
- Movable Chairs
- Water Feature
- Pergola

Performance Area
- Inlaid Planters (Fire Truck Accessible)
- Hanging Lights
- Bench

Figure 7.8
Figure 7.9
Figure 7.10
LAYERS OF THE ALLEY

LIGHTING

Use of strung lighting acts as a canopy and adds light to the alley. Full spectrum, low wattage bulbs provide the best light.

PAVING

Permeable Pavers used through the entire alley. Different colors differentiate between pedestrian only spaces and traffic thoroughfares.

VEGETATION

Use of shade trees and planters bring the space down to a pedestrian scale and make the users feel more comfortable in the alley.
This image shows the entrance of the alley from 16th Street. On the left is an extension of the restaurant and wall mural space. Further down the right is are more cafe tables and benches for visitors to site and relax at.

The use of chicanes makes this alley one way, and allows for design space.
This alley is located in the middle of the block between O & P Streets and 25th and 26th Streets. The alley is entitled Carriage Path Way.

The alley is in the middle of a mix between a single family and multi family block. The block has a majority of single family homes, but there are a few apartment buildings. But the primary use of the alley is for car access to private garages that are all facing the alley. With garages and private parking spots for the homes on the block limited to the alley makes this alley more active than most. There is car traffic on a regular basis with the regular coming and going of people. However, there is very little activity that occurs in the alley besides the comings and goings of cars.
Located in the outer rim of Midtown, Carriage Path Way is in the middle of a primarily residential area, transitioning into the suburbs. Every residential unit in this block has either a designated parking spot or garage in the alley, making the need for appropriate turning radius very important. And making car traffic in the alley completely the same through the entire alley.

There are a few storage units that are along the alley as well, but these do not show any signs of being currently used or of them being accessible from the alley. This opens up space for design opportunities.

However, through observations, the alley does not feel like it is a space that is used to its full potential by the residents. There is no sense of a community network in the alley, it is blocked off from the people by either fences, garages or sheds and makes the user in the alley feel very alone and abandoned.
Figure 8.4

VIEW FROM 25TH STREET

STORAGE OFF THE ALLEY

TUCK UNDER PARKING

GARAGES AND FENCES OFF THE ALLEY

RESIDENTS ON STREET PARKING

VIEW FROM 26TH STREET
SITE ANALYSIS

GARAGES

ON STREET PARKING

STORAGE

OPEN SPACE

CIRCULATION

FENCES + EYES ON STREET

Figure 8.5
This design is meant to create more of a community in the alley for the residents who live along the alley. The design is meant to bring in residents of all ages to enjoy a public place, right outside their doors. With spaces for children's play, community gathering, and community gardening, this design focuses on bringing people out of their private homes outside.

The design was implemented through the addition of chicanes to the alley. These transform the alley into a one way street, with the vehicle access being from 25th street, exiting onto 26th street.
LAYERS OF THE ALLEY

LIGHTING

Hanging lights from the pergola provide light throughout the entire alley. Lights are also located on the sides of the buildings.

PAVING

Permeable Pavers used through the entire vehicle access route of the alley. Different materials are used in the designed areas, including turf.

VEGETATION

Shade trees are placed throughout the alley to protect from the summer heat. Vines grow on top of the pergola to provide more consistent shade.
This image shows the vehicle exit from 26th Street looking in. On the right are the community planter boxes where the residents along the alley can use to grow whatever they please.

Further down the alley are moveable chairs, play spaces for children and street trees to make the alley more inviting.
09. REFERENCES
Sources


City & County of San Francisco. “Alleyways of San Francisco: A Pedestrian Experience.” San Francisco, California.


IMAGE SOURCES

1.1  Buglose Old Allee – St.. Vincent dePael Image Archive: www.stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/?lib=Vincentian%20Places&path=Vincentian+Places%2FFrance%2FBuglose

1.2  Ostia Antica – Rome City Tours: www.romecitytours.com/ancientostiatour.htm


1.5  New York City Figure Ground - Unmapping the City by: Armelle Caron

1.6  Washington DC Figure Ground - Follow the Creative Path: www.followthecreativepath.blogspot.com/2011/01/figure-ground-nolli.html

1.7  Freiburg, Germany: Keith L. Scott II

1.8  Down Croft Alley: www/shugii.deviantart.com/art/

1.9  Austin Alley - Opening Night Party, by: Michael Knox: www.whichwayaustin.blogspot.com/search/label/alleys

3.1  The Creative Little Garden by: Vivienne Gucwa: www.nythroughthelens.com

3.2  Hotaling Alley: www.apr.com/alawrence/30-Hotaling-Place-San-Francisco-CA-l3554020

3.3  Mint Plaza: www.transportationissuesdaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Mint-Plaza-San-Francisco-wins-EPA-Smart-Growth-Award-in-2010-Image-SFWeekly.jpg


3.5  Toyota Children’s Learning Garden - Flickr by: Goggla: www.flickr.com/photos/goggla/4877829644/in/set-72157624691739350/

3.6  Nord Alley - Flickr by: Jordan Lewis: www.flickr.com/photos/67269485@N03/sets/

3.7  Nord Alley - Flickr by: Jestoni Gabuyo: www.flickr.com/photos/67269485@N03/sets/

4.1 Alley Network Project: www.alleynetworkproject.com


4.3 Alley Allies Logo: www.millstreetplanning.com

7.2 Aerial View of N St. O St. Block - Google Maps: www.maps.google.com

8.2 Aerial View of O St. P St. Block - Google Maps: www.maps.google.com

* All other figures are the product of Amie Patel.
THANK YOU FOR READING!