PLAY IS A RELEASE TO DISCOVER SELF

"The hours we are absorbed by beauty are the only hours when we really live. Those are the only hours that support the soul and lift it to a plane where it can see life as it really is, and all things as they are."
- Henry David Thoreau, "The Divine Proportion"

"Man looks at the world through transparent templates which he creates and then attempts to fill over the realities of which the world is composed.

"In the parable of the blind men and the elephant"" - Phylis Rose and S. Claytor, "The Graphic Mind"
Whittier School and Its Neighborhood

The Whittier Neighborhood is one of the oldest in Denver. The school building and site have undergone several renovations, with the most recent being the current playground, which was built in the mid to late 1970s. Problems with the current design include poor gravel play surfacing, inadequate play structures (use and safety), damage to the building, lack of sun protection, and an overall failure to meet the general requirements of basketball and soccer. The school is located on the eastern edge of downtown Denver, creating a dramatic visual link between the school and the city. There is a community garden located in the southeast corner of the site, which is too large for the amount of use. Some recent efforts for improvement have been made at the school. Last year trees were planted along the walkway and part of the sidewalk.

Children's Play as a Release to Discover Self

Recall is the only time of day during the school day left unstructured. Children may have their own education. The neighborhood's learning experience supplies a range of physical education age-appropriate play opportunities, quiet areas for contemplation, safe spaces, creative points for imagination play, and participation gardens; children are afforded choices. This type of playground experience leads to better classroom attention.

Fractal Geometry

The real world, or the world in which we live is "the space-time continuum of man and nature where there is constant change based on feedback. It is an open system where everything is related to everything else." From "The Fractal Geometry of Nature" by Benoit Mandelbrot, fractal geometry is the geometry of nature, where self-similarity is the common theme. The concept of fractal geometry is the addition of the fourth dimension, time. In nature, patterns grow and change over time. There is a repetition of self-similarities over time. This type of geometry best describes not only nature, but how children move and experience space.

Design Intent

The design for "The Playground as an Urban Experience" utilizes not only examples of fractal geometry, but also an underlying Jeffersonian grid, and its said (visual and geotechnical) relationship to downtown Denver as the organizing design principles. The design goals of the community and the school were to connect the two as one, to integrate and highlight the history of the neighborhood, provide students with primary and secondary play equipment, separate the uses to avoid traffic, and to give shape to the area through planting and a grade circulation plan.

"The poetry, forests, and other ecosystems of the region are the result of continuous dynamic interaction between living organisms and their environment through past climates. As we grow to appreciate these changes, not just under natural conditions, we must also recall the human capacity to be a driver of change and pursuing a physiological force.

"Read and listen, explore, learn, act.

"Order is of a strange and beautiful kind, containing self-similar geometric self-similarities of large and small scales (fractal).

"The beauty of the fractal is its ability to depict the world's complexity."

"Students make and recognize literature as a reflection of human experience."

"In summary, the design emphasizes the beauty and diversity of the natural world.

"Geometric concepts, students develop spatial sense and use geometric concepts, properties, and relationships in problem solving. Str. 1.4: Students communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems."

"From "A Foundation for Future Mathematics Standards for Students."