

Part I: The History of Unionville, Connecticut (nonfiction)

As described by the historical society of the town, Unionville Connecticut is “the classic American story of adapting to change.” Through years of shifting economic and social trends, this community has endured it all and remained true to its identity as a suburban haven tucked in the hills of scenic central Connecticut. Our version of Suburban Park celebrates the unique history of Unionville and the enduring and loyal spirit of its community. It blends fiction and nonfiction into one harmonious mix that leads us to our themed entertainment proposal, The Suburban Park Redevelopment Project.

The small town of Unionville Connecticut has always been a community with a heavy emphasis on suburban living. Although it had a decent presence in the agricultural and steam train transportation sectors, the residential identity always served as the town's more significant draw. This suburban appeal was never stronger than in the late 1890s when the trolley line expanded to Unionville. The Farmington Valley Trolley Company developed a new line from Hartford to Unionville to bring city dwellers into the suburbs on the weekends. At the center of this weekend trip was Suburban Park.

In 1895, Suburban Park was opened as a modern amusement park funded and operated by the trolley company to increase ticket sales to Unionville. At that time, its attractions were cutting-edge entertainment. Complete with an open-air dance hall, a water fountain fitted with electric lights, a children's carousel, a pond for fishing and small boat craft, and miles of hiking trails, this space was enough to entertain for weekend guests. The ultimate intent behind this venture was to show city-dwellers the pace of life in suburbia and persuade them to move away from the city and into rural Connecticut. After a 10-year run, Suburban Park ultimately closed its doors after the trolley company cut back on the number of trips to Unionville and raised ticket prices without updating existing or introducing new attractions.

It was at this that the town began to shift to a manufacturing presence. The industrial economy began to boom as factories and mills started to pop up along the river. But this left some in the community feeling misled and frustrated with the promise of suburban bliss slipping away. Factories began to struggle during the Great Depression and several minor natural disasters. What looked to be a rebound in the industry during World War II was ultimately lost when the Great Flood of 1955 occurred and wiped out much of the factories and residential community in its path. Now, the area that once had a strong suburban identity that was compromised by a growing manufacturing presence was left with no identity at all.

Part II: John Langdon and the Suburban Park Redevelopment Project (fiction)

After the Great Flood of 1955, many members of the Unionville community were left with nothing, and all were heartbroken that this natural disaster swept away its community's identity with it. John Langdon, Entrepreneur and born-and-raised Unionville resident, saw the community that had raised him heartbroken and in despair. John remembers being a small child and visiting Suburban Park with his mother and father. As he grew into a man, he worked in several of the town's factories until he saved enough to start his own housing development business. Unionville was not the residential town it once was, and many felt that identity was

long gone and the time to leave was approaching. But with the waters of the flood, John saw a clean slate for opportunity rather than a hopeless situation. Rather than sulking in what was lost, John was eager to utilize his professional experience and his passion for his community to restore Unionville's suburban identity.

The state prepared a sizable stimulus package to help Unionville restore its community, but the question remained; in what way does the town restore itself? This question served as a pivotal opportunity in either restoring or departing from the history of Unionville's identity, one that John knew could not be squandered. John's vision for his beloved town was to *rebuild an updated Suburban Park and to build an adjacent community setting that celebrates the hardworking, creative, and passionate spirit of the individuals that make the community what it is.*

Part III: Design Proposal - Suburban Park

At the heart of every suburban town is the family. Therefore, to restore the suburban identity of the town, there must be outlets that entice and entertain the family unit. What John saw as the ideal means of reconstruction was to rebuild Suburban Park with updated attractions to entertain in this new age of amusement park, and a town center that simultaneously functions for residents and draws in tourists. His proposal was written as such:

"The updated Suburban Park will consist of five main areas with some attractions based on those of the park's heyday and some developed anew. Those five areas are Entry Point, Hilltop Plaza, Electric Wonderland, Kettle Valley, and Punting Pond. In addition to the amusement park, there will be a shopping and dining center, called Langdon's Quarters, divided into two areas located adjacent to the park. Those two areas are Upton Marketplace and Union District."

Entry Point

Suburban Park is located on a small hillside covering roughly 20-acres of lush forest. Park guests of the park's original run would be dropped off on the southeastern corner and would have to walk about a half-mile to get to the closest attraction. This was the park's only entrance. While this entrance will stay functional, a new entrance building will be constructed that provides easy access to Langdon's Quarters and a shorter more scenic walk into the heart of the park.

The natural beauty of the woods is one of the signature draws of New England. With miles of hiking trails weaving through the forest, Suburban Park was a great spot for families to take in the majesty of New England's naturescapes. Along with a shorter walking trail directly up to the park's hub, a botanical garden has been added to the hillside area on the southeastern corner of the park. Lush flower gardens and winding trails make for an enjoyable and beautiful walk to the fun that awaits.

Hilltop Plaza

When an attraction is designed well, the test of time has a minimal impact on the appeal to its guests. This area brings back several features of the original park with minimal design changes.

Riverside Dance Hall is the new dance pavilion that overlooks both Langdon's Quarters and the rest of Suburban Park. Great views of the community in action and the nighttime spectacular fountain show can be seen from the second-story viewing deck. An assortment of local musicians performs every evening bringing in crowds to dance the night away and filling the forest with joyful tunes. For holidays and special events, the facility can be transformed and redecorated to fit whatever the occasion may have in store.

Another one of John's key intentions of the redevelopment project was to bring back local businesses that moved or closed in the decade prior. One of the park's most popular draws was Besse's Ice Cream Parlor. Besse owned and operated an ice cream parlor in the original Suburban Park, guests used to love her homemade flavors of ice cream which she made and sold in her shop right there on the hillside. Besse closed up shop when the park closed and relocated her business. John and his team persuaded and convinced her to come back to her original shop so guests can enjoy her delicious confections once again.

The original focus of the park was to show the joys of suburban life and to convince guests to move from the city to Unionville. At the scenic overlook, guests get a picturesque view of exactly what Unionville has to offer.

Electric Wonderland

Arguably the most innovative feature of the original park, the introduction of electricity to the area made for several unique experiences for guests in the late 1890s. In the 1950s, electricity was no longer something to make park dwellers marvel. The fountain fitted with fluorescent electric light bulbs would not entertain the crowds of the 1950s as it did over half a century prior. Therefore the area is being reworked to celebrate the introduction of electricity to the town while entertaining in a way that uses electricity to tell a story rather than the technology being the focal point of the attraction.

The most innovative attraction of the original park was by far the fountain. It was the first in the nation to be powered by electricity, and it showcased the new technology that was about to become the new standard across the nation. The redesigned fountain show will serve as the nighttime spectacular for Suburban Park. Dancing water jets and colored lights will illuminate the forest every evening to celebrate the technological advancement that stood as a pillar of the park in its heyday.

A children's favorite and the only ride system in the original park, the carousel once stood in the same spot as the proposed site for Electric Wonderland. In our new park, John's team has built a new carousel fitted with hundreds of electric light bulbs that twinkle to captivate guests of all ages.

Another local business impacted by the park closure was Habenstein & Hackney's Brewing Co. The partners operated their brewing company out of Unionville but left when the town's manufacturing presence grew. Hackney also produced and oversaw the operation of the park's original carousel. Habenstein & Hackney's Brewing Co. accepted the request to return to

Unionville, where they operated a new venture of their company, Habenstein & Hackney Ale Garden. This outdoor beer garden gives adult guests a chance to relax and socialize while enjoying an adult beverage under the signature electric lights of Electric Wonderland.

Kettle Valley

The terrain of Suburban Park sits on top of numerous valleys that were formed a long time ago by a glacier. Pieces of the glacier detach and melt into the Earth's surface, creating a valley-like feature called a "kettle". One of the larger kettles in the park will become the site of a new wooden coaster, called Kettle Coaster. At theme parks across the country in the 1950s, wooden coasters became the focal point attraction and the pinnacle of thrills and entertainment for theme park guests. A small-scale wooden coaster has been added to the space available to help bring the park into the modern era.

Because Suburban Park guests would travel in from the city, families usually brought a picnic lunch and ate at one of the park's many pavilions. The Pavilion Cafe has been added to Kettle Valley to add a central spot for families to purchase picnic foods or enjoy the meals they brought with them.

Punting Pond

At the rear of the park on the northern edge, Roaring Brook feeds into Punting Pond and continues down the hill into the Farmington River. Punting Pond was used in the original park by guests who wanted to go fishing or enjoy a scenic boat ride. In the revived park, the Punting Pond area will offer boat rentals, a log flume attraction, and a trolley station that takes guests to Langdon's Quarters.

The Farmington Valley Trolley Company, which owned and operated the original park and runs the proposed trolley line through the revitalized one, has placed a station at the plaza in Punting Pond. This station provides easy access to and from Langdon's Quarters and the trolley line that departs back to Hartford.

Just as what once was in the original theme park, boat rentals will be available on the scenic waters of Punting Pond. Here, guests can drift about in paddle boats and rafts and experience the same peaceful afternoon on the water as the park guests from half a century prior.

One of the members of John Langdon's team of entrepreneurs was the owner of the local lumber company. In the years since Suburban Park closed its gates, the lumber company set up a sawmill on the northern edge of Punting Pond. This mill is no longer in use, but the owner has generously agreed to donate the facility to John and the Suburban Park Redevelopment Project initiative where it will be transformed into a new log flume attraction, called Roaring Brook Rapids. Guests will board a log and ride through the chutes and streams to a neighboring mill where the logs used to be sawed into pieces. But be careful not to venture down the mine shaft, as this can be rather treacherous!

Part IV: Design Proposal - Langdon's Quarters

Bringing back Suburban Park as the mainstay of family fun in Unionville is intentional in the fact that it draws people into the area, but having a place for guests to relax and experience the little details of what makes the community so special is essential. Langdon's Quarters serves as the guest's first experience of what a day-in-the-life would look like as a Unionville resident.

Our dining and shopping district is divided into two sections, Upson Marketplace and Union District. Between the two spaces, guests of our establishment (whether they are current or prospective residents) have plenty of options when it comes to dining, shopping, and convenient transit. Our layout is broken up as such to have the west side (Upson Marketplace) serve as a hub for residential activity, and the east side (Union District) as a hub for tourists traveling in from the city.

Upson Marketplace

In Upson Marketplace, guests will find plenty of options for shopping, dining, and entertainment. As was mentioned previously, one of John's main priorities was to bring back the charming mom-and-pop establishments that contributed to the community's distinct character. Shops such as Shapiro & Son's Department Store (clothing store) and Bauer Prints (art store) are some of the small businesses that are coming back after losing everything in the flood and reestablishing elsewhere. Because this attraction falls in the center of a residential community there are traditional businesses needed to sustain residential life. Foster's Grocery & Farmer's Market and Gramp's Pharmacy & General Store were well-established businesses in the community that were wiped out by the flood that are coming back to Langdon's Quarters. Several manufacturing companies who had also moved away have re-imagined their presence in Unionville and are opening brand new shops and cafes in the area. Lawton Miner Co. Grain and Flour used to harvest and process grain; now they are using their resources and brand name to open a bakery and coffee shop of the same name. American Writing Paper Co. used to mill paper; now they are doing the same in opening a bookstore. Another important design component to John and the team was having a feature to celebrate the vibrant community that makes up Unionville's residents, and what better way to do that than through food. Culinary offerings can be found in Al La Carte Market, Georgio's Pizzeria, and Habenstein & Hackney's Brewing Co. And through it all, the Unionville Museum has stayed open to its residents to educate on all tops pertaining to the town's rich history. The Unionville Museum will continue to do so in Langdon's Quarters for years to come.

Union District

Across the street, Union District serves as a hub for transportation to and from our entertainment attraction. The Farmington Street Railway Company, which operated the original park and the trolley line between Unionville and Hartford, has re-established their line and a grand station has been built in Union District. Because the park was revived in the late 1950s, the automobile reigns king of the road, and guests who wish to explore more of that era can visit Gas Man's Service Station, where locals congregate with their 50s automobiles for a daily car show. Out-of-town guests who extended their weekend trip into a multi-day stay can reserve a room at the Elm Tree Inn. And for families who want a delicious meal before they head out, just

after they arrive, or any time in between can dine at Unionville Family Diner, the town's 50s-style cafe with all American eats!

Part V: Design Intent - “Embrace Your Surrounding”

When deciding to embark on this massive undertaking, John and the team knew that their beloved community needed something to rally behind. The flood had decimated much of the town leaving most with severe losses and damages, and others with nothing at all. In a time when so many were hurting, it was John’s belief that it was not only the responsibility, but also the privilege of those who were in a position to do so to lift the community at a time when it was most needed. To John, this restoration and revitalization was not just about repairing what was lost in the flood. It was also about restoring the lost identity of Unionville as the suburban paradise it once was, while also paying homage to the manufacturing presence that provided work and access to the American Dream to many residents. In his eyes, the same experiences that had shaped John over the previous decades had shaped the community in a similar way, thus forming a new identity to his childhood home.

After much reflection and assessment of the situation facing his community, John and the team developed this simple principle to justify the work to be done and to remind and excite the current Unionville residents about what makes their community great. This principle is “embrace your surroundings”, and in this case, those surroundings are classified as “physical surroundings”, “community”, and “yourself”.

Embrace Your Surroundings - Physical Surroundings

At the time of ideation, the town’s physical surroundings were literally “washed away”. In the years prior, big businesses started to move into the community and their practices left the surrounding water and air polluted, the forests desolate, and the natural world depleted. The once beautiful New England town of Unionville had been stripped of its beauty in careless acts for monetary gain. And as was quickly learned, the environment can give a great deal; but if you take advantage of what is given, it can also take away just as swiftly. To John, this is the town's opportunity to take back its “physical surroundings” and treat it respectfully rather than taking advantage. Lush gardens and naturescapes, easily accessible low-cost transportation, and the establishment of businesses with an environmentally-conscious mindset are just a few of the new practices that tie into the overall concept of embracing your physical surroundings.

Embracing Your Surrounding - Community

Having a great physical environment is crucial to a town’s longevity, but it is truly the people that reside there that make it what it is. In John’s eyes, re-establishing that Unionville’s identity is first and foremost a residential community is of the utmost importance. When people used to travel in from the city to spend the day at Suburban Park, it was always about the sense of belonging to a community of peers that lived in bliss together. Wherever you go, whatever you are doing, in whatever time period you are in, it is always the people around you that make the experience memorable. The idea of “embracing your surroundings” as it pertains to community serves as another key principle in the design of this entertainment attraction; you will find numerous

spaces and activities to congregate with others beyond the party that you came with, as well as an overall sense of togetherness and belonging.

Embracing Your Surroundings - Self

Lastly, the final component to embracing your surroundings is the idea of embracing who you are as an individual and realizing the impact that you can have on the community and physical surroundings that you reside in. In John's case, he grew up in Unionville and experienced both the residential and manufacturing presences of the town. These experiences shaped his personal identity, and he feels as though he owes what he has and who he is to the people and place that shaped him. Our last pillar is about recognizing the magnitude of what you received from your surroundings and the impact it had on shaping you into the person you are today and the person you will become. And beyond that, as is John's case, it's about lifting those around you when you are in a position to do so, just as those around you have lifted you when you most needed it.