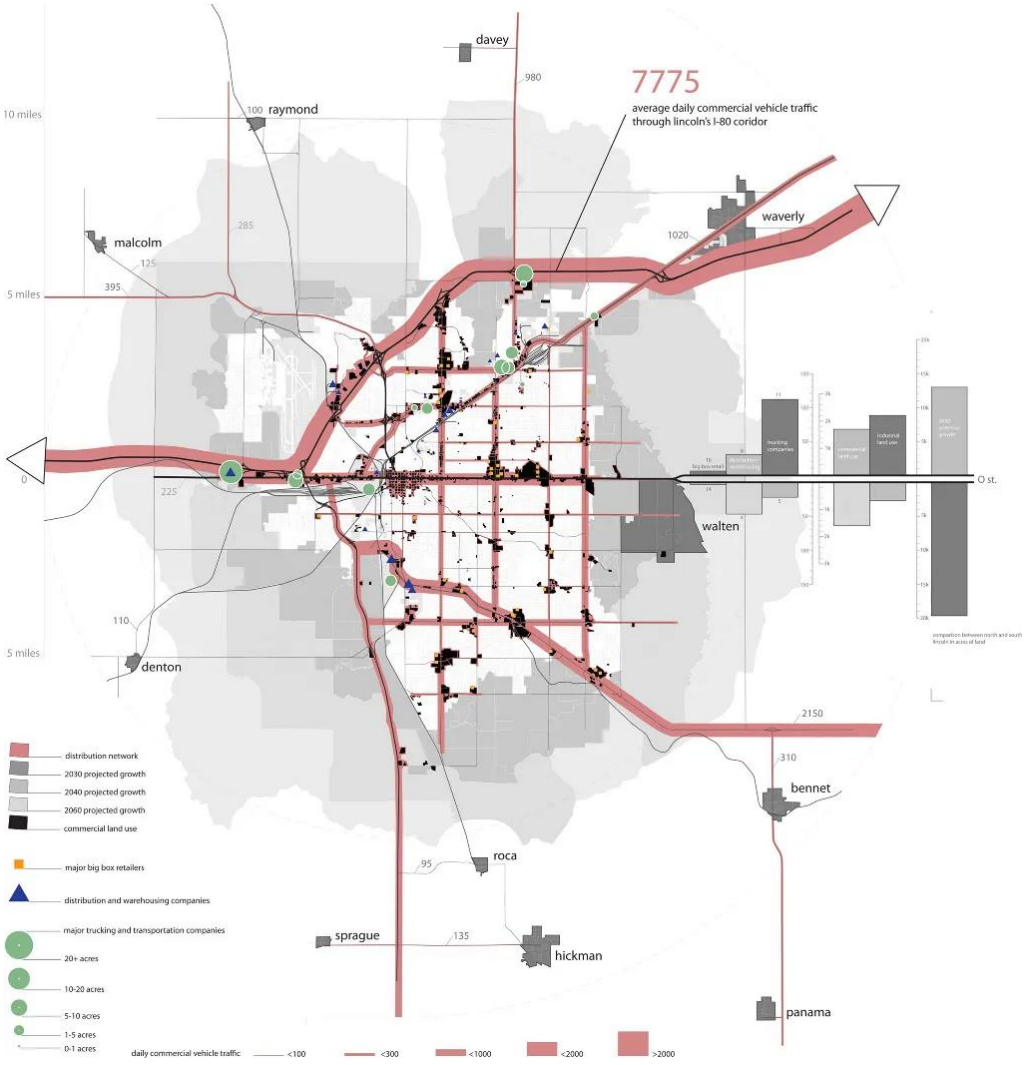

Mapping Economic Corridors
Lincoln NE, MIT

Project 1

Site Analysis / Mapping

ARC 4546 | Architectural Design IVB

Spring 2026

"Cartography, or map making, has played a critical role in representing spatial concepts for thousands of years. While the earliest forms of maps displayed geographic information carved into clay tablets and etched onto cave walls, the maps we use today have significantly evolved to creatively show a range of different information. These visualizations draw conclusions about population sizes, historical events, cultural shifts, and weather patterns to help us understand more about our world and how we impact it."

A Brief History of Maps and Their Role in Urban Development (ArchDaily)
Kaley Overstreet

"The use of mapping in architecture has seen a gradual change from urban mapping as a means to explore and contemplate future developmental implementations and consequences (i.e., towards projective reflexivity), to spatial mapping as a means to explore and investigate the multiplicity of contemporary urban and territorial conditions (i.e. towards spatial research and analysis). Mapping in architecture has thus started to focus more on scaled readings of spatial conditions in an attempt to indicate a possible informing of an architectural construct itself. The speculation on this direct relationship between analysis and production does not, to be clear, focus on the attempt to 'optimize' the fabrication of architectural work but rather seeks a more proper 'grounding' of the architectural work in its overall contextual setting, whether these contextual settings are metaphorical, theoretical, historical, factual or critical."

Mapping in Architectural Discourse: Place-Time Discontinuities
Marc Schoonderbeek

Learning Outcomes

- Analyze and diagram issues related to site and program
- Visualize environmental data

Working Method

Work should be done in groups of two.

Project

The site for our project is Meridian, MS and you will analyze Meridian at the following scales:

1) Regional / Micropolitan Scale

1a) Nodes + Circulation Map – Map local towns, cities within the Meridian micropolitan area. Map all roads and identify in terms of type (4-lane, 2 lane-paved, dirt, etc., etc.) Map railroads and significant connections. Map any large waterways that connect the region with other regions. Map any airports.

1b) Land Use + Climate Map(s) – Using satellite imagery tools (see resources), and other sources, create a map identifying land use (city, forest, farmland, bayou, water bodies, etc.) for the Meridian micropolitan area and show your Nodes & Circulation Map layered on top. Using environmental data create regional macroclimate charts such as temperature, precipitation, humidity, solar, wind roses, etc. for Meridian, MS.

1c) Cultural + Commercial Assets Maps – On a map or several maps, show cultural and commercial assets within the Meridian micropolitan area. Such cultural assets might include medical centers, schools, churches, libraries, town halls, historical markers & sites, recreation areas, wildlife preserves, etc.

2) City Scale

2a) Cultural + Commercial Asset Maps – Within the municipal boundaries of Meridian, MS, map all commercial assets such as businesses and factories, farms, shops etc. Map all civic and cultural assets such as city hall, libraries, museums, parks & recreation. All maps must be the same scale.

2b) Urban Patterns – Using maps, historical, and visual evidence, diagram the major patterns of roads and settlement for Meridian. Try to discover patterns in road arrangements, parcel configuration and size, natural and man-made disruptions in the patterns.

2c) Conceptual Map(s) - Genius Loci / The Spirit of a place – Create mappings that identify places within the municipal limits of Meridian. The mappings should use the ideas of extension (nodes, paths, edges, domains, sky, light quality) as well as cultural ideas (use, human gathering, ceremony etc.) to define these places. Use graphics, text, and views to show the extension and character of these Places. Note that your conceptual maps may be based on assumptions made from the previous mapping exercises and other research. One aim of the conceptual mapping assignment is to graphically visualize certain concepts in order to compare them with your documentation and discoveries during our site visit.

All of these maps and diagrams should be printed on 11x17 sheets (either landscape or portrait). Develop a consistent title block with the analysis title, the drawing scale, and your name(s) for each sheet. Develop a consistent series of information keys for each drawing.

Final Deliverables

At least 6 - 11”x17” printed sheets covering the above analysis/mapping topics. Include a cover page.

Evaluation/Assessment:

- 60% - Graphic clarity in communicating information in drawings and diagrams
- 40% - Understanding of concepts and use of resources/research to create drawings and diagrams

Resources/References:

Books

- *Mapping in Architectural Discourse: Place-Time Discontinuities (Architectural Borders and Territories)* by Marc Schoonderbeek
- *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape* by James Corner, Alex Maclean, and Denis Cosgrove
- *The Image of the City* by Kevin Lynch

Websites

- *Agency Landscape + Planning*
- *Sasaki - Kabul Urban Design Framework*
- *Space Syntax*
- *Urban Design Lab - Activity Mapping in Urban Design*

USGS (United States Geological Survey)

- https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov
- https://landsatlook.usgs.gov/explore

Project Schedule

- 01/14 – Course and Project 1 introduced
- 01/16 – Initial research printed for group discussions
- 01/19 – Desk crits
- 01/21 – Desk crits
- 01/23 – DLF (no studio meeting)
- **01/25 – Project 1 Due by end of day**