BUILDING THE FUTURE
MINECRAFT AND LEBRETON FLATS AT CARLETON UNIVERSITY MACODRUM LIBRARY

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"The only limit is your imagination...build anything you want...because this the most significant sandbox you'll ever set foot in...with no rules to follow, this adventure, it's up to you."
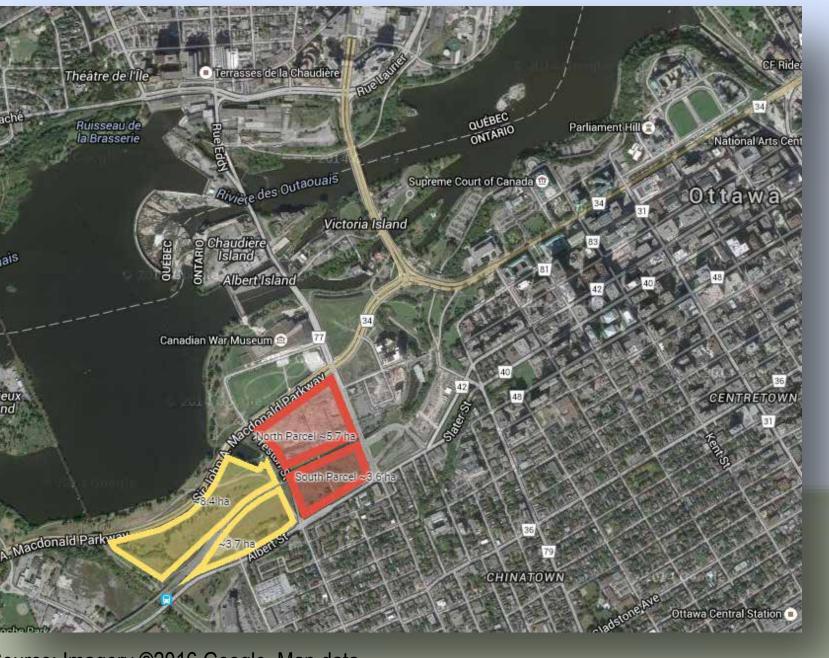-Team Mojang, Official Minecraft Trailer

What is Minecraft?

Minecraft is an open-world, sandbox video game. Unlike traditional games, Minecraft has no tutorial or set goals. The game is driven purely by the imagination and creativity of the user.

How did we bring Minecraft to Carleton University?

In May 2015, Carleton University Library hosted an Enrichment Mini-Courses Program (EMCP) called Location is Everything! During a three hour session, students were invited to engage with a local project called the LeBreton Flats Redevelopment Project.

Minecraft, when paired with a real world application, provides an excellent avenue to promote collaboration, team building, creativity, and interest in local events.

Source: Imagery ©2016 Google, Map data.

What is the Enrichment Mini-Courses Program?

- Offered to students in Eastern Ontario from grades 8 to 11
- Students explore a field of study or area of interest in an academic setting
- Approximately 125 mini-courses with 3,000 attendees
- Started in 1981 and has since seen over 50,000 students

The Lebreton Flats Redevelopment Project

The redevelopment project, led by the National Capital Commission (NCC), shortlisted four developers and published their proposals for the community to see. Using the criteria presented by the four pre-qualified developers, the students were asked to research and propose their own ideas for the space in a 1:1 scale version of Minecraft.

What did the professionals propose?

All included residential/commercial complemented by green space, but there were key differences.

Proposal 1
- Major event center for sports and entertainment performances

Proposal 2
- Indoor/Outdoor Concert Facilities
- Cultural Enterprises

Proposal 3
- A concept with multiple cultural institutions developed around a grand walkway

Proposal 4
- To house the headquarters of an international organization
- Accompanied by cultural venues

From Physical to Virtual: Getting Lebreton Flats into Minecraft

I explored various options for creating a scale version of Lebreton Flats into Minecraft. Third party programs such as World Painter seemed to be most popular amongst the Minecraft community. While there are more advanced ways to create real life places in Minecraft, I decided to use World Painter and Google Maps.

Design Inspiration

For design inspiration the students and I explored various resources to understand LeBreton Flats' past, from 1779 to the present. These resources included:

- Photographs
- Paintings
- Government documents
- Newspaper articles
- Social media sites

Source: From Lebreton Flats Remembered Facebook page. Aug. 31, 2014   Source: From Urbsite.blogspot.ca Ralph Burton on Lebreton Flats. Mar. 4, 2010.

Conclusion

The project was well received by the students in the session. Several of the more Minecraft adept commented on how well Lebreton Flats was transformed into Minecraft and requested copies of the Minecraft world files for their own use.

However, the session was ambitious in the amount of time we had to teach, plan and execute the construction of their vision for Lebreton Flats. This project would be better suited to an older audience with a longer timeline to plan, research and construct their vision for the space.

References

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