

# Life Along the Highway

by principal investigator Joseph Dahmen

## Abstract

Life Along the Highway will use funding from the BSA to propose an infrastructural intervention utilizing environmentally sustainable construction technologies to redefine the relationship of the city to the highway at a specific site along the I93 corridor in Dorchester. The project is pursued as a thesis in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Existing methods of acoustic attenuation often use of materials harmful to the environment in the attempt to provide total separation of highways from built areas. In contrast to this approach, this project attempts to rethink the relationship between city and highway conceptually to provide some acknowledgement of our dependence on highways while suggesting a intelligent use of the land alongside them. The project will emphasize the use of natural materials such as rammed earth, vegetation, berms, landscaping, and catchment basins to redefine the zone between highway and city. The proposed site along Interstate 93 was analyzed by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation several years ago and refused funding for sound barrier protection due to a perceived lack of economic benefit. It is hoped that by offering an intelligent and economically feasible vision of a redefined relationship of residential areas to the transportation corridor using sustainable materials this decision will be reconsidered.

Research liaisons have been established with the Turner-Fairbanks Highway Research Center in McLean, Virginia and are currently being sought with the Massachusetts Highway Department, in keeping with the desire to disseminate project research beyond the confines of academia.