Project Summary:
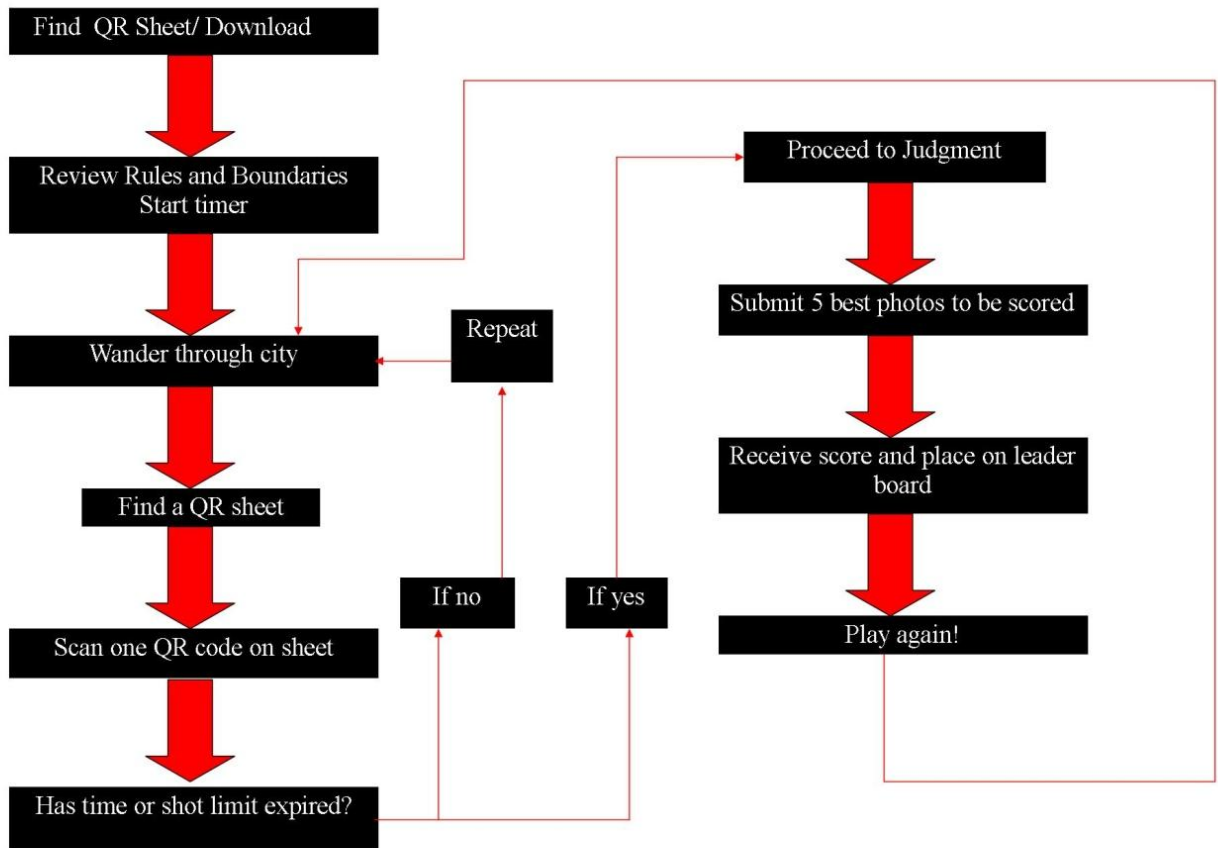
My project is to take the Nintendo 64 title *Pokémon Snap* (http://bulbapedia.bulbagarden.net/wiki/Pok%C3%A9mon_Snap)and transition it into a real world setting. The goal is to allow the player to experience what could once only be done through a TV on the real streets of a city. This would allow for a person to explore a city in a new light, merging fantasy and reality and having those two aspects inform one another. The main through line of the game is a person wandering throughout the city finding QR sheets that scan to reveal a Pokémon as part of the real life setting that the player is exploring, and that Pokémon saying something about the area it is situated in.
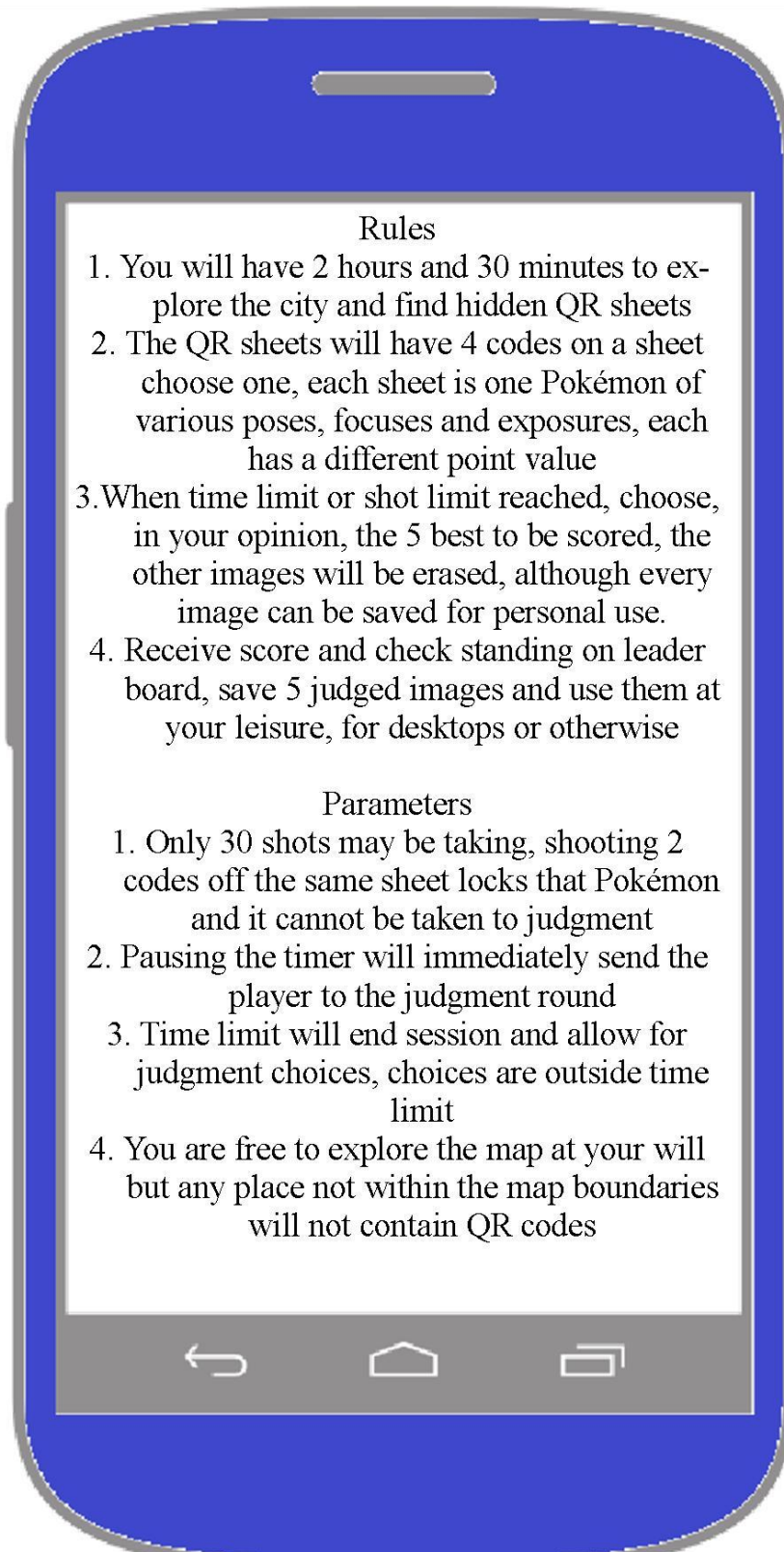
Project Description

The project will take the form of a scavenger hunt through the use of Smartphone and QR code technology. How the game works is described by the flow chart (fig. 1), this shows the actions one will take when playing the games as well as what action to take when a situation presents itself. Once a person downloads the app they will be able to review the rules (fig. 2) and see the boundaries (fig. 3) of the game space. From there a person would travel to any location shown on the map and start the timer located within the app (fig.4) and begin the search for QR codes. Once a QR sheet is found a player must choose one of the 4 codes shown on a single sheet(fig.5). Each sheet with have the same location informed by the Pokémon shown, and vice versa, of varying point value(fig. 6-10). Note that the play can only scan one of the codes shown on a four code sheet, because you do not know what Pokémon pose or point value will appear it encourages replay-ability. From there the player continues the process of exploring the boundaries of the map and finding hidden codes until time or shot limit has expired. From that point the player proceeds to the judgment round where the player chooses the 5 best shots and submits them for a cumulative score(fig. 11+ 12). That score is then translated to the leader board where the player will see where they rank with other players(fig.13). The player is then free to play again.

As shown by the above walkthrough of the game, the project takes the form of an augmented scavenger hunt. A game master will have hidden these codes, to remain for years, in locations either endorsed by businesses or in locations that cannot be taken down at all, to allow for the game to last. These code sheets will be on printed laminated paper that will allow for weather proofing, longevity, and clarity. As well the leader board will be updated in real time encouraging the constant need to compete and explore.

The master plan is this game will be experienced as an activity, no different than going to the museum or seeing a piece of theatre. This is to give people a reason to go into the city and spend some time looking for these codes. In actuality the goal is to get people into the city and spend some time, the game is a conduit to allow that. Hopefully as this time passes, they will see stores that interest them and enter them, eat food downtown. The goal is for true exploration and allowing people to see the city on their terms with the motivation of the game. The game is secondary to discovering the city. The game is a catalyst for exploration, the hidden motive is discovery of the tangible city.

(Fig. 1) flow chart of game play

Rules
1. You will have 2 hours and 30 minutes to ex-
plore the city and find hidden QR sheets
2. The QR sheets will have 4 codes on a sheet
choose one, each sheet is one Pokémon of
various poses, focuses and exposures, each
has a different point value
3. When time limit or shot limit reached, choose,
in your opinion, the 5 best to be scored, the
other images will be erased, although every
image can be saved for personal use.
4. Receive score and check standing on leader
board, save 5 judged images and use them at
your leisure, for desktops or otherwise

Parameters
1. Only 30 shots may be taking, shooting 2
codes off the same sheet locks that Pokémon
and it cannot be taken to judgment
2. Pausing the timer will immediately send the
player to the judgment round
3. Time limit will end session and allow for
judgment choices, choices are outside time
limit
4. You are free to explore the map at your will
but any place not within the map boundaries
will not contain QR codes

(Fig.2) displaying the game rules

Boundary

(fig. 3) the game boundary (this allows for exploration of the would be populous areas of the city and encourages exploration off the map post game.)

Timer
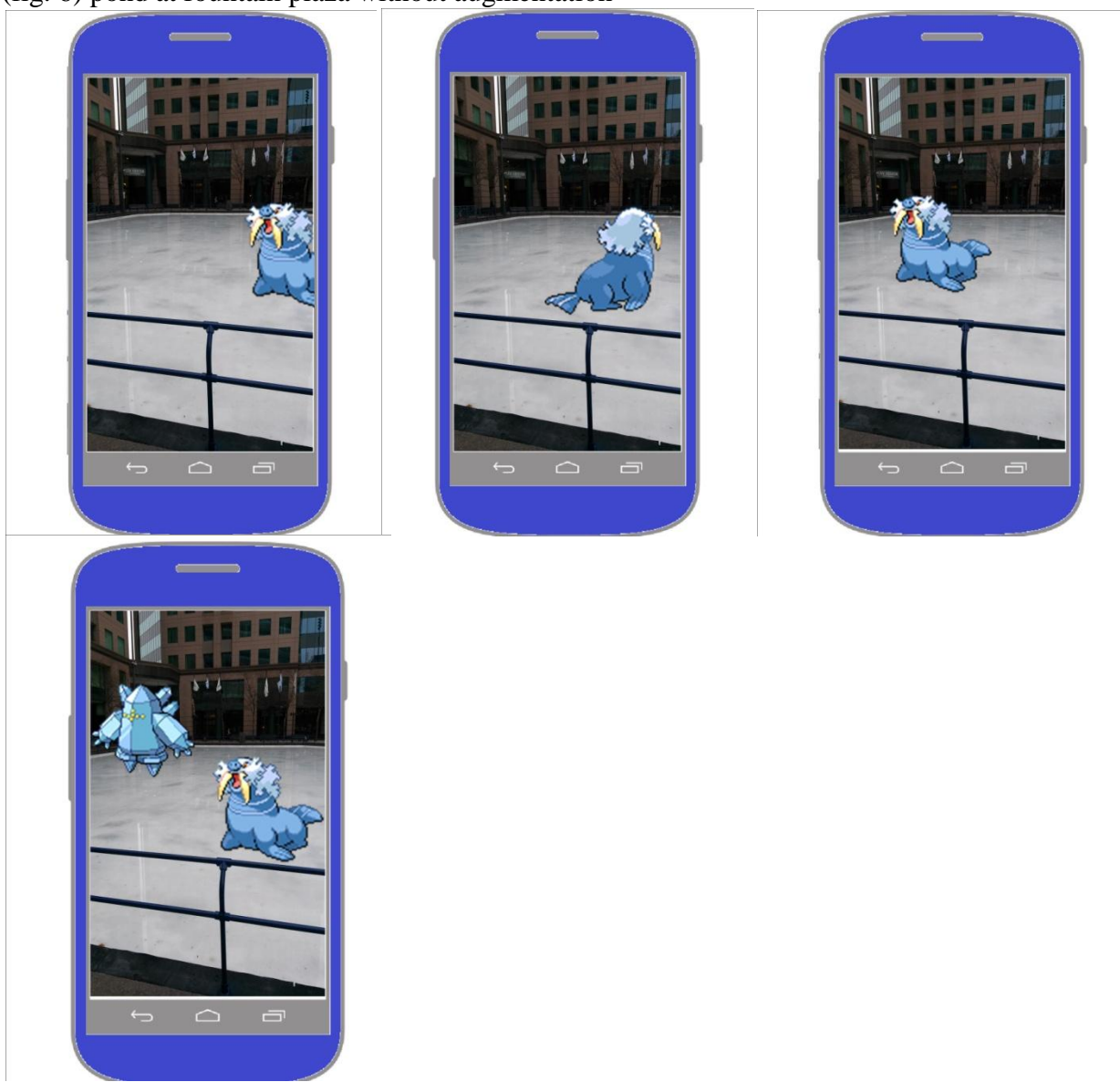
2:30:00

Start

Finish/Judgment
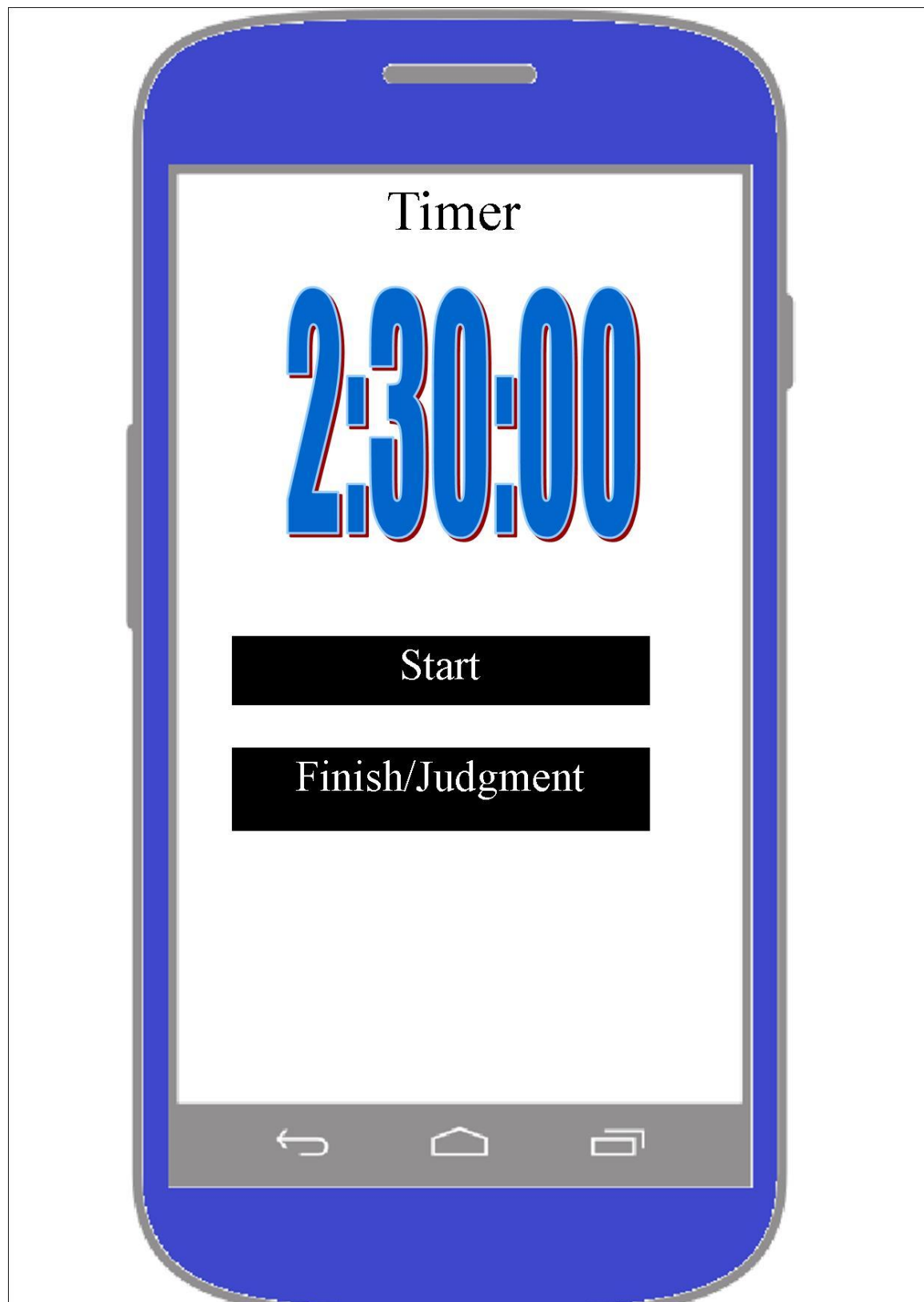
(Fig.4) The timing application
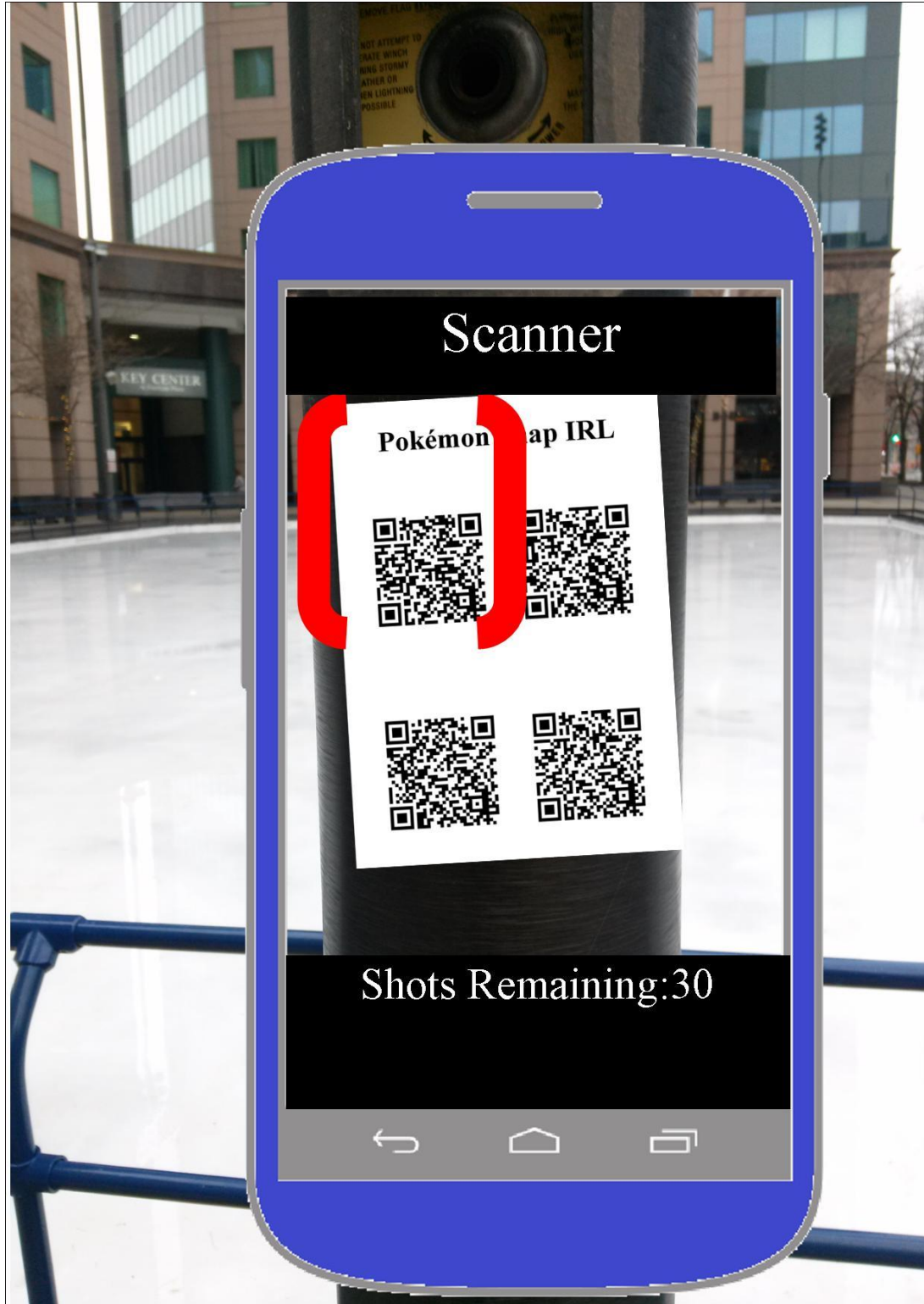
(Fig. 5) scanning of a QR code (QR codes just examples not scanable)
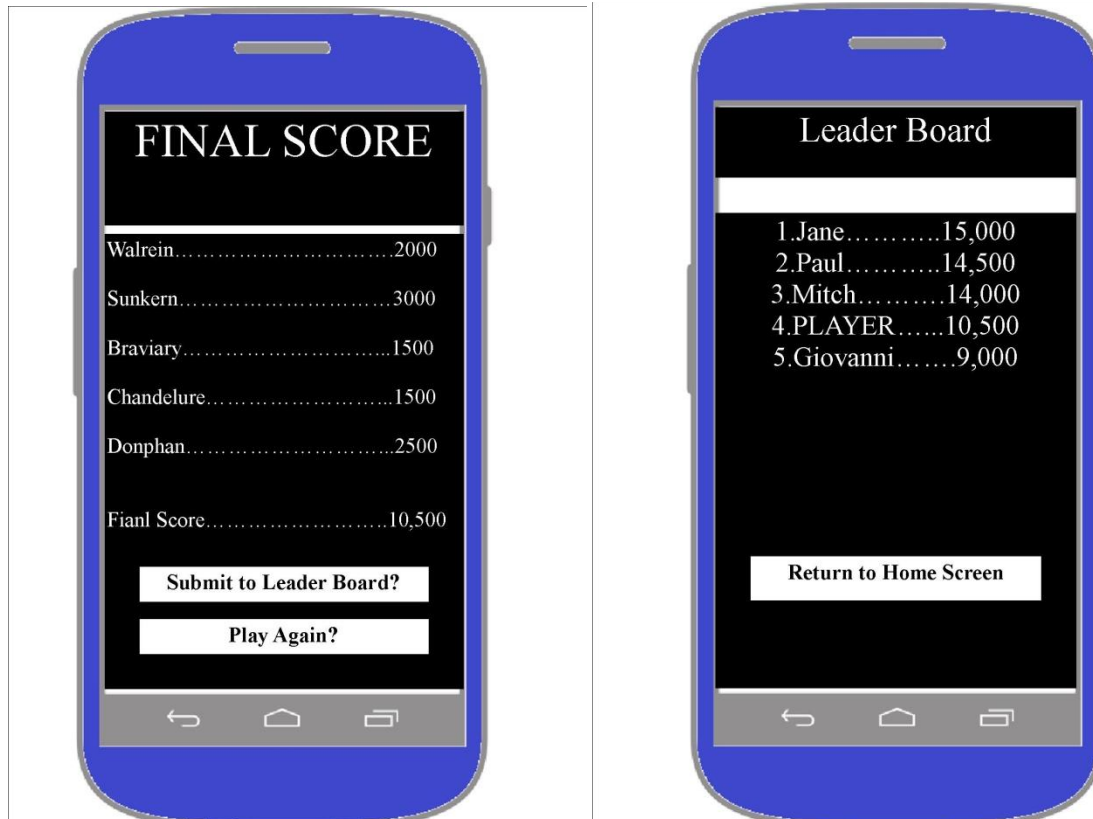
(fig. 6) pond at fountain plaza without augmentation

(fig 7-10) images displayed after scanning going left to right the point values increase

(Fig.11) Choosing your best images to submit to judgment

(Fig. 12) The score displayed after points are assigned to the images shot
(Fig. 13) The leader board showing where the player ranks against other players

Project Contexts

This project is most in line with "The Street as a platform".(http://www.cityofsound.com/blog/2008/02/the-street-as-p.html) The idea of data being public and private is an element that this game thrives upon. In one regard it is open as anyone can play this game as long as they are in the proper city that it is installed in. On the other hand it is private as a person may not know where the QR sheets are hidden. The game plays upon the themes of what is known and not known. As the QR sheets will correspond within city one might go to all the key points of that city, but the uninformed will go off the beaten path and may find some that are not in well known spot. It also shows how a person walking through the city could be taking in information passively, this game forces a person to actively look through the city and see everything it has to offer.

Another reading from class that informs this project is Benjamin's "The Flâneur"(http://cast.b-ap.net/readings/Benjamin_2.pdf). The first quotation of the text, summarizing the coming chapter reads "And I travel in order to get to know my geography". While this is a very watered down version of what a flâneur does and believes, it still is the basis of this game. By playing you are observing the things around you and taking inventory of the city as it exists. One is forced to actively observe the world and find what they are looking for. While a standard flâneur would wander aimlessly taking in passively what came into their vision, this game updates that idea and gives the player an objective. Through that objective however they are free to passively observe everything else. It could be considered altered, or object oriented flâneurism.

From my own research I found a paper titled "Gamification in Education: What, How, Why Bother?"(http://www.gamifyingeducation.org/files/Lee-Hammer-AEQ-2011.pdf) written by Joey J. Lee and Jessica Hammer. To summarize the paper the idea is that gamification can "harness the motivational problem power of games and apply it to real-world problems" In this case that would be the dying livelihood of the Buffalo streets. By gamifiying the downtown area, a person could take a fictional device and make a real world change. This is the very basis of the project, to create a fictional story or environment and through that idea, make a real world change.

The final contextual idea I drew from in this project is the work of J. Huizinga(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johan_Huizinga), more specifically his book *Homo Ludens*. The book focuses on play and culture and how the two are intermixed. What stood out most to me and charged the entire direction of this project was what was said on page 49. ""There is something at stake"-the essence of play is contained in that phrase". That changed how this project was centered and also directed the focus of what Pokémon should appear where. The ideas contained in the book directed the way that the project was directed and I realized that there is more than game in a game. There is learning and there is a higher purpose. Games exist for a reason, and this one as well needed purpose before it could be considered an urban game that could be played.

Project Precedents

This project follows in a long line of urban games. The first example is a game called AnswerHunt(http://urbaninteractivestudio.com/answerhunt/). According to the website for this game, a person will "embark on a mobile scavenger hunt that will lead them on a discovery adventure of your making". A person playing this game would need to find specific signage or landmarks to explore their designated area to find clues to lead them to the next area. In the process they would learn about the area and whatever the game master would want to direct them to. However this is a marketing idea, and a person can pay to use their template and then the company would create an Answerhunt designed specifically to the GMs needs. While it does focus on exploration and urban gaming, at the end of the day it is a money making venture. It is similar to the Pokémon project but different in that Pokémon is free to play and designed solely to spark exploration of its sake not to make money.

Another project similar to this one is referred to only as "Where is Waldo QR installation"(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Drbn6jUbst4), it can be found as such on youtube. From what I can see of the video this game involves placing QR tiles around the city and having people scan those codes to try and chase down Waldo. This is just like Snap in that it follows the idea that the QR codes are hidden throughout an urban environment and to continue the game one must hunt for the codes. If a person finds the codes then the game directs the player to the next code, going from point A to B. At the same time though if a person cannot find the codes then they are looking through the city. Just like Snap, the game is based on QR hunting and the exploration of the city. The difference is that in Snap the exploration, not going point to point as a player does not know where the points are, of the city is not secondary to the game and is actually the primary reason that it exists.

The final project I found that informs snap is the alternate reality game based on the Nine Inch Nails album *Year Zero(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Year_Zero_(game)). The idea is that the album was being teased through an alternate reality games, from highlighted words on a concert t-shirt leading to a website, to hidden Usb drives at concerts containing music off the album, or

even pictures of the album cover. By slowly allowing the fan base to piece together the storyline through hidden messages, it created groundswell around the album and allowed for the fans to be a part of the game and engage further to elevate the album to something more than just music but a message. This thematically is closest to what Snap should be. It is not about the game itself but what the game stands for.

All of these combined can inform Snap and show the sources that came before it and elevate it to the next level. These can show where the project came from and where it can go as urban and alternate reality games are only becoming more pervasive and important to marketing and urban culture.

Project Implications

The goal of this project is to give people a reason to go downtown. As it stands downtown Buffalo is not as lively as it once was, that is due to a lack of business and people crowding around its streets. There is no reason for people to be downtown anymore. This project will allow people a reason to go downtown and explore. By having people downtown and wandering aimlessly for a few hours, they will naturally get hungry or perhaps see a building they want to enter. This influx of people could breathe new life into the city but physically and economically. As well this project is supposed to teach people about the city through Pokémon. As each Pokémon has their own specific traits and appearance so too does every location in Buffalo. These creatures could inform the actual landscape they are matched with, as shown with Walrein the ice type and fountain plaza being frozen over. Therefore telling the player why this location is important or why the location is the way it is. It allows the player to learn why the city is the way it is and transfers the traits of the Pokémon to apply to the real world settings they find themselves in. At the end of the day though the game is designed to let the player have fun. This is a game and learning is only so potent in its raw form. One must disguise education and exploration in a sugar coated shell. The game is designed to encourage exploration, foot traffic, education of locations and fun.

Audience

The intended audience for my game, much like the Nintendo 64 title, is Pokémon fans. However this game is designed to be play by all and simple enough that anyone can enjoy it. The audience would start with the hardcore fans, but hopefully trickle down to those that want to explore or spend a day. The audience could extend to urbanites, explorers, gamers who are not just Pokémon fans, families looking to spend a day together. These people would be reached, through random encounters with the QR sheets that would prompt a Smartphone download, I would hope that Pokémon based websites like http://www.serebii.net/or http://www.smogon.com/ would endorse the game. As well if there were flyers around the city it would be installed it I would hope that would spread buzz, and explain the game and its features. In general I want this to be a game for all, it would appeal to the Pokémon fans first but then those fans would want to share the experience with others seeing as the point is not Pokémon but exploration and whimsy.