

patches, purlieus, [ pur-loos, purl-yoos ]  
& panoplies

Joe Mihanovic, MSAAD 2023

GSAPP Portfolio

# Preface

Architecture is a political act. The oft-repeated maxim, propounded in the subtitle to Lebbeus Woods' seminal publication, *Anarchitecture*, dryly affirms the civic scope of architecture and repudiates its reputation as a purely aesthetic discipline. Incidentally, the phrase would be entirely appropriate as a mantra for the GSAPP, which wholly embodies its stated ambition to foster the development of critical practitioners. 'Architecture is a political act' was substantiated in every studio, seminar, and workshop I participated in at the GSAPP—always implicitly and sometimes explicitly. Each experience challenged me to evaluate, critique, and reimagine the political agency of architecture, a task I undertook through a series of design projects, analytical drawings, and essays.

*Patches, Purlieus, & Panoplies* is a comprehensive review of these artifacts—at least those most meaningful to me. My varied interests in architectural design and discourse prompted me to explore multiple seemingly disconnected topics, which made producing an instructive title for this text difficult. Nonetheless, a few threads have carried through my research at the GSAPP. Patches, purlieus, and panoplies are my three 'avatars.' I employ them as heuristic devices which loosely categorize the artifacts thematically. They are not mutually exclusive, nor are they exhaustive. Many artifacts are related to multiple avatars and one does not fit neatly with any, but together they provide a decently-comprehensive assortment of my work at the GSAPP.

**Patch:** [ pach ]

- (noun) a small piece of material used to mend a tear or break, to cover a hole, or to strengthen a weak place
- (verb) to mend, cover, or strengthen with or as if with a patch or patches
- (verb) to repair or restore

A few of my projects explore themes related to mending and healing. In the context of my research, patches symbolize the process of repairing disaffected communities. The Bronx Borough Hall is a project of reparation, seeking to heal the South Bronx communities disaffected by the Cross Bronx Expressway and stitch together a bisected park. The Purple Houses, a different project of reparation, seeks to provide much-needed sexual and reproductive healthcare services for the people of Mississippi.

**Purlieu:** [ pur-loo, purl-yoo ]

- (noun) environs or neighborhood
- (noun) a place where one may range at large; confines or bounds
- (noun) an outlying district or region, as of a town or city

Two essays studied large swaths of peripheral land developed to support other primary lands. "Planning Socialism: Mass Housing in Postwar Prague" is a case study of the history of the Jižní Město development in the southern outskirts of Prague, Czech Republic. Another essay, "The Railroads That Built Yellowstone," charts the historical process of commercialization which converted the lands of the national parks into amenities for the urban bourgeoisie. Additionally, the Bronx Borough Hall and the Purple Houses explore concepts of 'in-between' and 'peripheral' lands at the neighborhood scale. In its own way, the Sludgy-Hydro Hangout reimagines architectural peripheries, reinterpreting the envelope as a structural and service system—although conceptually, it is probably best described as a 'panoply.'

**Panoply:** [ pan-uh-plee ]

- (noun) a wide-ranging and impressive array or display
- (noun) something forming a protective covering
- (noun) full ceremonial attire or paraphernalia; special dress and equipment

"The Role of Sexuality in Betsy's *Queer Space*" addresses multiple panoplies of queer culture described in Aaron Betsy's book; the shroud of secrecy that protects queer spaces and the externalizing performance of alternative gender expressions. Another essay, "Castles, Kitchens, & Robots" lays bare the performance of gender through objects of play revealed by Ani Liu's *A.I. Toys*. A panoply of an entirely different sort, the Sludgy-Hydro Hangout reconnects people to their waste by putting waste systems on public display and inviting creative interactions with it.

The one remaining GSAPP artifact does not closely relate to any of the avatars, but is worthy of inclusion. This case study explores the spatial, formal, and material qualities of the Lawson Westen House, designed by Eric Owen Moss in the early-1990s.

# Index

## Patches

### 03 Bronx Borough Hall

Civic space in East Tremont, Bronx

Adv. Studio VI  
Eric Bunge

### 16 Purple Houses

Healthcare & advocacy center in Jackson, Mississippi

Adv. Studio V  
Bryony Roberts

## Purlieus

### 32 Planning Socialism

Mass Housing in Postwar Prague

Architecture & Socialism  
Reinhold Martin

### 39 The Railroads That Built Yellowstone

National Parks as Consumable Commodities

Architecture, Land, Ground  
Lucia Allais

## Panoplies

### 43 The Role of Sexuality in Queer Space

Analyzing Betsy's *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*

History of Arch. Theory  
Mark Wigley

### 47 Castles, Kitchens, & Robots

Gender as a Tool of Capital in Ani Liu's *A.I. Toys*

Arguments  
Dariel Cobb

### 49 Sludgy-Hydro Hangout

Water resource recovery facility in Red Hook, Brooklyn

AAD Studio  
Dan Wood

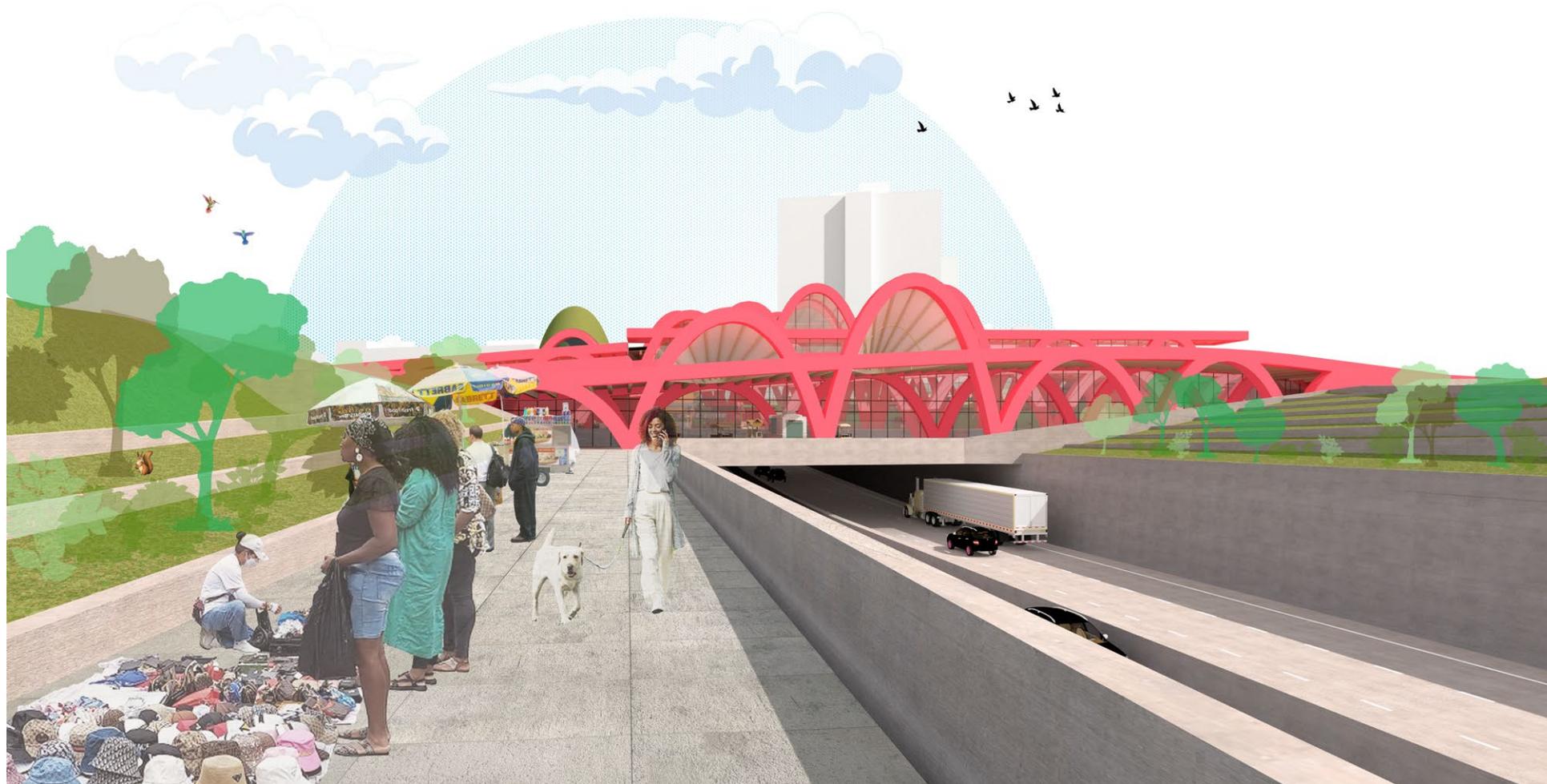
## Other

### 57 Case Study—Lawson Westen House

Section case study of the Eric Owen Moss-designed home

Seminar of Section  
Marc Tsurumaki

# Bronx Borough Hall



In the 1940s and early 1950s, the East Tremont neighborhood in the South Bronx was a bustling and diverse working class community with strong ties to the land. Robert Caro described it as a “staging area” for new immigrants to establish themselves and work towards a better future. In the late 1950s, New York City began construction on the middle section of the Cross Bronx Expressway (CBE), which forever devastated East Tremont and the rest of the South Bronx. Condemnation and demolition of numerous apartment buildings, coupled with a hazardous construction process, plunged East Tremont into extreme poverty, starting with the buildings directly adjacent the new CBE and irradiating outward. Scores of Bronxites fled. The CBE bisected Crotona Park (resulting in the creation of Walter Gladwin Park to the north). Hundreds of buildings in East Tremont were demolished and thousands of East Tremont residents were left without adequate housing. Today, residents of East Tremont have a median household income of about \$30,000, most are on public assistance, and most report having difficulty paying rent. There are also pervasive health issues like asthma, which is clearly due, at least in part, to the CBE.

However, the South Bronx is experiencing a gradual economic renewal, fueled in large part by the success of small, local-owned businesses. The central question which guides my design project is “How can a new borough hall reunite the South Bronx and help foster its continued economic renewal?”

The new Bronx Borough Hall bridges across the Cross Bronx Expressway, reunites two parks and their adjacent neighborhoods, and provides a new civic and commercial center for the South Bronx. Its tectonic form and spatial logic revolve around the act of bridging. Reinterpreting the arch bridge, catenary arch trusses span across the CBE and support a series of strips supplying program. Below, municipal functions and market stalls are combined in a big open market place, while park-goers can travel between parks via the green roofs above.

The new hall is intended as an incubator for small businesses. The main hall offers market stalls for aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners, as well as flexible space to be occupied by social gatherings and political activity. A small business development office and a trade school/workforce training offer tools for professional development, while the other municipal functions of the Bronx Borough Hall—the Bronx Borough President’s office and community board meeting rooms—occupy the peripheries of the market hall.

**TERM** Columbia GSAPP MSAAD—Spring Semester (2023)

**STUDIO** City, Hall Studio

**CRITIC** Eric Bunge

**PROGRAM** Civic space, municipal office space, & marketplace

**SITE** Walter Gladwin Park & Crotona Park, E 175 St, Bronx, NY 10457



Vicinity Plan 0 10000 25000 50000 FT



Figure 1. Postcard from New York Public Library. Source: Benjamin Waldman, "Then & Now: The Original Bronx Borough Hall in NYC." *Untapped New York*. <https://untappedcities.com/2016/07/15/then-now-the-original-bronx-borough-hall-in-nyc/>

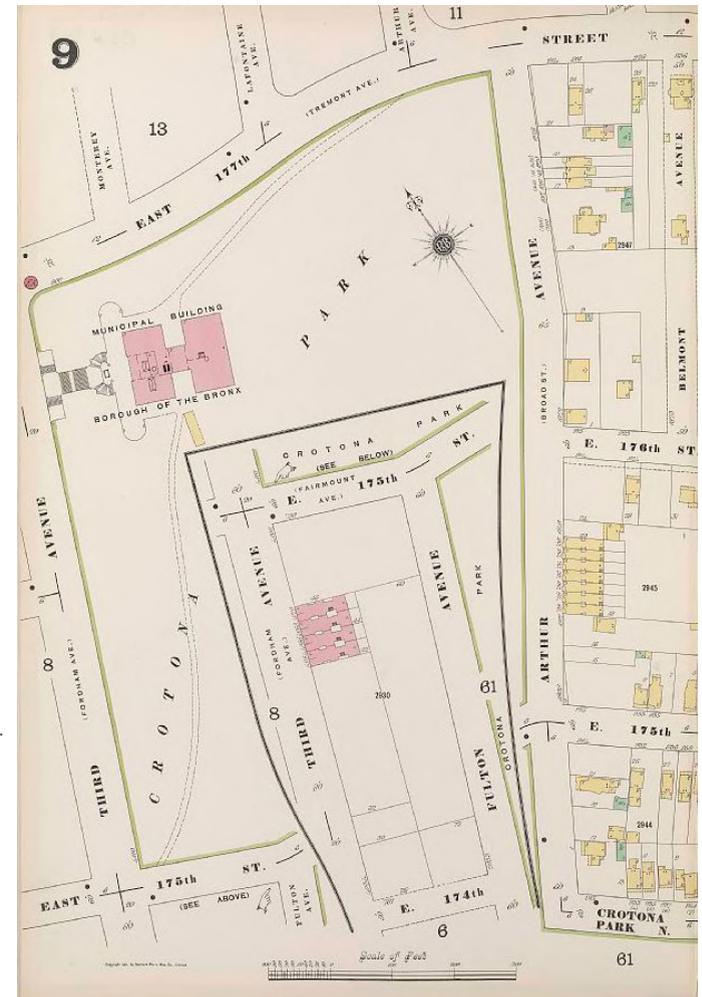
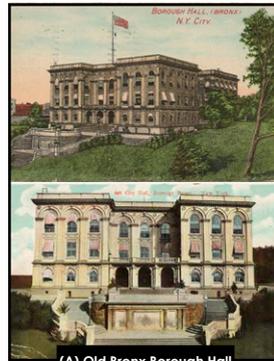


Figure 2. Map of Crotona Park from 1901 Source: Bronx, V. 14, Plate No. 9 [Map bounded by E. 177th St., Arthur Ave., 3rd Ave.]; *Atlases of New York City. / Insurance maps of New York. / Bronx / Atlas 52. Vol. 14, 1901.*



(A) Old Bronx Borough Hall



(B) NYPD Bronx Traffic Enforcement



(C) Xclusive Designs & Yaris Auto Sound



(D) Traore Halal Meat & Bafista Tax Services



(E) Helen Seward Hairstylist



(F) Eagle Academy for Young Men



(G) Bronx Mental Health Clinic



(H) Dunkin Donuts/Baskin Robbin



(I) Icahn Charter Elementary



(J) Crotona Park Center

Key-Ground Floor Use

- Health/Services
- Education
- Retail/Restaurants
- Vacancies



Axonometric View 0 80 200 400 FT

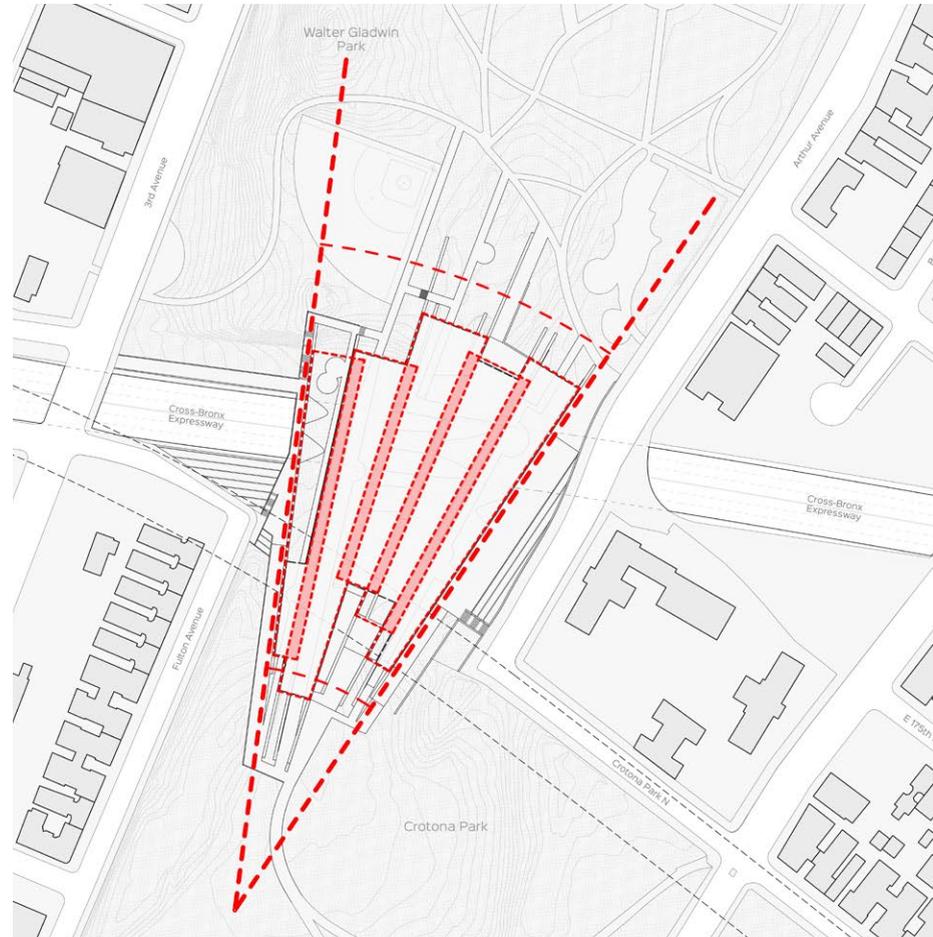
3rd Avenue is a quasi-commercial thoroughfare, with multiple businesses along it. Three schools are along the western edge of the parks as well.

In the interest of activating 3rd Avenue and Fulton Avenue, the grand entrance to the marketplace is positioned on the western side of the market hall.



Axonometric View 0 80 200 400 FT

The strips have varying roof forms. Some slope down into the terrain of each park on either side of the CBE—providing walking paths via their green roofs above and spatially reconnecting the two parks. Other strips peel upwards and provide access directly from the ground level of the market hall.

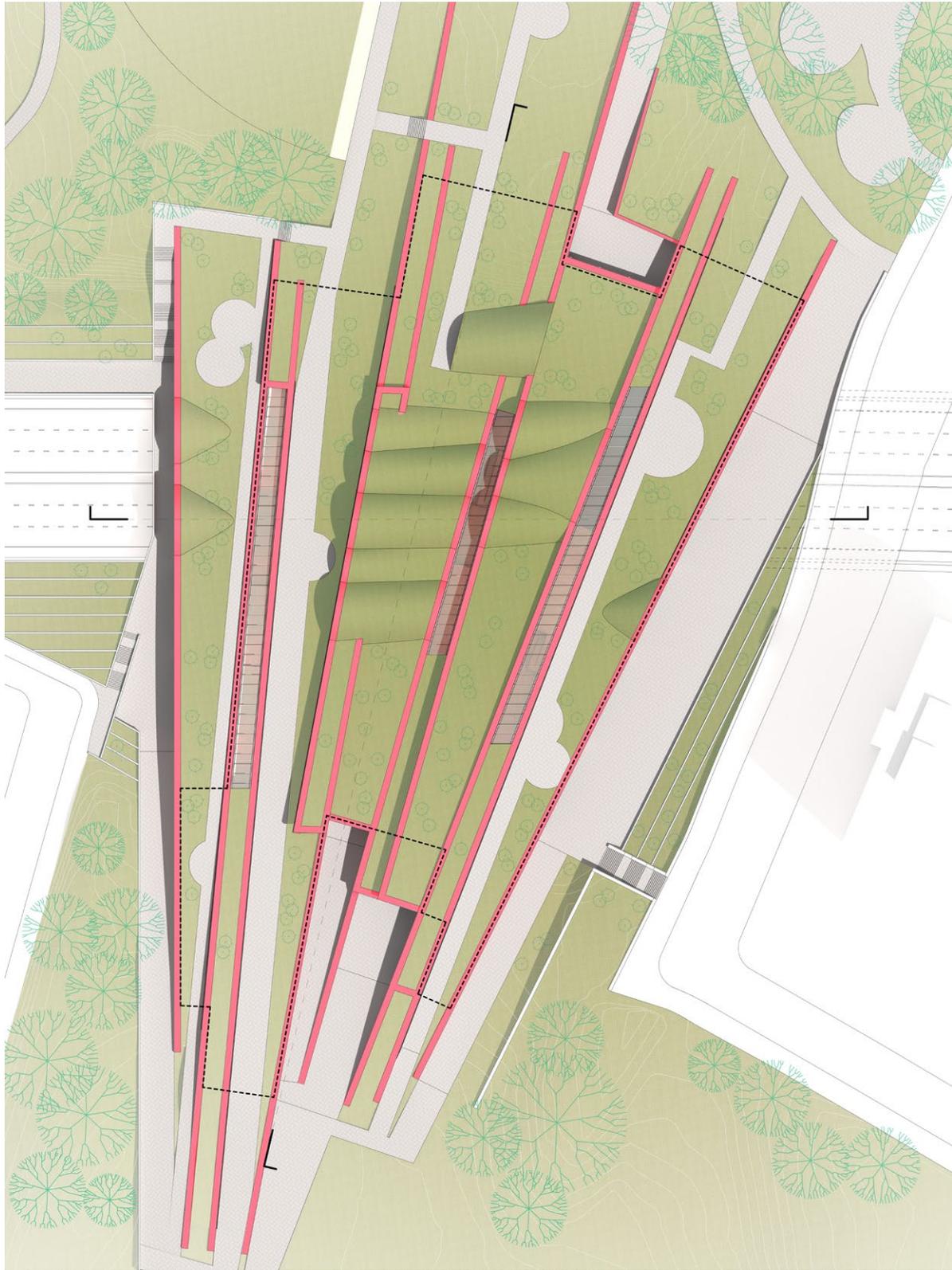


The basic configuration of the new hall takes cues from the site context. Its radial layout is defined by two curves, one perpendicular to the CBE, and the other parallel with Arthur Ave. The strips are laid out in an AB pattern—with the overlaps in the A larger strips resulting in smaller B strips.

The structural grid is taken from the CBE, with the trusses touching down on either side of the CBE. Subsequent horizontal structural gridlines are arrayed outward, parallel to the CBE.



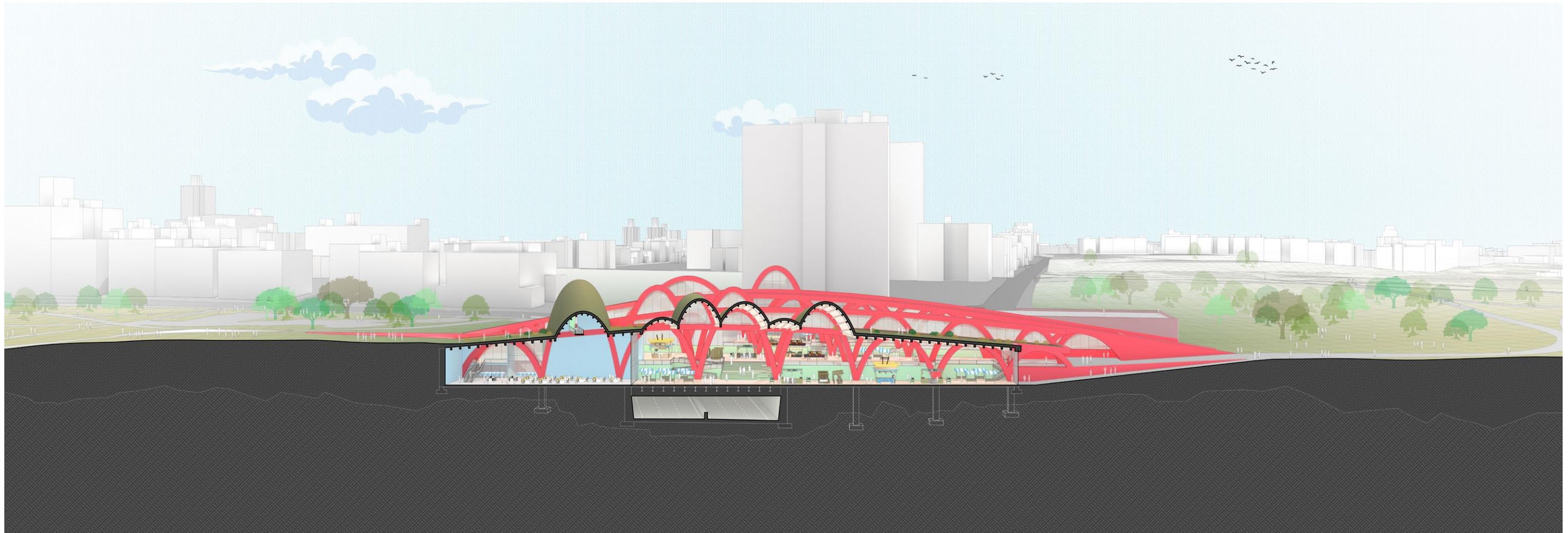
Site Plan  0 100 250 500 Ft



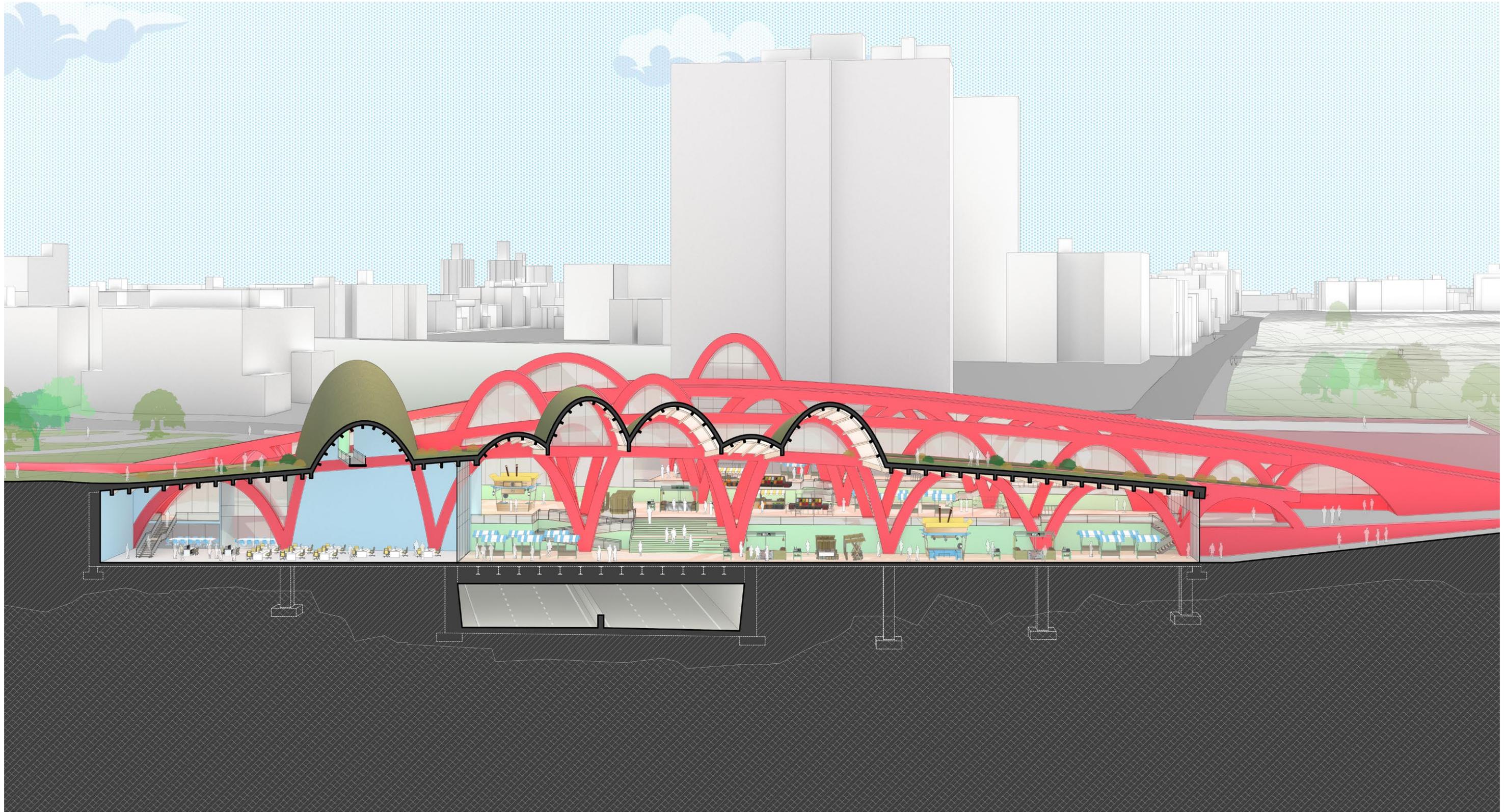
Roof Plan



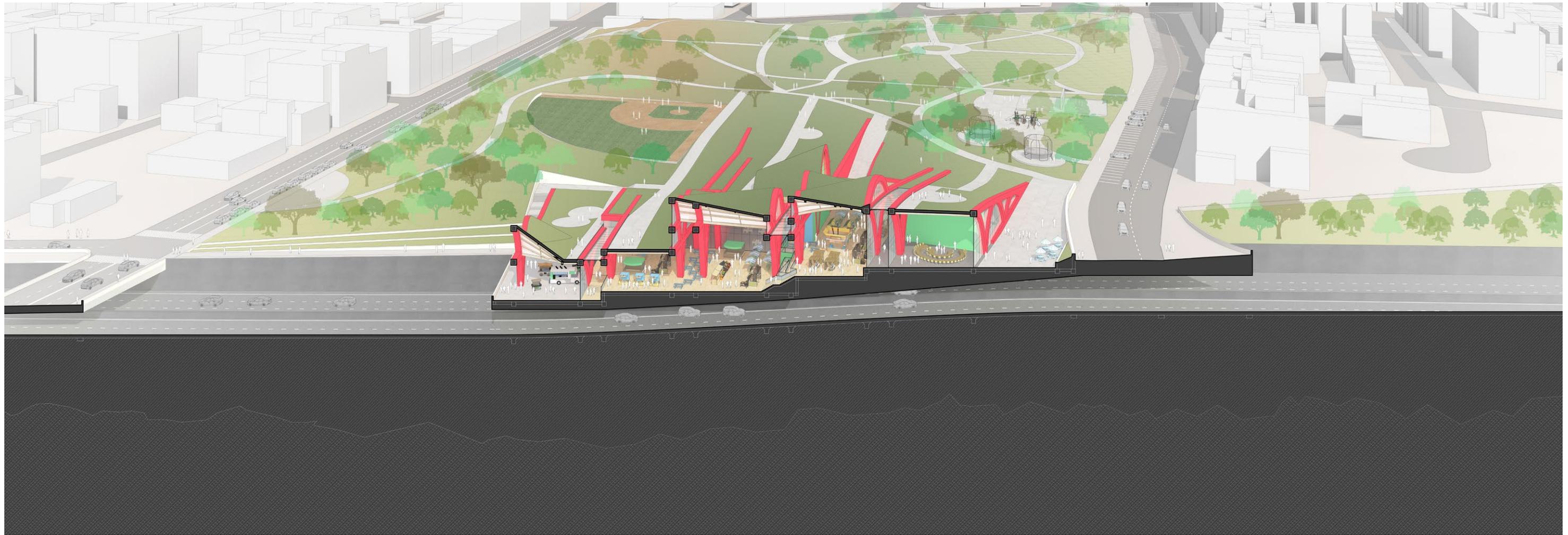
Ground Floor Plan



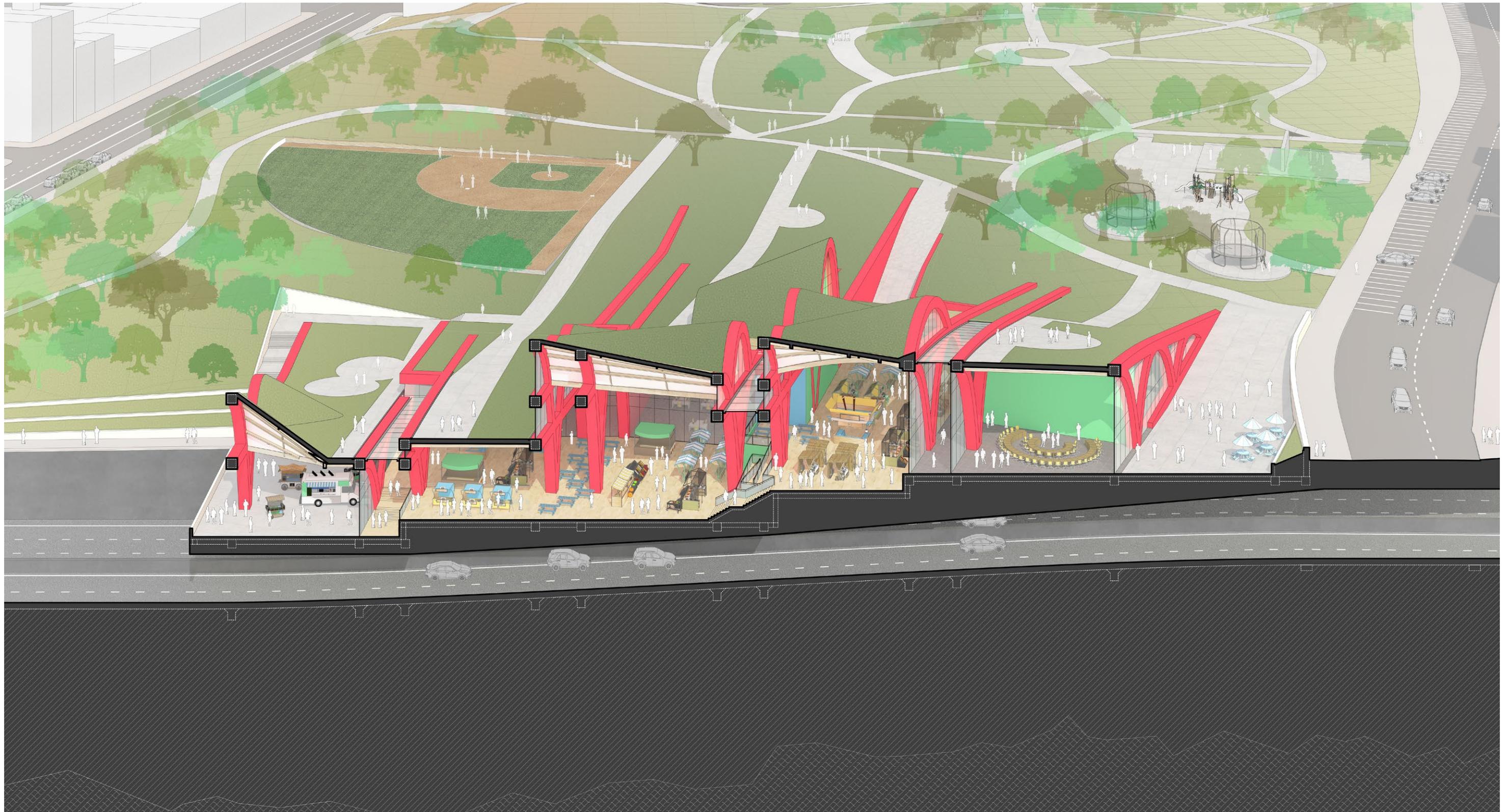
Long Section Perspective 0 20 50 100 Ft



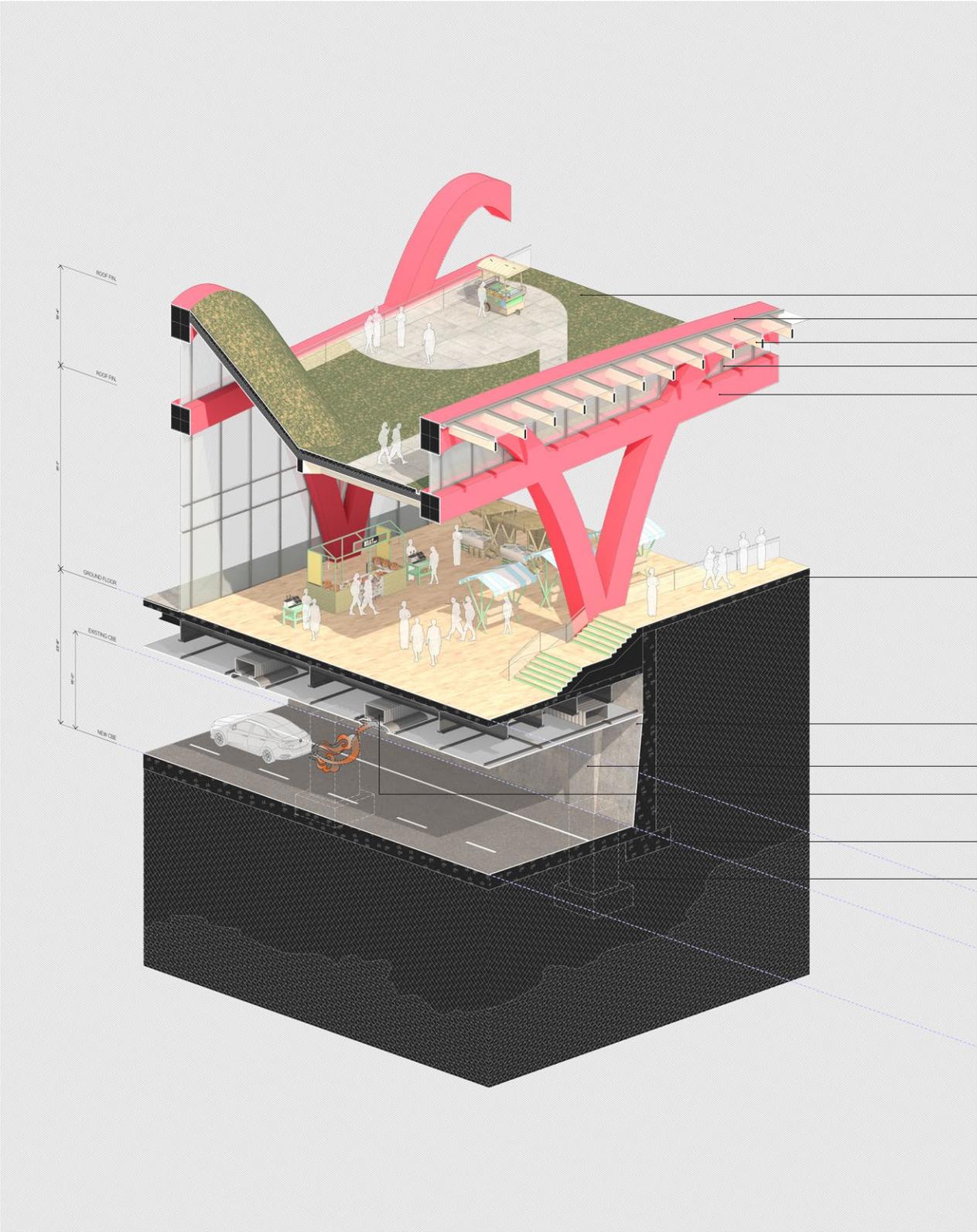
Long Section Perspective 0 10 25 50 ft



Cross Section Perspective 0 20 50 100 Ft



Cross Section Perspective 0 10 25 50 ft



- GREEN ROOF ASSEMBLY, WITH SOIL, SHEATHING, & INSULATION
- ALUMINUM ROOF GUTTERS
- GLULAM BEAMS AT 6'-0" ON CENTER SPACING
- CLERESTORY WINDOWS
- SQUARE SECTION HOLLOW STEEL TUBES WITH PAINTED DRYWALL FINISH

RADIANT FLOOR HEATING IN CONCRETE SLAB

PHOTOCATALYTIC CONCRETE WITH TITANIUM DIOXIDE MIXED IN. WHEN ACTIVATED BY SUNLIGHT, WILL BREAK DOWN NITRIC AND NITROGEN OXIDES

CONCRETE COLUMNS EMBEDDED IN RETAINING WALLS  
AIR PURIFYING SYSTEM SUCKS UP SMOG AND COLLECTS AND STORES FINE DUST PARTICLES

CONCRETE GIRDERS SPANNING THE LENGTH OF THE CBE

ARCHED TRUSSES TRANSFER THE LOAD TO THE CBE RETAINING WALLS AND THE FOOTINGS BELOW

Chunk Section-Axonometric





# Purple Houses



Following the Supreme Court's 2022 decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the plaintiff—the Jackson Women's Health Organization—closed its doors. The JWHO was the last abortion clinic in the state of Mississippi, and it became obsolete almost overnight due to Mississippi's trigger ban. Their former home, the Pink House, was sold. Mississippians are left without access to legal abortions, and many also lack access to basic reproductive and sexual health services, resulting in poor health outcomes with regards to reproductive, sexual, and maternal health.

The Purple Houses is a new healthcare facility and advocacy center in Jackson, Mississippi that provides the full-spectrum of reproductive and sexual health care services, including abortions in the case of the abortion ban exceptions (rape and to protect the life of the birthing person), pregnancy tests, check-ups and cancer screenings, birth control and contraceptives, STI screenings and treatment, gender-affirming care (including hormone treatment therapy), sexual education, and counseling; in addition to office space and gathering spaces for advocacy organizations.

The design of the Purple Houses was driven by 2 key questions. First, how can reproductive healthcare facilities counter political opposition? The site planning seeks to counter political opposition, provide security for care seekers, and provide vibrant public spaces. For security, the main building (which includes the medical spaces, doctor's offices, sexual education, etc.) is surrounded by a perimeter wall at its northern, western, and southern edges. The perimeter wall is pulled back from the site's boundaries, allowing the project to give back to the community with an outdoor amphitheater, rain garden, bioswales, and other interstitial public spaces. Meanwhile, the advocacy center, which is intended as the "public face" of the facility, is placed at eastern edge of the site bordering a major boulevard and large public lawn. The advocacy center serves as the physical intermediary between care seekers and political opposition, and invites public discourse. Inside the perimeter wall, care-seekers, medical workers, and advocates enjoy a dynamic landscape.

The second key question was: how can clinical spaces create a sense of comfort, safety, and vitality for patients? Conventional clinical spaces are sterile, bland, orderly, and hyper-rational. The Purple Houses presents a new model for spaces of care which incorporates domestic forms, soft colors and textures, and curvy quirks to invoke a sense of

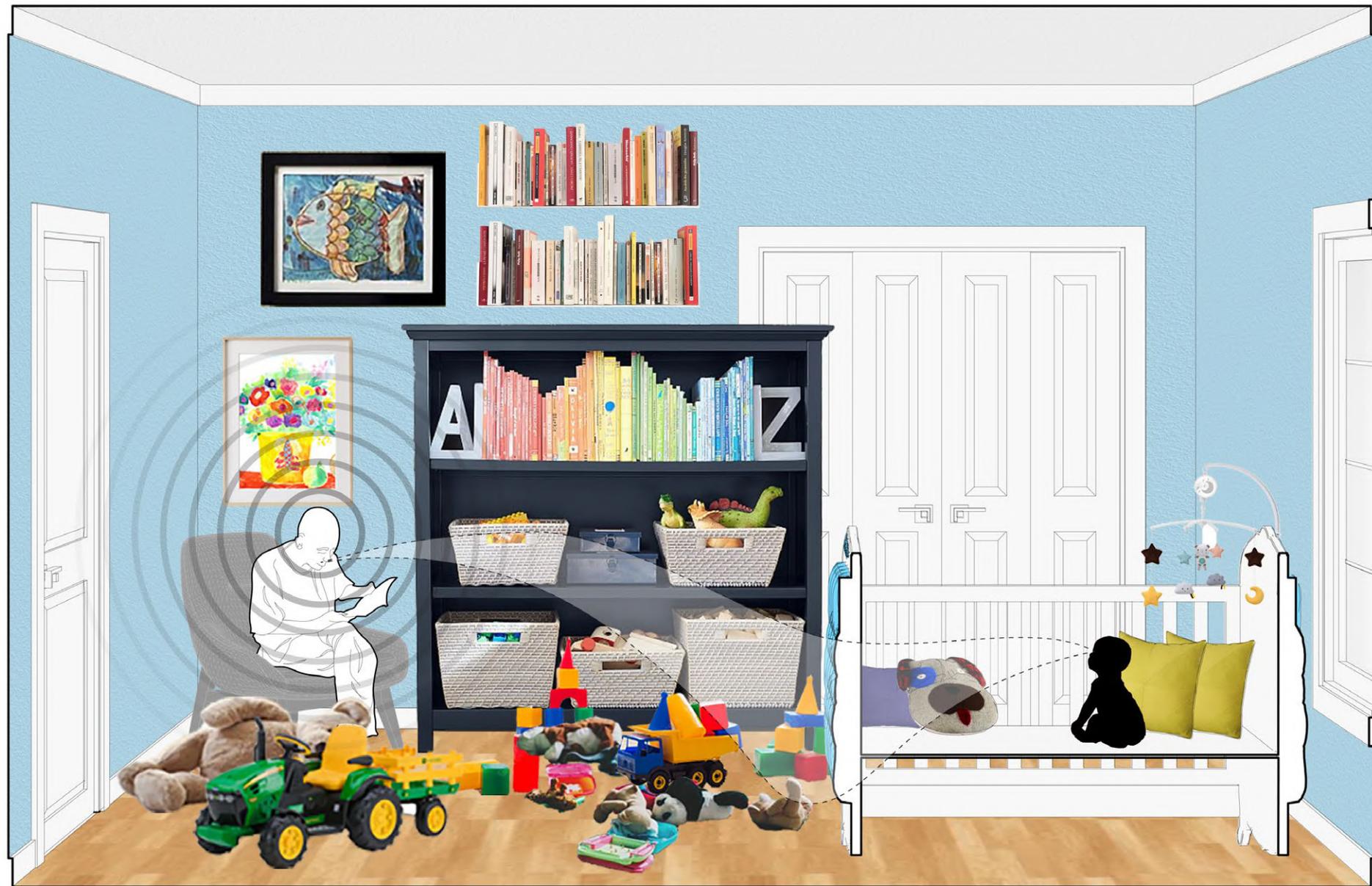
**TERM** Columbia GSAPP MSAAD—Fall Semester (2022)

**STUDIO** Reproductive Justice Studio

**CRITIC** Bryony Roberts

**PROGRAM** Reproductive & sexual healthcare facility & advocacy center

**SITE** 514 E Amite St, Jackson, MS 39201



This drawing represents a positive experience of care—a memory from my childhood of my father reading Harry Potter books to me.



# ROLLING BACK REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE & SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGHS

1974 Gerald Ford | 1977 Jimmy Carter | 1981 Ronald Reagan | 1989 George H.W. Bush

HISTORY OF SEXUAL RIGHTS & TECHNOLOGIES

SC Justices:  
Warren E. Burger  
Byron R. White  
Lewis F. Powell, Jr.  
William H. Rehnquist  
William O. Douglas  
William J. Brennan, Jr.  
Thurgood Marshall  
Harry A. Blackmun  
Potter Stewart

SC Justices:  
Warren E. Burger  
Byron R. White  
William H. Rehnquist  
Lewis F. Powell, Jr.  
William J. Brennan, Jr.  
Thurgood Marshall  
Harry A. Blackmun  
John Paul Stevens  
Potter Stewart

SC Justices:  
Warren E. Burger  
Lewis F. Powell, Jr.  
William H. Rehnquist  
Byron R. White  
Sandra Day O'Connor  
William J. Brennan, Jr.  
Thurgood Marshall  
Harry A. Blackmun  
John Paul Stevens

SC Justices:  
William H. Rehnquist  
Byron R. White  
Sandra Day O'Connor  
Antonin Scalia  
Anthony M. Kennedy  
William J. Brennan, Jr.  
Thurgood Marshall  
Harry A. Blackmun  
John Paul Stevens



1981

The Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA; otherwise known as the “chastity law”) ensured federal funding for abstinence-only sexual education programs, many of which spread misinformation.<sup>17</sup>



1981

AIDS was first identified in the US. AIDS decimated the LGBTQ+ community, killing around 320,000 people between 1987 and 1998. By 1995, 1 in 9 gay men had been diagnosed with AIDS, and 1 in 15 had died.<sup>16</sup>



1987

The first antiretroviral medication for HIV, azidothymidine (AZT) became available.

HISTORY OF REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS & TECHNOLOGIES



1981

IVF (in vitro fertilization) had its first clinical success in the United States.



1984

Resulting from research in IVF, gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT) was developed—allowing for fertilization in the fallopian tubes. IVF has become the far more popular assisted reproductive technology.



1976

Propelled by pro-life Senator Henry Hyde, the Hyde Amendment is a federal policy banning federal funding for abortion. Since 1976, people seeking an abortion have been unable to cover it through Medicaid, a policy which has primarily affected low-income women. As a result, “approximately one-fourth of women who would have Medicaid-funded abortions instead give birth when this funding is unavailable.”<sup>15</sup>



1981

In *Bellotti v. Baird*, the Supreme Court ruled that minors may have access to an abortion without parental notification.



1989

The Supreme Court upheld a Missouri law which defined life at the point of conception and barred public facilities from being used to conduct abortions, and public employees from conducting them. *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* established that viability testing was constitutional, and opened the door for individual states to restrict abortion.

HISTORY OF ABORTION RIGHTS

← RELATED EVENTS ○ EXPANSION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES/ TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS ● RESTRICTION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES/ THREATS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Jacqueline Pothier & Joe Mihanovic

# FEDERAL ABORTION LIMITATIONS & ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

2001 | George W. Bush

SC Justices:  
William H. Rehnquist  
Sandra Day O'Connor  
Antonin Scalia  
Anthony M. Kennedy  
Clarence Thomas  
John Paul Stevens  
Ruth Bader Ginsburg  
David Souter  
Stephen Breyer

2009 | Barack Obama

SC Justices:  
John G. Roberts  
Antonin Scalia  
Anthony M. Kennedy  
Clarence Thomas  
Samuel A. Alito, Jr.  
John Paul Stevens  
Ruth Bader Ginsburg  
Stephen Breyer  
Sonia Sotomayor

HISTORY OF SEXUAL RIGHTS & TECHNOLOGIES

HISTORY OF REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS & TECHNOLOGIES

HISTORY OF ABORTION RIGHTS



**BIRTH CONTROL PATCH**

2002

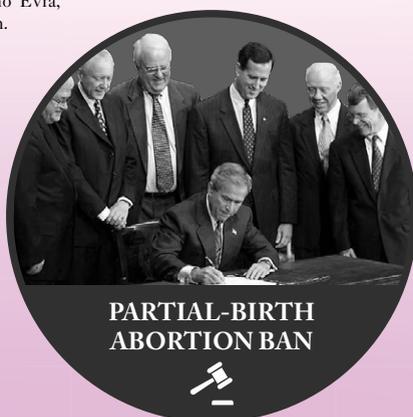
The FDA approved Ortho Evra, the first birth control patch.



**BIRTH CONTROL IMPLANT**

2006

The FDA approved Implanon, a birth control implant.



**PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION BAN**

2003

The Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 was a federal statute that banned partial-birth abortion (also known as intact dilation and extraction). In passing the statute, Congress found that “[a] moral, medical, and ethical consensus exists that the practice of performing a partial-birth abortion... is a gruesome and inhumane procedure that is never medically necessary and should be prohibited.”<sup>20</sup> The act stipulated penalties (including fines or imprisonment) for physicians who performed partial-birth abortions, but it also included exceptions for abortions considered necessary to preserve the health of the birthing person.



**HIV CURE**

2007

Timothy Raw Brown became the first person to be cured of HIV after a stem cell transplant.



**SEXUAL EDUCATION**

2009

The Obama administration transferred funds from the Community-based Abstinence Education Program, and budgeted \$190 million in new funding for two new sex education initiatives: the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP) and the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP).



**GONZALES V. CARHART**

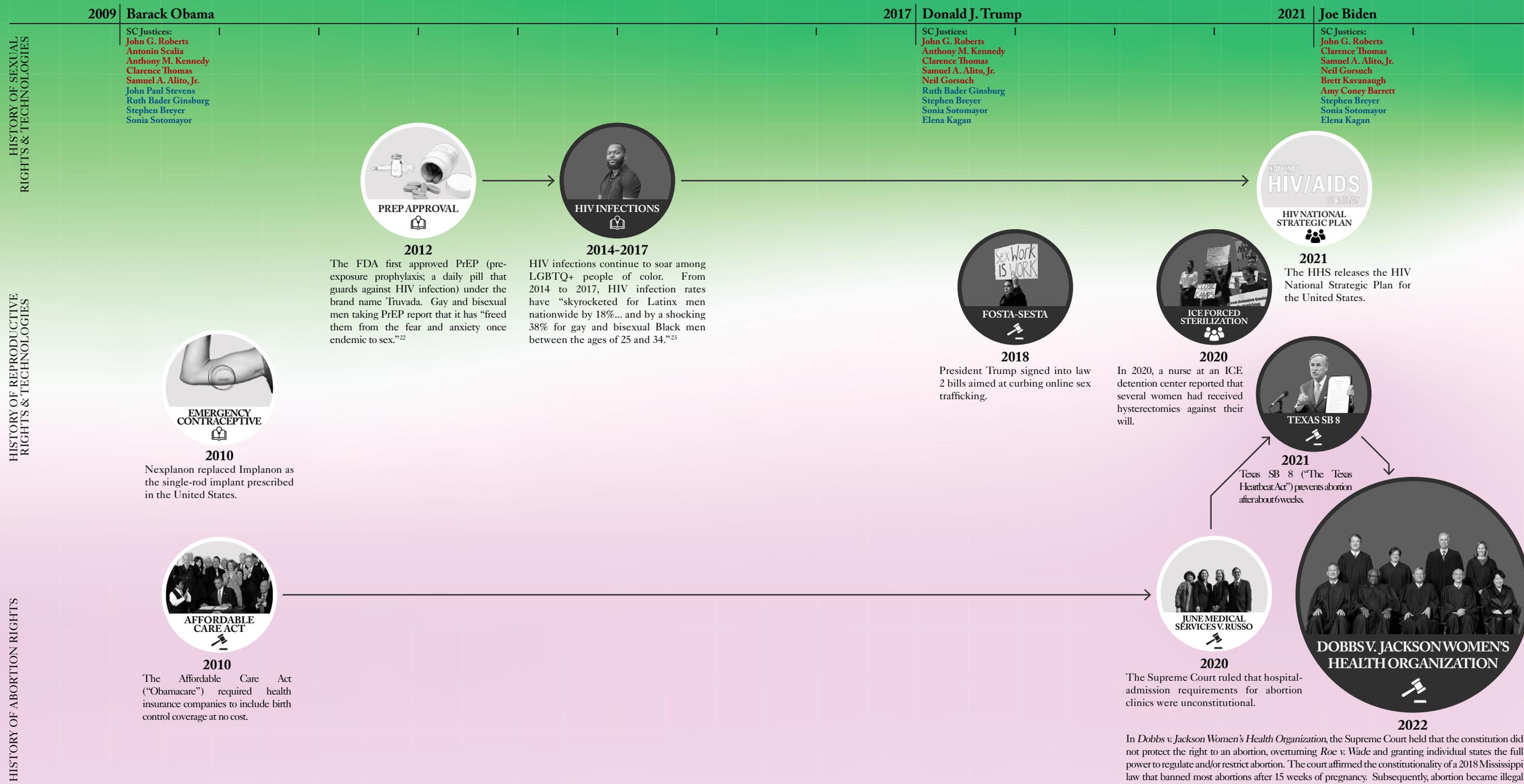
2007

*Gonzales v. Carhart* upheld the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003, the first-ever federal ban on abortion methods. The court overturned a key principle of *Roe v. Wade*, that the birthing person’s health remain paramount, and held that the “state’s interest in promoting respect for human life at all stages in the pregnancy” could outweigh the birthing person’s interest in protecting their own health, setting a precedent for future rulings.<sup>21</sup>

← RELATED EVENTS   ○ EXPANSION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES/ TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS   ● RESTRICTION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES/ THREATS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Jacqueline Pothier & Joe Mihanovic

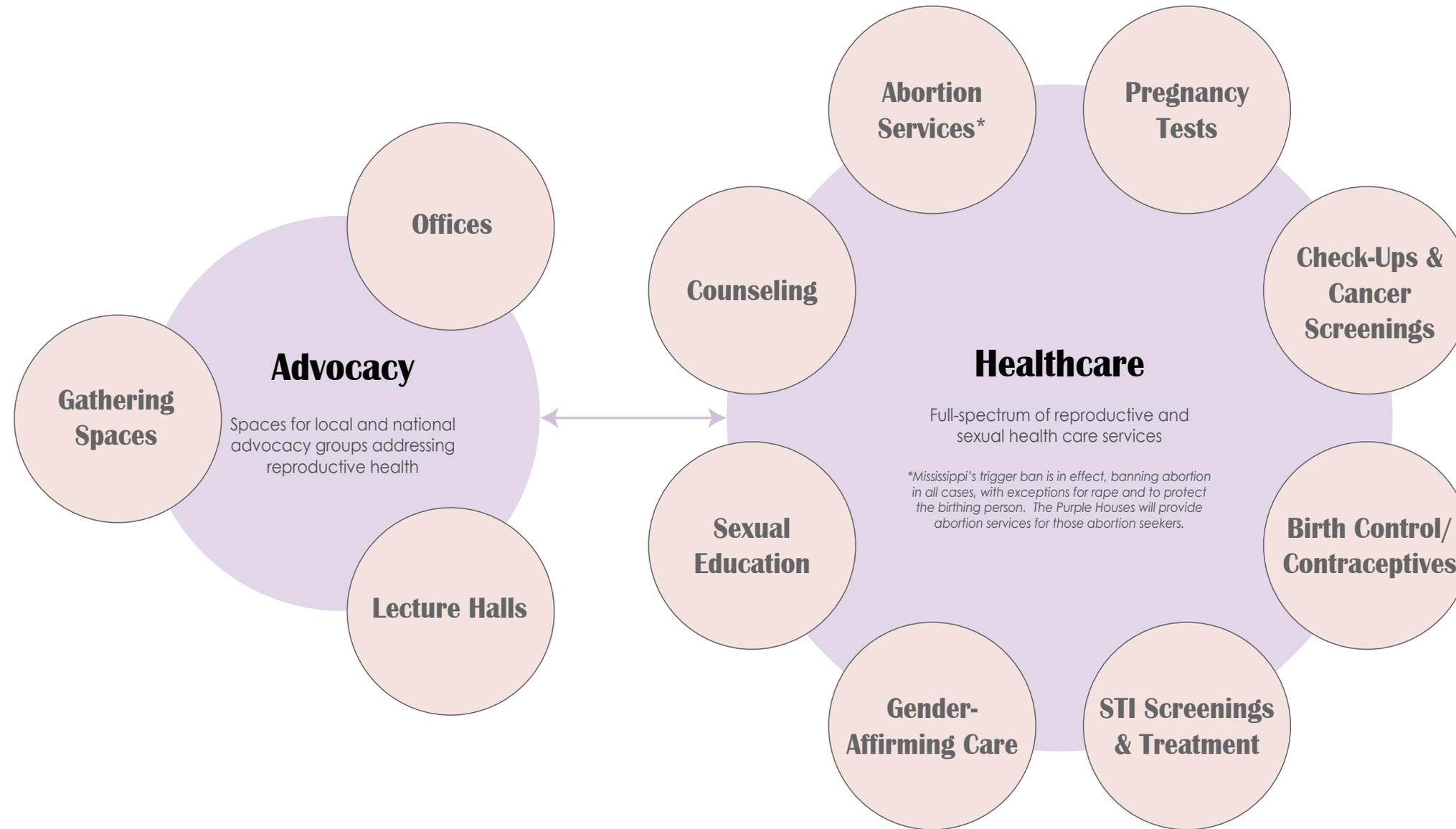
# THE ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE SUPREME COURT



← RELATED EVENTS   ○ EXPANSION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES/ TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS   ● RESTRICTION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES/ THREATS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Jacqueline Pothier & Joe Mihanovic

# Program



# Network of Care



## Local Network Jackson, Mississippi



### Advocacy

Spaces for local and national advocacy groups addressing reproductive health

### Healthcare

Full-spectrum of reproductive and sexual health care services

*\*Mississippi's trigger ban is in effect, banning abortion in all cases, with exceptions for rape and to protect the birthing person. The Purple Houses will provide abortion services for those abortion seekers.*



### Information Exchange



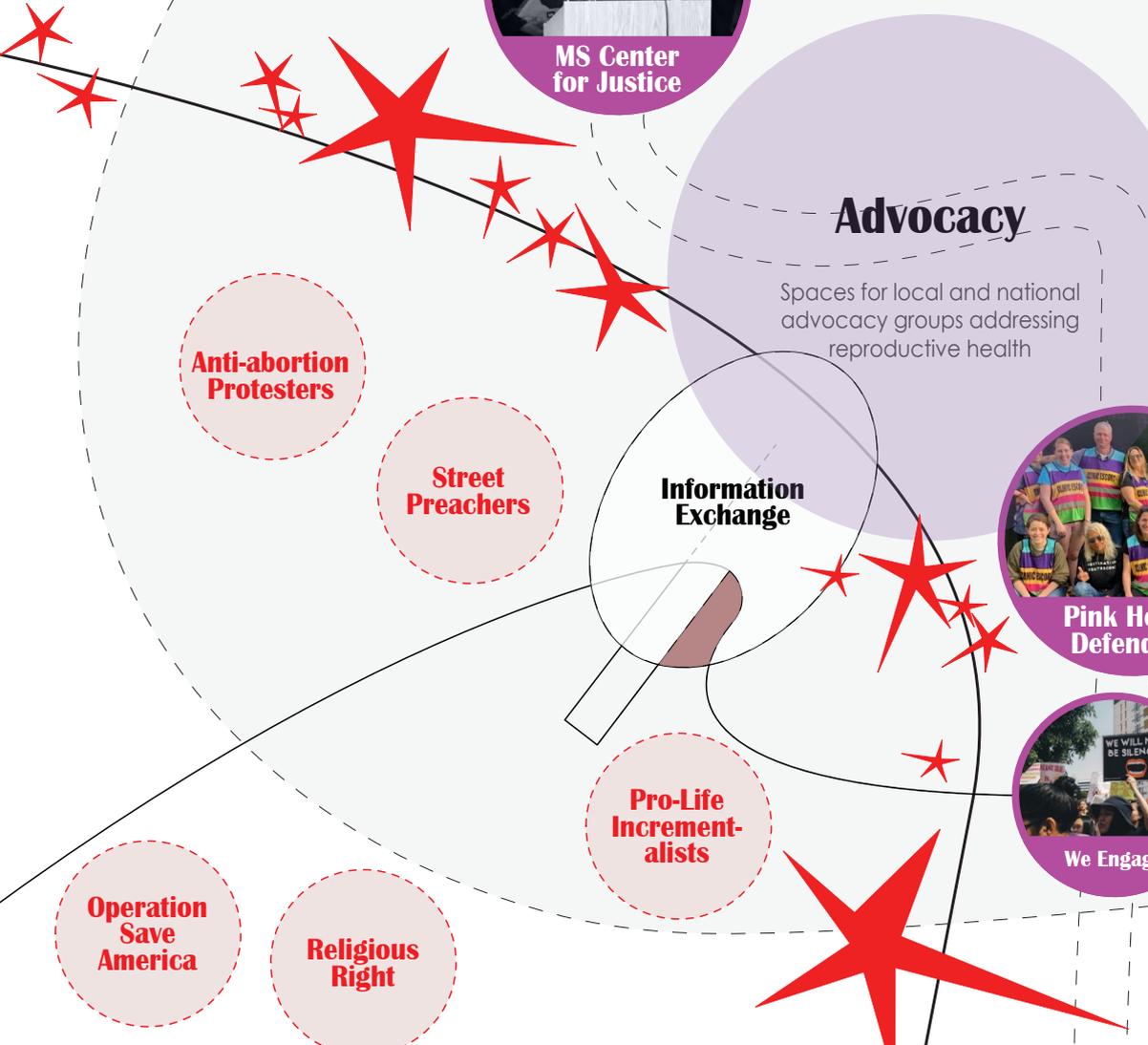
Anti-abortion Protesters

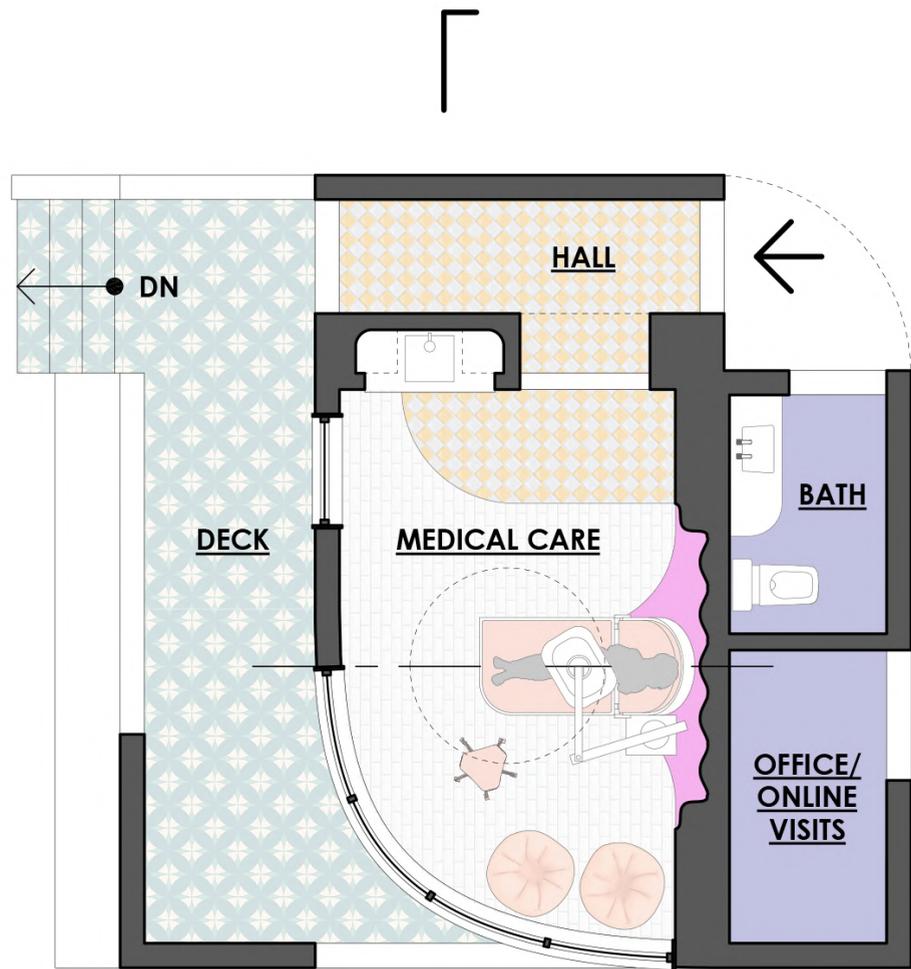
Street Preachers

Pro-Life Incrementalists

Operation Save America

Religious Right





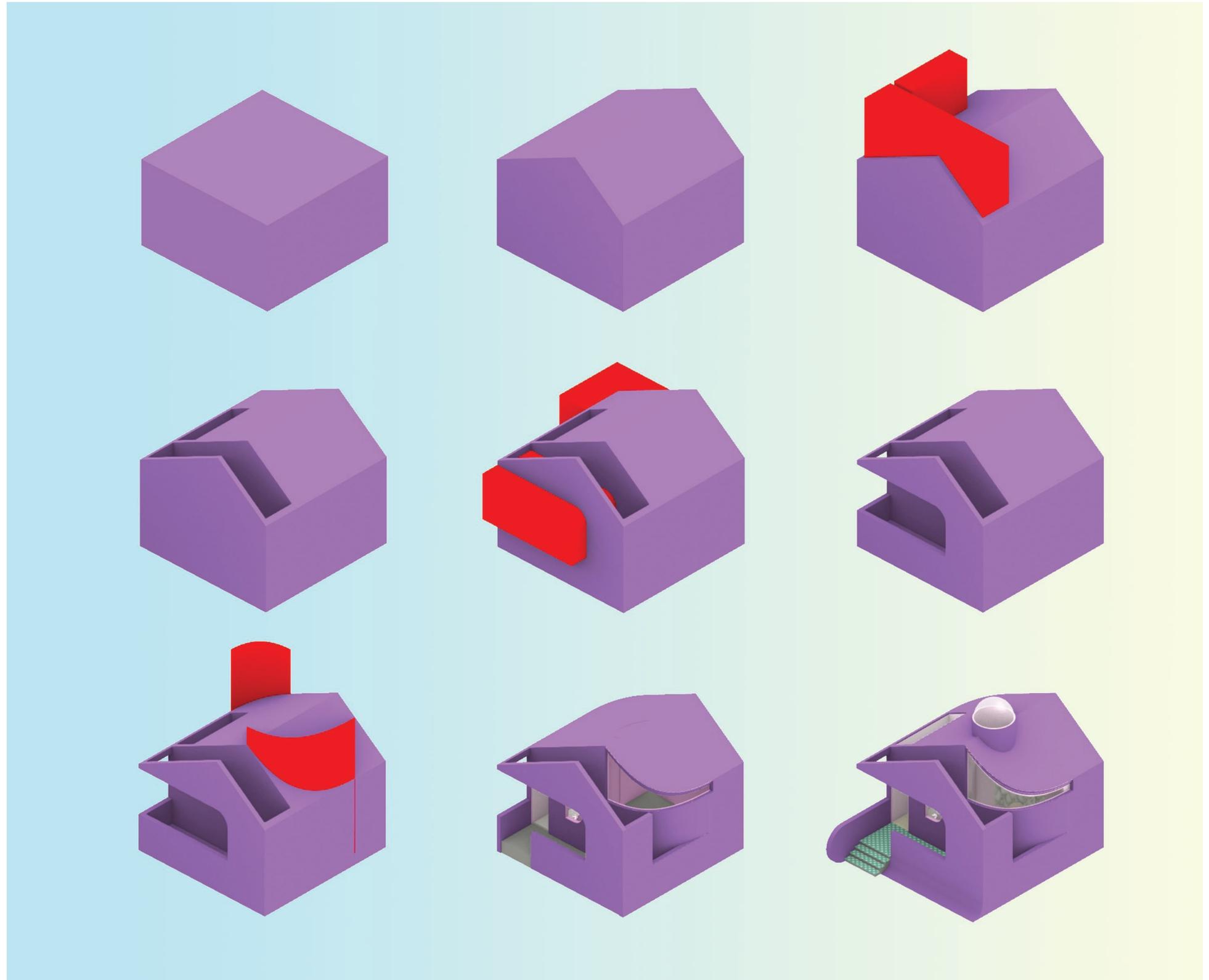
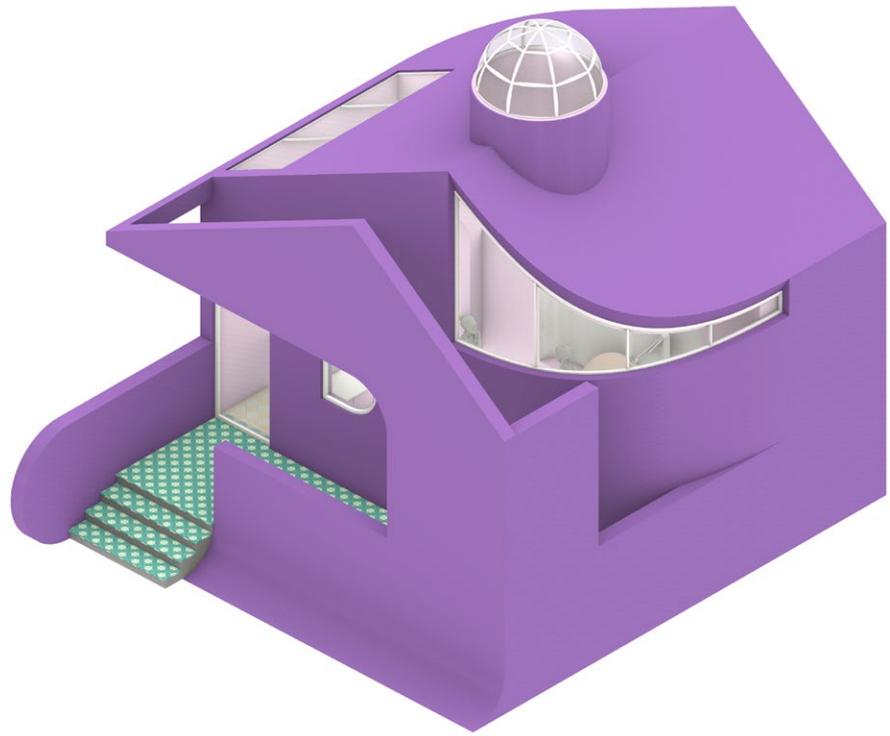
Floor Plan 0 2 5 10 FT

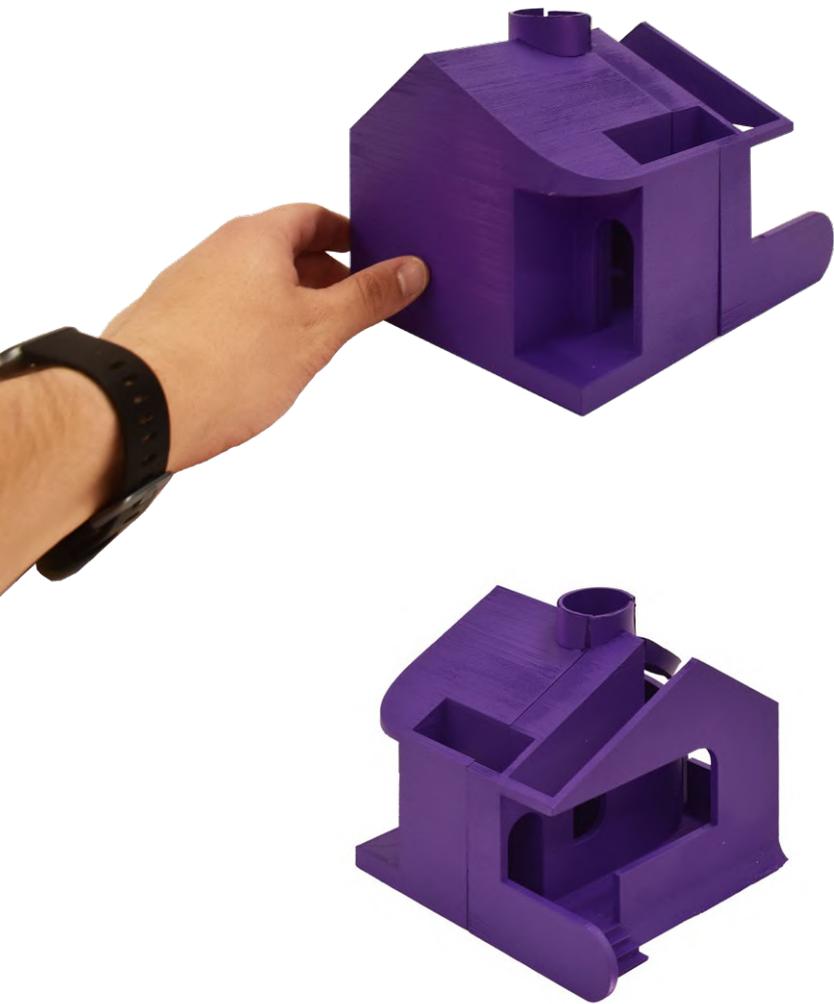
A 'Purple House' is an adaptable medical space for administering various reproductive health services, including abortions.



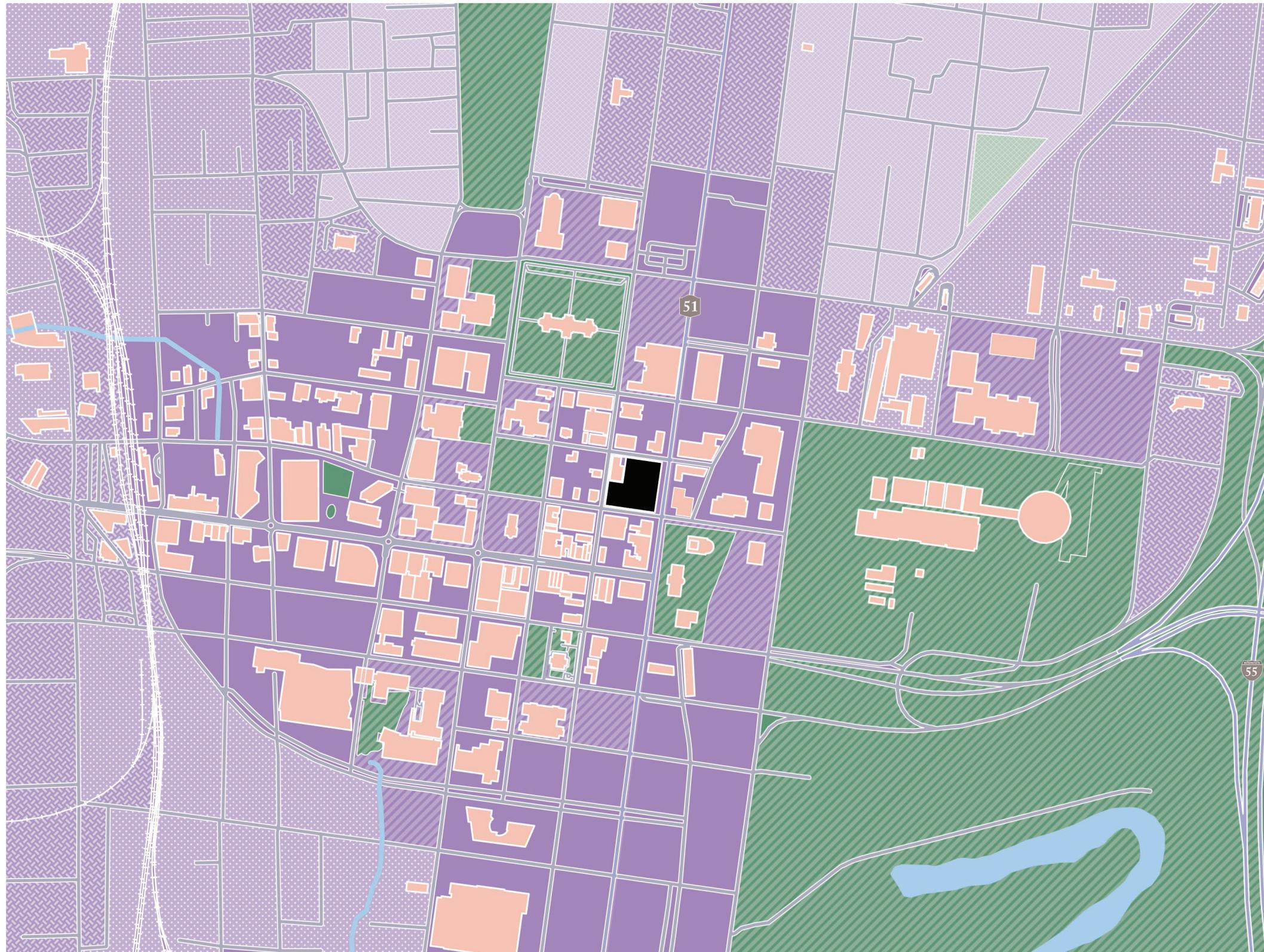
Cross Section

The gable roof massing invokes the image of domesticity, an image which is transformed by a series of moves. The roof ridge is pulled off center, and penetrated by a half-dome skylight. The wall behind the exam table is indented with an arched opening. Meanwhile, beans bags and button-tuck textures soften the interior.





Early 1/2" = 1'-0" study model, annotated with section cut



The site for the new Purple Houses is an empty parking lot near downtown Jackson in the cultural and commercial hub of the city, right off a freeway exit.

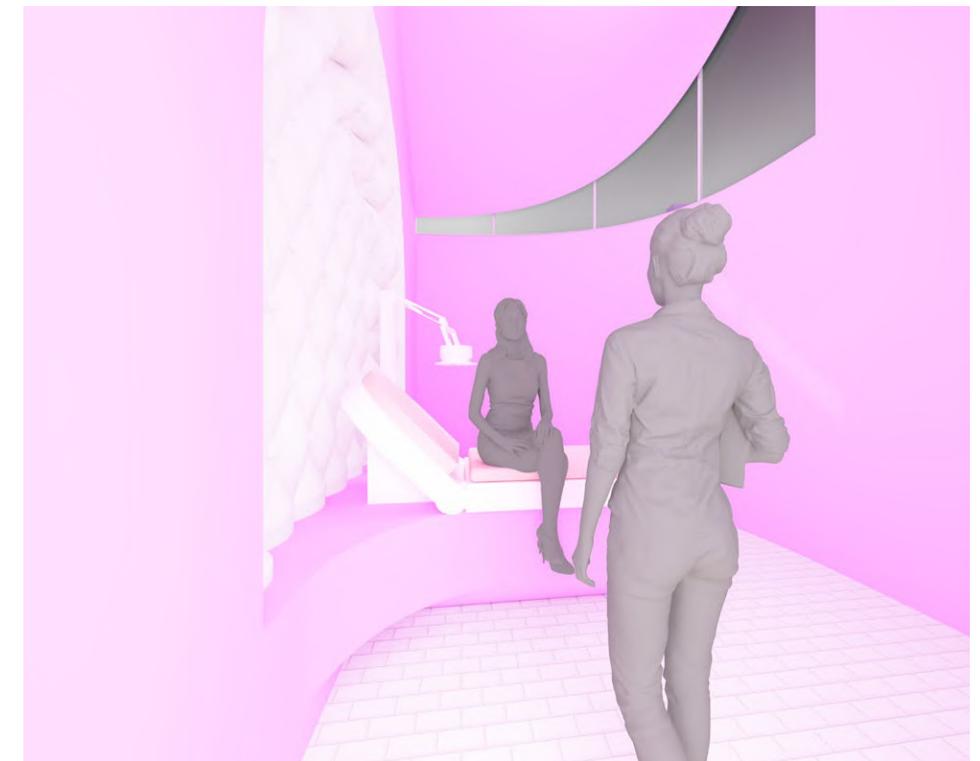
-  R-Residential
-  SUD-Special Use District
-  I-Industrial
-  C-Commercial
-  CDB-Central Business District

Zoning for Jackson, Mississippi



Site Plan 0 10 25 50 100 FT







Final 1/16" = 1'-0" model

# Planning Socialism

## Mass Housing in Postwar Prague

TERM Spring 2023

COURSE Architecture and Socialism

PROFESSOR Reinhold Martin

From the Syllabus:

Historically, socialism has been—and remains—an international project. In architecture, this project has most commonly been studied through the building programs and urbanism of the Soviet bloc and more recently, through Soviet-led development programs. Widening the frame globally, the seminar will study the architecture of a loosely defined, heterogeneous, and often contradictory "socialist international" throughout the twentieth century, in cases ranging from national economic planning to postcolonial development to municipal housing. To do so, we will introduce examples from around the world—Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa, and North America—in which state policies, building types, construction methods, design practices, political ideologies, and architectural theories have offered systemic alternatives to capitalist hegemony. Such work has been variously associated with communist, socialist, and social democratic regimes or ideologies, some of which have been revolutionary and others reformist in character. Taking each on its own terms and critically in context, and emphasizing links between them, we will ask in each case how architecture meets political economy, guided by the socialist project.

**"The initial designs for Jižní Město balanced a functional demand to meet material needs with robust, utopian ideals for town planning."**

### Introduction

Away from the medieval castles, Gothic cathedrals, and cobblestone streets of Prague's picturesque historic core, the paneláks quietly provide the real life of the city. Once derided as nightmarish relics of the city's communist past and now resurrected in the general public perception, the paneláks—cheaply-produced buildings constructed of prefabricated concrete panels—have a rich history eminently intertwined with the political history of Czechoslovakia. The city's largest panelák housing estate (and the country's, for that matter) is the massive Jižní Město development, sitting in the southern outskirts of the city. At the time of writing Jižní Město (or "South City") houses about 100,000 people—about 8% of the city and 1% of the entire country. More than just a functional abode, Jižní Město occupies an oversized presence in the public imagination and epitomizes the mass housing estates dotted around former Czechoslovakia, even serving as the setting for the popular 1980 tragicomedy film *Panelstory*, which depicted the social ills and cramped conditions of Communist mass housing.

Initially designed in the mid-1960s and built from the early 1970s through the Velvet Revolution, Jižní Město underwent several substantial changes from planning to execution. Studying the history of Jižní Město elucidates the agency (or lack thereof) of Czechoslovak architects and planners in the postwar era and how their building projects were driven by the political conditions of the country and the stance of the state. Propelled by the energetic radicalism of the architects and planners of the Czechoslovak state agencies, the initial designs for Jižní Město balanced a functional demand to meet material needs with robust, utopian ideals for town planning. After the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the optimism of these early plans was extinguished, and a state crackdown on architects and planners initiated a new era of mass housing defined by dull, hyper-functional construction. Jižní Město I was born from this dull hyper-functionalism and featured very few of the affordances and very little of the social-mindedness of the original designs. Learning from the mistakes of Jižní Město I, Jižní Město II was a substantial improvement, with a greatly diversified urban plan and superior landscaping. But neither project was executed in its entirety, and neither achieved the lofty ideals of its authors. Eventually falling into disrepair, Jižní Město would serve as a symbol of the communist housing block. But a closer look at the project's development over time reveals an intriguing story intricately linked with the history of socialism in Czechoslovakia.

### Planning Socialist Housing

Czechoslovakia emerged out of World War II largely unscathed, the medieval monuments of its historic capital untouched by the ravages of war. In 1945, it was the Soviets—not the Americans—who liberated Prague from Nazi Germany, and they did so with theatrical flair, triumphantly parading their hammer-and-sickle-adorned tanks through the streets. Together the brutality of the Nazis, the West's abandonment of Czechoslovakia and the signing of the Munich accords in 1938, and this liberation by the Soviets ripened the Czechoslovak population for radicalism, bolstering the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), which already represented a plurality of the electorate. After leading coalition governments for a few years following World War II, the KSČ staged a coup d'etat and formed a people's republic in 1948. With support of the Soviets, the KSČ crushed internal opposition and nationalized industry. Czechoslovakia would remain within the Soviet sphere of influence until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.

**"Jižní Město underwent several substantial changes from planning to execution. Studying the history of Jižní Město elucidates the agency (or lack thereof) of Czechoslovak architects and planners in the postwar era and how their building projects were driven by the political conditions of the country and the stance of the state."**

With the ascendancy of the KSČ, the fields of architecture and urbanism were radically transformed. The Construction Nationalization Act of 1948 merged all private building firms into a single state corporation, with all architectural offices absorbed into a single entity, Stavoprojekt. The architects of the new state entity, many of whom participated in or were influenced by the radical prewar Functionalist discourse led by Karel Teige and others, and many of whom were radicals themselves, found themselves in a remarkable historical moment. As Ana Miljački outlines, "the Czechoslovak architectural field—summoned to build Socialism and literally construct the state—consistently and dynamically interpreted elements of Socialism's master narrative and historical conditions in order to fulfill its own ideological and historical role."<sup>1</sup> In the initial post-coup years, Stavoprojekt was

<sup>1</sup> Ana Miljački, *The Optimum Imperative: Czechoslovak Architecture for the Socialist Lifestyle, 1938–1968* (1st ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2017), 6.



Figure 1. The town center of Jižní Město. Jaromír Čejka, "Panorama Hájů" Photograph. 2015. From Lucie Skřivánková et al., *Paneláci 1: padesát sídlišť v českých zemích: kritický katalog k cyklu výstav Příběh paneláku*. (Praha: Uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum, 2016), 226-227.

Figure 2. The paved backyards of Jižní Město apartments. Jaromír Čejka, "Haje" Photograph. 2015. From Skřivánková et al., *Paneláci 1*, 228.

Figure 3. Photograph of Stavoprojekt workers. "ČSSZ n.p. Stavoprojekt: our builder." *Architektura ČSR 8* (1949).

predominantly engaged in organizing and executing housing projects, as it sought to alleviate the acute housing crisis.

Stavoprojekt's functionalist project departed sharply from the interwar years of Czechoslovak architectural discourse, which were largely marked by socialist realist aesthetics, despite Karel Teige and others' contributions. Socialist realist discourse was prevalent even in the initial post-coup years; the second issue of the 1948 series of *Architektura ČSR* (the largest architectural journal in the country) endorsed the conclusions from the 1948 Conference of All-State Communist Construction Workers: "The new road we have embarked upon is the road of truth and hard facts. The road of Socialist realism in architecture is a progressive step and a higher level of hitherto efforts."<sup>2</sup> Yet there was a disconnect between Czechoslovak architecture's ostensible socialist realism and its actual execution, as seen in Czechoslovak architects' apparent "disinterest in the aesthetic dimension of architecture."<sup>3</sup> Subsequent issues of *Architektura ČSR* heralded standardization and industrial production, as many of the architects of Stavoprojekt assumed new roles as managers (rather than designers) of building projects.

Around 1952 and 1953, socialist realism received renewed interest, as Czechoslovak theorists questioned the role of architecture in constructing a new socialist identity. Architects received a new mandate to create socialist aesthetics in the production of buildings and cities. But this was short-lived; Nikita Khrushchev's 1954 speech to the All-Union Conference of Builders, Architects, and Construction Workers entitled "On Wide-Scale Introduction of Industrial Methods, Improving the Quality and Reducing the Cost of Construction" was a definitive turning point in Czechoslovak architecture. Khrushchev's speech was largely a call for the increased production and widespread use of reinforced concrete and prefabricated concrete parts throughout the Soviet Union; but it also solidified a new ideology of building construction. Decrying the perceived wastefulness of the building and design industries, Khrushchev declared:

A common feature of construction in this country is wastage of resources, and for this a large part of the blame rests with the many architects who use architectural superfluities to decorate buildings built to one-off designs.

Such architects are a stumbling block in the way of industrializing [sic] construction. In order to build quickly and

successfully, we must use standard designs in our building, but this is evidently not to the taste of certain architects...

If an architect wants to be in step with life, he must know and be able to employ not only architectural forms, ornaments, and various decorative elements, but also new progressive materials, reinforced-concrete structures and parts, and, above all, must be an expert in cost-saving in construction.<sup>4</sup>

Dealing a crucial blow to socialist realism, the speech empowered architects throughout the Soviet sphere—including those at the Stavoprojekt—to discard frivolous aesthetic concerns and instead refocus on the tangible affordances provided by architecture. In Czechoslovakia, it sparked a significant reorientation of architectural practice, as Czechoslovak architects first hustled to interpret Khrushchev's speech, and eventually rallied around the main task articulated by Khrushchev, which later became the title for Otakar Nový's January 1955 article; "To build cheaper, more durably, and more beautifully!"<sup>5</sup> Industrial methods of construction favoring standardized parts, already featured in Czechoslovak construction at the time, were soon implemented on a wider scale.

**"Dealing a crucial blow to socialist realism, the speech empowered architects throughout the Soviet sphere—including those at the Stavoprojekt—to discard frivolous aesthetic concerns and instead refocus on the tangible affordances provided by architecture."**

The country's housing crisis, which was most acute in the initial postwar years in the Sudetenland (the formerly Nazi-occupied territories), persisted in Prague as well through at least the early 1960s, when many city residents did not have access to adequate living facilities

4 Nikita Khrushchev. "On Wide-Scale Introduction of Industrial Methods, Improving the Quality and Reducing the Cost of Construction." Speech to the All-Union Conference of Builders, Architects, and Construction Workers 1954. In T. P. Whitney (Ed.) (1963). *Khrushchev Speaks. Selected Speeches, Articles, and Press Conferences, 1949–1961* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press), 153–192.

5 Miljački, *The Optimum Imperative*, 110.

(bathrooms, central heating, etc.).<sup>6</sup> Stavoprojekt research institutes began imagining standardized housing blocks and innovating new methods of prefabricated panel construction. Born out of this research, wide scale construction of the paneláks began in earnest in the 1950s. Massive housing estates were constructed throughout Prague as well as broader Czechoslovakia, reaching their "qualitative peak" in the 1960s with the Lesná estate in Brno or Dablice and Invalidovna in Prague.<sup>7</sup> After the Warsaw Pact invasion of Prague in 1968, state control over the building industries had disastrous consequences, ushering in a new "technocratic phase"<sup>8</sup> of panelák construction, in which a renewed hard-line control over the building industries disempowered architects, resulting in uninspired and somewhat inhumane massive housing estates, which were inconsiderate of aesthetic sensibility or the cultural heritage of their sites. Jižní Město's initial designs and initial construction straddled 1968, and this unfortunate circumstance makes it an excellent test case for the role of the state in planning and executing the paneláks.

**"After the Warsaw Pact invasion of Prague in 1968, state control over the building industries had disastrous consequences, ushering in a new "technocratic phase" of panelák construction, in which a renewed hard-line control over the building industries disempowered architects, resulting in uninspired and somewhat inhumane massive housing estates, which were inconsiderate of aesthetic sensibility or the cultural heritage of their sites."**

6 Petr Roubal, "The Crisis of Modern Urbanism under the Socialist Rule: Case Study of the Prague Urban Planning between the 1960s and 1980s." *Czechoslovak Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 6 (2018), 110.

7 Martina Koukalová, "Panel Forms over Time: Towards a Periodisation of Panel Housing Estates." From Lucie Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks: Twenty-Five Housing Estates in the Czechoslovak Republic* (Praha: Uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum, 2017), 31.

8 Koukalová, "Panel Forms over Time," 41.

9 Koukalová, "Panel Forms over Time," 41.

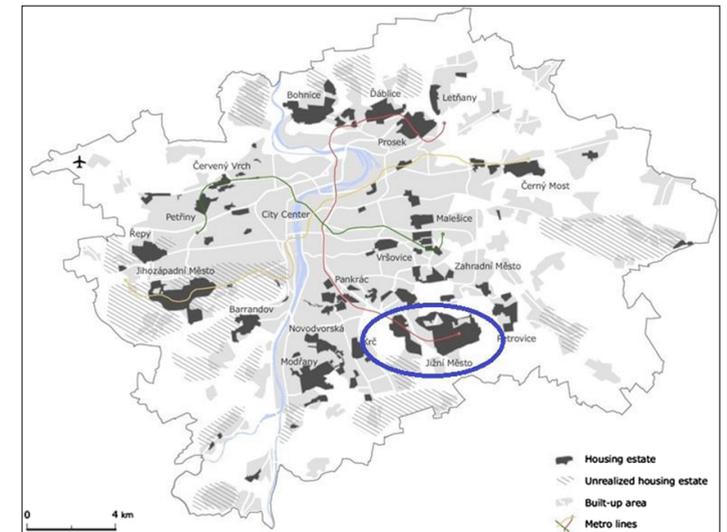
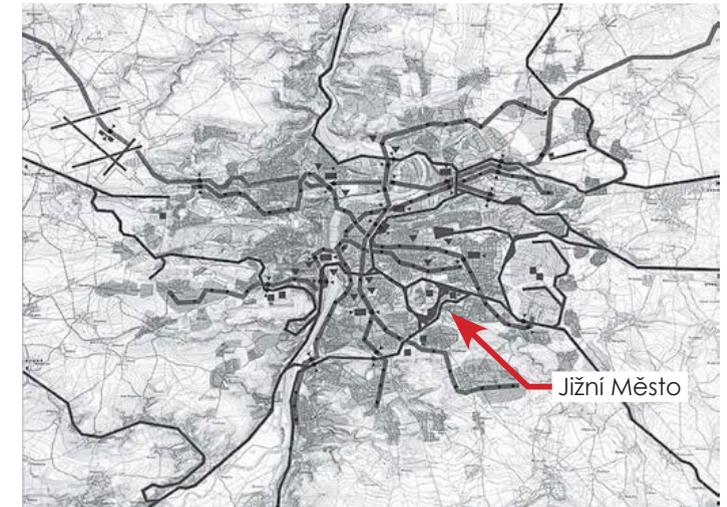


Figure 4. Prague-Central Bohemian Agglomeration Spatial Plan. Design of Public Transport Network, 1970. Zdroj: Archives of the Prague Institute of Planning and Development. Annotated.

Figure 5. Location of Jižní Mesto housing estate within the urban environment of Prague. Martin Ouredníček and Zuzana Kopecká, "Towards ordinary quarters: the development of housing estates in Prague after transformation." *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* (2021): 10.1007/s10901-021-09891-4.

2 *Architektura ČSR* 2 (1948). (Ana Miljački, Trans.). From Miljački, *The Optimum Imperative*, 95.

3 Miljački, *The Optimum Imperative*, 95.

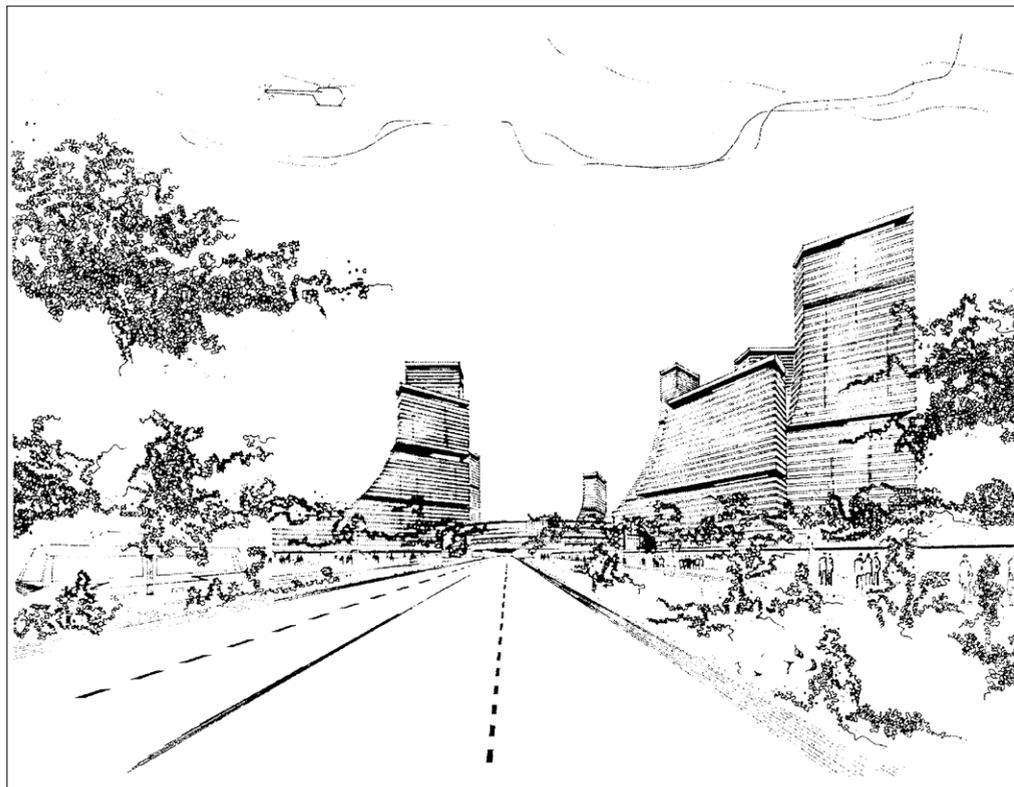
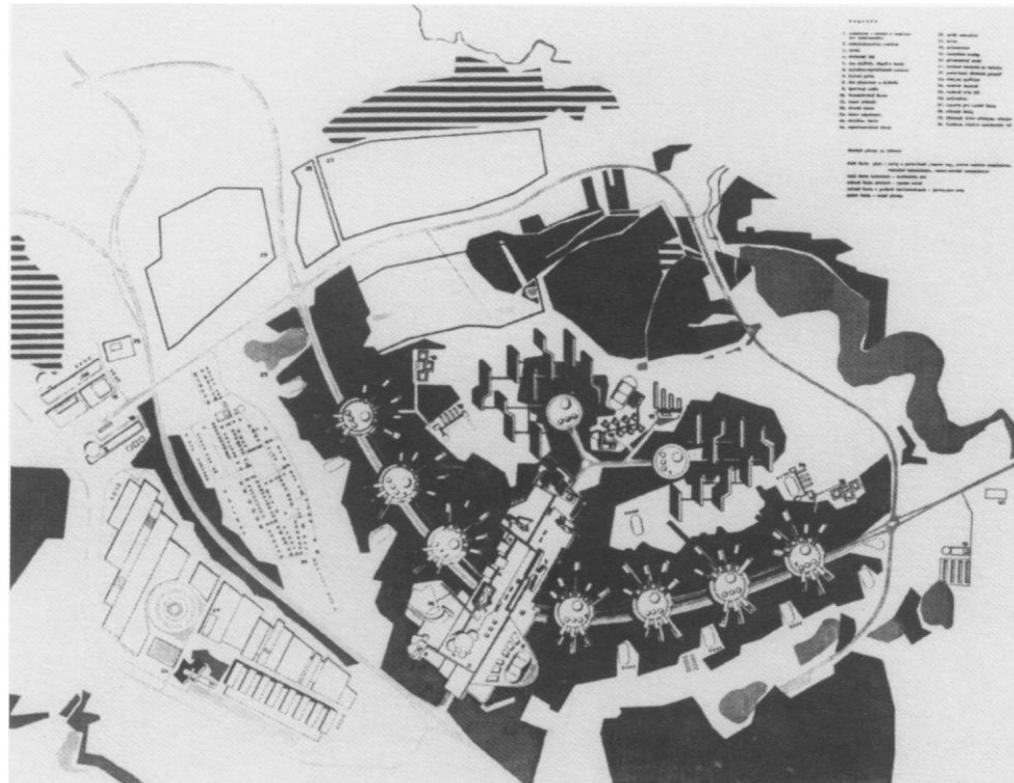


Figure 6. National competition entry for the new town of Jižní Město by Peter Lizon, et al., held in 1966. Lizon, "The Unhappy Heritage," 108.

Figure 7. Perspective views of the Peter Lizon et al. proposal.

## Planning Prague

In the initial postwar years, the capital city was not a major focus of the state, having been untouched by war. Instead the KSČ focused on developing the industrial center of Ostrava, the modernization of Slovakia, and the resettlement of the Sudetenland following the expulsion of the Germans.<sup>10</sup> In the post-Stalin years, the Czechoslovak government turned its attention to the development of Prague, setting guidelines for future construction which became the basis for the new Prague master plan (1951-1964), which "took the first steps towards ensuring the planned connection between the city and the neighboring [sic] region."<sup>11</sup> Several years later, the Prague-Central Bohemian agglomeration master plan sought to bolster Prague's economy by reforming its industrial, service, and educational systems.

Drawing on the teachings of Marx and his interpreters, Czechoslovak planners regarded the scientific-technical revolution as the animating force for ushering in new dynamics of housing and social life in Prague. Leading a team of experts on behalf of the Central Committee of the KSČ, philosopher Radovan Richta foretold the need for professional specialization, modernization of the education system, and expansion of leisure time within a new system of decentralized economic management in his *Civilizace Na Rozcestí*, which was subsumed into the ideological apparatus of the KSČ. Richta's theory of modernization became the basis for the creation of the Prague-Central Bohemian agglomeration master plan. Aiming to carve a new social mobility for Prague city residents, the plan sought new integrated housing and transport systems that simultaneously provided material needs and promoted individual freedom throughout the territory. Planners understood the Prague-Central Bohemian agglomeration as an "integrated organism in which all components form a single economic, physical, and social space."<sup>12</sup>

The final master plan, executed by a group led by architect Jiří Hruža, incorporated the modernist principle of concentrically-arranged single-function zones which had guided the planning of Prague since the 1920s. Within the city, the plan proposed the "establishment of areas for tertiary-sector workplaces and housing" and a "reorganization of the housing system with extensive social implications."<sup>13</sup> To protect the greenery of Prague, the planners decided on a satellite model for new

10 Dita Dvořáková, "What Will You Be Like, Prague of the Year 2000? The Prague – Central Bohemian Agglomeration Plan in the Context of Political Changes at the Turn of the 1960s and the 1970s," *Architektura & Urbanismus Journal of Architectural and Town Planning Policy* 56, no. 1-2 (2022): 52.

11 Dvořáková, "What Will You Be Like," 52.

12 Dvořáková, "What Will You Be Like," 54.

13 Dvořáková, "What Will You Be Like," 55.

development, in which new developments concentrated around old ones. Additionally, the urban planning concept was closely tied to the largely rail-based public transport system. Hruža's team proposed reinforcing the existing rail network with suburban transit lines as well as roads, to minimize the commute from peripheral settlements to the urban core of Prague.

**"Planners understood the Prague-Central Bohemian agglomeration as an 'integrated organism in which all components form a single economic, physical, and social space.'"**

The Prague-Brno motorway provided an excellent pre-existing transportation infrastructure for Jižní Město. In 1964, a directive development plan included the creation of a new residential district under that name in the southern portion of Prague, at the city's periphery like the rest of the panelák housing estates. Several agricultural villages and enclaves of villas built during the interwar period occupied the space already; these would eventually be incorporated into the plans for Jižní Město. Coupled with the pre-existing motorway, the hospitable terrain of the area, populated by streams, ponds, rolling hillsides, and large forests (including the adjacent Hostivařský Forest Park), made it suitable for residential neighborhoods.

## Planning Jižní Město

In 1966, a public urban planning competition for the design of Jižní Město ("South City") was held. The initial competition garnered 41 proposals, after which several additional rounds of competition followed. Many of the initial proposals were guided by utopian ideals of urban living. Designers imagined an almost self-sustaining urban ecosystem of varied buildings and plentiful greenery in the form of parks and nature preserves.

One losing proposal from 1966, designed by Peter Lizon in collaboration with Peter Gal and Stefan Popluhar, featured a series of 7 megastructures to house 80,000 people. The design proposed maisonette-type apartment units and a town center consisting of recreational and educational facilities. The jury chair, Jiří Voženílek, included the design in an analysis in *Architektura ČSR*, though ultimately the scheme was deemed "too extreme."<sup>14</sup> But the prevailing schemes in the initial rounds of the competition were no less bold.

14 Peter Lizon, "The Unhappy Heritage of Communist Mass Housing," *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (1996), 108.

In the first round of the competition, the highest prize was awarded to Jan Krásný and his team. Krásný and his team, along with 6 other competitors, were invited to revise their initial designs in the second round of the competition, with the deadline set for February 1967. In the second round, two projects were awarded—"one setting out a linear urban axis with extremely tall buildings (up to thirty floors), and the other with a centralized [sic] composition and a wide range of typologies for the residential structures."<sup>15</sup> Initially, the two awarded teams were slated to collaborate on a land-use plan for Jižní Město, but the two teams produced comparative studies, and ultimately Krásný and his team were chosen to produce the final detailed land-use plan.

**"Krásný and his collaborators put forth grand new visions for a fully-integrated, well-balanced, and beautiful housing estate. The designs were strikingly sculptural and abstract, even as their political aims were grounded by the functionalist goal of housing production."**

Completed in 1968, the land-use plan from Krásný's team divided the area east of the Prague-Bрно motorway into 4 distinct zones—Háje, Chodov, Litochleby, and Opatov—with their own unique urban characteristics. Meanwhile, the area west of the motorway (which would eventually become Jižní Město II) was designated for manufacturing, a university, a hospital, and recreation. The plan integrated the planned new construction of Chodov and Litochleby into the original colonies of small single-family houses, and the buildings were designed to rise and fall with the natural terrain. A model by Krásný's team from 1967-1970 demonstrates the roof lines of the buildings rising and falling in accordance with the site conditions; the city centers organized as concentrated areas of high rise buildings. These initial designs reveal both a utopian idealism and a humanistic environmental sensibility. Charged by the revolutionary politics of the 1960s and underwritten by the Stavoprojekt, Krásný and his collaborators put forth grand new visions for a fully-integrated, well-balanced, and beautiful housing estate. The designs were strikingly sculptural and abstract, even as their political aims were grounded by the functionalist goal of housing production. This dynamism is apparent in both the model and in the early concept sketches.

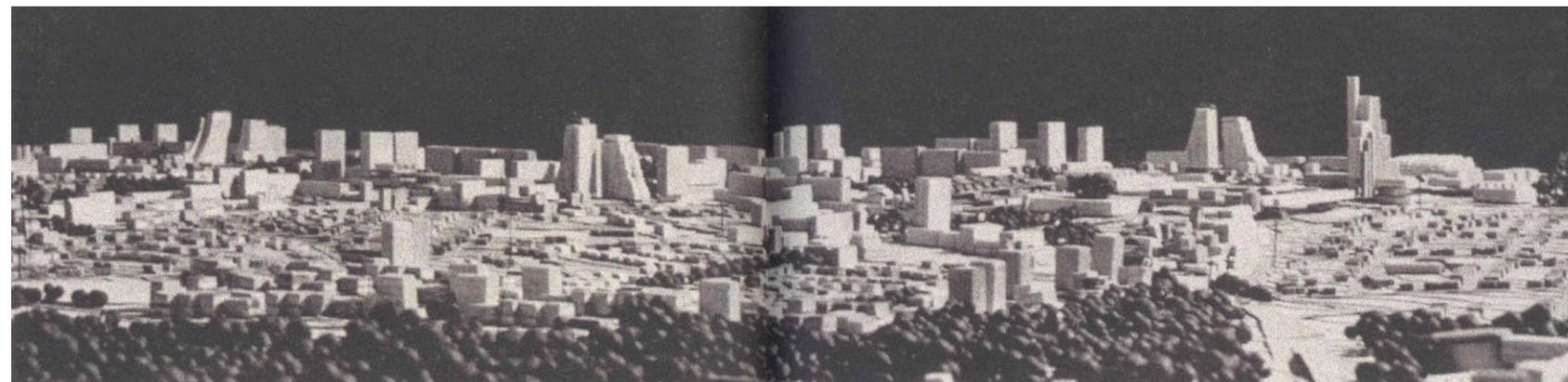
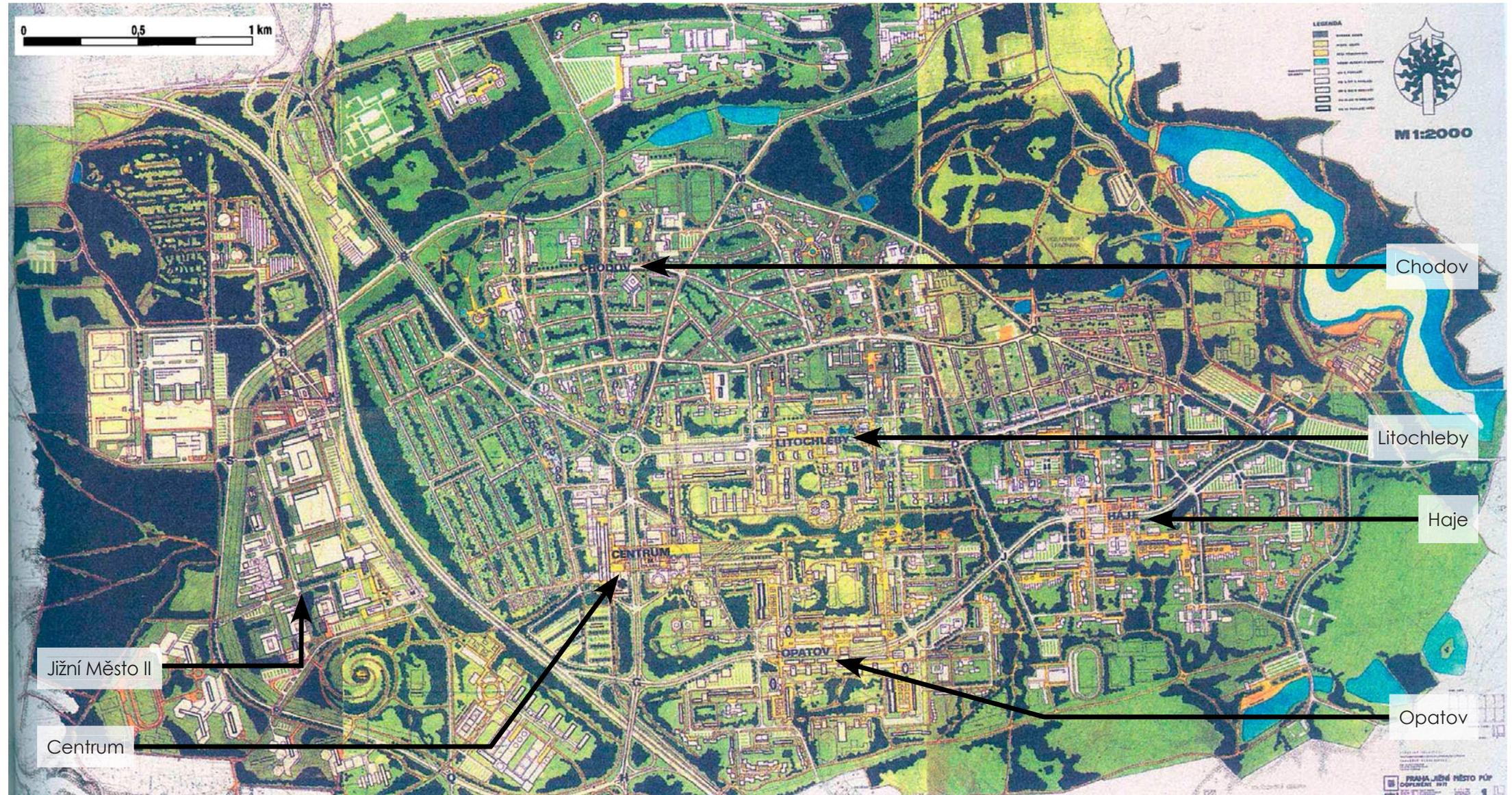


Figure 8. Layout plan from 1971. Lucie Skřivánková et al., *Paneláci 1*. Annotated.

Figure 9. Jan Krásný et al.'s model for Jižní Město, 1967-1970, showing the architects' original ideas of creating local centers with high buildings, while the edges of the estate merge into the landscape. Lucie Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks: Twenty-Five Housing Estates in the Czech Republic*. (Praha: Uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum, 2017), 40.

15 Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 170.

The Centrum was a crucial component of the Jižní Město masterplan, designed to provide for the public life of the development. The architects imagined a vibrant town center with multiple uses organized around a central park, as shown in the sketch from Krásny. At the Centrum a string of public amenities and a hotel eventually culminated in a “quiet zone” of the park, with a network of pedestrian paths connecting various residential sections.<sup>16</sup>

Jižní Město's initial designs employed variegated roof forms, multi-use zoning, and spatial and formal play to imagine a new Czechoslovak socialism. Although clearly influenced by utopian thinking, the designers were not naive to the pitfalls of bureaucracy and the practical concerns of construction. Tempered by the shortcomings of other mass housing developments in the city, they delivered prescient warnings for Jižní Město's potential failings. As summarized by Skřivánková et al.:

Not only the authors, but also other experts from the highest ranks of the architectural professional repeatedly stressed the unique opportunity for this project to take instruction from the many flaws and failures of several already realized [sic] housing estates. All of the participants were aware of the threat of mono-functionality (bedroom suburb), architectural monotony, the lack of employment opportunities directly on the estate, insufficient shops and services, poor transport connections and [the lack of] walkways or landscaping.<sup>17</sup>

### Executing Jižní Město I

Ultimately, the architects' fears were confirmed. Mired by economizing bureaucratic compromises, the plan of Jižní Město would face the same fate as the other Czechoslovak mass housing estates planned in the 1960s, “dissolved into monotonous mediocrity.”<sup>18</sup> The violent defeat of the Prague Spring by the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968 marked a major juncture in the architectural and urban planning disciplines. The ensuing Normalization period brought significant repression over all artistic work and a vastly intensified state oversight of the building industry. Many architects, planners, and designers were ousted from their roles at the Stavoprojekt, and many more were seemingly cut off from public commissions by the authorities. Moreover, the architecture of the 1960s—even the well-intentioned quasi-functionalist mass housing projects—was widely criticized for its perceived formalism, which was deemed out of

<sup>16</sup> Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 170.

<sup>17</sup> Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 170.

<sup>18</sup> Koukalová, “Panel Forms over Time,” 41.

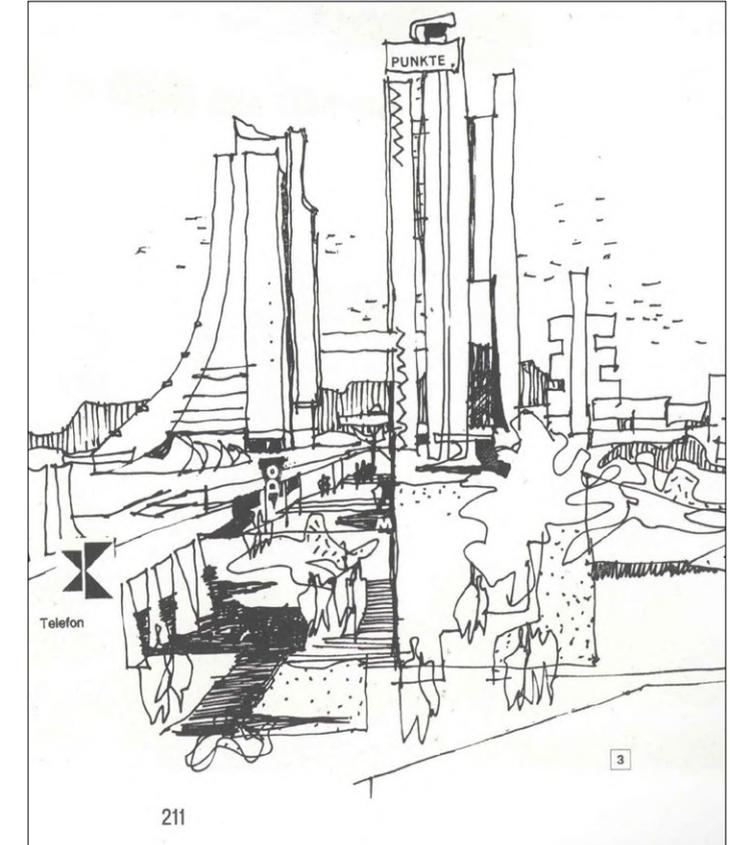
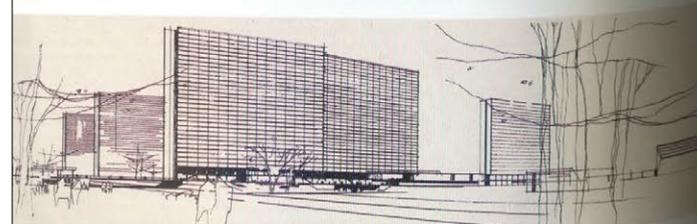
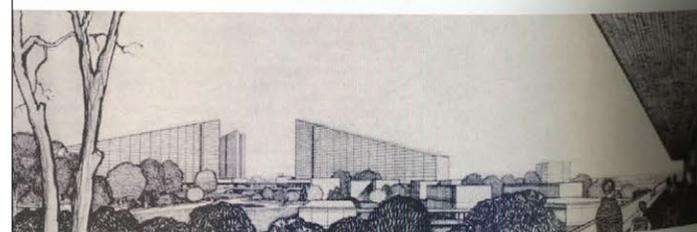
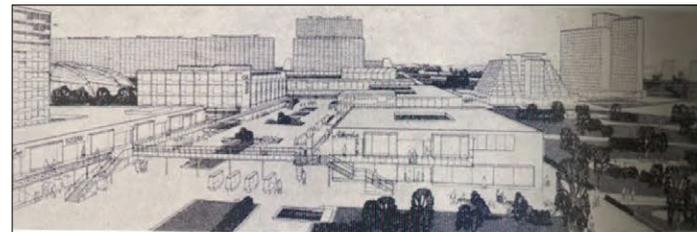
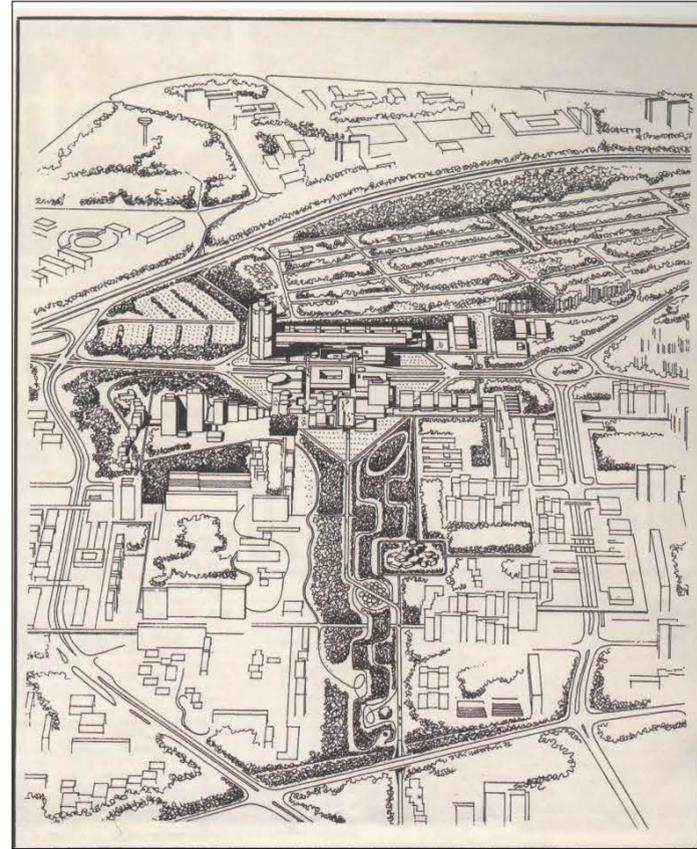


Figure 10. (top left) Jan Krasny's sketch of the Centrum and Central Park. From Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 175.

Figure 11. (bottom left) Several proposals for the Jižní Město Centrum from the first round of the competition; the top sketch is from Krásny's team. From Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 174.

Figure 12. (center top) 'Kupa' building with a catwalk at Jižní Město. Zdeněk Voženílek, Photograph, early 1980s. From Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 177.

Figure 13. (center middle) Construction workers on the site at Jižní Město. From “South City: From Utopia to Reality” exhibition, *Aktualne Magazin*. <https://magazin.aktualne.cz/>.

Figure 14. Piles of concrete panels. Deněk Voženílek, Photograph, early 1980s. From Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 177.

Figure 15. (right) Jan Zeleny, sketch of the hotel of the Kupa house in Jižní Město, 1970. Otakar Novy a kolektiv PPU, Architekti Praze, Praha 1971. From Lucie Skřivánková et al. *Paneláci 1*, 211.

step with socialist ideals. Despite the tumult in the architectural profession, construction of the estates accelerated due to massive state investments in housing construction.

**"The variegated building forms of the original scheme devolved into uninspired, oversized apartment blocks which overpowered the landscape, and the ruthless repetition of the blocks shunned the hierarchy and urban organization of the original concept."**

Normalization dealt a fatal blow to the utopian ideals of the Jižní Město masterplan. Jan Krásný and Jiří Lasovský (the second-highest ranking architect of the project) were forced to abandon the project for political reasons, and it progressed without their much-needed oversight, culminating in the construction of the first phase of the project, which later came to be known as Jižní Město I. The original plan was nearly altogether abandoned. Crucially, the Centrum was never built, nor the grand central park. The variegated building forms of the original scheme devolved into uninspired, oversized apartment blocks which overpowered the landscape, and the ruthless repetition of the blocks shunned the hierarchy and urban organization of the original concept. The planned mix of low-rise and high-rise buildings rising and falling with the natural terrain was discarded, and the network of pedestrian paths providing access between residential areas, parks, and nature preserves was abandoned. Like many of the other panelák estates, Jižní Město was seemingly shoved inartfully into an environment that was not ready for it, and therefore was inhospitable to it and to its residents. Koukalová sums up the failings of the Jižní Město plan:

The architecturally interesting social center [sic] with institutions of city-wide importance was never built, nor the adjoining central park conceived as a piece of land art. Economics emerged triumphant over aesthetics.<sup>19</sup>

Jižní Město I soon earned cautious critiques from the architectural community, including the project's own designers, whose repeated appeals for the construction of the urban center fell upon deaf ears at the KSČ.<sup>20</sup> The paneláks of Jižní Město came to epitomize the social ills of

communist mass housing. Unable to identify with the inhospitable setting of the paneláks, some photographers sought to capture the social, sociological, and environmental impact of the paneláks' construction, and created depressing images of piles of concrete panels, which more closely resembled the day-to-day living of the paneláks than the utopian visions promised by the initial designs. The lengthy construction process, which dragged on for many years after the first residents moved in, rendered the project as an incomplete construction site.

**"The lengthy construction process, which dragged on for many years after the first residents moved in, rendered the project as an incomplete construction site."**

### Executing Jižní Město II

The detailed plans for Jižní Město II were originally drawn in the latter half of the 1970s. The proposal divided the area lying to the west of the Prague-Brno motorway into three sections: Horní Roztyly, Horní Kunratice and Šeberov. Like the original designs, the building massings for Jižní Město II were designed to rise and fall with the natural terrain. The complicated terrain also served to guide non-traditional design approaches, like terraced apartment blocks—an anomaly for panelák projects which typically bore very little relation to the site context. Similarly, recalling the environmentalism of the initial designs for Jižní Město I, these plans envisioned a network of pedestrian paths traversing the site. Jan Zelený, the new chief architect for the project after Krásný and Lasovský's oustings, summarized his team's plans for the pedestrian paths:

The system of main pedestrian routes makes a passage through the urban section by foot more interesting than otherwise, and it is also a step toward the path to finding a replacement of the earlier urban street which modern housing estates so sorely lack.<sup>21</sup>

As Zelený's statement seems to imply, the designers of Jižní Město II had clearly learned from the shortcomings of its neighboring predecessor. They created a new plan which used colors and graphic symbols to signal distinct visual and urban identities for the individual housing

<sup>21</sup> Jan Zelený and Vítězskava Rothbauerová, "Urbanistické, architektonické a technické vyhodnocení Jižního Města II na základě realizace druhé stavby." (Trans. Skřivánková et al.). From Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 170-171.

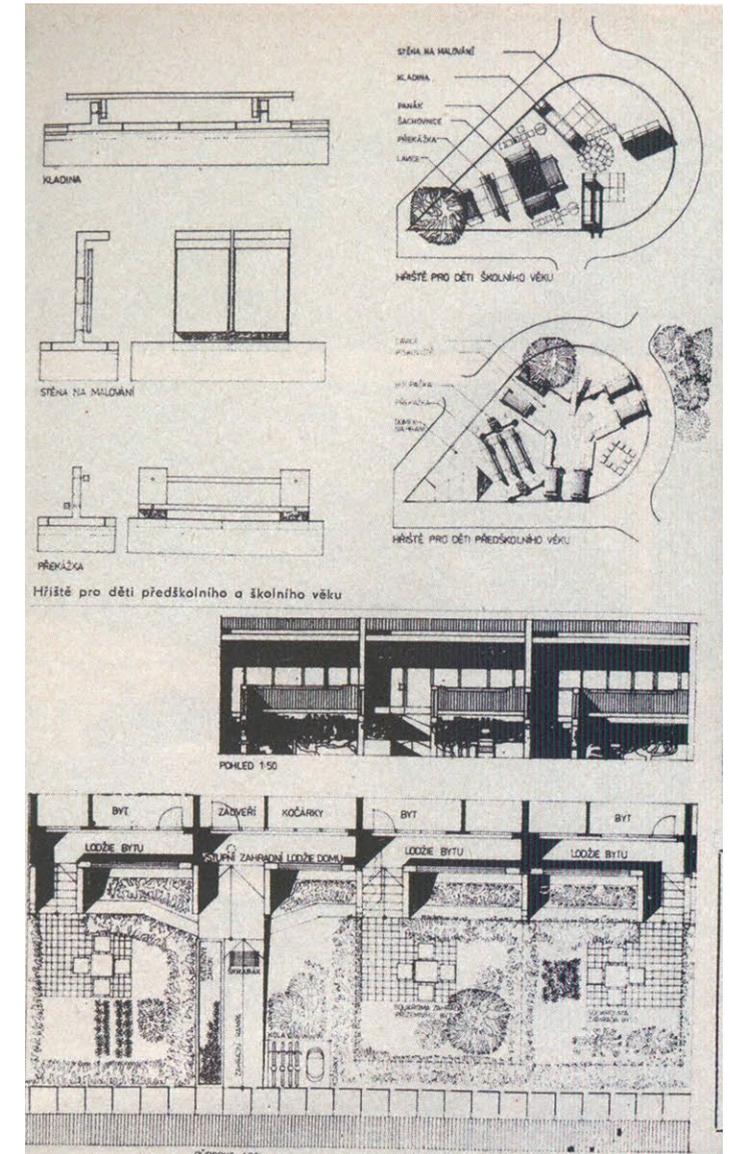
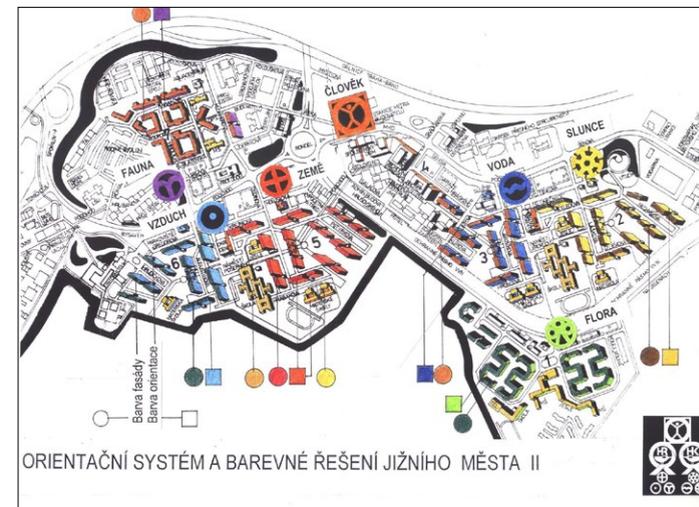


Figure 16. (top left) Model of Jižní Město II from the mid-1970s, view from the southeast. From Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 175.

Figure 17. (bottom left) Orientation and color division map of Jižní Město II. From "South City" exhibition, *Aktuálně Magazin*.

Figure 18. (right) Magazine article featuring the plans for Jižní Město II. From Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 176.

<sup>19</sup> Koukalová, "Panel Forms over Time," 41.

<sup>20</sup> Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 170.

blocks, and for creating an ease of orientation. Circular graphic symbols depicted basic elements of the environment—fauna (purple), humans (orange), air (blue), earth (red), water (dark blue), sun (yellow), and flora (green). Departing from the ethereal, futuristic depictions of utopia which marked Krásný and others' initial sketches for Jižní Město I, the new representational strategy sought graphical clarity through color and symbols, while nonetheless exploring abstract ideas about humankind's relationship to the environment. Buildings were shaded to represent the colors of the facades of each residential section.

**"Departing from the ethereal, futuristic depictions of utopia which marked Krásný and others' initial sketches for Jižní Město I, the new representational strategy sought graphical clarity through color and symbols, while nonetheless exploring abstract ideas about humankind's relationship to the environment."**

Initially planned for industrial production and public facilities, construction began on new residential areas of Jižní Město II in 1979. Taking heed of the difficulties of Jižní Město I, Zelený's team were highly involved in the political process of planning approval, funding, and construction; and made a concerted effort to resist the typical patterns of housing estate development. Skřivánková et al. catalog the relative successes of Jižní Město II:

Jižní Město II has a notably more intimate character, a unique orientation system, and each of the residential sections has its specific supplementary facade color [sic] (black, brown, red or green). The apartment buildings were given a number of atypical features, such as the protruding entranceways with overhangs. Moreover, the builders were relatively successful in synchronizing [sic] the completion of infrastructure and services along with the actual flats, and applying a unified system for small-scale architecture.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately the graphics of the color division map was translated into a tangible navigational strategy and aesthetic features for the new development. Notably, some features of the plan were never built, while others are still under development in capitalist Prague at the time of

writing. Development of the southern section of Jižní Město II, which was designed to merge with the existing single-family homes of that area, was never attempted. But the architects and planners of Jižní Město II deserve credit for successfully resisting the economizing influence of the KSČ, and exerting their political leverage to manifest a largely-successful town planning development.

The relative success of Jižní Město II is clearly indebted in large part to the transparency of the failings of Jižní Město I. Criticism had mounted from numerous parties affected by or involved in the original project, even if those criticisms were tempered by a reluctance to undermine the KSČ. But by the mid-1970s, the KSČ was apprehensive of repeating the mistakes of previous mass housing developments. It became clear that mass housing needed a more humanistic approach to town planning, resulting in expanded creative freedoms for the architects and planners of the Stavoprojekt even as Normalization dragged on. Yet this is only one aspect of Jižní Město II's relative success. Unlike Krásný and Lasovský's team, Zelený's team engaged effectively with the KSČ to realize the crucial aspects of the project. They assumed new roles as political agents, navigating a complex bureaucratic system to execute their artistic vision.

**"Zelený's team engaged effectively with the KSČ to realize the crucial aspects of the project. They assumed new roles as political agents, navigating a complex bureaucratic system to execute their artistic vision."**

## Conclusion

At the time of writing, Jižní Město, along with all of the other housing estates in Prague and throughout former Czechoslovakia as well, is undergoing a radical transformation in the public perception. As the 'era of unfreedom' fades, so too does the bitterness towards the visible traces of that bygone era. The generation liberated by the Velvet Revolution is growing old and passing, while new generations of Czechs and Slovaks are raised in housing estates that, by and large, are pleasant places to live. Others think fondly of the communist era of Czechoslovak politics, and the current successes of the estates only lends further credence to this feeling of nostalgia.

While in their day the paneláks were subject to significant criticism, it is worth noting their contemporaneous successes. In an era defined by the housing crisis, Jižní Město and the other paneláks provided for the basic material needs for (in Jižní Město's case) 100,000 people, many of whom previously did not have adequate living conditions. At the urban scale, Jižní Město solidified new and improved transportation patterns and advanced a varied zoning configuration for the city of Prague. Jižní Město also instituted a flattening of social hierarchies, so that people of different professions and/or socioeconomic statuses lived in similar units, creating a sense of class solidarity.

In any case, the successes and failures of Jižní Město offer an impression of the internal political machinations of the state, the functioning of the state architectural agency (Stavoprojekt), and the agency of individual architectural teams in carrying out large-scale projects. The many changes undergone in the planning and execution of Jižní Město closely align with political developments in the country, demonstrating that architecture is strongly dictated by its administrative political regime.

## Bibliography

1. Dostálík, Jan. "The natural environment in socialist modernity: three case studies of new urban areas in Czechoslovakia (1966–1991)," *Planning Perspectives*, 35:5, 895-907, 2020. DOI: 10.1080/02665433.2020.1801494
2. Dvořáková, Dita. "What Will You Be Like, Prague of the Year 2000? The Prague – Central Bohemian Agglomeration Plan in the Context of Political Changes at the Turn of the 1960s and the 1970s," *Architektura & Urbanismus Journal of Architectural and Town Planning Policy* 56, no. 1-2 (2022).
3. Khrushchev, Nikita. "On Wide-Scale Introduction of Industrial Methods, Improving the Quality and Reducing the Cost of Construction." Speech to the All-Union Conference of Builders, Architects, and Construction Workers 1954. In T. P. Whitney (Ed.) (1963) *Khrushchev Speaks. Selected Speeches, Articles, and Press Conferences, 1949–1961*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
4. Koukalová, Martina. "Panel Forms over Time: Towards a Periodisation of Panel Housing Estates." From Lucie Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks: Twenty-Five Housing Estates in the Czechoslovak Republic*. Praha: Uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum, 2017.
5. Krivý, Maroš. "Greyness and colour desires: the chromatic politics of the panelák in late-socialist and post-socialist Czechoslovakia." *The Journal of Architecture*, 20:5, 765-802. 2015. DOI: 10.1080/13602365.2015.1088053
6. Krivý, Maroš. "Postmodernism or Socialist Realism? The Architecture of Housing Estates in Late Socialist Czechoslovakia." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 75:1. 2016.
7. Lizon, Peter. "The Unhappy Heritage of Communist Mass Housing." *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 50, No. 2. 1996.
8. Mariotti, Jasna, and Janez Koželj. "Tracing post-communist urban restructuring: Changing centralities in central and eastern European capitals." *Urbanistični inštitut Republike Slovenije*, 27:1. 2016.

9. Miljački, Ana. *The Optimum Imperative: Czechoslovak Architecture for the Socialist Lifestyle, 1938–1968* (1st ed.). New York: Routledge, 2017.
10. Ouredníček, Martin, and Zuzana Kopecká. "Towards ordinary quarters: the development of housing estates in Prague after transformation." *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*. 2021.
11. Roubal, Petr. "The Crisis of Modern Urbanism under the Socialist Rule: Case Study of the Prague Urban Planning between the 1960s and 1980s." *Czechoslovak Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 6. 2018.
12. Skřivánková, Lucie et al. *Paneláci 1: padesát sídlišť v českých zemích: kritický katalog k cyklu výstav Příběh paneláku*. Praha: Uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum, 2016.
13. Skřivánková, Lucie et al. *The Paneláks: Twenty-Five Housing Estates in the Czech Republic*. Praha: Uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum, 2017.
14. "South City: From Utopia to Reality" exhibition, *Aktualne Magazin*. <https://magazin.aktualne.cz/>.
15. Sýkora, Luděk. "Changes in the internal spatial structure of post-communist Prague." *GeoJournal*, 49: 1. 1999.
16. Temelová, Jana. "Housing Estates in the Czech Republic after Socialism: Various Trajectories and Inner Differentiation." *Urban Studies* 48, No. 9, 2011.
17. Zarecor, Kimberly. *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.
18. Zarecor, Kimberly. "The Rainbow Edges: The Legacy of Communist Mass Housing and the Colorful Future of Czech Cities." From *Without a Hitch: New Directions in Prefabricated Architecture*. Iowa State University.

<sup>22</sup> Skřivánková et al., *The Paneláks*, 171.

# The Railroads That Built Yellowstone

## National Parks as Consumable Commodities

TERM Fall 2022

COURSE Architecture, Land, Ground

PROFESSOR Lucia Allais

From the Syllabus:

*In architecture the words ground, site, and land have been conflated, and made to encapsulate the blurry and mythical pre-existing condition for an architectural project.*

*This graduate seminar aims to undermine these assumptions and conflations. Our hypothesis will be that, rather than being something that comes "after" land, buildings participate in the establishment of expectations, the regulation of temporalities, and the crystallization of economic relations, that have allowed land to come into being as such: an asset that produces rent, becomes settleable, and is ultimately politically objectified.*

*The course will proceed along two parallel lines. First, each week we will read texts that situate building in histories of capitalism, of colonization, and of the environment, focusing on authors who have described land itself as a technopolitical project since the early modern period. Our goal will be to learn key concepts from this literature, whether legal (property, enclosure) economic (rent, improvement), energetic (metabolism, resource), etc. Second, we will read architectural case studies, and produce our own. These will explore the design strategies, building techniques, planning actors, etc.. The goal will be to produce revisionist narratives of architectural modernity, writing against the usual story of architectural modernization relying on an abstract, empty, and therefore theoretically impoverished, conception of the ground.*

Yellowstone is a powerful symbol of America's natural beauty. Its abundant wildlife and dramatic landscape features have captivated generations of tourists ever since its inception as the country's first national park in 1872. America's national parks are widely credited to the advocacy of the great naturalist John Muir, but recent scholarship has shed light on the role of the railroads in creating, promoting, and maintaining the parks, and Yellowstone is no exception. The political lobby of the Northern Pacific Railroad and the expeditions and speaking tours it sponsored were instrumental in Yellowstone's establishment as a national park, and subsequently, Northern Pacific consolidated control over early land development in and around the park. Its advertisements rendered the land of Yellowstone in the mythical image of undisturbed natural beauty. Its railroad journeys were fashioned into luxury consumer experiences, and scenic views of



Figure 1. 1946 magazine advertisement featuring Willmarth water colors. Union Pacific Railroad, "Yellowstone National Park: Where Nature Lets off steam..." advertisement, *New Yorker*, 1946.

Yellowstone were a prime feature of the experience. The conservation of the national parks marked a change in the conception of land, in which the land itself became a consumable amenity and not "simply a source of production"<sup>1</sup> (through mining, logging, ranching, farming, etc.). A closer look at various advertisements for Yellowstone also reveals shifting conceptions of the land over time as the transportation system of the United States evolved.

Contrary to the image of purity promoted by the railroads, the land was not undisturbed prior to the Anglo-American explorers' arrival. Indigenous peoples of North America have inhabited Yellowstone for over 11,000 years,<sup>2,3</sup> and early hunter-gatherer inhabitants made "aggressive use of natural resources by establishing

strategic migration patterns through the area."<sup>4</sup> The marketing campaign of the big railroads served to erase the history of the area's earlier settlers and presented a romanticized version of the Yellowstone landscape.

**"The conservation of the national parks marked a change in the conception of land, in which the land itself became a consumable amenity and not 'simply a source of production' (through mining, logging, ranching, farming, etc.)."**

4 Farrell, *The Battle*, 40.

1 Justin Farrell, *The Battle for Yellowstone: Morality and the Sacred Roots of Environmental Conflict* (Princeton University Press, 2015), 60.

2 Cannon, K.P. and R.E. Hughes. 1993 Obsidian source characterization of Paleoindian projectile points from Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. Manuscript submitted to *Current Research in the Pleistocene*, March 1993. On file in the Archeology Lab, Heritage and Research Center, Yellowstone National Park, Gardiner, Montana, USA.

3 Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story, Volume 1* (Yellowstone Library & Museum Association in Cooperation with Colorado Associated University Press, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, 1977), 16.

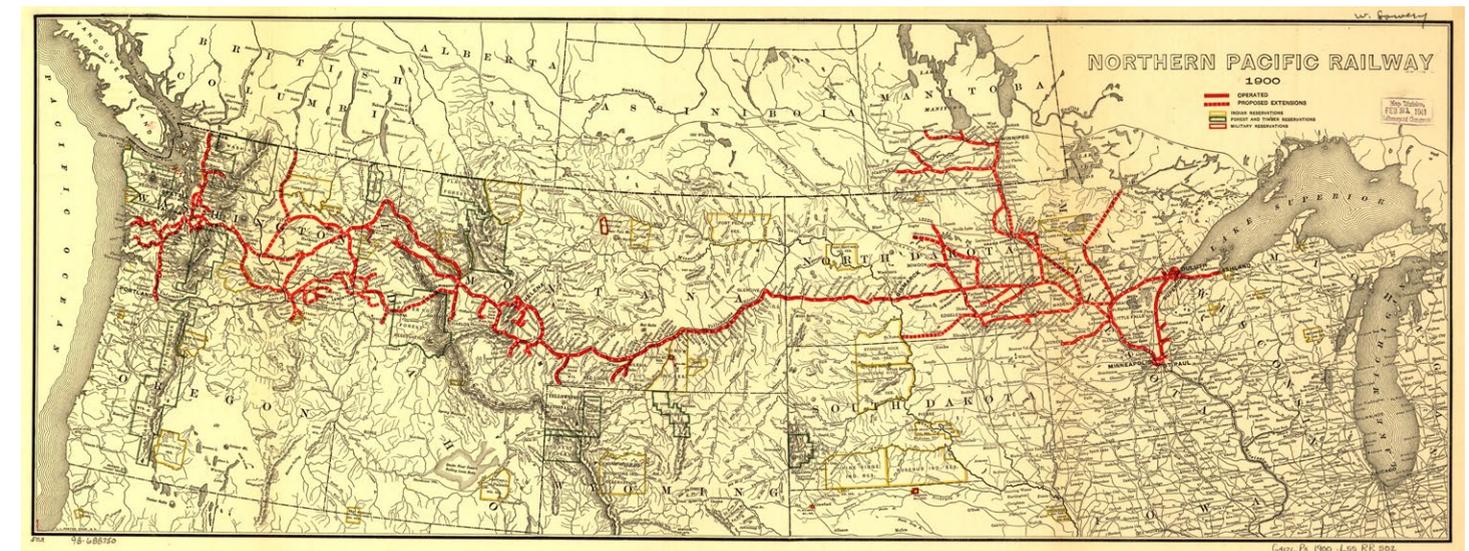


Figure 2. Map showing the Northern Pacific Railway route circa 1900. L.L. Poates Engr'g Co., Northern Pacific Railway, Library of Congress map collection, New York, 1900.

## Yellowstone: Origin & Early Depictions

The first documented “discovery” of Yellowstone by Europeans occurred after a Lewis and Clark expedition in 1806, when a member of the party, John Colter, returned to the area to expand fur-trading opportunities. Numerous fur trappers soon followed, and Yellowstone’s treacherous landscape (especially its geothermal features) earned the area a reputation as a dangerous “hell,” later acquiring the nickname “Colter’s Hell.” Gradually, the perceived untamed-ness of Yellowstone’s landscape “secured a prominent place in the American imagination,” especially as “heroic tales legends about the courage of white mountain men who dared to conquer this far-off and dangerous land in the spirit of Progress” trickled back East.<sup>5</sup>

The tales of grandeur did not escape the railroads, who by the mid-1850s were committed to finding possible routes for a transcontinental railroad across the United States, and successfully lobbied Congress to pass the Pacific Railroad Survey bill in 1853. The bill funded a series of explorations of the American West, including early official explorations of Yellowstone. The Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition of 1870 consisted of a small group of prominent businessmen and politicians whose accounts of the journey were published in *The Helena Daily Herald* and *The New York Times*. The expedition is infamous for producing the national park creation myth, which held that one member of the trip, upon hearing a proposed plan by a few others to privatize the area, altruistically objected that the area might be made into a national park for public enjoyment. The myth—part fact and part fiction—is undone by the individuals’ political and economic motivations; most notably, Nathaniel Langford. Funded by the Northern Pacific Railroad, Nathaniel Langford embarked on a speaking tour of the United States following the expedition, promoting the wonders of Yellowstone. Langford’s presentations led to the first federally-funded expedition of Yellowstone, the Hayden Geological Survey of 1871, led by Ferdinand Hayden of the U.S. Geological Survey. Motivated to summon public support for a national park, Hayden enlisted the help of landscape painter Thomas Moran to substantiate the rumors of Yellowstone. Moran was so taken with his experience at Yellowstone that he changed his signature to “TYM,” Thomas “Yellowstone” Moran. Working off numerous sketches taken over the course of the grueling journey, Moran eventually completed a monumental 7’ by

12’ painting, *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, in 1872, which was purchased by Congress and displayed in the National Statuary Hall of the U.S. Capitol.<sup>7</sup>

Moran’s colorful masterpiece captures the all-consuming glory of the Yellowstone valley. Belonging to a genealogy of American landscape painting which unsettled the Enlightenment-era instinct to “wrestle nature into submission,”<sup>8</sup> Moran’s piece projects a false image of unspoiled natural beauty and celebrates the prospect of boundless nature, a concept that is deeply interwoven with the ideology of extraction which dominated American politics in the 19th century. Depicted in the scene is a wide-angle view of the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone, with the Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River in the center-left. Lighting creates a clear delineation between the foreground, midground, and background. The foreground and the background are shrouded in shadow and bluer in hue, while the midground is illuminated in a dazzling display of orange, red, and brown hues, accentuating the profile of the jagged, rocky snow-capped peaks in the center-right. In the center-left, the shaded background is pierced by the bright white light of the Lower Falls, with steam rising from them. With color and lighting, Moran eschews photorealism in favor of an exaggerated expressiveness that emphasizes the dramatic features of the landscape.

**“Moran’s piece projects a false image of unspoiled natural beauty and celebrates the prospect of boundless nature, a concept that is deeply interwoven with the ideology of extraction which dominated American politics in the 19th century.”**

In the far background, beyond the ridge of the Lower Falls, land can be seen for miles, aided by an apparently fictional view hovering above the ground. In the top left of the image, in the far background, is Old Faithful Geyser, nearly too small to be perceived. The apparently unending quality of the land in the distant background, assisted by the fictional view hovering above the ground, reinforces the image of boundless nature. Moran’s piece is also notable for its depiction of people. In the foreground sit three tiny shadow figures. Two of them—Ferdinand Hayden and a Native

<sup>7</sup> “Thomas Moran and the Big Pictures,” U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., September 25, 2020, <https://www.doi.gov/blog/thomas-moran-and-big-pictures>.

<sup>8</sup> Farrell, *The Battle*, 41.



Figure 3. Thomas Moran, *The Grand Canyon on the Yellowstone*, 1872, “Thomas Moran and the Big Pictures,” U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., September 25, 2020, <https://www.doi.gov/blog/thomas-moran-and-big-pictures>. Accessed 16 December 2022.

American man—stand together, their profiles bolded by the bright midground beyond, while the other, supposedly Moran himself, stands off to the side in the shadows attending to the travelers’ horses, nearly imperceptible due to the lighting. The humans are dwarfed by the vastness of the surrounding landscape, and their figures are further hidden by the piercing colors of the midground and Lower Falls, which dominate the image. The relative scale of the people in relation to the landscape in Moran’s image is symbolic of the sheer enormity of Yellowstone’s territory. His painting invents a new image of nature that celebrates the glory in its wildness and vastness. Further, it presents a fictionalized narrative of a friendly relationship between the indigenous peoples of the Yellowstone area and the European visitors rather than the reality of violent dispossession and displacement.

**“[Moran’s] painting invents a new image of nature that celebrates the glory in its wildness and vastness. Further, it presents a fictionalized narrative of a friendly relationship between the indigenous peoples of the Yellowstone area and the European visitors rather than the reality of violent dispossession and displacement.”**

Aided by Moran’s contribution, Hayden’s plan worked. In March 1872, President Grant signed into law the Yellowstone Act, an act which would have massive implications on the political economy and ecology of the United States, forever changing the fate of the railroads, the timber economy, land development of the Western United States, eco-tourism, and the vast swaths of territory which would later be designated as national parks.

Farrell is right to note that the establishment of Yellowstone does not rest entirely on the tourism interests of the railroads, although they played a major role. After all, Moran’s piece is only indirectly tied to railroad money through the surge of expeditions it funded. It would be reasonable to say, as Farrell suggests, that the establishment of Yellowstone (and the other national parks) coincided with a “broader moral shift (albeit a slow one) in how Americans understood their relationship to the West and to nature more generally.”<sup>9</sup> He also notes the spiritual value and sense of national pride embedded in the land at Yellowstone. Even so, considering the railroads’ integral involvement in (albeit not total control of) nearly every step in the process of Yellowstone’s enshrinement as a national park, it is worth taking a closer look at the railroads’ representation of the land. It is especially interesting to consider how the railroads contributed to shifts in the moral, spiritual, and nationalistic conceptions of the ground.

<sup>9</sup> Farrell, *The Battle*, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Farrell, *The Battle*, 42.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Schullery and Lee Whittlesey, *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

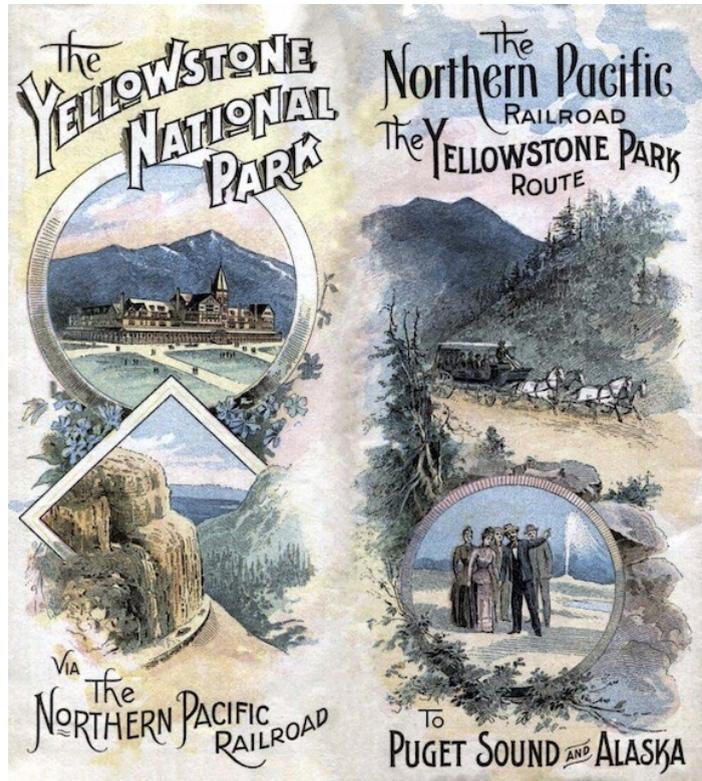


Figure 4. 1893 brochure from the Northern Pacific Railroad, advertising vacation stays in Yellowstone National Park. Northern Pacific Railroad Historical Association, "The Yellowstone National Park," advertisement, 1893.



Figure 5. 1894 brochure from the Northern Pacific Railroad. Northern Pacific Railroad Historical Association, "The Yellowstone National Park," advertisement, 1894.

**“Northern Pacific constructed the image of a new leisure class that travels for pleasure, in contrast to the rugged mountain men valorized in Moran’s landscape, who travel for food, material goods, trade routes, new land, etc.”**

## Advancing an Economy of Leisure: Advertisements in the 1890s

Following Yellowstone National Park’s inception, Langford was appointed the first Park Superintendent, allowing him to favor the rail development of his financier, Northern Pacific, which included connecting rails and railroad hotels within the park boundaries. Beginning in the mid-1880s, Northern Pacific built several hotels in the Yellowstone area, most notably the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel and the Old Faithful Inn. With these in place, the railroad could turn its attention to attracting Easterners, a goal it pursued through an aggressive marketing campaign throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Brochures, booklets, and timetables were mass-produced and distributed widely.

One brochure by Northern Pacific from 1893 depicts a series of scenes within Yellowstone, with three different images of the National Hotel in Mammoth, a face of rock, and a group of upper-class Anglo-American vacationers, respectively. These are enclosed by a circular frame, a square frame, and a circular frame, respectively. The rock enclosed by the square frames spills out into the foreground of the page and continues outside its frame and into the margins of the page. The frames emphasize the clear distinction between humankind and nature, with the frames enclosing and segregating human activity from the landscape. This may explain why the rocky formations are enclosed by a square, rather than a circular frame and why they, unlike the human activities, spill onto the margins of the page.

The human subjects in the bottom right circular frame are wealthy Anglo-Americans dressed in dignified attire. They stand tightly in a circle, peering at the landscape in the distance but not actively interacting with it, thereby engaging with the land as a visual artifact. Natural wonders of Yellowstone are shown in the human-inhabited circles, including a geyser in the bottom right and a mountaintop in the top left, but they sit far in the background, detached from the vacationers. In the top left, the National Hotel in Mammoth projects an image of fortification, safety, and luxury.

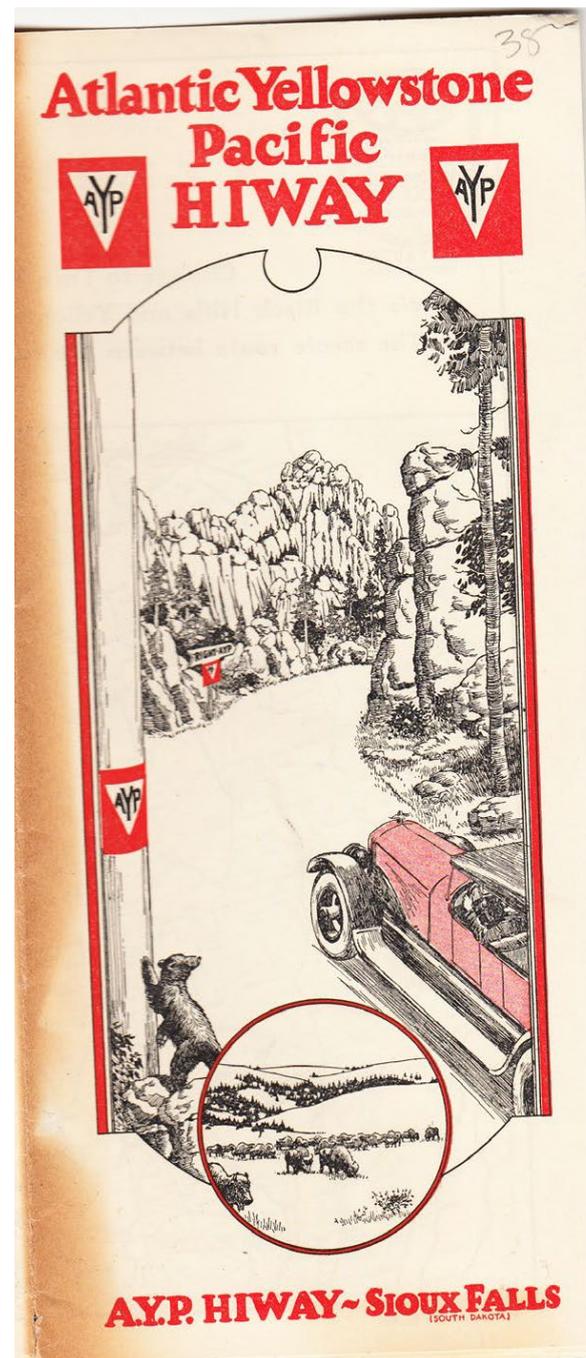
Meanwhile, on the other half of the brochure, a dramatic landscape of untamed wilderness unfolds, with a horse-drawn carriage speeding through. The angle of the horses’ legs and the perspectival warpage of the horse-drawn carriage and its passengers give it the appearance of moving swiftly. Its swift movement may hint at the hastiness by which people desire

to move through the unknown wild, further accentuating the humankind-nature divide. Altogether, the brochure presents a fictional image of an unspoiled, untamed wilderness. It also presents a distinct relationship between humankind and nature; unlike Moran’s painting, which depicts humans as a part of the landscape, Northern Pacific’s brochure renders people as mere observers of the landscape.

Northern Pacific’s brochure from a year later, in 1893, displays many of the same themes. The humankind-nature divide is apparent, the land is valorized for its aesthetic (and perhaps its moral, spiritual, and nationalistic value, as well), and the human subjects are imagined as a newly-minted leisure class. In the foreground, an Anglo-American family stares intently down upon a picturesque landscape, with the Lower Falls of Yellowstone in the center. The family is dressed in dignified attire, presumably reflecting an elevated economic status and the Northern Pacific’s desire to attract upper-class clientele. This is reinforced by the light bouncing off their clothing, giving the woman and girl’s dresses the appearance of silk.

The position of the family in relation to the natural scenery is significant. They sit detached from the landscape, positioned above and away from it, peering down at it, shielded from it by posts (and, presumably, a railing), creating a clear divide between them and the unspoiled wilderness below. The land in the image is objectified, first by its separation from the human subjects, then by their apparent attentiveness to it, then by its framing by the draping vine, and finally by series of curves across the top and right-hand side of the image, which echo the visual language of the vine and curvy typefaces.

Northern Pacific Railroad’s brochure advertisements from the 1890s reveal a new type of subject. In its ploy to attract the upper echelons of the East Coast to its attraction-filled vacation, Northern Pacific constructed the image of a new leisure class that travels for pleasure, in contrast to the rugged mountain men valorized in Moran’s landscape, who travel for food, material goods, trade routes, new land, etc. Further, there appears to be less interest in the vastness of the land. With the scaling up of the human figures in relation to the landscape (especially in comparison to Moran’s piece, in which the humans are dwarfed), the lands of Yellowstone appear less vast. Moreover, the boundlessness of nature depicted in Moran’s piece is mitigated by the framing in Northern Pacific’s brochures.



## Commercialization of the National Parks in the Age of the Automobile

After World War I, the power of the railroads decreased precipitously, in part due to the devastating consequences of the Great Depression and in part due to the increasing prevalence of automobiles and the highway system. Railroad advertisements were replaced by advertisements for scenic highway automobile routes like the Atlantic Yellowstone Pacific Highway and the Chicago North Western Line, which were each proposed and lobbied for by businesses and private citizens.

**“In the creation of a more efficient consumer experience, starting with the Northern Pacific’s vision for a new railway leisure class, and continuing through the automobile consumer, the lands of Yellowstone are valued more and more as a purely visual spectacle, stripped of their moral, spiritual, and nationalistic value.”**

Two advertisements uncovered by Peter Blodgett reveal a continuation of the trends noted before. The land takes on a further reduced importance, fading far into the background, with no identifiable features of the lands of Yellowstone. In each case, the automobile is a central focus of the advertisement. In the advertisement for the Atlantic Yellowstone Pacific Highway, red highlights the body of the car, further emphasizing its presence on the page. In the Chicago North Western Line advertisement, the automobile is accompanied by a Native American man on horseback, the horse reared unto its heels in an aggressive stance, as if to charge at the car full of Anglo-Americans. The ad announces a “new and unique way to Yellow Stone” through a few territories previously held by the Native Americans, as if to boast about the territories won from them. In contrast to the railroad advertisements, the Anglo-American subjects also assume on a reduced importance, fading behind the details of the luxury automobiles.

## Conclusion

Yellowstone National Park remains a realm of wondrous possibility, but its status in the popular imagination has changed dramatically over time with shifting economic and political pressures. I have shown through the various representations of Yellowstone over time, starting with Thomas Moran’s picturesque landscape painting in the early 1870s and ending with automobile advertisements post-World War I, that the land of Yellowstone has been subject to a process of commercialization and marginalization. In the creation of a more efficient consumer experience, starting with the Northern Pacific’s vision for a new railway leisure class, and continuing through the automobile consumer, the lands of Yellowstone are valued more and more as a purely visual spectacle, stripped of their moral, spiritual, and nationalistic value.

### Bibliography

1. Blodgett, Peter. "Defining Uncle Sam's Playgrounds: Railroad Advertising and the National Parks, 1917-1941." *National Park Service History*.
2. Blodgett, Peter. "'The stuff that dreams are made of': Envisioning Yellowstone, 1872-2022," *Conversations on Collection Yellowstone*, Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, 24 June 2019.
3. Cannon, K.P. and R.E. Hughes. 1993 Obsidian source characterization of Paleoindian projectile points from Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. Manuscript submitted to *Current Research in the Pleistocene*, March 1993. On file in the Archeology Lab, Heritage and Research Center, Yellowstone National Park, Gardiner, Montana, USA.
4. Cramton, Louis C. "Early History of Yellowstone National Park and its Relation to National Park Policies." *US Department of the Interior*, 1932.
5. Farrell, Justin. *The Battle for Yellowstone: Morality and the Sacred Roots of Environmental Conflict*. Princeton University Press, 2015.
6. Galusha, Hugh D. "Railroads, Politics, and the Early History of Yellowstone National Park." *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis*, 1968.
7. L. Haines, Aubrey. *The Yellowstone Story*, Volume 1. Yellowstone Library & Museum Association in Cooperation with Colorado Associated University Press, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, 1977.
8. L.L. Poates Engr'g Co. Northern Pacific Railway. Library of Congress map collection, New York, 1900.
9. Northern Pacific Railroad Historical Association, "The Yellowstone National Park," advertisements, 1893-1894.
10. Schullery, Paul, and Lee Whittlesey. *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park*. University of Nebraska Press, 2003.
11. "Thomas Moran and the Big Pictures," U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., September 25, 2020, <https://www.doi.gov/blog/thomas-moran-and-big-pictures>.
12. Union Pacific Railroad, "Yellowstone National Park: Where Nature Lets off steam....," advertisement, *New Yorker*, 1946.

Figure 6. Peter Blodgett, "'The stuff that dreams are made of': Envisioning Yellowstone, 1872-2022," *Conversations on Collection Yellowstone*, Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, 24 June 2019.

# The Role of Sexuality in Betsky's *Queer Space*

TERM Fall 2022

COURSE History of Architectural Theory

PROFESSOR Mark Wigley

From the Syllabus:

*Architecture emerges out of passionate and unending debate. Every design involves theory. Indeed, architects talk as much as they draw. This class will explore the way that theory is produced and deployed at every level of architectural discourse from formal written arguments to the seemingly casual discussions in the design studio.*

For the final paper, students were asked to choose a piece of architectural theory and analyze how it works. I chose Aaron Betsky's *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*.

Aaron Betsky's *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire* charts the historical development of queer spaces, argues that queers make essential contributions to urban life and urban spaces, and makes an impassioned plea for a renewed autonomy in queer culture. Betsky's historical treatise begins with institutional houses of prehistoric societies (like the Men's House of the Sepik River region, New Guinea) and culminates in the decimation of gay communities by the AIDS epidemic. Betsky argues that queer space emerged out of a "cultural condition" of exclusion "experienced by homosexual men" in the 20th century and "infected and inflected our built environment, pointing the way toward an opening, a liberating possibility." Queer spaces are disappearing, he claims, absorbed by the broader heteronormative culture "as their very power became useful for advertising, lifestyles, and the occupation of real estate" (5).

What is meant by the term "queer space"? Betsky's text struggles to define queerness, and the phrase "queer spaces" appears throughout the text with different connotations. Betsky is transparent with his lack of assuredness, promising in the introduction to "try to describe what [he] mean[s] by that phrase" (5). He writes that queer space is:

[A] kind of space that I find liberating, and that I think might help us to avoid some of the imprisoning characteristics of the modern city. It is a useless, amoral, and sensual space that lives only in and for experience. It is a space of spectacle, consumption, dance, and obscenity. It is a misuse or deformation of a place, an appropriation of the buildings and codes of the city for perverse purposes. It is a space in between the body and technology, a space of pure artifice. (5)

Betsky's explication is romantic and entertaining, but it lacks rigor in its analysis of architectural spaces. In general, Betsky's *Queer Space* tends to catalog, rather than analyze, the kinds of spaces where queer people feel safe, where they congregate, and where they have sex. There is a lack of inquiry into the qualities of the spaces themselves that make them queer, which seems to contradict Betsky's underlying premise that queer spaces are necessarily distinct. If their distinction rests entirely on the types of people that inhabit them and the activities that happen within them, then perhaps the spaces themselves (and their qualities) are irrelevant.

Still, there is something architectural in Betsky's definition, which is predicated on the premise that the modern city has "imprisoning characteristics." Queer space liberates Betsky (and presumably other queers) from these imprisonments. Betsky's language locates queer space specifically in opposition to the (heteronormative) modern city.

Queer space exists only in opposition to predominant spatial conditions; much like queer culture exists only in opposition to the dominant culture. Queer space is a triumphant rejection of social norms; a place of pure debauchery, "spectacle, consumption, dance, and obscenity." Queer spaces are predicated on change from one condition to another. In other words, a queer space is a space which is queered in some fashion by a debasement of the space's intended purposes; a "misuse or deformation of a place, an appropriation of the buildings and codes of the city for perverse purposes." It is interesting to imagine if Betsky considers the possibility that a space can be wholly and originally queer, or if transformation, debasement, misuse, deformation, and appropriation are necessary. It stands to reason that the emphasis on change may be tied to social progress. Perhaps, queer spaces require transformation of an existing (heteronormative) space, because all spaces are necessarily heteronormative by default.

**"Queer space exists only in opposition to predominant spatial conditions; much like queer culture exists only in opposition to the dominant culture. Queer space is a triumphant rejection of social norms; a place of pure debauchery, 'spectacle, consumption, dance, and obscenity.'"**

Whatever the case, for Betsky the queering of spaces is sexual by nature. The sexually-charged language of "sensual," "obscenity," "deformation," and "perverse" hint that abnormal kinds of sex are a key component of queer spaces. Still, Betsky's definition lacks information about the sexualities of the people that inhabit queer spaces. For Betsky, sensuality, obscenity, deformity, and perversity—presumably in the form of gay sex—are related to queerness and queer space, but not necessary to create queer space. Same-sex attraction, even, he claims, is not necessary either. Queer space is "any space that establishes... a free and real space, no matter the sexual preferences of the persons making it or using it. I will call queer all spaces I think trace a way toward a third nature" (26).

Betsky's inclusive language belies the specificity of his later analyses of queer spaces, which primarily center around the contributions of gay men. At times "queer" is used interchangeably with "gay," and at others, "queer" is used as a distinct cultural and political identity, which serves to muddle the author's argument. Betsky opens by describing his first

experience at Studio 54, a prominent nightclub in Midtown Manhattan that catered to young gay men. By context, it can be inferred that Betsky himself is gay, but this is never directly acknowledged throughout the text. Betsky subtly hints at his queer identity when he refers to queer culture as "our culture" (6), or when he later refers to queer people as "us," writing that queer postmodernism "gave us open space and shelter without having to enclose us behind closed walls or under giant roofs" (136). Notably, Betsky never explicitly acknowledges his same-sex attraction, which he is clear to delineate as distinct, though related, to queer identities. In identifying as queer rather than gay, Betsky assigns a heightened importance to his queerness (as a sociopolitical identity) over his sexuality. I will argue that though unacknowledged, Betsky's same-sex attraction plays a central role in his discussion of queer spaces.

**"Betsky's inclusive language belies the specificity of his later analyses of queer spaces, which primarily center around the contributions of gay men. At times "queer" is used interchangeably with "gay," and at others, "queer" is used as a distinct cultural and political identity"**

To Betsky, queerness is an act of protest. At Studio 54, "queer men put on a show... a show that presented them first of all to themselves, validating their existence in a real place, and then to others who shared their tastes, so that they might recognize each other, and finally and defiantly, to the world" (7). Ostensibly, same-sex attraction is less relevant (despite its inclusion in the book's title):

I am not so much interested in what makes someone gay, queer, or homosexual—all terms that define different shadings of what one or society makes out of one's desires—as I am in how a distinct culture emerged out of those desires. Though it is true that there have been other subcultures, networks, and defined social groups throughout history that have defined themselves through same-sex desires, I am interested specifically in the roots, development, flowering, and what is most important, effect of the particular culture that I will, almost arbitrarily, define as queer. (7)

Once again, Betsky is unclear about the meaning of queerness. It is puzzling to imagine what would possess someone to write an entire book about a topic they can only define "almost arbitrarily." Despite his ostensive confusion, Betsky has a lot to say about queer space. Perhaps

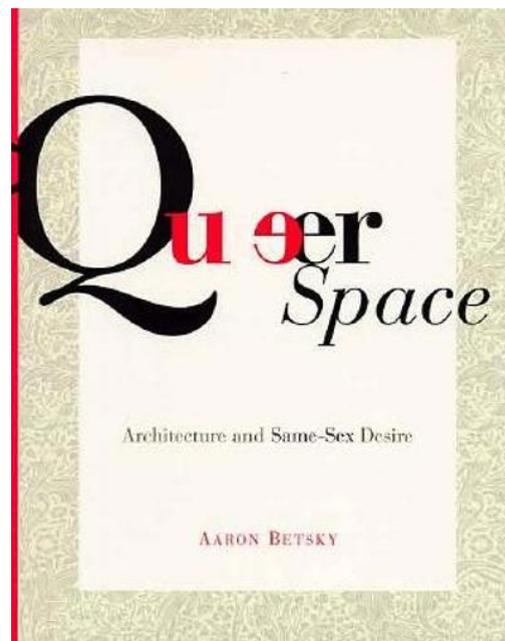


Figure 1. Cover page. Betsky, Aaron. *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*. New York, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997.



Figure 2. Image from Betsky's introductory chapter, featuring mostly male figures. Betsky, *Queer Space*, 3.

Figure 3. Image from Betsky's introductory chapter. Betsky, *Queer Space*, 15.

the spatialization of queerness is easier for a trained architect and architectural historian to conceive of than queerness itself. A closer read of the various meanings assigned to "queer space" throughout the text reveals the contradictions and quirks of the text.

Betsky is clear of one thing, however; that queer space is real and necessary, and that it needs defending. His introduction concludes with a declaration of the contributions of queers, and a dire warning about the concurrent slow-moving disappearance of queers and queer spaces:

Queers queered the city. They made it their own, they opened it up on the margins, they performed it. They were always a minority, but because they were at the very heart of the middle-class project to create an artificial world, their contributions to that culture were immense. They made the spaces that appeared in the movies and the magazines, and designed the clothes in which men and women alike appeared. They made some of the strongest designs on and of the modern world...

[T]he queer experience continues to be one of the creation of a thoroughly modern world for one's self. Queers continue to queer our cities, our suburbs, and now our exurbs because they must, as they continue to redefine who we are as individuals, as bodies, as part of a society...

Queer spaces are disappearing, as are most spaces of resistance. Out in the suburbs, queers are starting families that are no stranger than those of the single-parent, oft-divorced, and always-moving standard unit. They are networking on the Internet and through twelve-step programs that are indistinguishable from those of their heterosexual peers. The spaces of cruising, though still present, have less of a sense of concentrated activity. Like the edge cities that are taking over our urban life, the life of queer men and women is dissolving into pieces and parts of an endlessly developing sameness. (13-14)

Once again, Betsky seems more interested in discussing queer people and their activities than queer spaces and the qualities of those spaces that make them queer. He is clear to state that queers have made essential contributions to the cultural life of cities. His language once again describes queerness in terms of change, but this time in more endearing terms. Queers "queered the city," "made it their own," and "performed it." As before, queer spaces are defined only in opposition to predominant spatial conditions, but this time, predominant spatial conditions are not debased, but rather, "performed." Additionally, Betsky's tone and

language reveals the high value he places on queers; arguing that queers "must" contribute to urban life because they "redefine who we are as individuals." For Betsky, queerness is not just a state of being queer, but also a process of individuation. To queer oneself is to divert from cultural norms. In the same vein, queer spaces are "spaces of resistance," but these spaces of resistance are disappearing.

Betsky laments the perceived assimilation of queer people into heteronormative society, bemoaning the preponderance of queers forming regular family units in the suburbs that closely resemble the prototypical nuclear family. He further laments the perceived homogenization of daily habits; curiously describing how queers are supposedly "networking on the Internet" and guiding themselves "through twelve-step program" in the same way that cisgender, straight people are. Finally, Betsky warns that queer culture is losing its autonomy as it "dissolv[es] into pieces and parts of an endlessly developing sameness."

The idiosyncrasies of queer culture emerged in the 19th century with the ascendance of the middle class and the institutionalization of the nuclear family, the "regimented and defined body" (including gymnasiums, schools, and prisons), and standards of public conduct, Betsky argues. This institutionalization created the closet, "an artificial zone of security within a world it continued to change all around itself" (10). Forced into and then out of the proverbial closet, the homosexual, "a truly modern invention," is conceived of as indecent, "prowling, like a perverted flaneur, the public rest rooms... hiding in the mirrored world of the bar, or building up a fantastical world by gathering objects from all times and places" (10). It is curious how Betsky transitions seamlessly from queer men to homosexuals, seemingly equating the two. Might it be that when Betsky refers to queer people or queer men, he is really referring to homosexuals? To homosexual men in particular? Moreover, the tone of Betsky's description of the homosexual makes clear his negative feelings towards homosexuality as an identity. Driven by lust to lounge about semi-public spaces, the homosexual is a "flaneur," or idler; in contrast to the queer; whose identity is implicitly tied to political action.

**"The idiosyncrasies of queer culture emerged in the 19th century with the ascendance of the middle class and the institutionalization of the nuclear family, the 'regimented and defined body' (including gymnasiums, schools, and prisons), and standards of public conduct"**

Despite his apparent distaste for homosexuality, Betsky's same-sex attraction permeates the text, albeit in the background—manifesting as a fetishization of male bodies and gay sex. Recounting his experience at Studio 54, he is clear to mention the "nearly nude males... wrap[ping] themselves up in the shadows, adoring themselves in motion" (4). His description of gay sex between ancient Greek men was unsparing and graphic: "Men made love standing up... rather than lying down with women. They were equal citizens in this stance. They did not dominate each other, except in age: the younger man would receive the older man, though the free Greek citizen eschewed anal or oral sex in favor of intercrural sex" (32). Chapter 4: "From Cruising to Community," discusses, in depth, the development of various cruising (i.e., hookup) spots frequented, almost exclusively, by gay men beginning with "dark alleys, unlit corners, and hidden rooms" (141) and later including public urinals, truck stops, gyms, and finally sex clubs. Betsky revels in his description of the "closely cropped hair, small mustaches, and their muscular but not bulky bodies" of the circuit gays (169).

Women in Betsky's text are not sexualized in such a way. To the extent that the sexuality of women is acknowledged at all, it is often discussed in relation to the satisfaction of men's sexual desires. Ancient Greek women's space "was that of the night: women were associated with the moon, sex with women was something that occurred at night, and night was when the man returned to the home where he had left the woman" (33). Women would gather with each other on the roof at night to "drink, talk, and laugh all night" (33), but Betsky insists, "we cannot say whether same-sex activities took place in such spaces" (34). Lesbian sex is not discussed at all in Betsky's research on cruising spots.

His attraction to men may explain, in part, why he downplays the role of women in the field of architecture, and why he downplays the role of queer women, in particular, in the making of queer spaces. Betsky argues,

Men in the Western world have created architecture, and women have been forced to live in its often confining structures. In return women have used their interiors to create often beautiful, sensual, comfortable, and practical environments, divorced as they have been from overt 'meanings.' To a large extent this is still true, but changes in technology and in the roles men and women play have opened up some new places. Because they were defined as 'the third sex,' queer men and, to a lesser degree, queer women have been the first—but I hope not the last—to explore these possibilities. (6)

Embedded in Betsky's argument are several sexist ideas: first, that men create exteriors and women create interiors; second, that women's designs do not carry meaning; and third, that queer women have contributed less to exploring new architectural possibilities than queer men. The first is rooted in the historical discourse of the domestic interior, which women were relegated to, but it fails to acknowledge the long history of women's contributions to exterior architecture, which were erased by architectural histories. Additionally, in contrast to the architectural exterior designs of men, which were presumably full of meaning, Betsky describes the women-created interiors as "practical," and devoid of "overl" meaning. To be fair, it seems that Betsky laments the imbalance he perceives in the relative contributions of men and women to the field of architecture, commenting that women are "forced to live" in architecture's "confining structures." Nevertheless, it is worth noting his playing-down of women's contributions.

Betsky is similarly dismissive of the contributions of queer women to queer spaces. Chapter 2: "Aesthetic Escapades and Escapes" describes the emergence of the modern queer. Predictably, this queer is male: "Curiouser and curiouser, the modern queer sinks into decadence. Since he finds few role models in the straight world, and certainly no spaces that affirm his identity or place in the world, he creates fantastic places of imagination" (57). Betsky charts the work of several architects, designers, and writers who contributed "fantastic places of imagination": William Beckford, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, Oscar Wilde, C.R. Ashbee, Louis Sullivan, and Bruce Goff. All of them were men, and all of them were either confirmed gay or rumored to be gay, and Betsky makes a strong case for each's supposed homosexuality. Betsky insists from the start that one does not need to be gay or queer to create a queer space, but if that is the case, it is curious that he feels the need to substantiate each person's supposed homosexuality.

Chapter 3: "Queering Modernism" charts the development of queer modernism, in which queer spaces took on a different life; that of the domestic, sane, open, and clean interior. Betsky finally acknowledges the substantial contributions of two female architects, Elsie de Wolfe and Julia Morgan, going so far as to say that in their work, "we can trace the beginnings of a different space, one that we might comfortably call modernist" (98). Even in praising their queer architecture, however, Betsky appears to play down the scope of their ideas. "Instead of the utopian ideals of mainstream architecture, it presents a domestic version of a modern world," he writes (98). The delimiting gendered language of the "domestic" architecture of de Wolfe and Morgan sits in stark contrast to the far-reaching ideals of the (presumably male) utopian modernists.

Imagining "utopia" is reserved for the visionary genius of male architects, while de Wolfe's work was more down-to-earth, seeking a balance between "comfort, practicality, and tradition" (100). This practicality, Betsky argues, allowed for its absorption, and therefore dissolution, into popular culture; "De Wolfe's queer achievements became encapsulated, contained, and eventually eviscerated by a mass marketing of standardized decorating tricks" (102). Here, Betsky's language includes subtly sexist language. As is often the case with female designers, De Wolfe's work is seemingly equated with decoration, a trope which appears to downplay the impact of her work. So

Betsky similarly situates Morgan's work in a discourse of the interior; "only in domestic interiors did she let loose" (103). Betsky is critical of her exterior architecture:

[Morgan's] architecture was decidedly unoriginal. Throughout her life, she adopted not only a variety of historical styles, but even the mode of such mentors as Bernard Maybeck... What sets her work apart is something that remains embedded within these conventional forms: an elegance, grace, and sensibility that exactly removed itself from immediate observation. Morgan's architecture passes: it clothes itself correctly, presents an elaborate artifice, and winds up by overstating its plainness. The many buildings she did to house William Randolph Hearst's enterprises, for instance, flaunt their simple facades and matter-of-fact organization. (102)

Embedded in his critique is the same subtly gendered language of down-to-earth-ness, "sensibility," and "plainness." Further, Betsky implies that Morgan's architecture is attributable—at least in part—to historical styles and her mentor, thus diminishing her agency and innovativeness as a female architect. Betsky's dismissiveness of queer women's contribution to queer spaces extends to the informal gay cruising spots discussed in Chapter 4 as well. After examining the Castro community of San Francisco, which Betsky describes as a "gay Disneyland" (170), Betsky explains the lack of apparent spaces for gay women. He writes,

The place of women in these areas is controversial. Certainly concentrations of lesbian women began to appear almost immediately after and adjacent to queer male communities. These neighborhoods were considerably less visible. To a certain extent this is due... to the fact that women still have less money and power in our society, and thus do not have the resources to establish themselves. (175)

It is perhaps unsurprising that lesbians are less visible to the gay male gaze of the author, but it is reasonable to question whether they are less visible in general. Here and elsewhere, Betsky recognizes sexism as a major factor in the apparent lack of prominence of queer women, but it may be wise to consider whether Betsky is participating in an act of erasure, as he seems to have in relation to the contributions of women (and queer women) to exterior architecture.

It is interesting to note as well the instances where Betsky's writing slips between the third person to the first or second. I might suggest that these miscues, if they can be counted as such, shed light on the personal voice of the author. At times Betsky freely and confidently identifies with queerness, and at others he subtly disowns it, holding it as a distance—using it as a tool of categorization for the detached "them." Betsky seems to be especially dodgy when discussing the uncomfortable topic of sexuality. In Chapter 3, Betsky discusses the queer postmodernism of Frank Israel:

Frank Israel realized the potential of a queer postmodernism. To him, modern technology of glass and steel, but also of air-conditioning and electricity, could be liberating. It gave us open space and shelter without having to enclose us behind closed walls or under giant roofs. It served as the built equivalent of the changing attitudes toward one's sexuality: one could construct one's self in an open way. Privacy became something one chose and built, in relation to the masks of public appearance that one wore with as much grace as possible. (136)

It is striking how Betsky slides between the first-person "us" to the third person "one" upon the mention of sexuality. He has no difficulties personally identifying with the social, cultural, aesthetic, and political movement of queer postmodernism, as realized through Israel's designs, but is resolute in his refusal to acknowledge the existence of his sexuality, let alone that it is a same-sex one. To Betsky, queerness is "liberating," while sexuality (especially homosexuality) is constructed in private, even if "changing attitudes" made the possibility of openness more appealing. In Chapter 4, Betsky discusses queer Turkish baths, where he spontaneously slips into the second person "you":

Internal boulevards of flaneurs, where men would cruise by each other as they looked for the wares they wished to consume, connected these spaces. In another perversion, these consumables were other men, who displayed

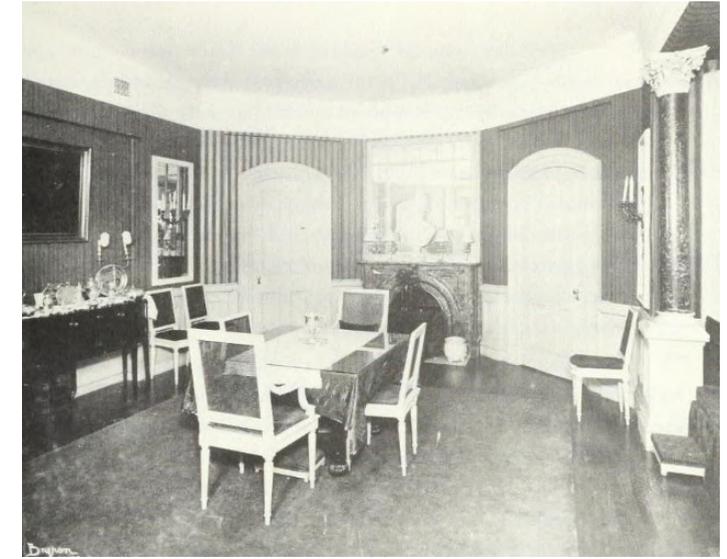


Figure 4. Image of Elsie de Wolfe's interiors. Betsky, *Queer Space*, 99.

Figure 5. Image of Elsie de Wolfe's interiors. Betsky, *Queer Space*, 100.

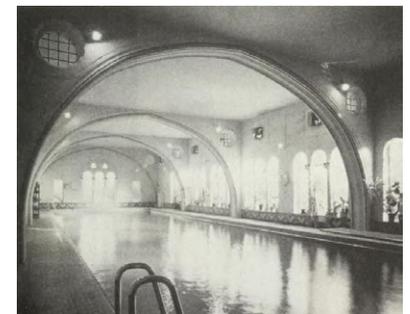


Figure 6. Julia Morgan's Berkeley Women's City Club. Betsky, *Queer Space*, 103.



Figure 7. Lola Flash's AIDS Quilt. Betsky, *Queer Space*, 183.

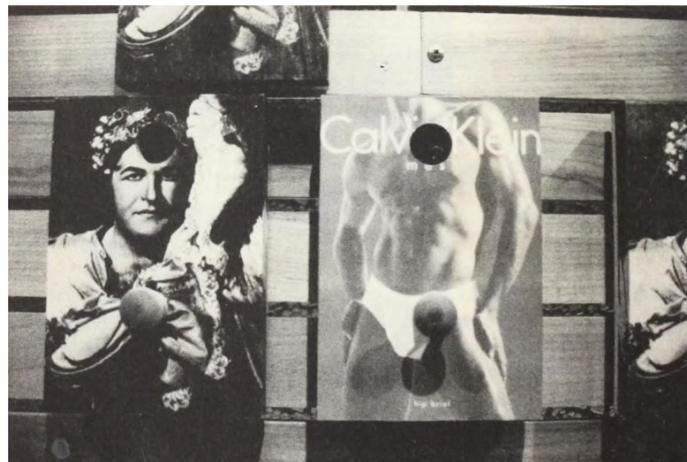


Figure 8. Mark Robbins's Borrowed Landscapes: 36 Views, 1994. Betsky, *Queer Space*, 184.

themselves in small cubicles whose doors they left open. Sometimes you were invited to watch, other times to obtain the object of desire, or even to become an object of sexual use yourself. The barriers between subject and object, what you could own and what you were, broke down in continual dramas of connection, fulfillment, and abandonment.

Separate from these open rooms were the little cubicles or lockers where you could store your belongings and then stay. You would be naked, but protected in a miniature of your private house. There you could create more private (sexual) relations, occasionally inviting a few others to join you. These little bedrooms became the most irreducible abstraction of home within this miniature city of desire. They were places where there was only your body and the sexual act. (164)

The story of an intimate sexual experience is laid out for the reader in detail. This time, the reader is placed into the role of the protagonist, a flaneur cruising for a sexual encounter. Subject and object “broke down into continual dramas,” Betsky writes. One could say the same for Betsky’s *Queer Space*, which presents itself as a scholarly portrayal of the queer sites of resistance, but in reality, is a deeply personal account of a gay man constructing and reconstructing himself through gay spaces. Betsky’s account begins with a third person account of the activities of gay men in the cruising spots of the baths, passing by each other, and then suddenly, the reader is thrust into the story; “sometimes you were invited to watch, other times to obtain the object of desire, or even become an object of sexual use yourself.” The intensely personal account of this experience hints that Betsky himself has lived it. Betsky’s sexuality manifests itself through his lustful language. His descriptions of sex objectify the male body (including Betsky’s own) as an “object of desire,” or an “object of sexual use.” The utilitarian language of “use” suggests a sexual dynamic in which one person’s body is surrendered to another, purely for the other’s sexual satisfaction.

**“To Betsky, queerness is ‘liberating,’ while sexuality (especially homosexuality) is constructed in private, even if ‘changing attitudes’ made the possibility of openness more appealing.”**

Betsky’s discussion of the Turkish baths is also interesting for the metaphor he draws between cruising and consumption. The internal hallways of the baths, where the cruising occurs, are described as “boulevards,” and one’s potential sexual partners are described as “wares” to “consume.” Likewise, potential partners in other rooms were “consumables” who “displayed themselves in small cubicles whose doors they left open.” Betsky’s description of the architecture of the baths lends some insight into his model of queer architecture. The varying zones of openness within the baths offer different opportunities for different types of intimacy and different types of sex. At the Turkish baths, the queerness of the space is defined by its varying zones of privacy and publicness. Furthermore, Betsky connects his analysis of the Turkish baths to his earlier discussions of the domestic interior, comparing the “little cubicles” for more private sexual acts to a “miniature of your private house.” Betsky’s description of the Turkish baths illustrates that a for him, a key component of queer space is the creation of safe spaces for queer people to have sex. The home, which is popularly conceived as a safe haven, is recreated in the queer spaces of the baths. One can be assured of their safety from foreign intrusion; in these abstract homes, “there was only your body and the sexual act.” In general, Betsky’s *Queer Space* offers an interesting, if sometimes seemingly contradictory commentary on privacy vs. publicness. Queer spaces simultaneously offer a private respite from the social dangers of heteronormative society, and at the same time, they are sites of political resistance. These are seemingly two contradictory ideas, because advocacy and resistance are necessary loud, in-your-face, and very public. Meanwhile Betsky praises the safety, privacy, and security provided by the types of queer spaces which hide away from the rest of society.

Betsky’s analysis of the Turkish baths is also emblematic, once again, of his tendency to conflate queerness with homosexuality. The Turkish baths were a cruising spot for gay men specifically, and the same is basically true of all the other supposedly queer spaces discussed in Chapter 4; gay bars, gymnasiums, truck stops, and urinals. Queer women cruise as well, Betsky insists, but none of his descriptions of the ostensibly queer cruising spots include women. Perhaps it is worthwhile to revisit the topic of queer spaces with a more inclusive scope.

Betsky concludes in both his introduction and the final chapter, Chapter 5: “The Void and Other Queer Spaces,” that queer spaces and queer people are disappearing:

We are all becoming part of a consumer society in which there is a premium on interchangeable, malleable data, icons, and symbols... [W]e are increasingly post-middle-class, post-individual, post-body... Queer spaces are disappearing, as are most spaces of experience. (14)

Betsky’s final plea is for the establishment of “heterotopias” as new kinds of queer spaces. Heterotopias, imagined by Foucault to constitute the full diversity of social arrangements, are an excellent counter to the slow disappearance of queer spaces as noted by Betsky, but only if they can recreate the full diversity of queer identities, and not just gay men.

#### Bibliography

1. Betsky, Aaron. *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*. New York, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997.

# Castles, Kitchens, & Robots

## Gender as a Tool of Capital in Ani Liu's *A.I. Toys*

**TERM** Summer 2022

**COURSE** Arguments

**PROFESSOR** Dariel Cobb

From the Syllabus:

*The course interrogates the way architectural devices and architectural practices gain collective relevance, by participating in environmental, technological and representational alliances, solidarities, defiances, disputes and controversies.*

*Organized around a series of eight invitations to relevant scholars, professionals, artists, scientists or activists—half from the field of architecture, half from non-architectural fields—this course has as its main goal an interrogation of the way architecture is part of the realities that shape the evolution of the world's societies and ecosystems.*

*In brief, the course scrutinizes trajectories, agendas, tools, performances, compositions and methodologies; and the way in which they take part in forms of political engagement that architectural realities, artifacts, and practices participate in...*

*Final assignment: As a concluding assignment, during the final weeks of the semester, the students will select one of the questions they have worked on during the semester (one that preferably was publicly posed to one of the speakers) and will write a 1000-word piece situating the question and the answer received from the speaker/s in its context of formulation, in the traditions it is part of, and in the realities it participates in.*

Ani Liu's lecture to the GSAPP in July 2022 as part of the MSAAD program's "Arguments" series began with a discussion of Michel Foucault's theories of social control. It may seem strange for a visual artist to reference the somewhat esoteric (albeit broadly influential) work of a 20th century philosopher and sociologist. But Liu's eminently socially-minded work belongs in a genealogy of queer theory beginning with Foucault, and the *A.I. Toys* project is her seminal contribution to the field. *A.I. Toys* is an ongoing research project of Liu's, which uses a machine-learning computer model fed with hundreds of entries of toy data (from Amazon and other sellers) explicitly marketed for either girls or boys and generates new toys (including their images, names, and descriptions) based on what it learns. The fascinating results of the experiment illuminate the forms of gender expression concretized through capital in the modern world. Liu's project advances contemporary queer theory, complicating the widely acknowledged social construction of gender through an investigation of the role of capital.

**“The fascinating results of the experiment illuminate the forms of gender expression concretized through capital in the modern world. Liu's project advances contemporary queer theory, complicating the widely acknowledged social construction of gender through an investigation of the role of capital.”**

In Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, he argues that the emergence of a “scientia sexualis” (science of sex) in the 17th century formed sexuality as an object of scientific inquiry and made possible a system of social controls aimed at regulating sexual behavior. With the increased interest in sexual “perversions” in the 19th century, Foucault argues, the 19th and 20th centuries then became “the age of multiplication: a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of their disparate forms, a multiple implantation of ‘perversions.’”<sup>1</sup> For Foucault, scientific inquiry implemented a categorization of different sexualities, thereby concretizing sexuality as a concept in the popular imagination. Liu's *A.I. Toys* project reinforces Foucault's theory of social construction, expanding his ideas to gender expression and shifting its focus to the role of industry. In the project description on her website,

<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (Vintage, 1990), 37.

Liu queries, “How does society construct gender through toys?”<sup>2</sup> Liu's language is significant. Her project does not reveal, illuminate, or uncover how children of different genders express themselves through the toys they play with. Rather, it explores how society “constructs” a set of concepts surrounding gender through toys.

**“[Liu's project] explores how society ‘constructs’ a set of concepts surrounding gender through toys.**

**Surveying the results of Liu's experiment reveals conspicuous differences between girls' toys and boys' toys, laying bare the mechanisms by which capitalism creates and reinforces gender as a construct. Liu notes, ‘Girls' toys are largely centered on jewelry, domestic chores, dolls, and animals, while boys' toys are largely centered on weaponry, electronics, cars, and construction.’”**

Surveying the results of Liu's experiment reveals conspicuous differences between girls' toys and boys' toys, laying bare the mechanisms by which capitalism creates and reinforces gender as a construct. Liu notes, “Girls' toys are largely centered on jewelry, domestic chores, dolls, and animals, while boys' toys are largely centered on weaponry, electronics, cars, and construction.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, girls' toys are often shades of pink, purple, turquoise, and light blue, and their forms are often simple, symbolic, and curvaceous. By contrast, boys' toys are often shades of dark blue, red, orange, brown, and yellow, and their forms are often complex, jagged, and mechanical. This divide is mirrored in the subtly gendered language of the toy names and descriptions, with the girls' toy names and descriptions featuring language that is fantastical and soft while the boys' toy names and descriptions are more violent and plainly written.

Consider the differences between the “Beyond Anything in the World Princess Castle Tent” and the “NERF Fortnite AR-L Elite Dart Drummer.” Apart from the obvious differences in subject

<sup>2</sup> Ani Liu, “A.I. Toys,” Ani Liu. Accessed August 7, 2022. <https://ani-liu.com/ai-toys>

<sup>3</sup> Ani Liu, “A.I. Toy Store,” Ani Liu. Accessed August 8, 2022. <http://ai-toys.net/>

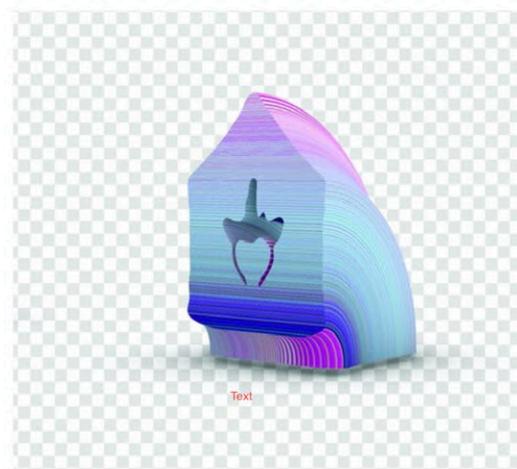
matter and salient appearance (princess vs. Fortnite, spa/beauty vs. electronics/engineering, light pink/cyan vs. blue/yellow), there are some subtle distinctions as well. The Princess Tent is formed in the shape of a gable-roof house, and its text description relates to domesticity, child-rearing, and beauty products (i.e., “spa,” “children,” “cosmetic,” etc.). By contrast, the Dart Drummer is composed of a system of blobular parts connected by thin strands (vaguely resembling a kind of mechanical assemblage), and its text description lists a series of traditionally masculine objects (i.e., “battery,” “charge cable,” “manual,” etc.).

**“Liu's project illuminates not only the mechanism of the construction of gender (capital), but also the cultural ideas surrounding gender that capital promotes. Reading *A.I. Toys* through the lens of late 20th century feminist theory offers a richer understanding of the cultural ideas surrounding gender which are reified through objects of play.”**

Liu's project illuminates not only the mechanism of the construction of gender (capital), but also the cultural ideas surrounding gender that capital promotes. Reading *A.I. Toys* through the lens of late 20th century feminist theory offers a richer understanding of the cultural ideas surrounding gender which are reified through objects of play. Judith Butler argues that “gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo.”<sup>4</sup> For Butler, “gender is not a fact,”<sup>5</sup> but rather, inscribed in a set of cultural ideas surrounding gender and sex which are continuously acted out, and enforced by the fear of social repercussion and violence. Toys, by their very nature, coerce performative behavior through their subject material, form and color, and marketing strategy. Acting upon the coercive forces of capital, a child “performs” their gender through their play, and the gendered form of this play is compelled by the set of cultural ideas surrounding gender which capital finds useful to exploit. The Princess Tent is loaded with a particular set of cultural ideas

<sup>4</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 519.

<sup>5</sup> Butler, “Performative Acts,” 522.



### Beyond Anything in the World Princess Castle Tent

Behind closed doors, this kid-friendly spa play-set turns children's natural hair into a luxury fun experience! Kids can pretend to be a chemist for a bath and body products company they get to make and test different cosmetic products (kind of like our beauty lab experts).

Figure 1. Two A.I.-generated toys from Liu's website, one (left) intended for girls and the other (right) intended for boys. Liu, "A.I. Toys."



### NERF Fortnite AR-L Elite Dart Drummer

An interactive tool that helps create electronic music works of art (in this particular case, it's based on the version of science used in the movie). Simply squeeze the cab to pop open the hood, drum kit or other accessories it includes an elevator, computer, a switch, battery, switch, hat, wand, charge cable and manual.

surrounding what it means to be a woman; its gable-roofed profile and the multiple mentions of children in its text description suggest that the essence of womanhood lies in private domestic spaces (i.e., "Behind closed doors...")<sup>6</sup> and in child-rearing.

**"Toys, by their very nature, coerce performative behavior through their subject material, form and color, and marketing strategy. Acting upon the coercive forces of capital, a child 'performs' their gender through their play, and the gendered form of this play is compelled by the set of cultural ideas surrounding gender which capital finds useful to exploit."**

Paul Preciado notes that modern capitalism is "characterized not only by the transformation of 'gender,' 'sex,' 'sexuality,' 'sexual identity,' and 'pleasure' into objects of the political management of living, but also by the fact that this management itself is carried out through the new dynamics of advanced technocapitalism, global media, and biotechnologies."<sup>7</sup> Foucault would object that gender, sex, sexuality, etc., have long been "objects of the political management of living," but Liu's project vindicates Preciado's identification of the "new dynamics" of modern capitalism. Gendered toys are somewhat ambiguous (and, in some cases, seemingly subliminal), and modern capitalism's promulgation of rigid gender roles is less overtly paternalistic than the strict enforcement of sexual behavior and gender expression from the 17th through 20th centuries.

**"Gender, sex, sexuality, etc., have long been 'objects of the political management of living,' but Liu's project vindicates Preciado's identification of the 'new dynamics' of modern capitalism."**

<sup>6</sup> Liu, "A.I. Toys."

<sup>7</sup> Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (The Feminist Press, 2013), 25.

Liu's A.I. Toys project is a profound and instructive research project that builds upon the work of queer theorists like Foucault, Butler, Preciado, and many others. It offers a poignant commentary on the immense power of capital in formulating norms of gender expression. It may fall short, however, of providing alternative realities. In her lecture at the GSAPP, Liu noted that she is often asked why she has not explored gender-neutral toys through her machine-learned algorithm. She explained that she had attempted such an experiment, and the results are often "least common denominators" (such as "Blaster Barbies") which simply combine stereotypical cultural ideas from each set of gendered toys.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, Butler charts a possible path forward, suggesting that "subversive performances of various kinds" can overcome "the pervasive character of patriarchy and the prevalence of sexual difference as an operative cultural distinction."<sup>9</sup> Perhaps Liu can innovate a machine-learned process of creating gender-subverting toys in her next iteration of the project.

<sup>8</sup> Ani Liu, "Ecologies of Care: Investigating Quotidian Domesticity as a Terrain for Social Change" (lecture, "Arguments" lecture series at the Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation, July 13, 2022)

<sup>9</sup> Butler, "Performative Acts," 531.

#### Bibliography

1. Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.
2. Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (Vintage, 1990)
3. Liu, Ani. "A.I. Toys," Ani Liu. Accessed August 7, 2022. <https://ani-liu.com/ai-toys>.
4. Liu, Ani. "A.I. Toy Store," Ani Liu. Accessed August 8, 2022. <http://ai-toys.net/>
5. Liu, Ani. "Ecologies of Care: Investigating Quotidian Domesticity as a Terrain for Social Change" lecture, "Arguments" lecture series at the Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation, July 13, 2022.
6. Preciado, Paul B. *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*. The Feminist Press, 2013.

# Sludgy-Hydro Hangout



New York City's waste systems are hidden behind walls, under roads, and inside uninviting walled-in treatment plants and processing facilities. This architectural and urban reality dissociates people from the waste they produce, and the immense infrastructure which sustains their continued well-being. New York's wastewater resource recovery process, in particular, is also plagued by environmental hazards and procedural deficiencies, including combined sewer overflows, and unnecessary wasting of its useful byproducts—biogas and biosolids. The Sludgy-Hydro Hangout reconnects people to the waste they produce and the infrastructure that processes it, provides sustainable systems of resource recovery and food production which take advantage of biogas and biosolids, and creates distinctive spaces for community engagement. The Hangout is a hybridized wastewater resource recovery facility, hydroponic farm, and social space.

The main building is composed of a transparent box with a whimsical assemblage of colored volumes, floor plates, and interconnected walkways suspended in the middle—all hanging from a thick roof diaphragm. Each volume houses a different program corresponding to its color; this includes components of the combined wastewater resource recovery and food production process and social spaces as well including the sludge thickener and sludge digester (in yellow), biogas purifier and generator (in blue), hydroponic farming pods (in green), sludge storage (in pink), and a flex theatre/educational space (in red). Stairs and elevators sit in a thickened, translucent exoskeleton of glass platforms and a curtain wall-glazed envelope. The central assemblage is accessed by traversing up through the exoskeleton, into the thick roof diaphragm, and down again into the central assemblage.

Hanging the assemblage from the roof inverts the typical spatial paradigm of wastewater treatment plants and food production facilities. Typically consigned to the dark recesses of architectural and urban spaces, the combined resource recovery and food production process is put on colorful, playful display, and invites visitors to inhabit the different volumes and the space between them in creative ways.

Hanging the assemblage also liberates the ground floor for public use. The ground supplying a grocery store selling produce from the hydroponic farms above, a café, a visitor's center, and a lounge. The settling tank and aeration tank in purple rise to the ground floor level as well, further inducing public engagement with waste systems.

**TERM** Columbia GSAPP MSAAD—Summer Semester (2022)

**STUDIO** Septic Studio

**CRITIC** Dan Wood

**PROGRAM** Wastewater treatment plant, hydroponic farm, & community center

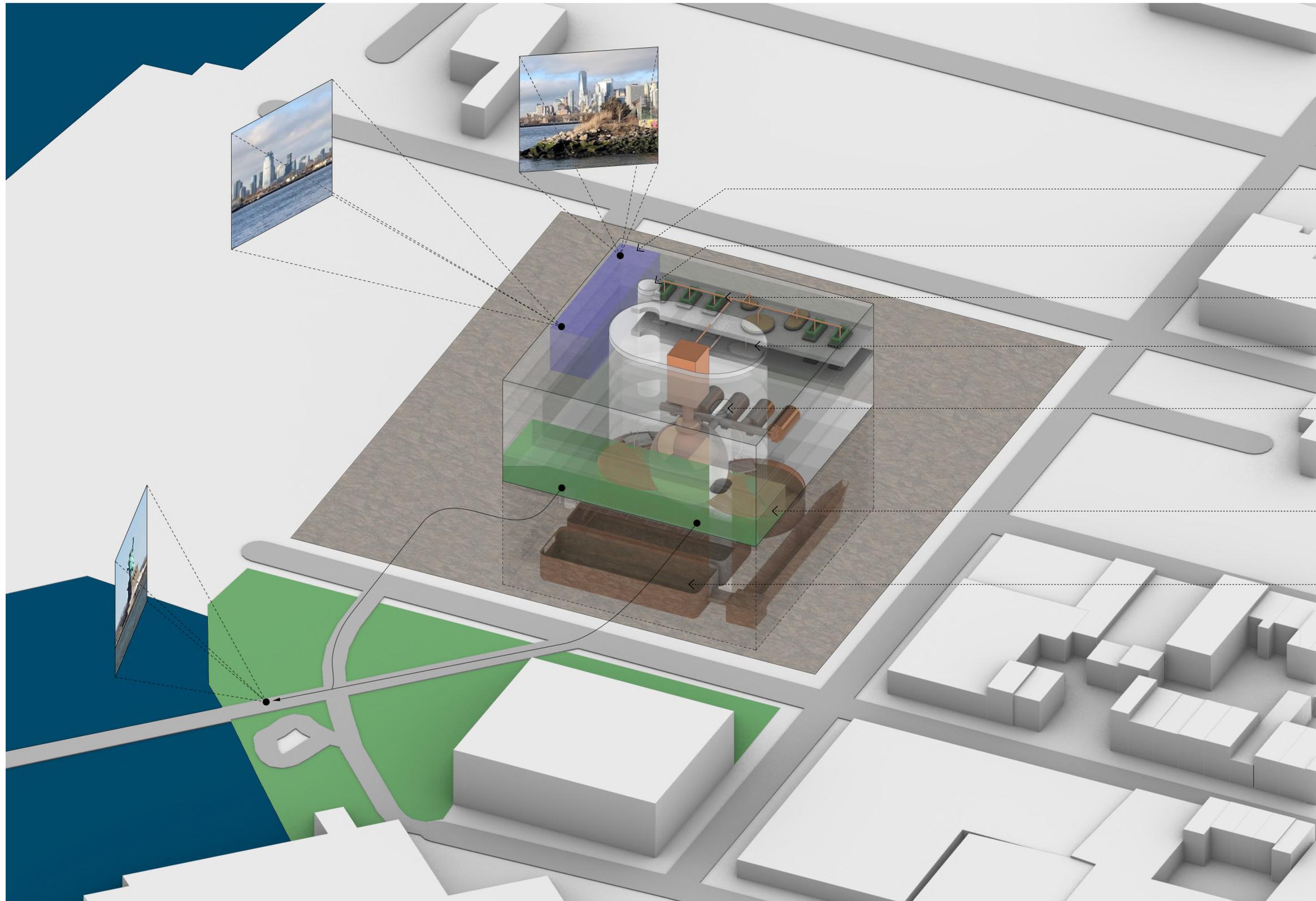
**SITE** 202 Coffey St, Red Hook, Brooklyn, NY 11231



Final 1/16" = 1'-0" model



Final 1/16" = 1'-0" model



(Blue) A roof deck takes advantage of views across the river

Lightwell extending down to secondary settling tanks

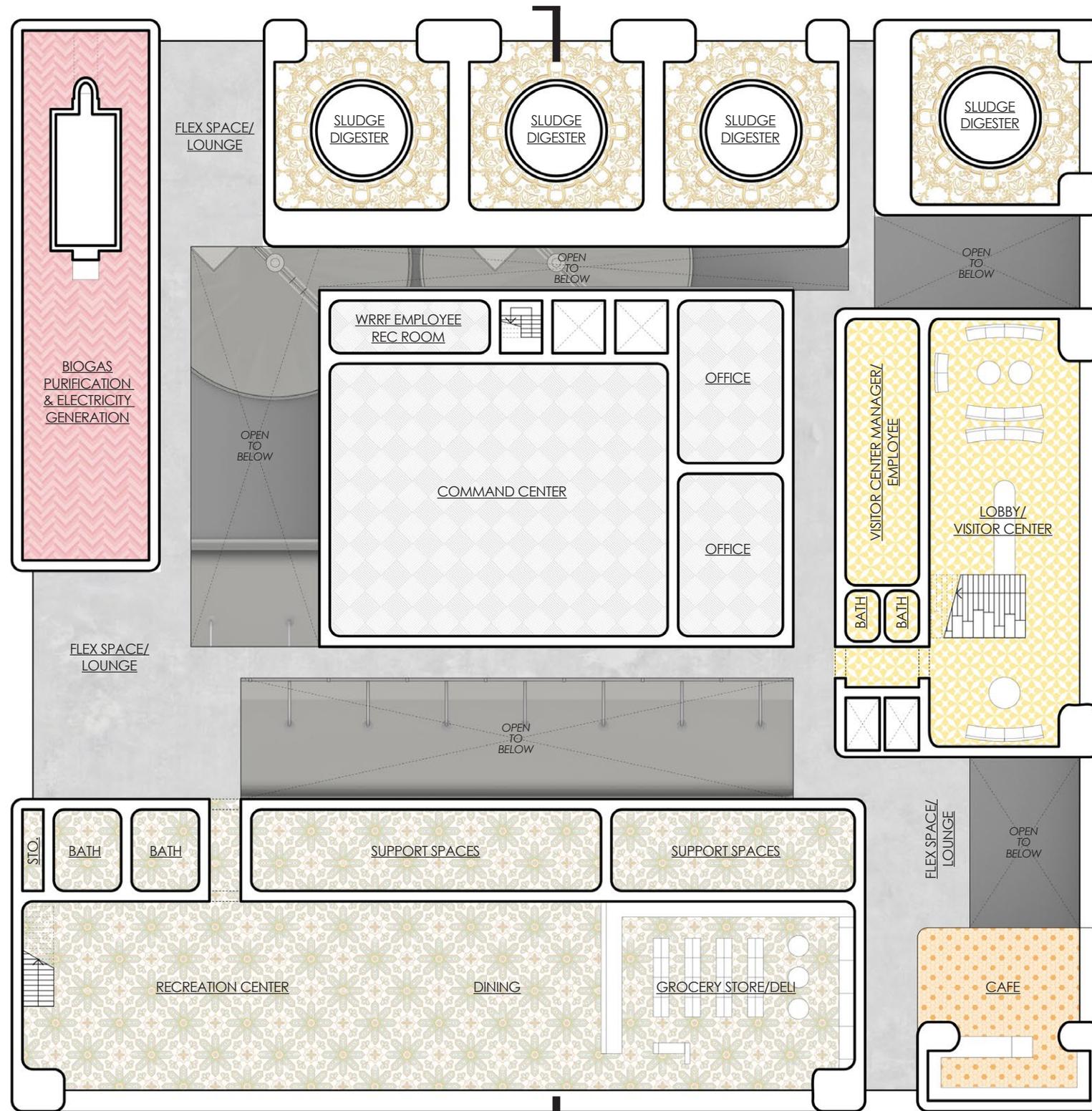
Community-managed hydroponic farm-powered

Glazed central atrium enclosing sludge digester, biogas purification system, & generator

Lightwell extending down to artificially-illuminated untreated wastewater

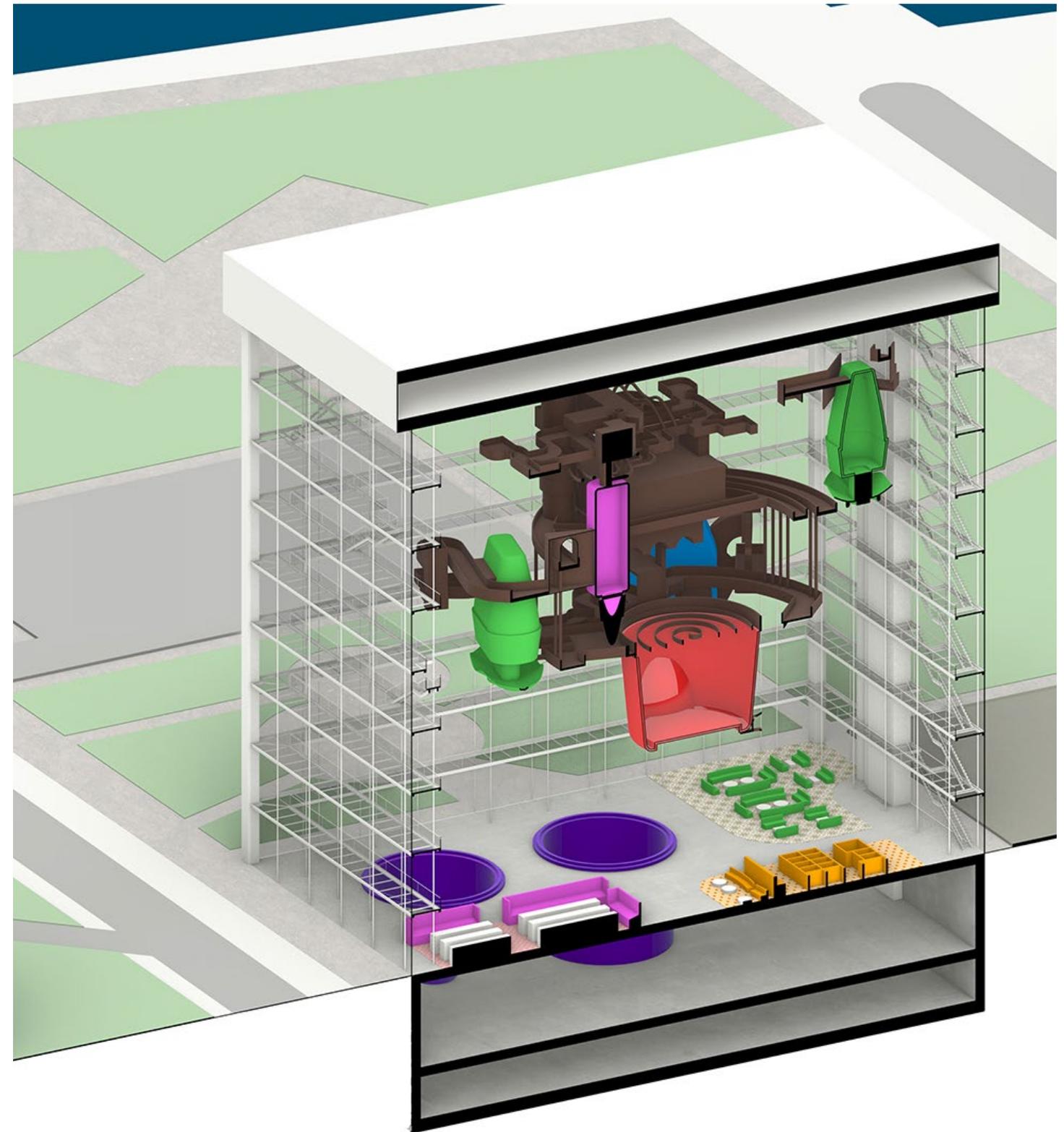
(Green) A cafe, small super-market, and rec area serve as a continuation of the local park across the street

Settling tanks and aeration tanks sit on the lower floors

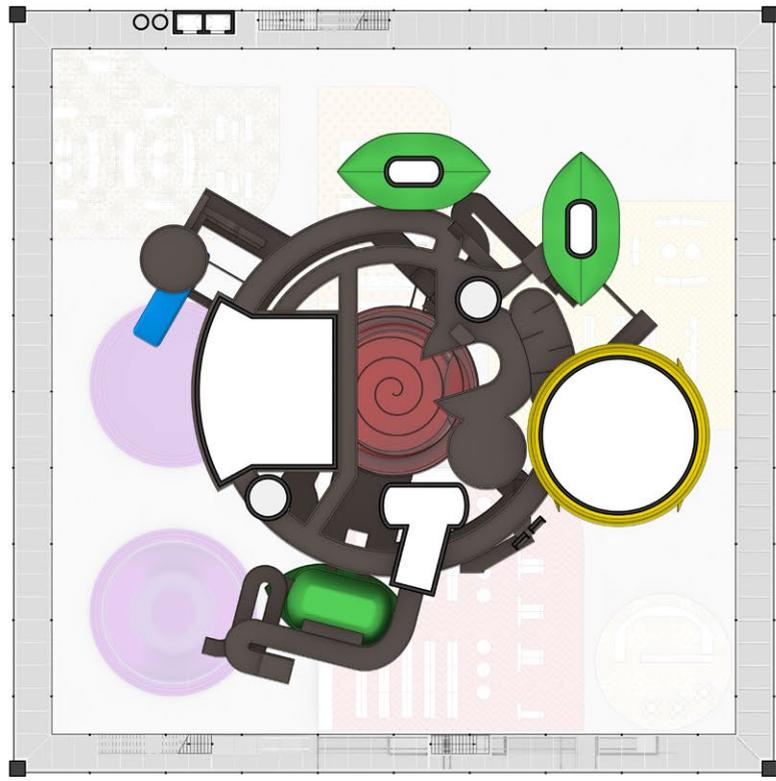


Floor Plan—Midterm Review

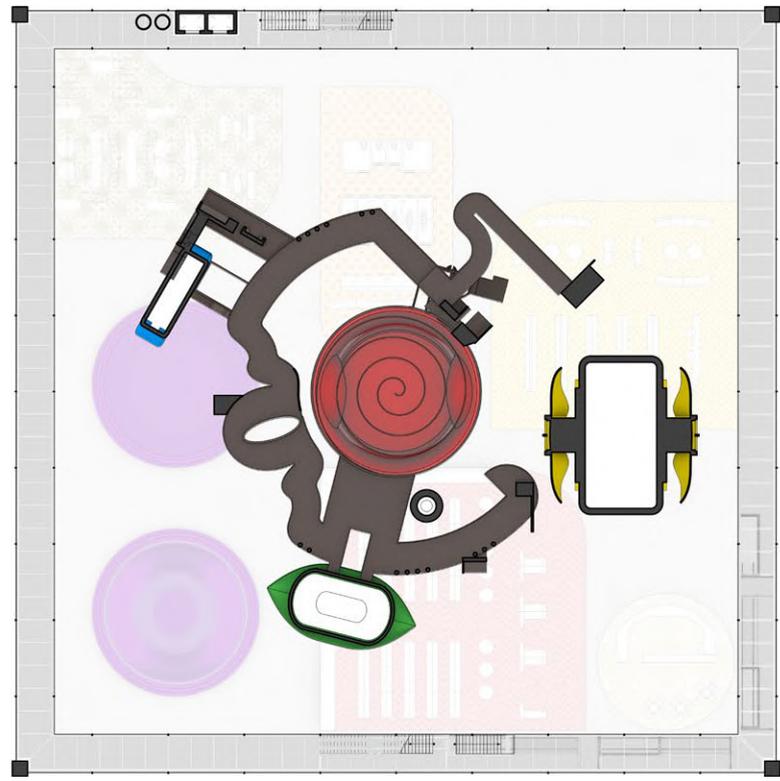




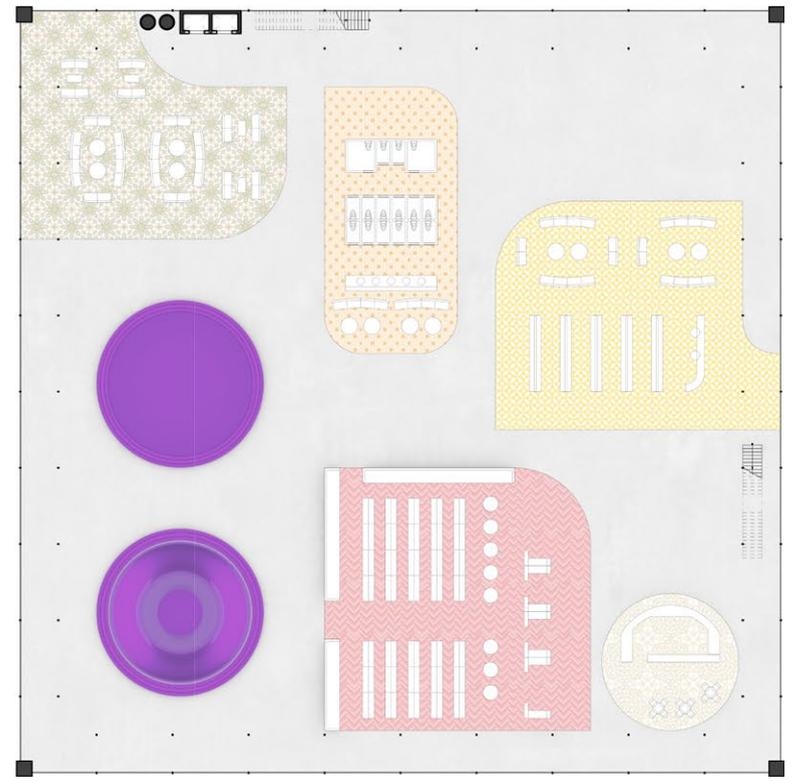
Section-Axonometric



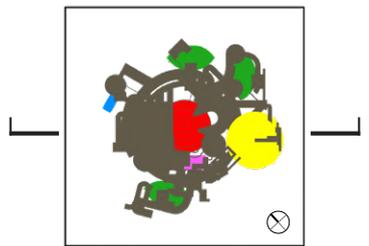
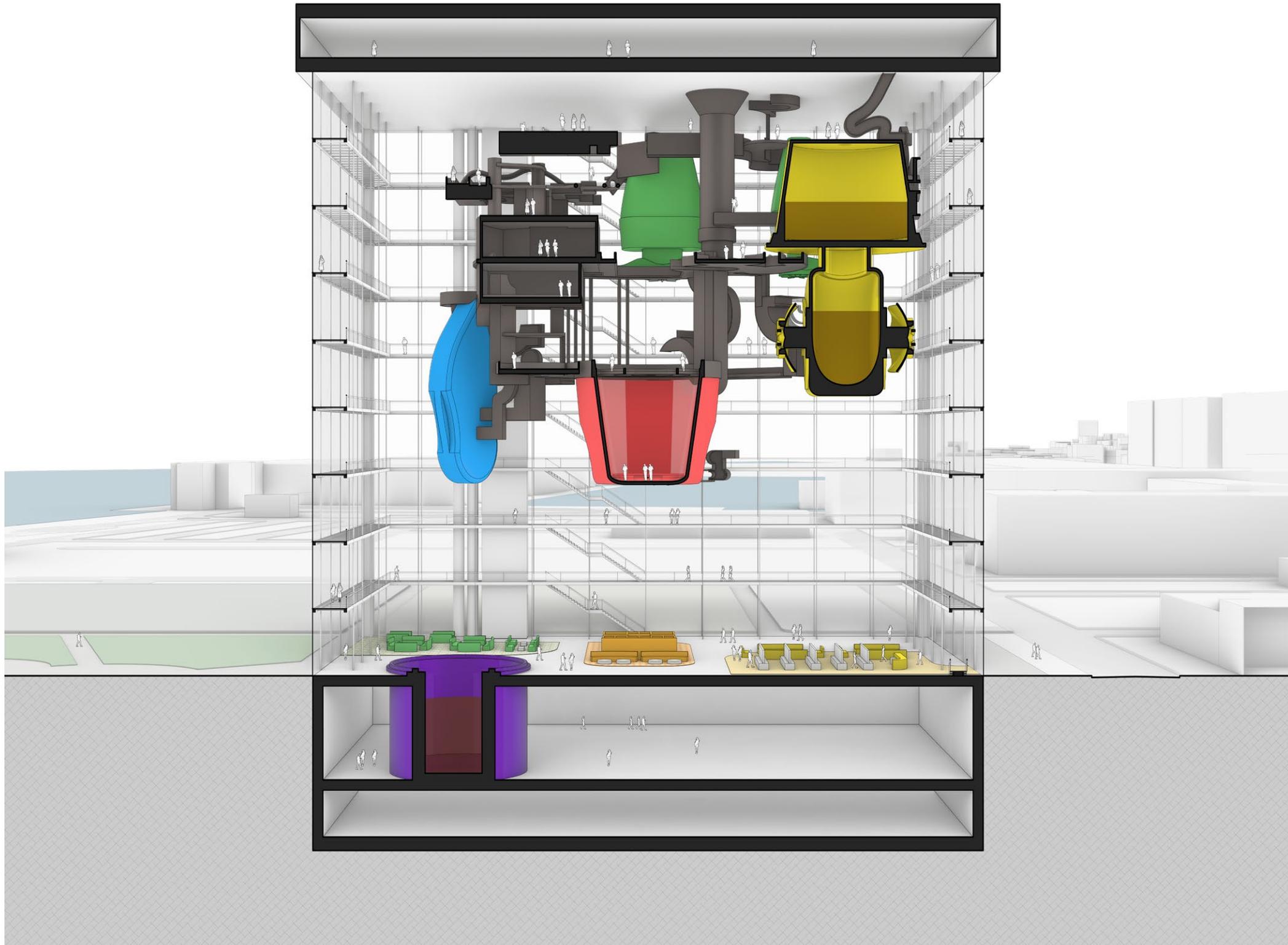
Floor 7 Plan



Floor 6 Plan



Ground Floor Plan



Perspective Section

# Case Study

## Lawson Westen House

**TERM** Spring 2023

**COURSE** Seminar of Section

**PROFESSOR** Marc Tsurumaki

From the Syllabus:

*While most commonly deployed as a retroactive tool to describe constructional requirements or (in the context of the contemporary design studio) an automatic side effect of the digital model, this seminar will re-conceive section as an instrumental and projective device. Building on the recent publication, 'Manual of Section' the seminar will explore and expand a discourse surrounding section in architecture. Generating a set of provisional structures, terms and taxonomies, we will seek to understand the role of section, it's historical development, contemporary transformations and possible futures. The goal of the seminar will be to provide students, through lectures, discussions and design research, the techniques through which they can develop their own approaches to section as a vital analytical and design tool.*



Figure 1 & 2. "Lawson Westen House." Eric Owen Moss Architects. <https://ericowenmoss.com/project-detail/lawson-westen-house/>.

