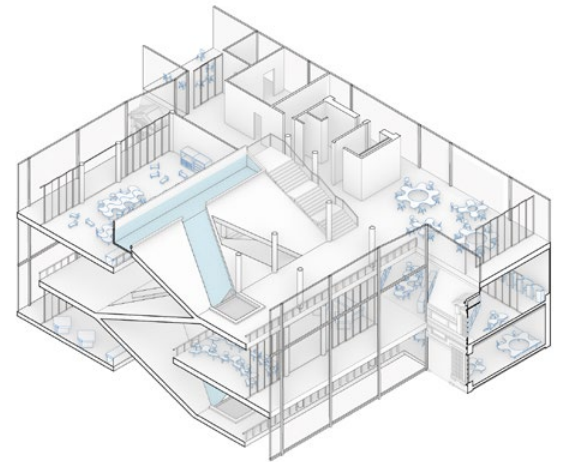


**thanatomicrobiome**



# CAMILLE NEWTON

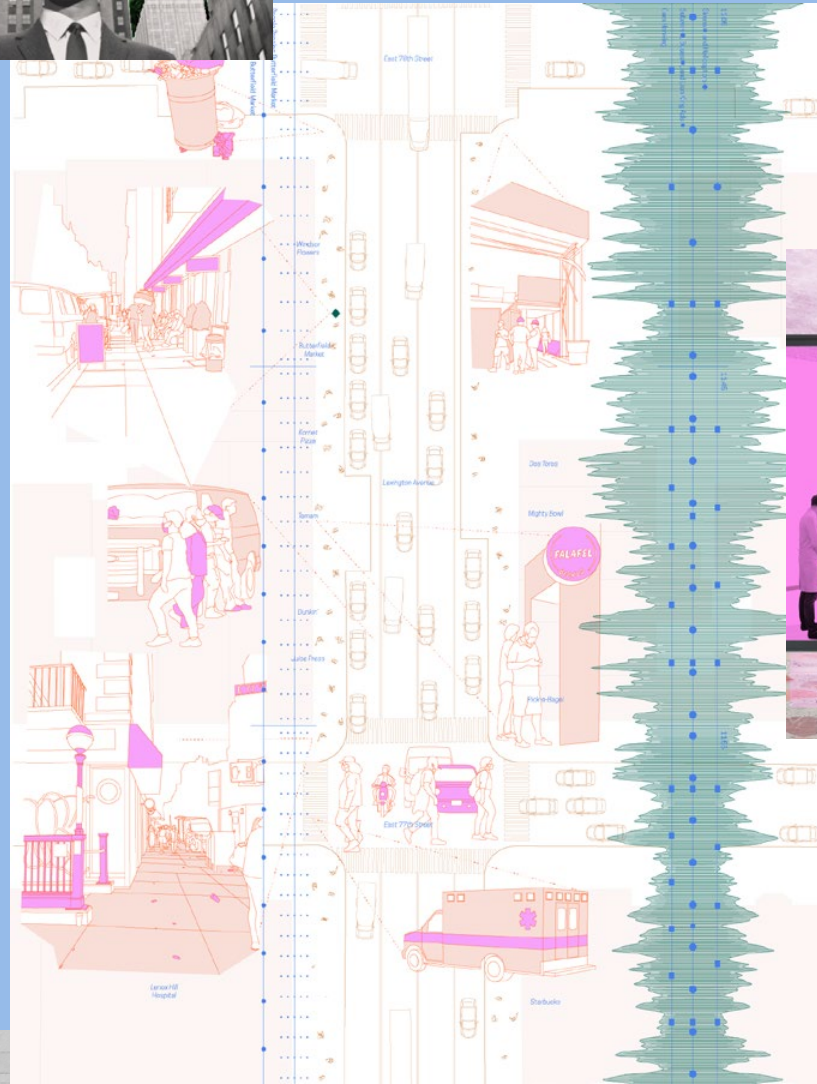
# COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING AND PRESERVATION

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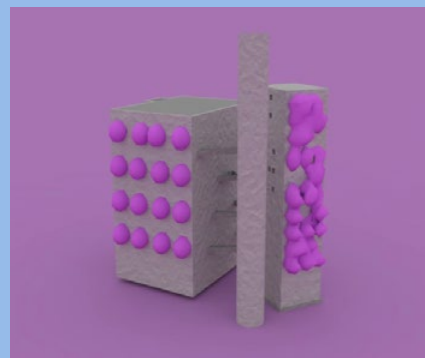
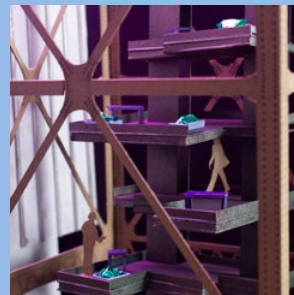


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# 1. Towards a Kinship

## TOWER OF CONSTELLATIONS

**Partner** Stella Dai

**Studio** Advanced VI: King Kong Studio

**Critic** Anna Puigjaner

**Term** Spring 2022

The Tower of Constellations explores the relationship between queerness and capitalism, especially as it relates to various queer communities in New York City. Through the process of trying to find “queer space,” we found that there has never truly been a solid, tight-knit queer neighborhood in New York, despite the myths of Greenwich Village and Park Slope. This is particularly true for trans/gender non-conforming, lesbian, and queer POC communities. Rather, there is a constellation of common spaces people gather, celebrate, and exist in. These spaces are often public, health-oriented, or commercial, as well as, unfortunately far from where many New Yorkers can afford to live. For example, the Center, located in Greenwich Village hosts a variety of support spaces for individuals, LGBTQ organizations, and community engagement, but many of its visitors travel from all over the city to access its programming

Unfortunately, while there are some remaining popular LGBTQIA+ spaces in New Yorkers’ constellations, many others, such as the Piers or feminine bookstores, have become faded memories.

The Tower is located in and on the envelope of the iconic 30 Rockefeller Plaza in Rockefeller Center. Rockefeller Center is not only a symbol of New York, exported throughout the world, but it is also a symbol of a heteropatriarchal society that values capitalism over all else. Constructed during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the three-block urban complex was funded by the extraction of oil and American Imperialism. The site has been owned by Gilded Age robber barons, Columbia University, the Rockefeller Family, multi-national corporations, and foreign governments.

However, Rockefeller Center is also a civic space that rethinks the city grid, hosting areas for public gatherings, leisure, and protests. The area was once home to the first botanical garden in America. It almost became the home of the Metropolitan Opera. It was built to represent American Media and is the home to NBC. Today, the garden walkways and plazas provide public space for an “approved” public. It also hosts protests and rallies, approved or not.

The Tower of Constellations aims to transform Rockefeller Center into a social machine that creates new stars in the LGBTQIA+ constellation through Inefficiency and Unfinished Interventions.

Efficiency is designed in every aspect of the existing building, including its circulation, to deliver workers to their designated floors and limit accessibility. In order to boost chance interactions, we are introducing inefficiency to the existing efficient circulation strategy.

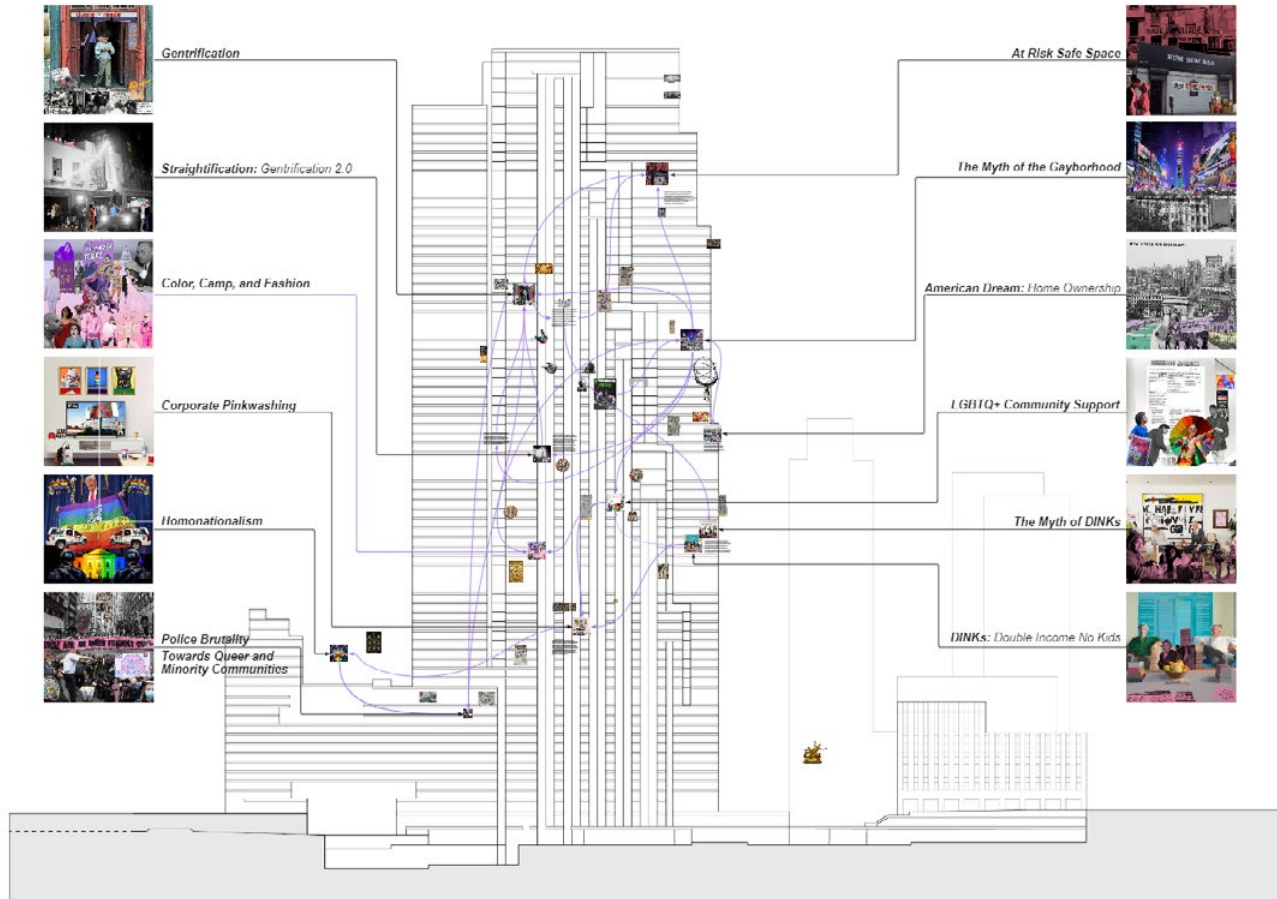
The Tower envelopes the building in a system of elevators and platforms, pulling the publicness of the plaza and street to meet the exclusive real estate inside. Wrap-around platforms correspond to the existing elevator breaks. Users are required to change elevators at these platforms to encourage interactions between workers and the public. Users can operate textile facades to enclose the open-air platforms.

The second system is a series of interventions that transform the building into a social machine that will create a new star in the LGBTQ+ constellation. These spaces are designed to support new and existing LGBTQ organizations as well as informal kinships. These spaces take on forms of protest. While protests can be violent and loud, they can also take place through quieter and non-normative acts of existence, representation, self-expression, health, inclusion, and artistic production.

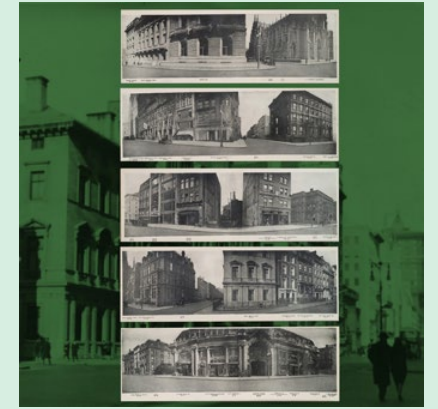
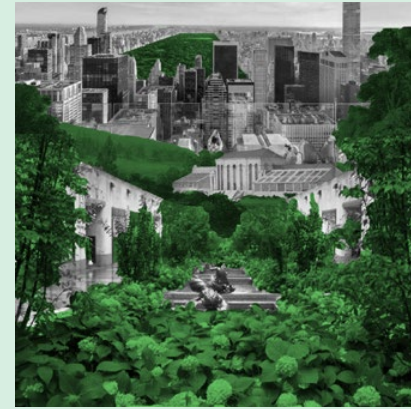
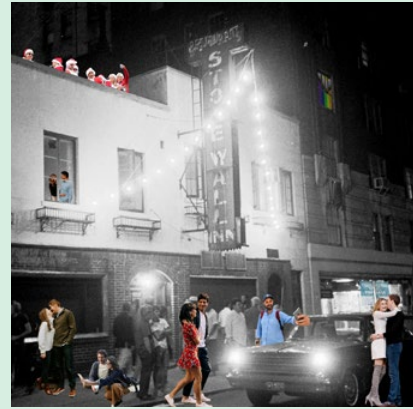
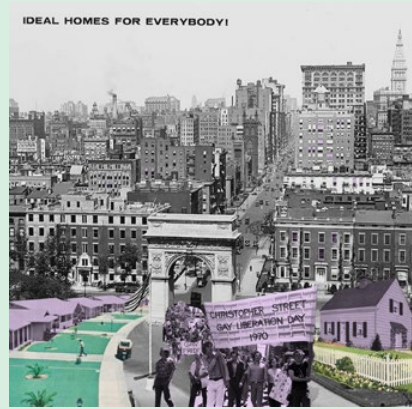
The Tower of Constellations starts with five interventions within 30 Rockefeller Plaza to support both formal and informal organizations. The first five spaces are a Hair and Care Salon, Printshop/Bookshop, Auditorium and Conference Center, Health Clinic, and Communal Kitchen.

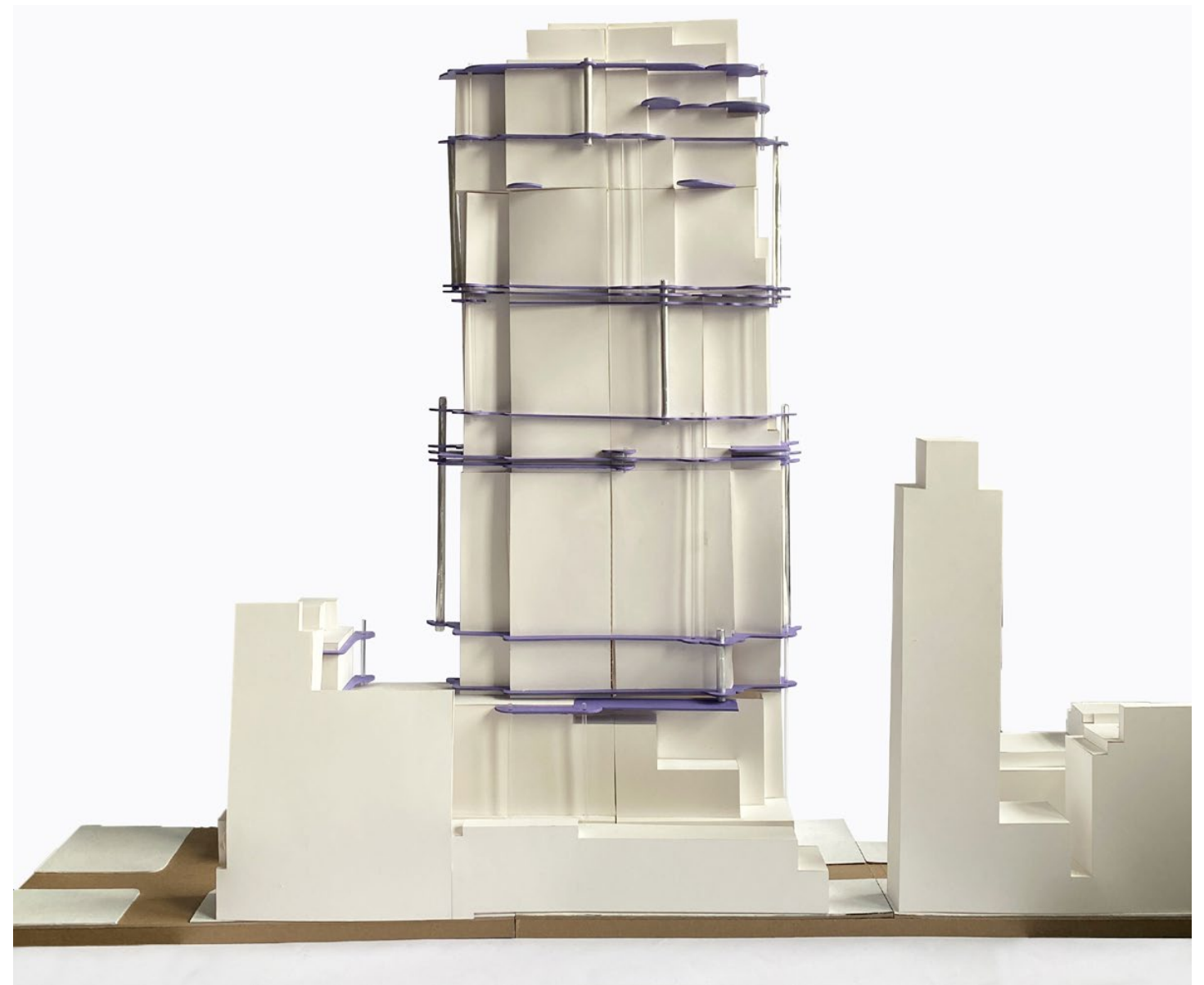
These spaces are starting points on a larger constellation to support New York’s diverse and ever-growing LGBTQIA+ communities. As these places begin to support organizations and individuals passing through midtown, we imagine more spaces developing to support protest, foster chance interactions, and encourage new forms of community.

# Queerness in New York Research

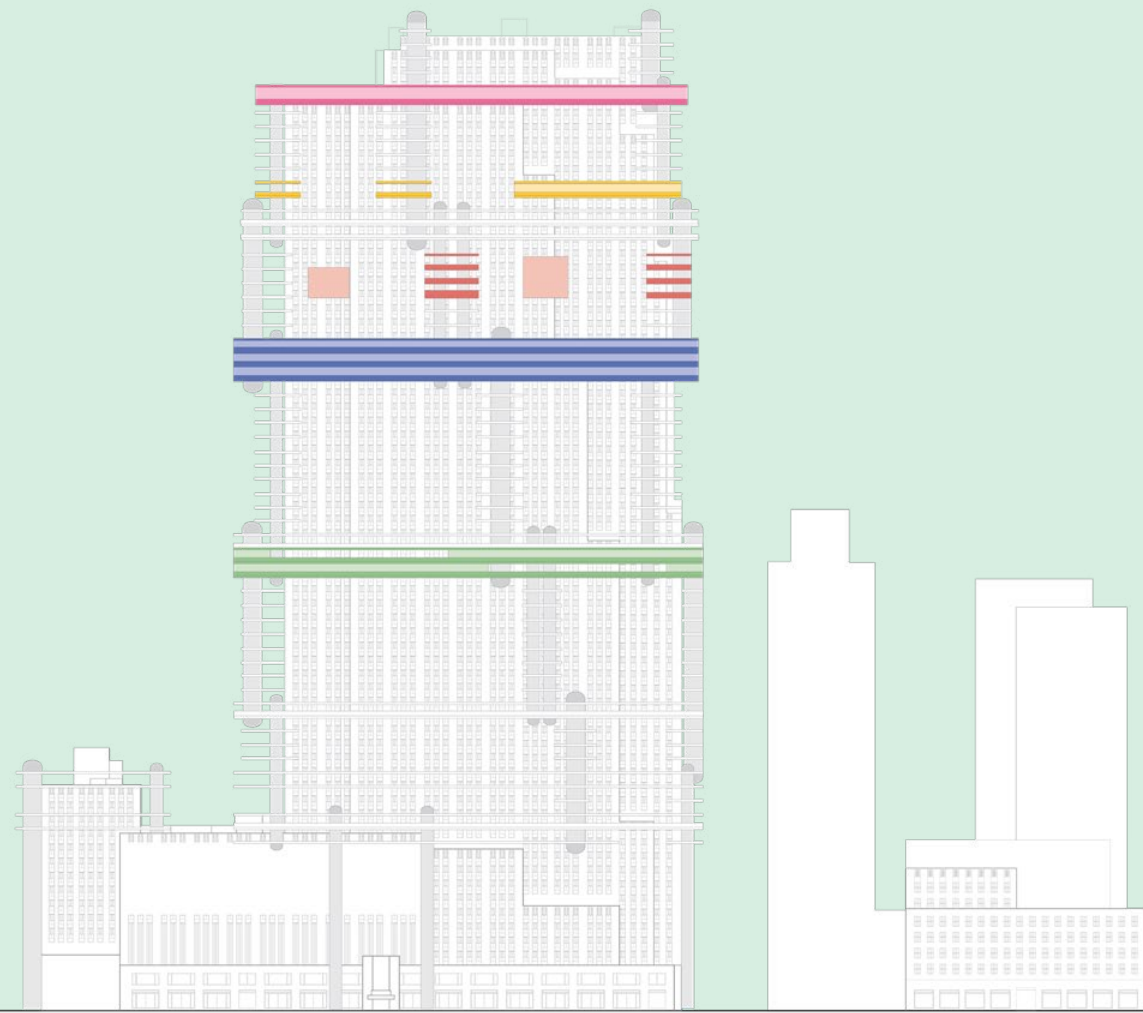


# Rockefeller Center Research

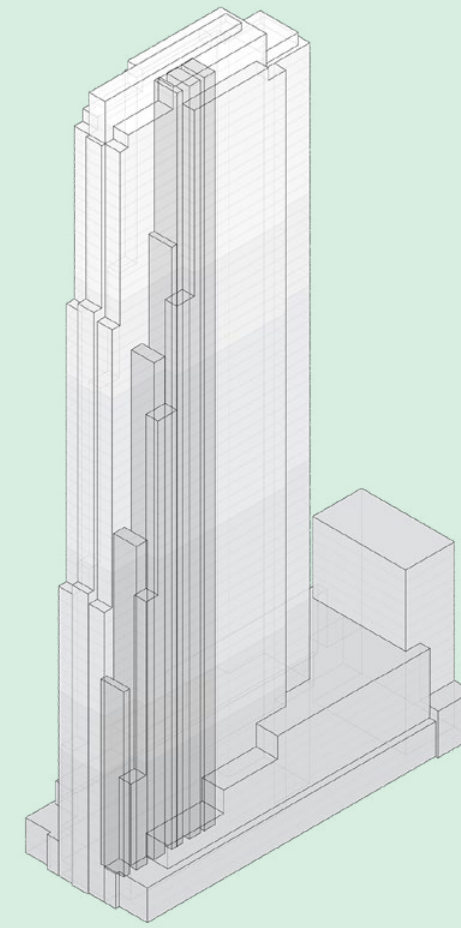




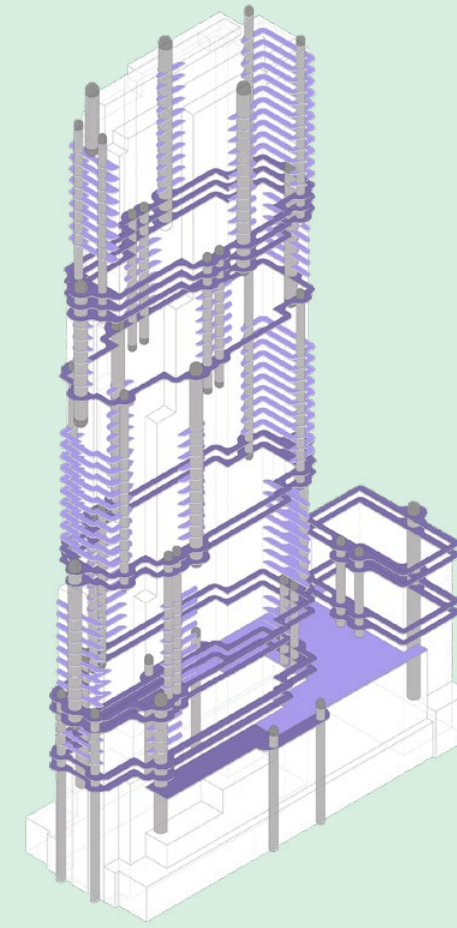
Elevation



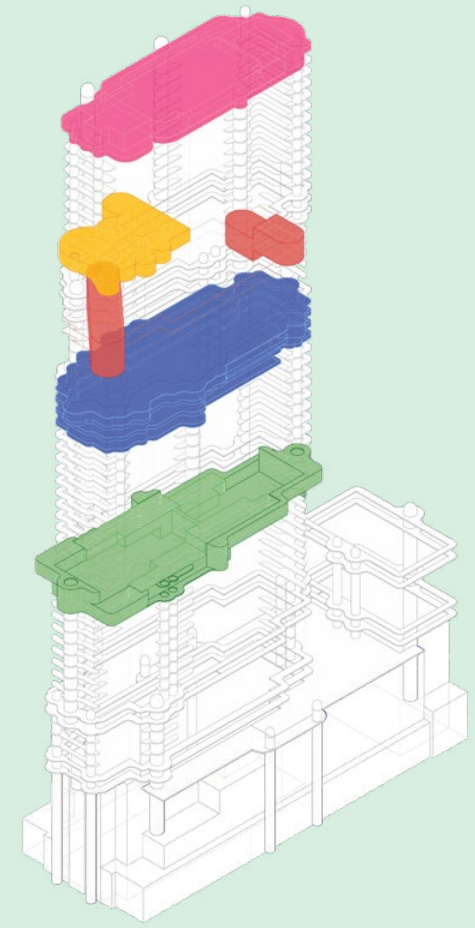
Inefficiency and Unfinished Interventions



Existing Elevator System



Proposed Elevator and Platform System

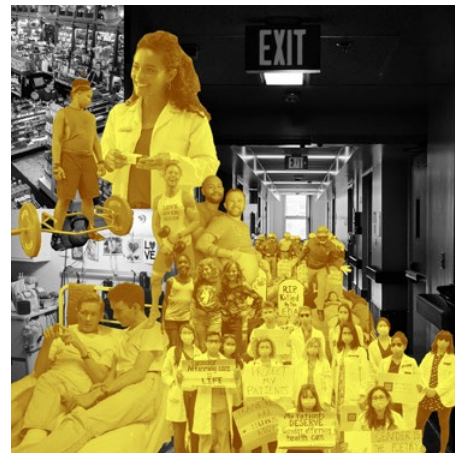


Proposed Social Interventions

Forms of Protest



Public Spaces and Places of Gathering



Health, Strength, and Survival



Board Room and Decision Making



Media and Story-Telling



Places of Identity-Creation and Pleasure



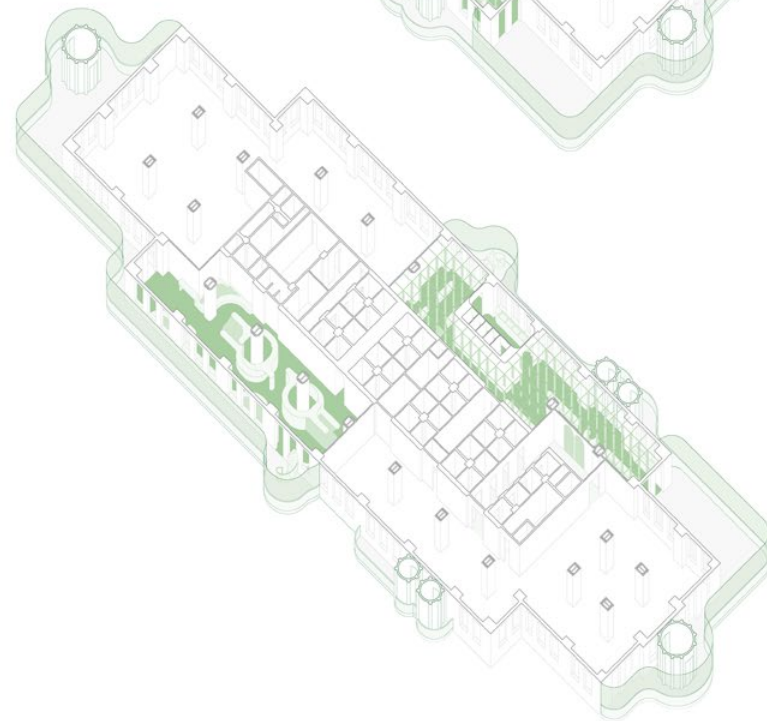
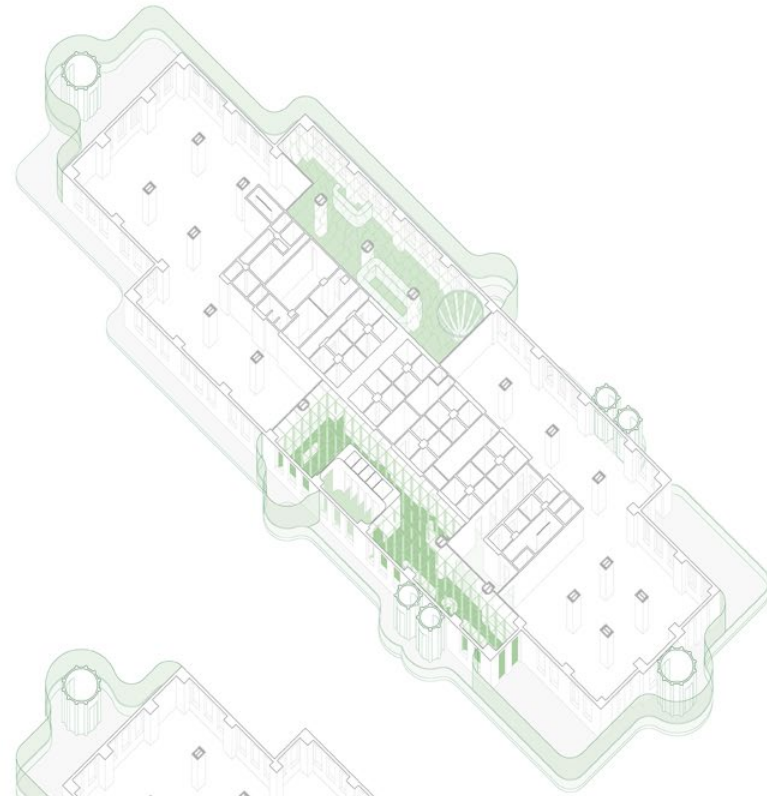
Self-Expression and Art Production



The Hair and Care Salon (Nails)



The Hair and Care Salon (Hair)  
& The People's Cafe



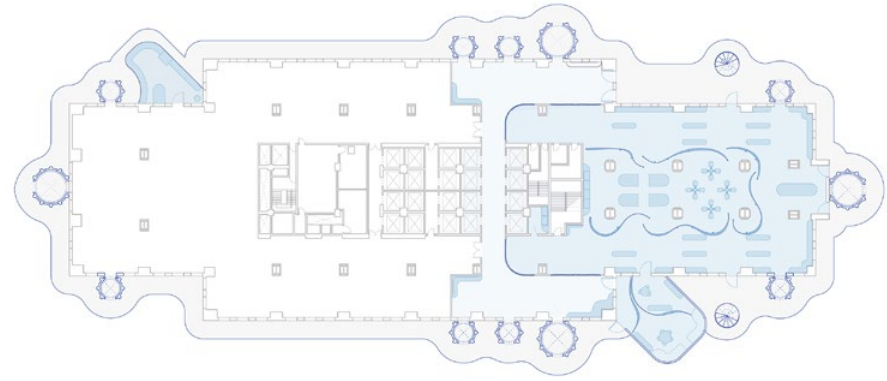
The People's Cafe



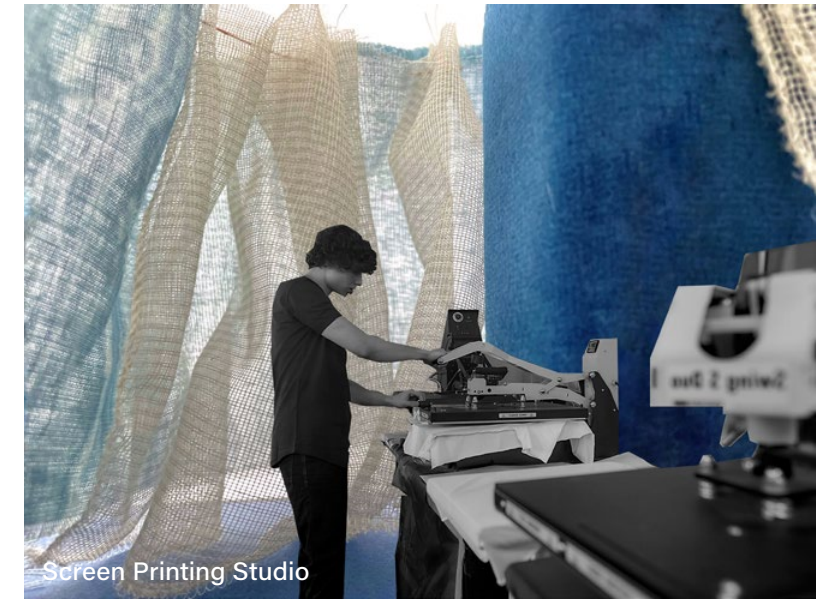
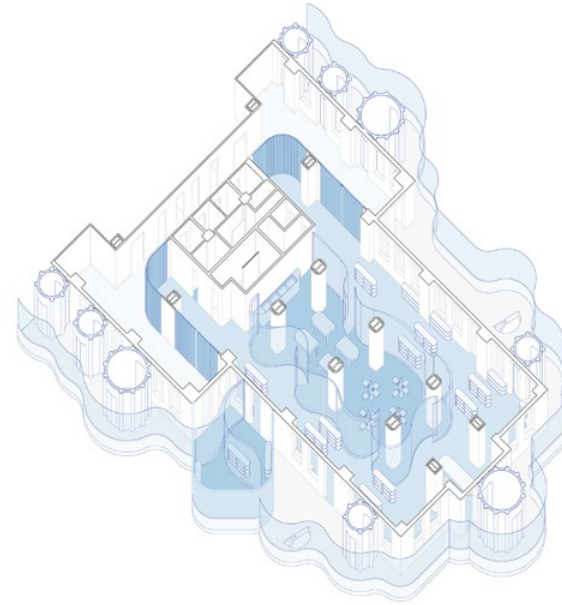
Hair and Care Salon



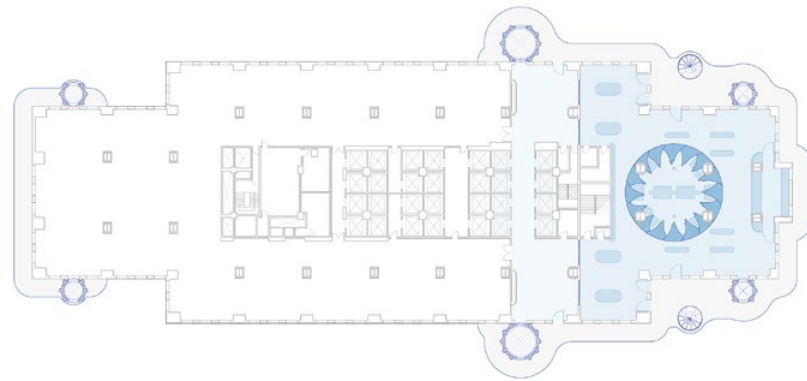
Print Shop / Book Shop



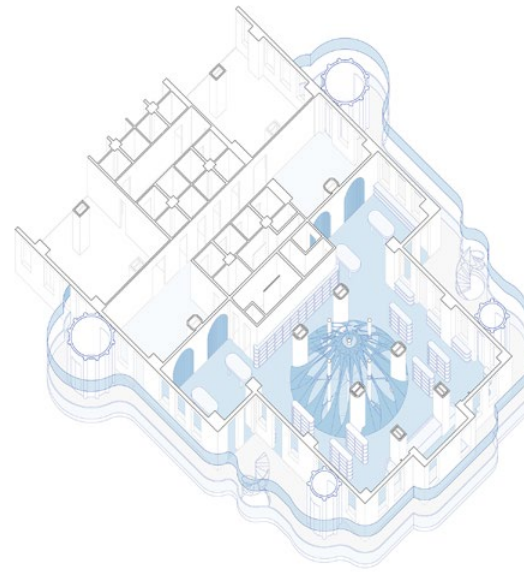
Screen Printing Studio, Children's Reading Room & Bookstore



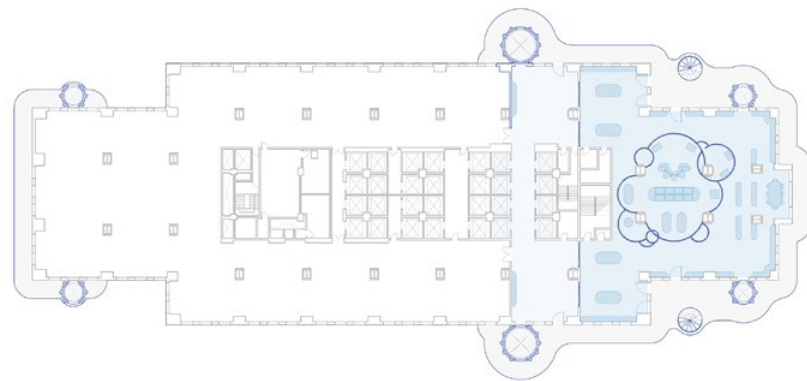
Screen Printing Studio



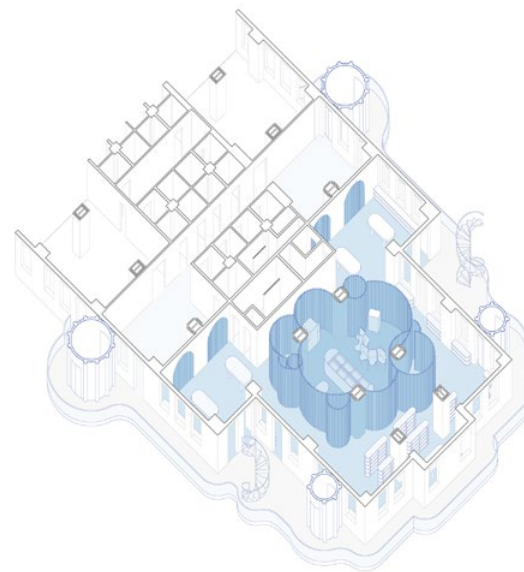
The Plot Shop & Bookstore



The Plot Shop

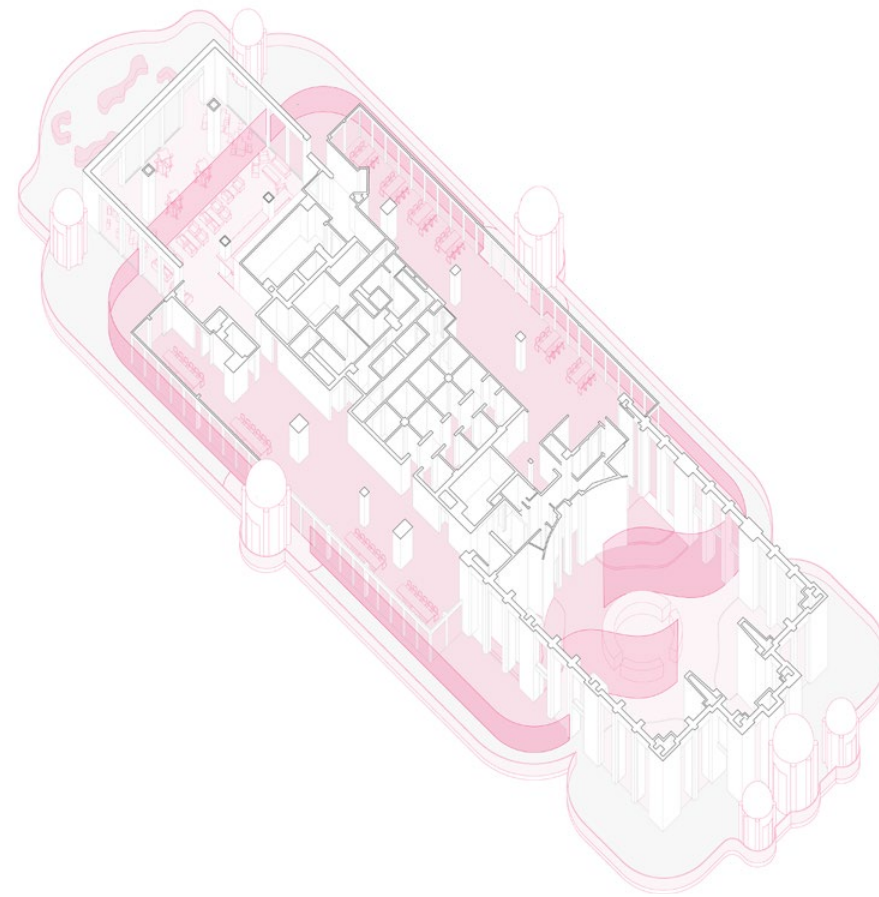
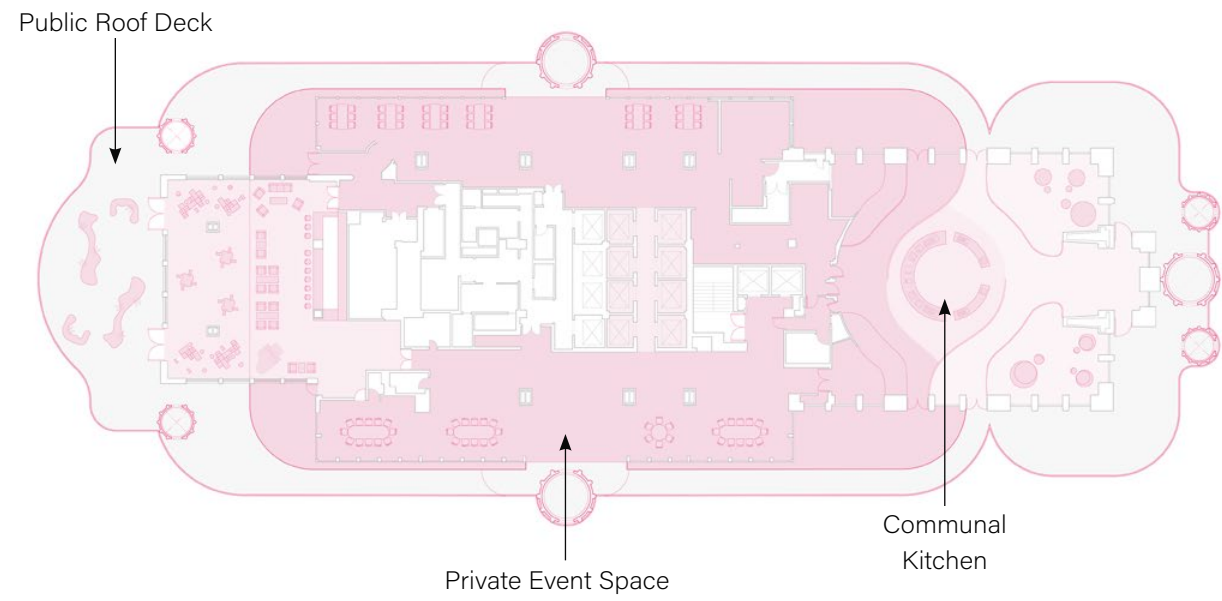


The Photography Lab, Dark Room & Bookstore



Photography Lab and Dark Room

# Communal Kitchen



# TEMPLE OF BASKETBALL

Partners Adam Vosburgh, Ben Diller-Schatz, & Jules Kleitmann  
 Course ATIII: Enclosures & ATIV: Integrated Structures  
 Critic Joe Hand  
 Term Fall 2020



This building was designed through Design Development phase, taking into account structure, MEP/FP systems, enclosure, and sustainability. The team worked closely with practicing consultants to produce a full drawing set.

Situated in the Melrose neighborhood the South Bronx, the Temple of Basketball is a community center that brings basketball, education, and the arts together under one roof. The project is guided by two integrated concepts of structure and architecture.

The South Bronx has a rich history of playground basketball, but kids from the area explained to our team that they had no safe place to play basketball. Their parents felt it was unsafe for them to go to the playground in the nearby NYCHA complex and also had concerns about child safety during the Covid pandemic.

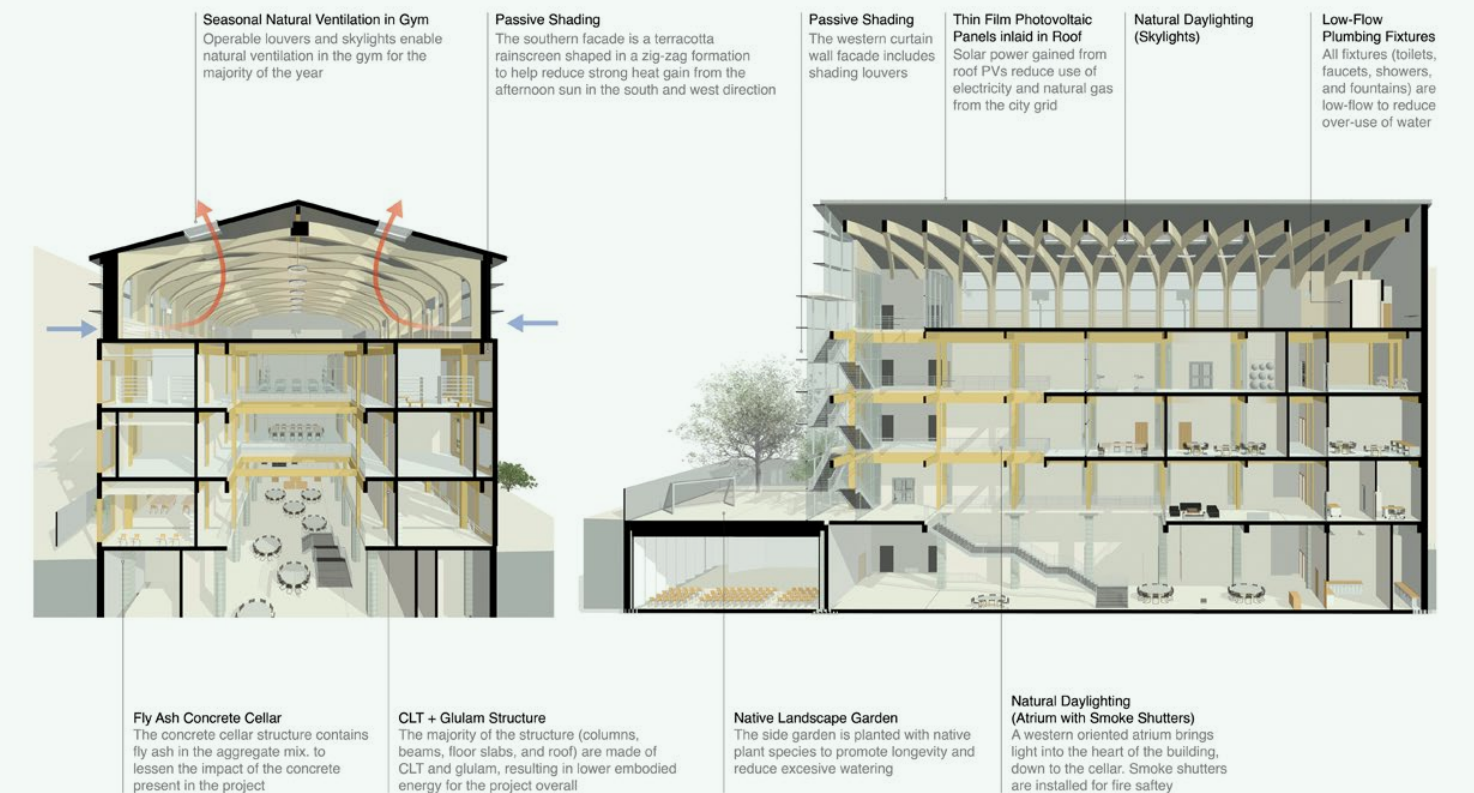
Further site investigation brought the numerous churches in the area to light. Melrose houses a large immigrant community from Latin America, many of whom seek religious spaces for sanctuary and community. The project combines the two community needs into a safe haven for basketball and community gathering.

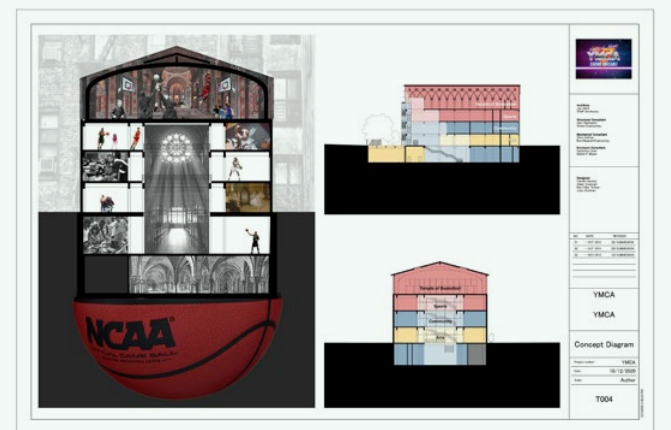
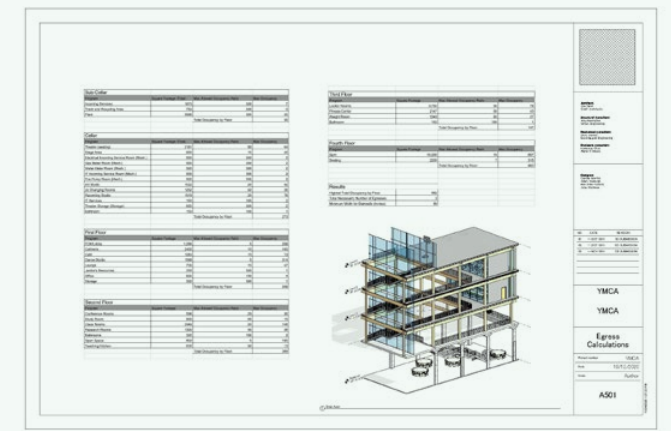
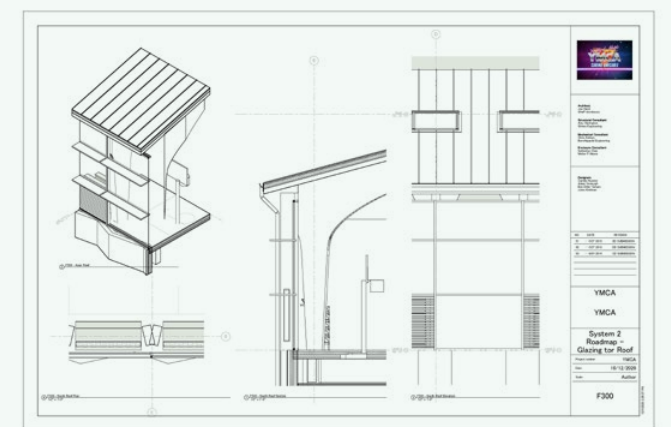
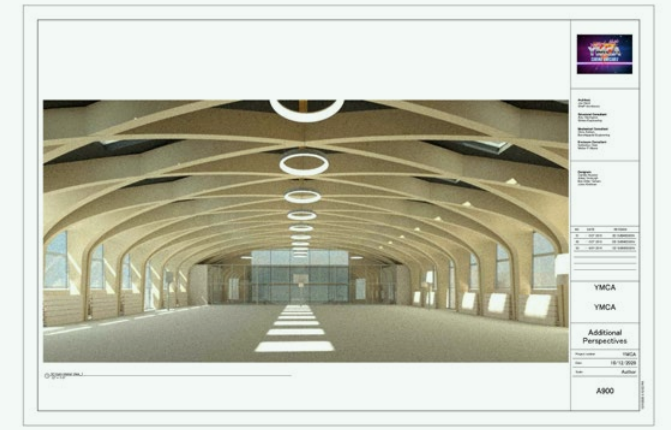
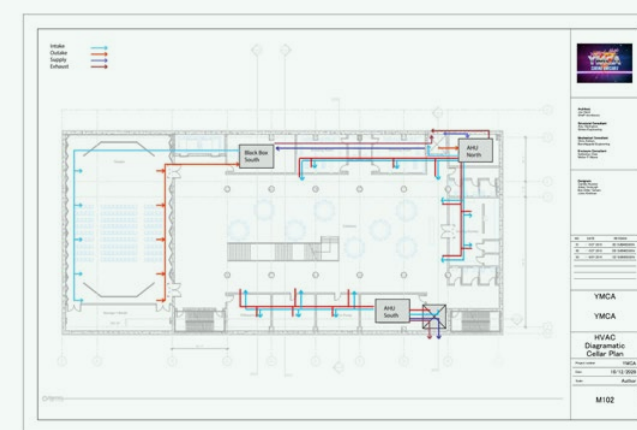
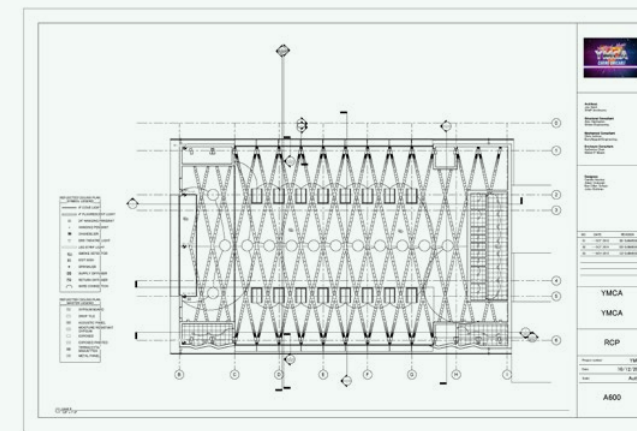
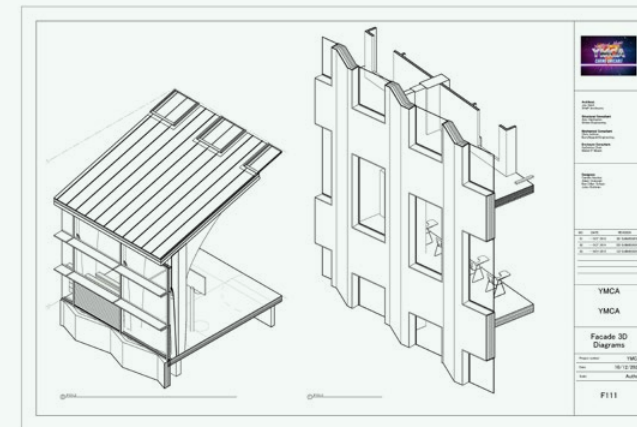
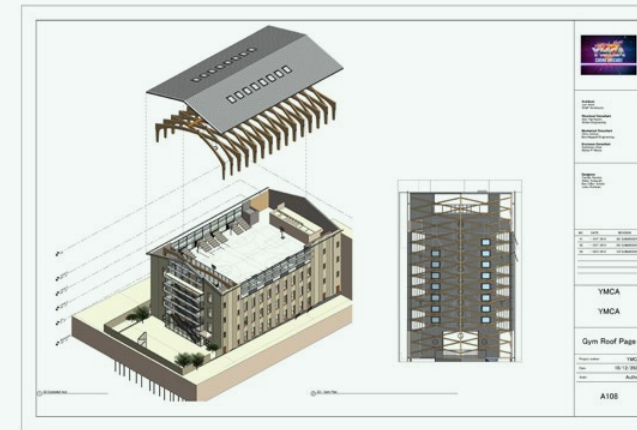
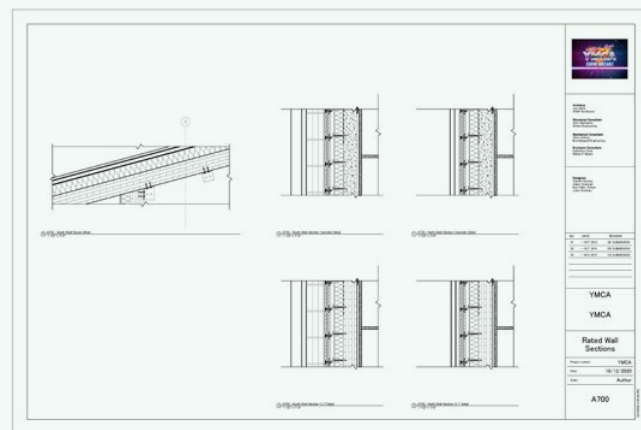
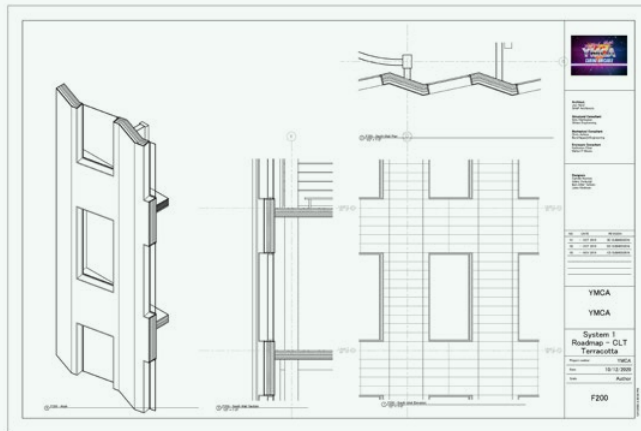
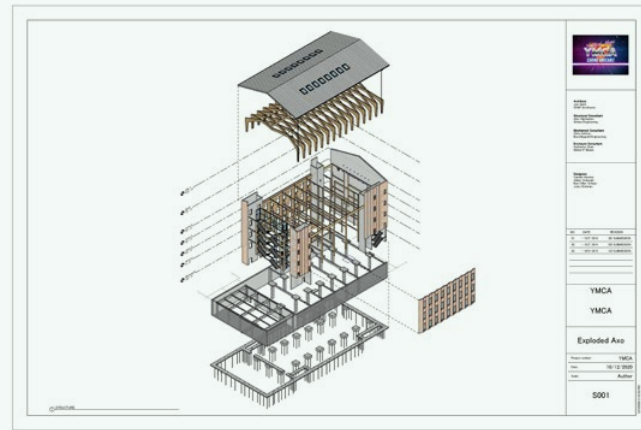
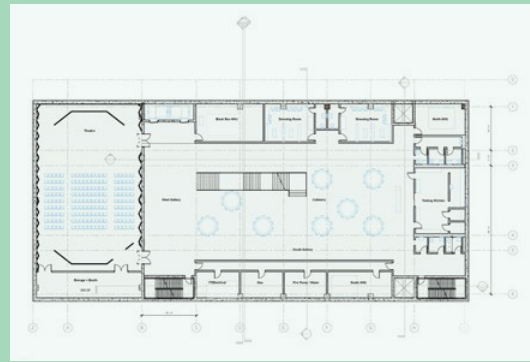
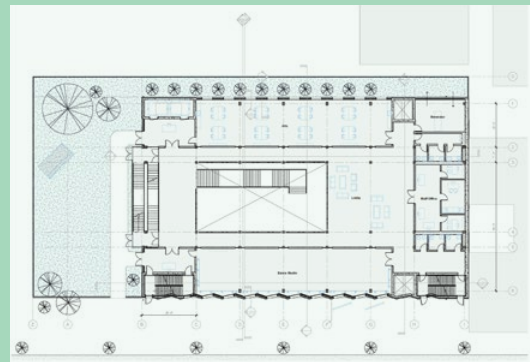
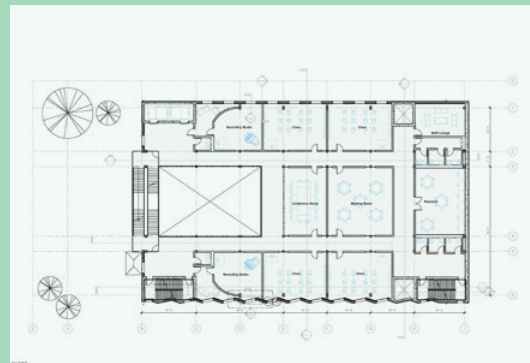
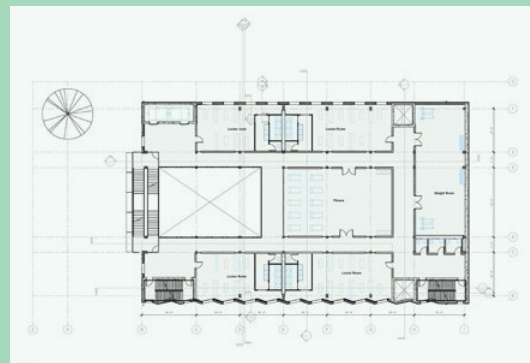
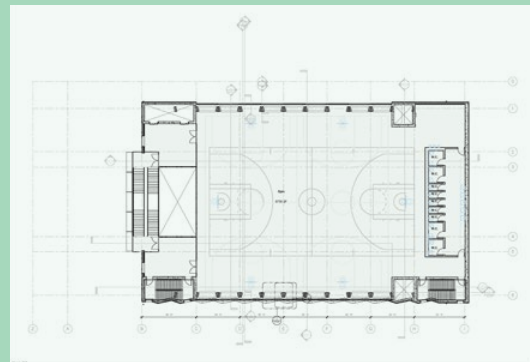
The program is organized around a shifting atrium space that grows as it moves down the building, bringing natural light deep into the building and down to the basement. The ground floor and basement welcome the community in with a large lobby, staff offices, art and dance studios, galleries, cafeteria, and black-box theater. The second and third floors house education spaces and fitness programs.

The basketball courts are on the top floor in a 86' column-free space. Considered the temple of the project, the gym sits under a lattice-like glulam structure and is designed for natural ventilation for the majority of the year. Exterior, weather and fire-proof stairs allow access to the gym when the rest of the center is closed.

The structural concept emphasizes the use of heavy timber in an institutional building. A crypt-like concrete structure below-grade supports the timber structure above. The timber structure consists of CLT columns and floors, which culminate into a glulam diagrid structure at the roof. The whole building is wrapped in a terracotta cladding.

The building incorporates passive design elements into the building first, aided by sustainable technology.





## URBAN VOIDSCAPE

Partner Nash Taylor

Studio Core III: Living In-Between

Critic Annie Barrett

Term Fall 2020

Urban Voidscape is a mid-rise affordable housing complex in the Melrose neighborhood of the Bronx, New York. The project seeks to create safe public space for youth in the South Bronx while investigating the relationship between urban public space and housing.

In site visits and discussions with residents of Melrose, we learned of children's immobility and lack of freedom compared to their age group in other neighborhoods of New York. Covid-19 trapped many children of all ages inside their apartments, while many parents in the neighborhood continued to work outside the home. Children, who have often been restricted in their ability to go outside due to concerns of crime in Melrose, are increasingly isolated indoors.

We investigated how both public space and housing could be designed as an interlocking and mutually beneficial system and were challenged in how to create an "eyes on the street" condition with housing and public space without creating either a modernist severity between the two or over surveillance public realm.

Using a strict platonic formal language, we explored how public space could be aggregated through the building to

create a public to private relationship. Pure geometries were used as a linguistic equalizer and as a means to create both order and variation. Squares and rectilinear spaces denote private, intimate spaces while circles represent public and communal spaces.

While the project takes up the majority of the site, the facade is broken up and lobbies are scattered throughout the building to community pockets within the building. Other than lobbies, the ground floor is dedicated to Melrose, with a public library; a series of spaces for NGOs; and fluid but secure open courtyards with basketball courts, a pool, and playgrounds.

The circular voids shift as the building moves up through residential floors, giving variation to interior and exterior community spaces. As voids cut bars of residential units, they create amenity cores for laundry, extra kitchens, and social spaces.

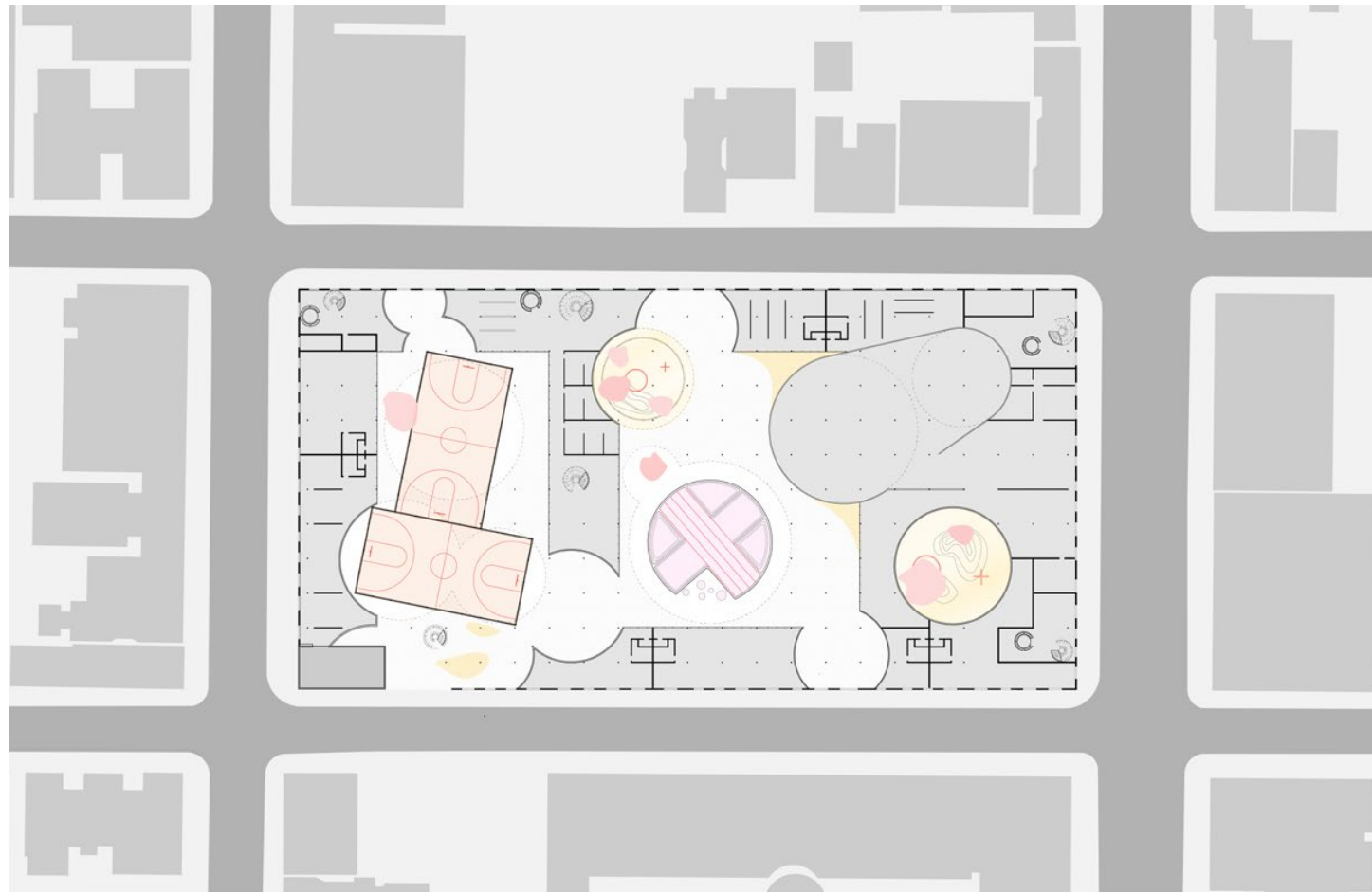
Apartments range in size from micro units to two bedroom units. Micro units are designed to be rented in the short-term, allowing flexibility for tenants, stability for growing and shrinking families, as well as new opportunities for residents to have extra space for work, study or childcare.



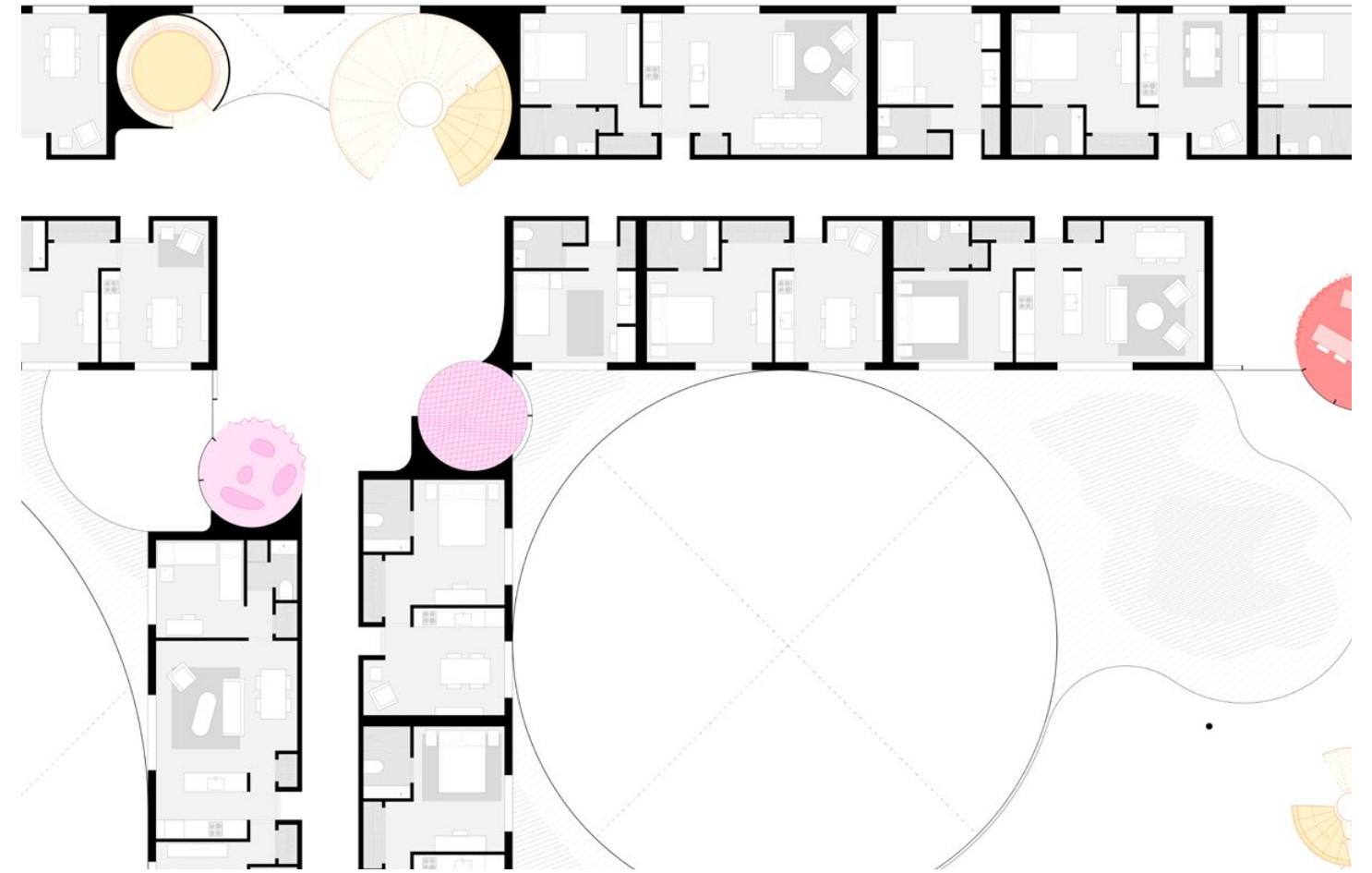
Recreation & Residential Courtyard



Library & Residential Courtyard



Site Plan

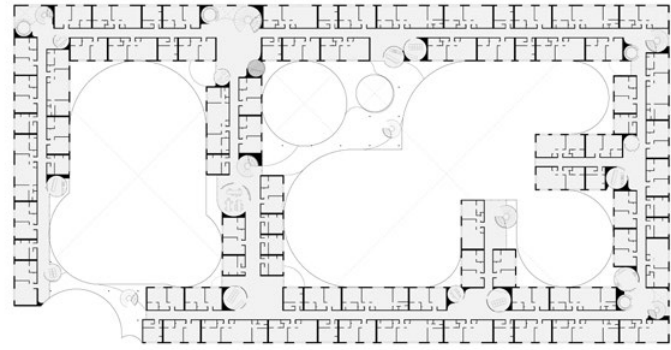


Community Pockets

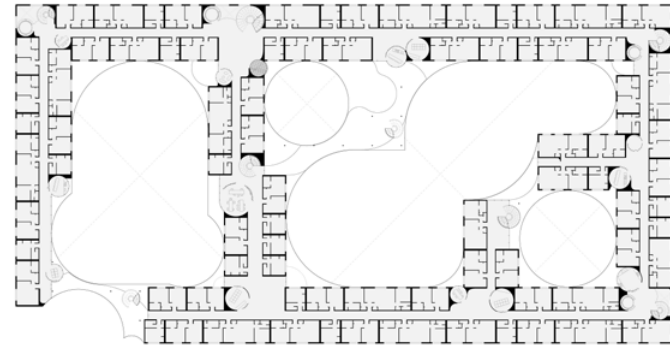


Section

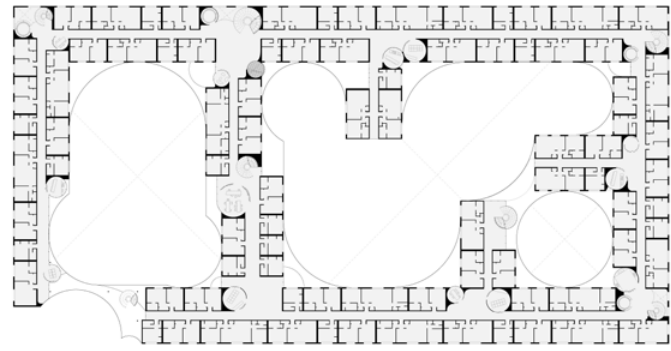
### Residential Floor Plans



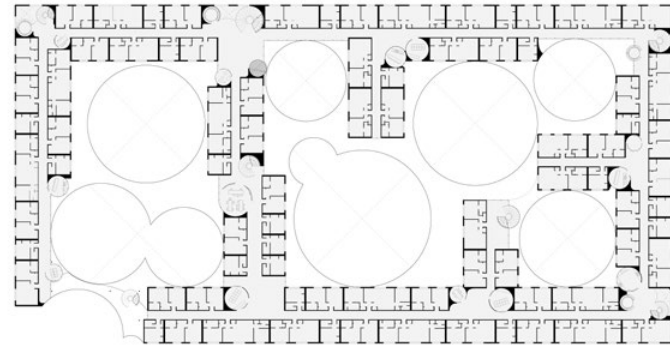
Fourth Floor



Fifth Floor

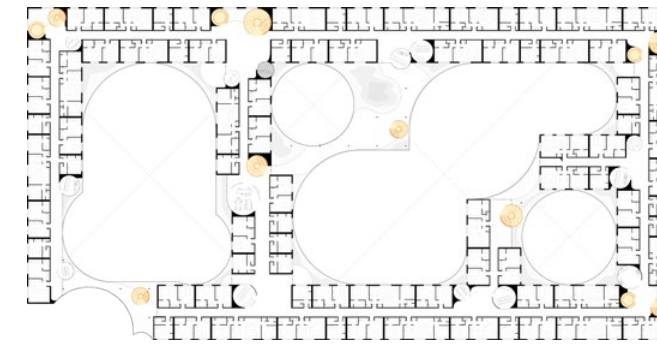


Second Floor

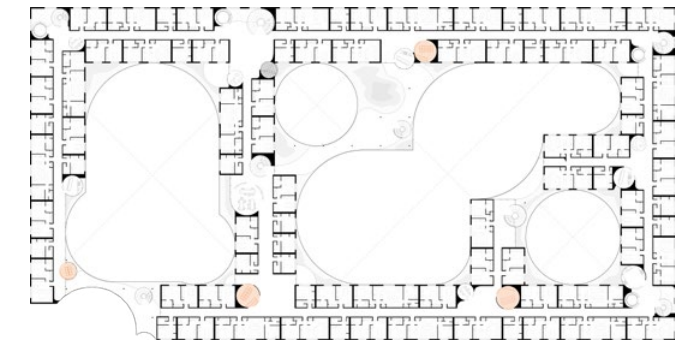


Third Floor

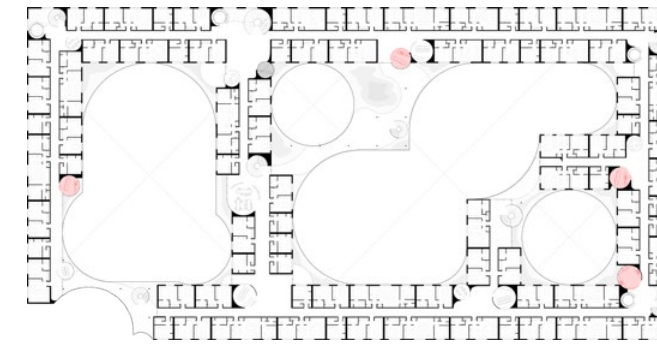
### Core Distribution (Fourth Floor)



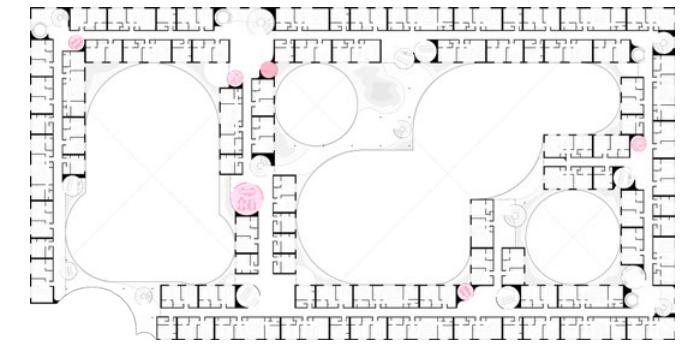
Circulation



Laundry Rooms

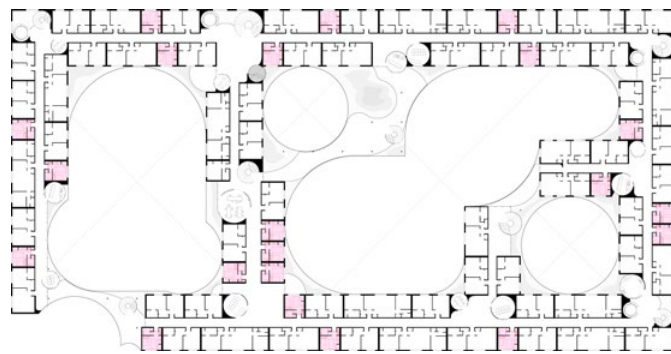


Community Kitchens

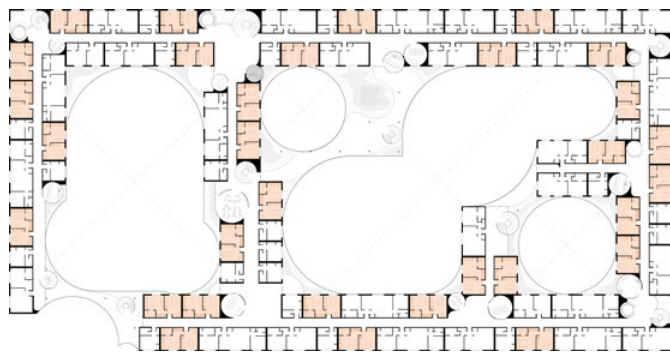


Social Space

### Unit Distribution (Fourth Floor)



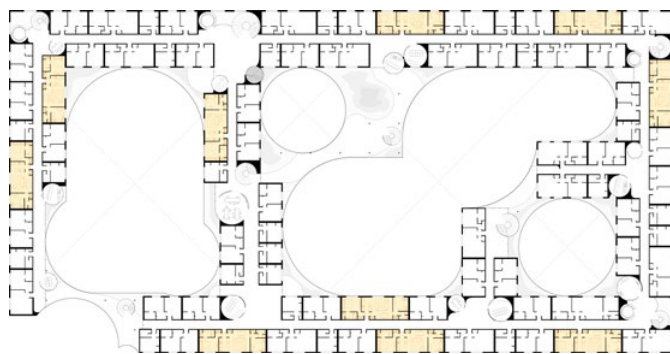
Micro Units



Studio Units

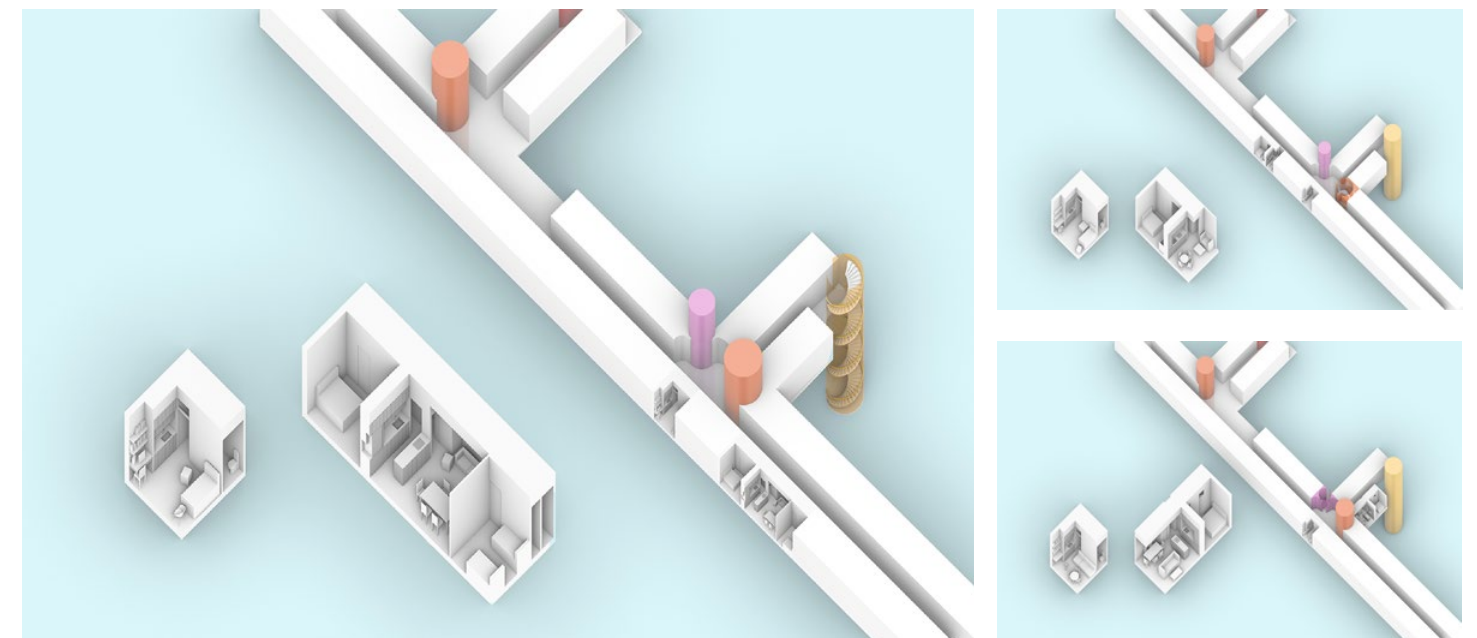


1 Bedroom Units



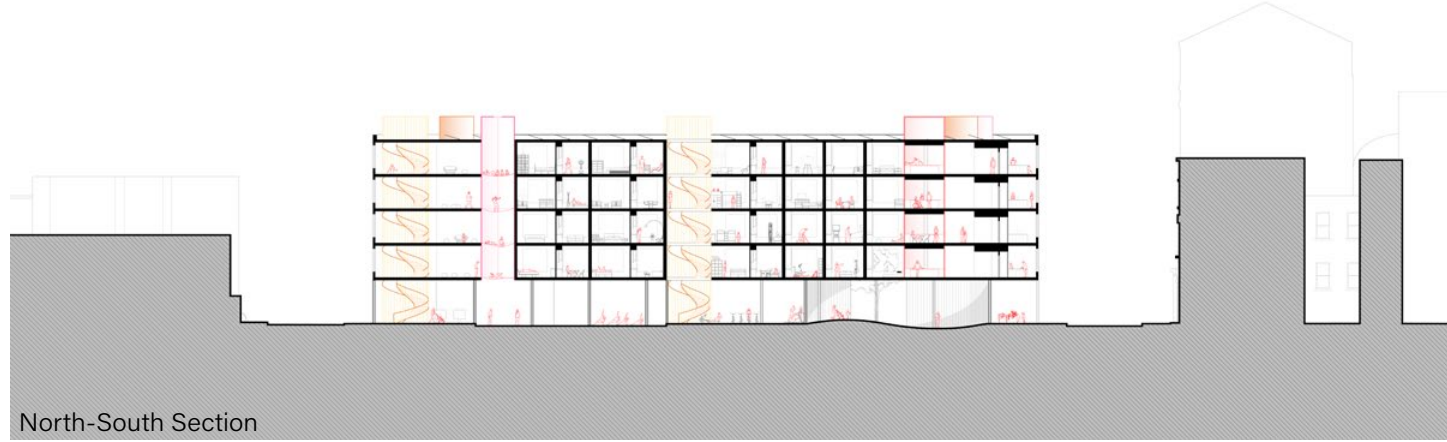
2 Bedroom Units

### Polyvalency of the Micro Unit





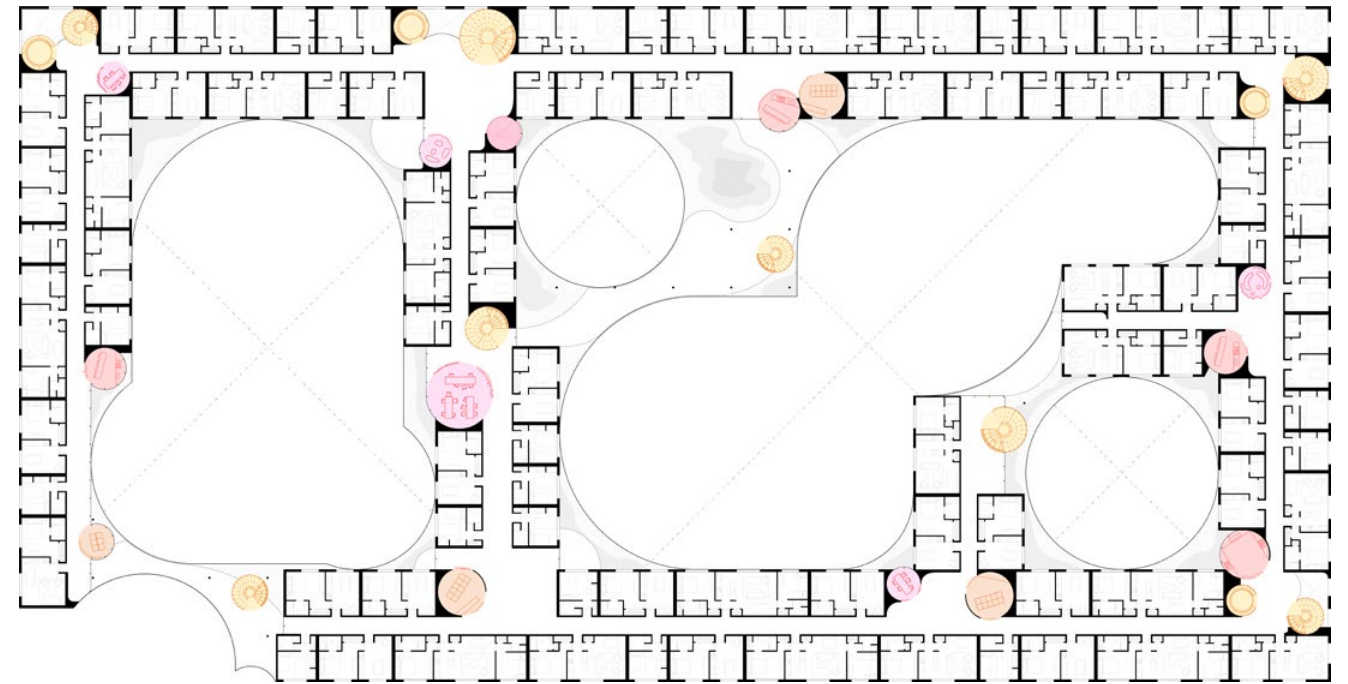
West-East Section



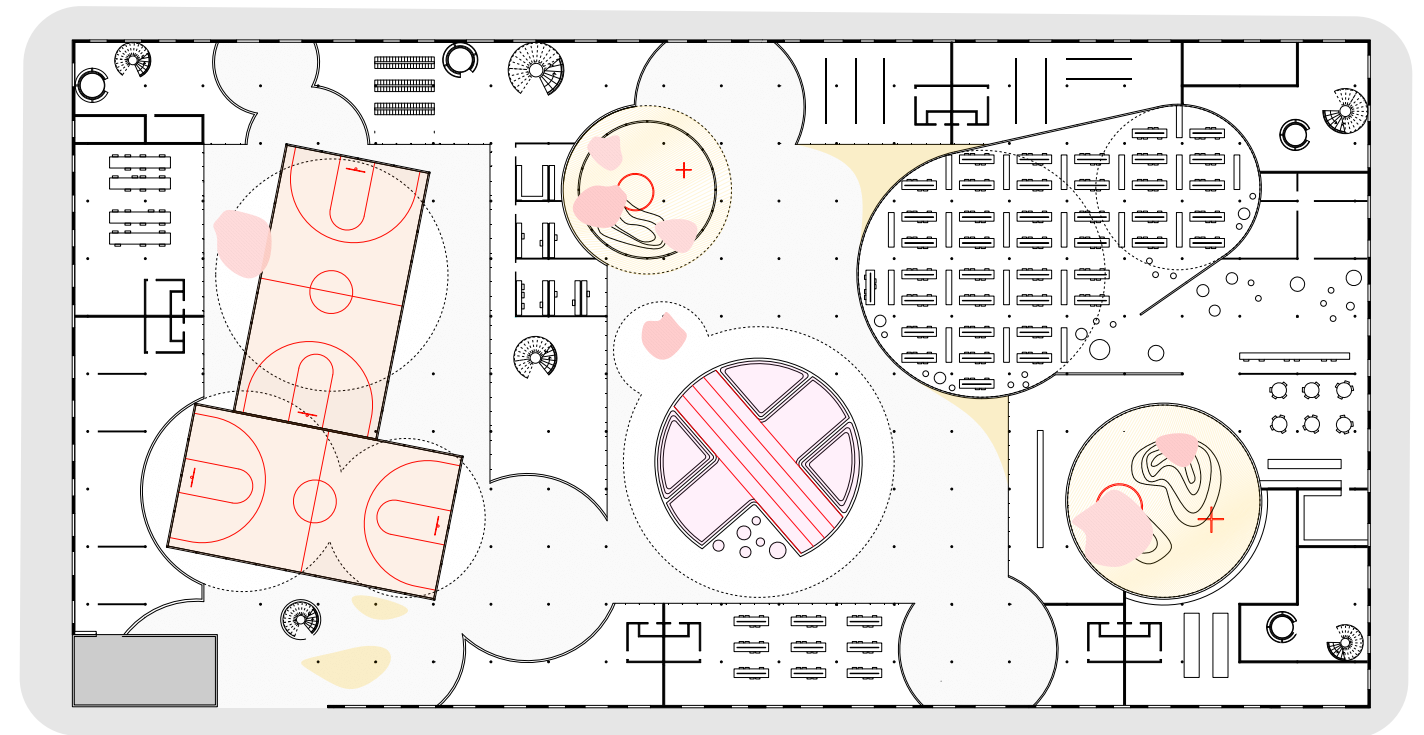
North-South Section



North-South Section



Fourth Floor Plan: Community Cores



Ground Floor Plan



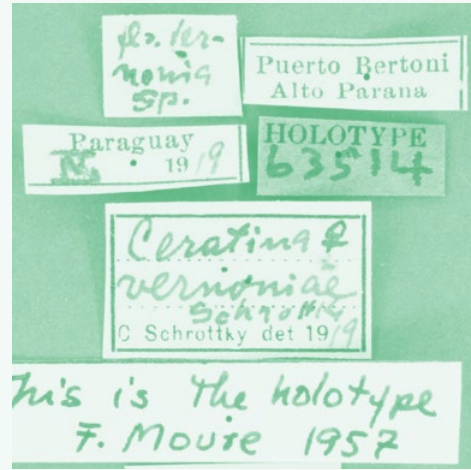


## UNDERSTANDING UTOPIA: PUERTO BERTONI

Course Utopian Visions of Latin America

Professor Luis E. Carranza

Term Fall 2020



Top: Specimen labels for insects discovered by Bertoni and his colony  
Right: the Bertoni Family (date unknown)  
Far Right: Bertoni at Puerto Bertoni (previously Guillermo Tell)



Puerto Bertoni has been categorized as both a utopian vision and one man's dream of living deep in nature, depending on the historical source (Baratti and Candolfi, 3). The experimental agricultural colony was the product of Moisés Santiago Bertoni, an immigrant from the Ticino region of Switzerland.

Bertoni was born in the village of Lottigna in 1857 as the son of a priest. His family's politics swung from liberal-democratic to anti-political and anarchist (Baratti, 175). In his youth, Bertoni leaned toward socialism and anarchy though his main passion was the sciences. While studying in Geneva and Zurich, Bertoni acquainted himself with the works of geographers and anarchists Élisée Reclus and Peter Kropotkin.

Bertoni, his family, and forty Swiss farmers left for Argentina in 1884, which many believe was to start a socialist or anarchist colony and factory. In letters to friends and family, he suggested the move would give him the freedom to study the sciences in total nature without economic struggle or urban distractions. He hinted at larger, social drivers, but there is little written evidence (Baratti and Candolfi, 251) as seen in the 1882 letter to friend Rinaldo Simen:

*Selflessly loving science for science's sake, I am driven by an irresistible force towards studies and towards an impossible life when you do not have assured at least a crust of bread to live on... Absolute silence on the social part of my project! Woe to you if the government knew it (Bertoni as quoted in Baratti and Candolfi, 251).*

Following the writing of Reclus and Kropotkin, young Bertoni appeared anti-colonialist and anti-government, yet his views changed shortly after arriving in Argentina. Bertoni joyously accepted colonial land and government support in Misiones from President Julio Roca, a former general known for cleansing indigenous people from Patagonia. And any discussion of socialist ideas quickly disappeared (Baratti, 143).

Climatic and economic hardship hit the Argentinian colony. Farmers slowly deserted and Bertoni began exploring other options. After a decade, he and his growing family moved across the border to Paraguay. They eventually settled in the Foz do Iguacu region on land inhabited by the Mbyá-Guaraní people given to Bertoni by the Paraguayan government.

Completely isolated from urban Paraguay, Bertoni focused on growing a large family and his scientific studies. The majority of the colony was composed of Bertoni's family,

including thirteen children, as well as grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. Farmers from Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina, as well as the Guaraní who worked the land, were considered laborers only (Baratti and Candolfi, 263).

The boys were taught courses in geometry, zoology, surveying, French, and German as training to eventually assist Bertoni in his experiments and explorations (Baratti and Candolfi, 255). Bertoni, an encyclopedic scientist, practiced botany, meteorology, zoology, cartography, anthropology, agriculture, and linguistics. He outfitted his isolated colony with a plantation, herbarium, printing press, and post office to aid in his practice. While the boys and men assisted Bertoni in research, the girls and women were required to prepare for marriage and childbearing, despite their feminist-anarchist names (Baratti, 177). In Bertoni's patriarchal vision, women were not supposed to practice science.

Bertoni was not known to be a leading expert in any field he practiced, yet he was given a couple of government positions and several false promises of government research grants. In the years before the economic collapse of 1914, he prospered from his production of bananas, coffee, tea, and yerba Baratti and Candolfi, 261). The collapse of the Paraguayan economy, along with trading costs and tariffs and a bitter frost in 1918,

crippled both Bertoni's plantation and scientific experiments. Though he published extensively in the last decade or so of his life, especially surrounding topics such as the Guaraní and agriculture, Bertoni's colony would never regain its previous fortunes.

Bertoni died in 1929 of malaria at the age of 72. His family eventually donated the colony to Paraguay to become a historic monument and nature preserve.

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## **2. Negotiations of Cooperation**

## BLACK DIRT SANCTUARY

**Partner** Hannah Stollery

**Studio** Advanced IV: (R)Urban Sanctuaries

**Critic** Nahyun Hwang

**Term** Spring 2021

The Black Dirt region in Orange County, New York has some of the most fertile soil in the United States. It is known for producing onions and organic produce sold in the tri-state area and beyond. Throughout the regions' history, agricultural opportunities have attracted immigrants in hope of economic prosperity.

From the perspective of the consumer, obscured by the illusion of organic and sustainable practices, these farms are hiding a very important social cost. Most of the labor is provided by migrant workers who are at risk of being exploited. Today 71% of the farmworkers are undocumented. Many do not speak English and are unaware of the health, legal, and educational services available to them. Transportation is also an issue as there is no public transportation in the area. Migrant farm workers have to rely on employers or other sources to get to services that are available to them.

Some migrant farmers split their year between different regions of the US. They farm in warm southern states during the winter and farm in the black dirt region from spring to fall, from planting to harvest. The workers typically work six to seven days a week without sick days, ranging from sixty to eighty hours a week.

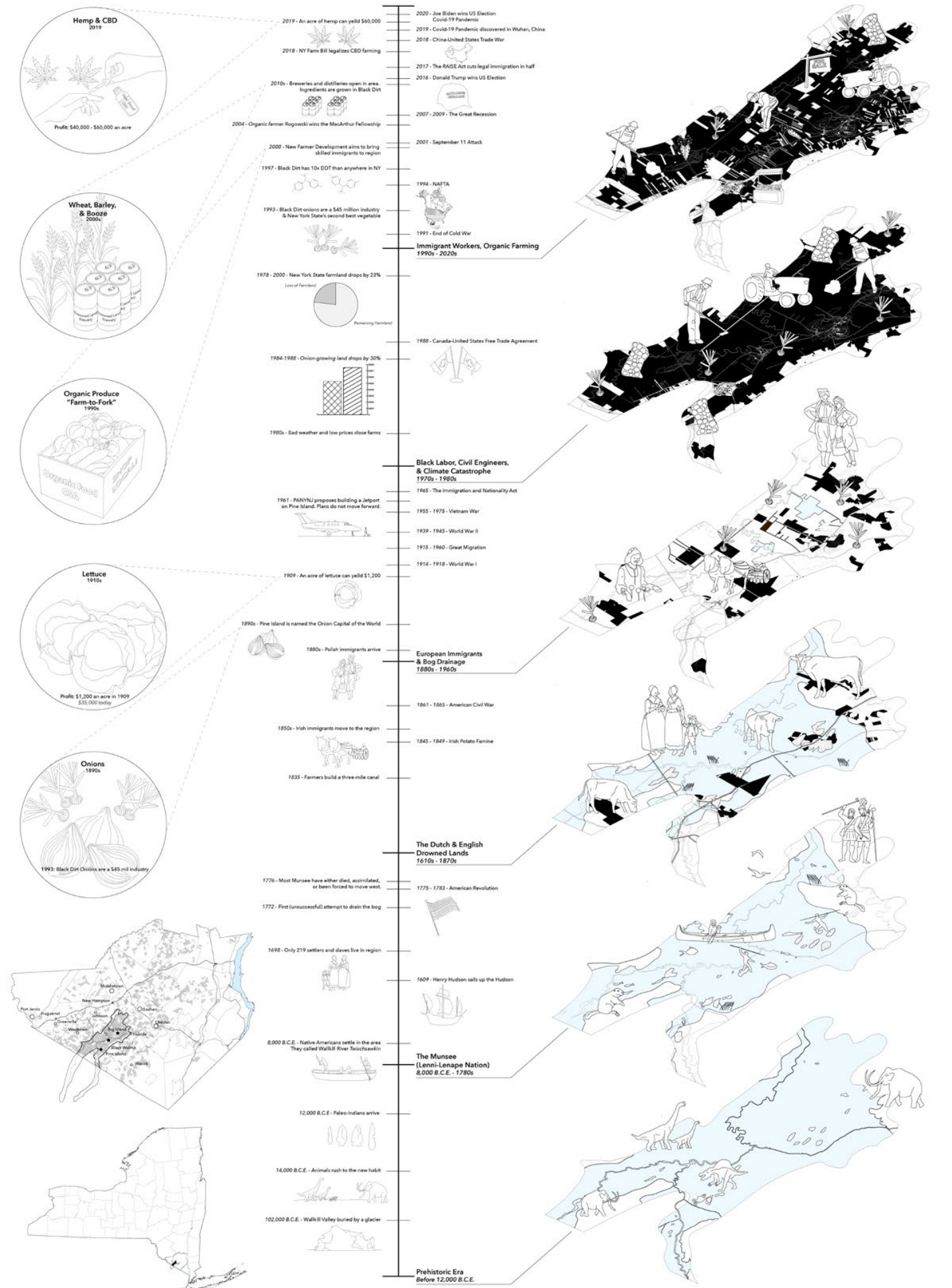
Much of the development in the region has been along the Pulaski Highway that connects the three large elevated land

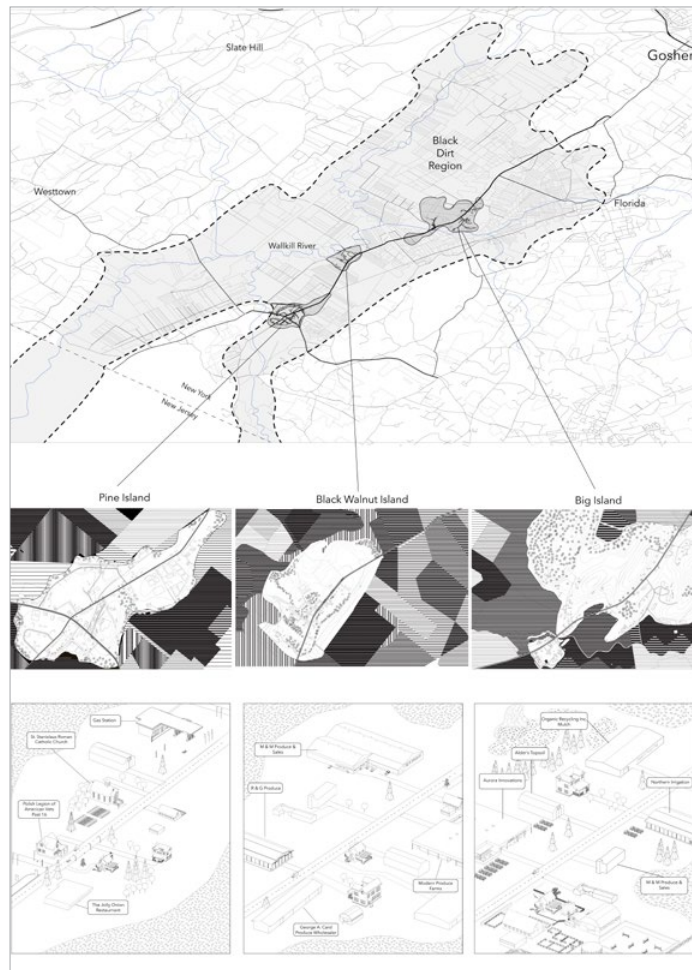
masses in the area. While there is a connective tissue in the towns surrounding Black Dirt, it is often not accessible to the migrant workers.

We are proposing a new network of sites and paths to provide agency and stability for migrant populations working and living in Black Dirt. Sites are dispersed throughout the farmland in patches, which will improve connectivity between farms but also create a network of bike and pedestrian paths for migrant farmers and local residents.

There are five cooperative prototypes that combine an innovative indoor farming technique, a secondary production facility, and community programming. Programming will be run in collaboration with local organizations such as Alamo Farmworkers, Sun River Health, and the Warwick Area Migrant Committee.

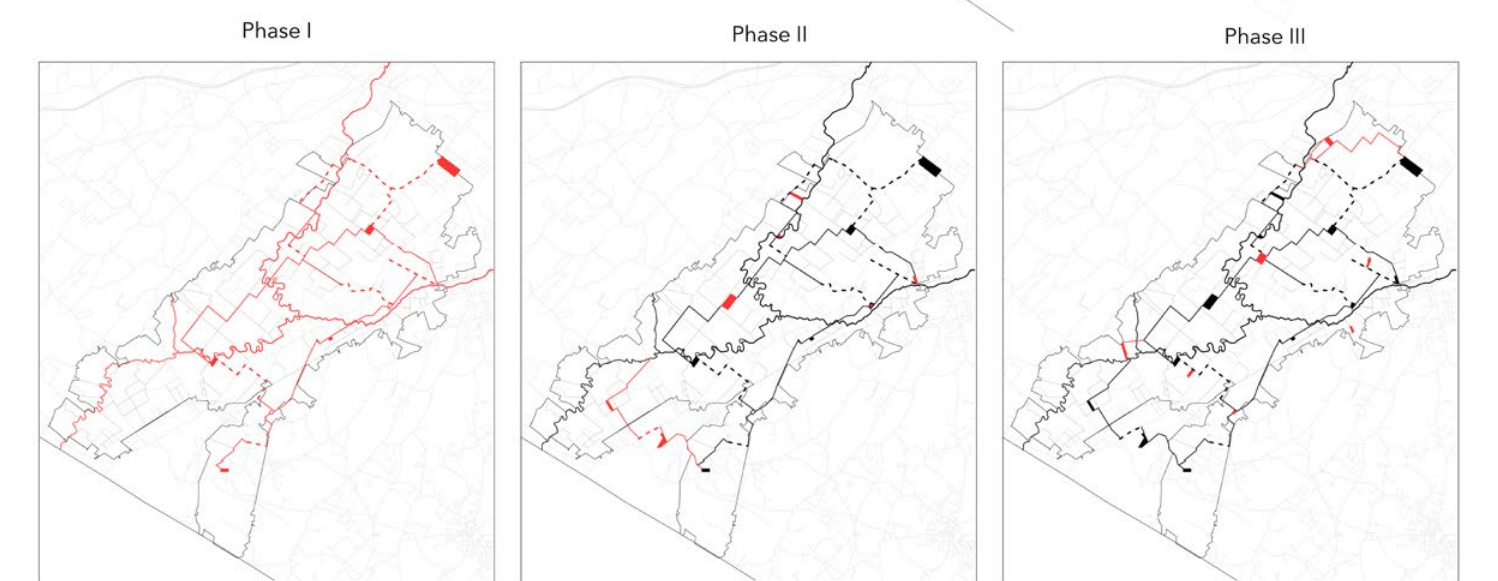
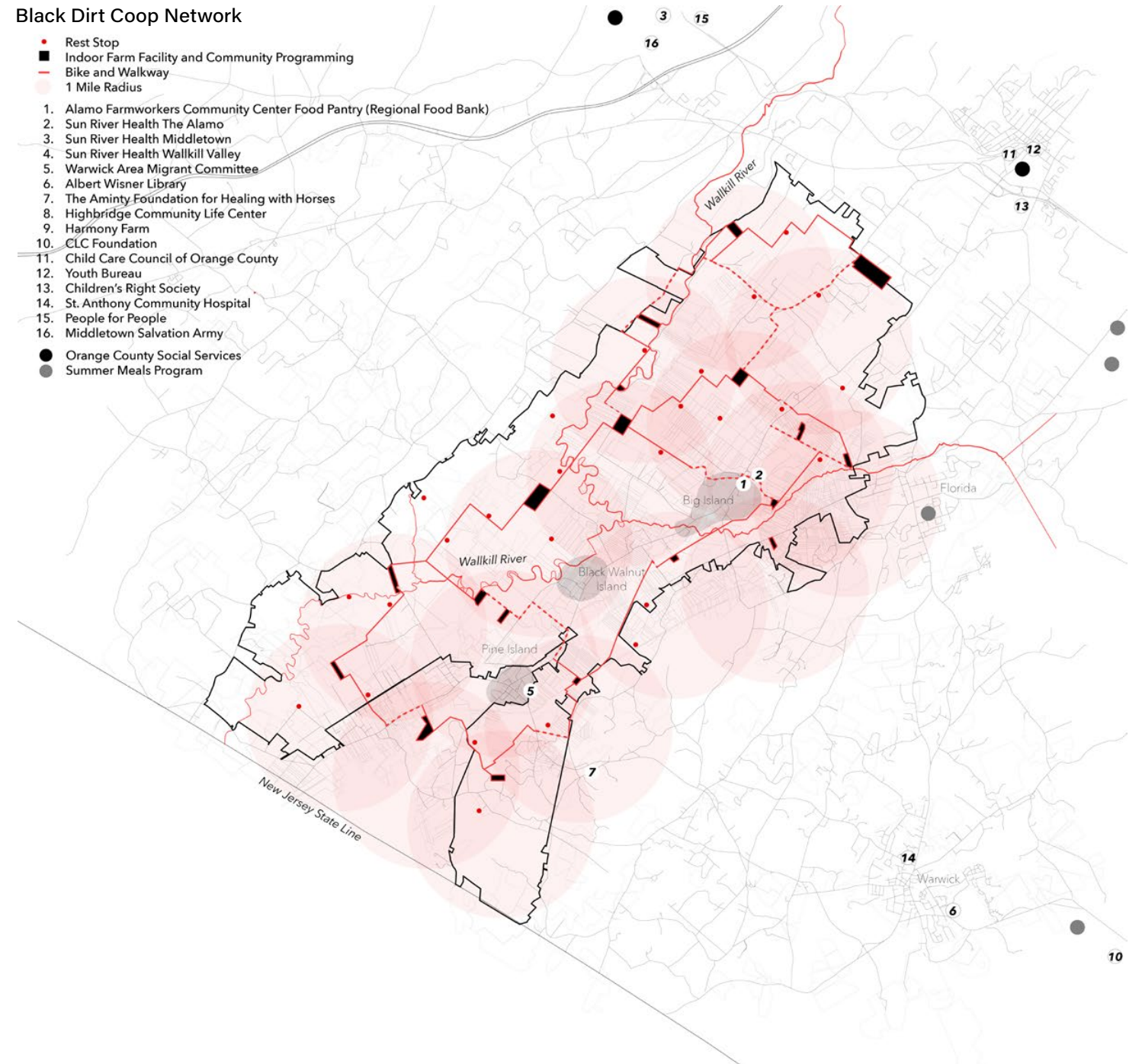
The first five facilities will also be in partnership with regional and land grant universities with robust agricultural departments to research innovative indoor farming techniques. Following facility nodes will be created as individual cooperative farms. Built over three phases, these nodes will provide economic empowerment, address community needs, and allow migrants to live in Black Dirt throughout the year.





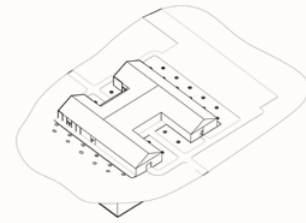
Black Dirt Coop Network

- Rest Stop
  - Indoor Farm Facility and Community Programming
  - Bike and Walkway
  - 1 Mile Radius
1. Alamo Farmworkers Community Center Food Pantry (Regional Food Bank)
  2. Sun River Health The Alamo
  3. Sun River Health Middletown
  4. Sun River Health Walkill Valley
  5. Warwick Area Migrant Committee
  6. Albert Wisner Library
  7. The Aminty Foundation for Healing with Horses
  8. Highbridge Community Life Center
  9. Harmony Farm
  10. CLC Foundation
  11. Child Care Council of Orange County
  12. Youth Bureau
  13. Children's Right Society
  14. St. Anthony Community Hospital
  15. People for People
  16. Middletown Salvation Army
- Orange County Social Services
  - Summer Meals Program

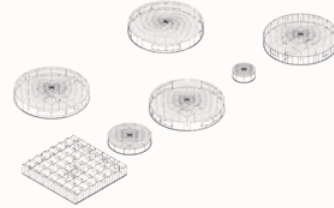


**Five Coop Typologies with:**  
 Indoor Farming  
 Food Production  
 & Social Service

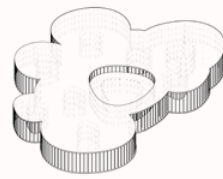
Aerobic Vertical Farm/ Herbal Medicine Factory/ Health Clinic  
 Accommodates 30 employees



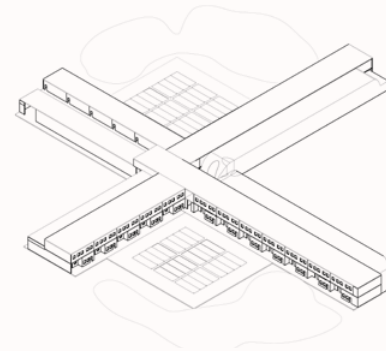
Floral Greenhouse/Natural Dye Factory/ Art Center  
 Accommodates 100 employees



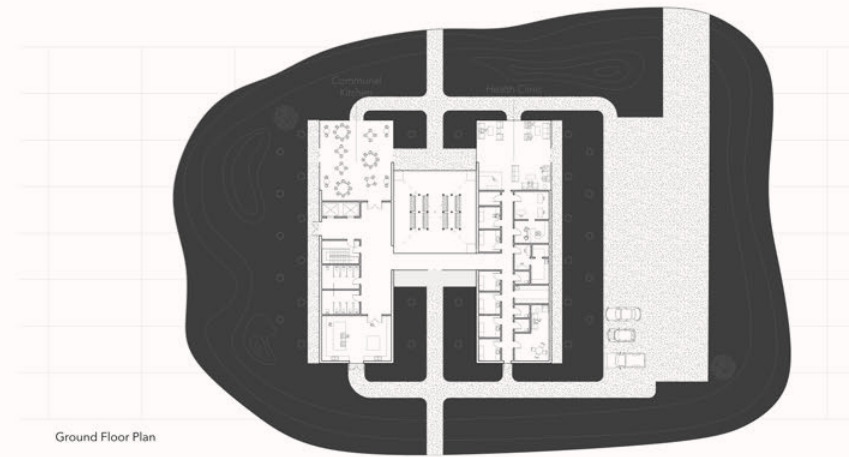
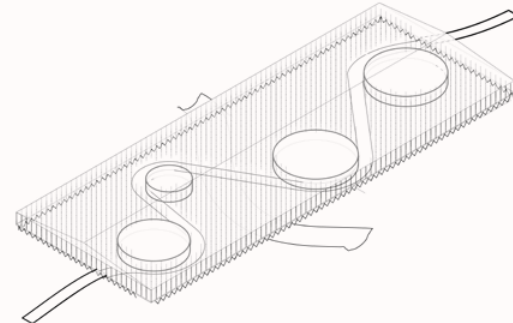
Hydroponic Berry Greenhouse/ Jamming and Preservative Plant/Childcare  
 Accommodates 10 employees



Airstream Covered Field /Hempcrete Factory/Housing  
 Accommodates 35 employees



Aquaaponic Cucumber Greenhouse /Pickling Plant/English Education and Legal Services  
 Accommodates 45 employees



Ground Floor Plan



First Basement Plan

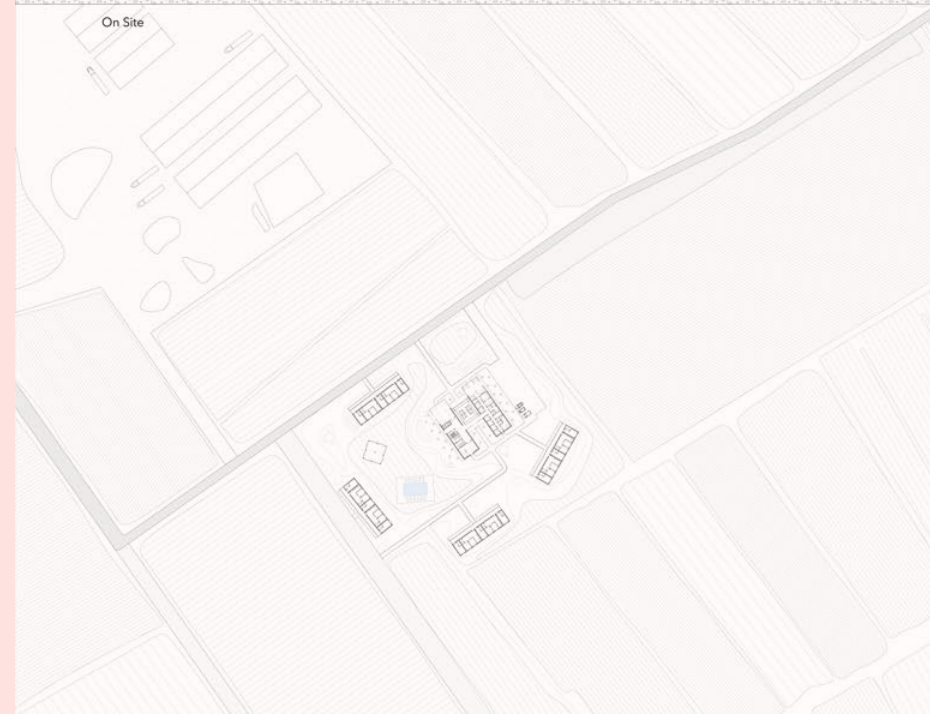


Second Basement Plan

Section



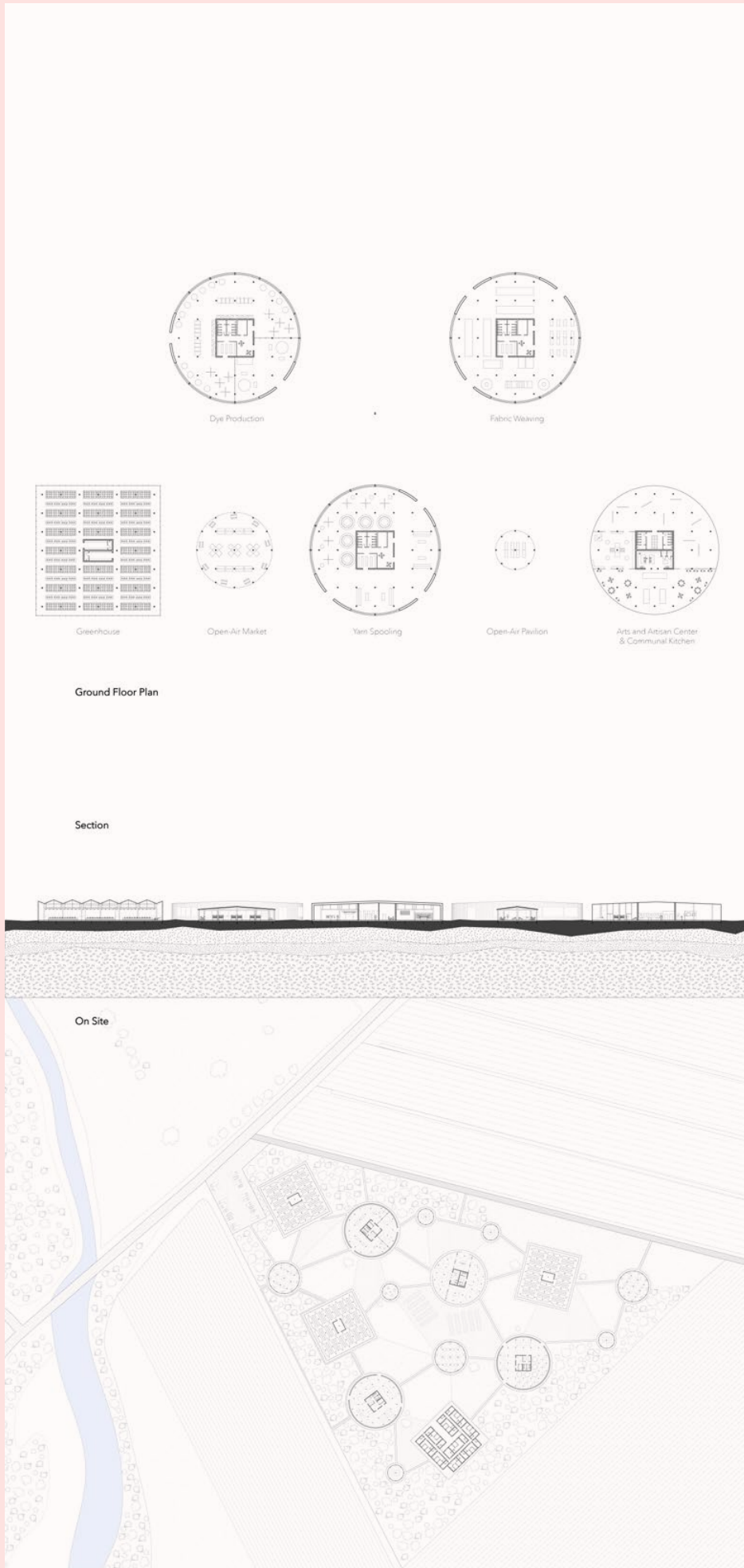
On Site



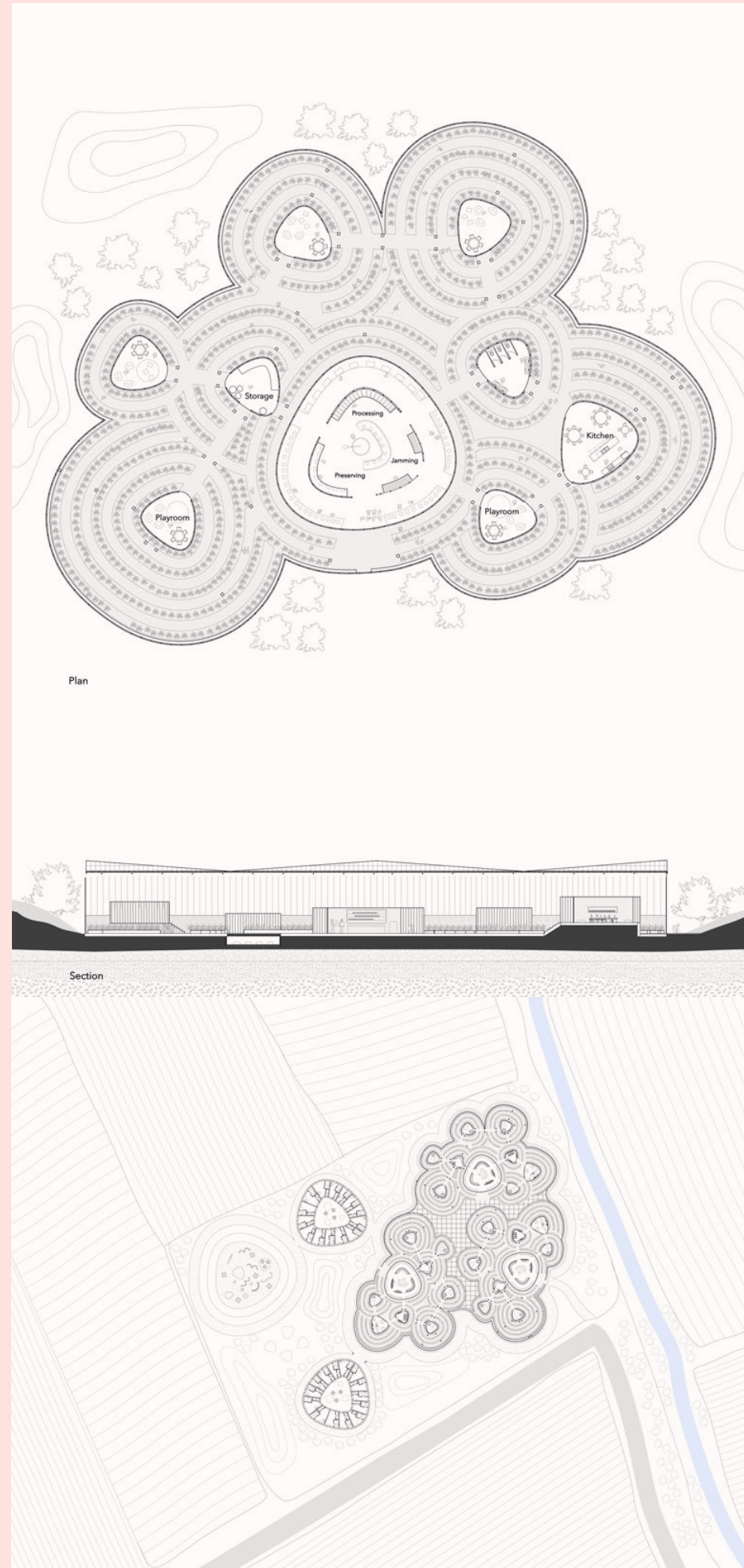
**Aerobic Vertical Herb Farm**  
**Herbal Medicine Factory**  
**Health Clinic**  
 30 employees per site



Flower Greenhouse  
 Natural Dye Factory  
 Artisan Center & Market  
 100 employees per site

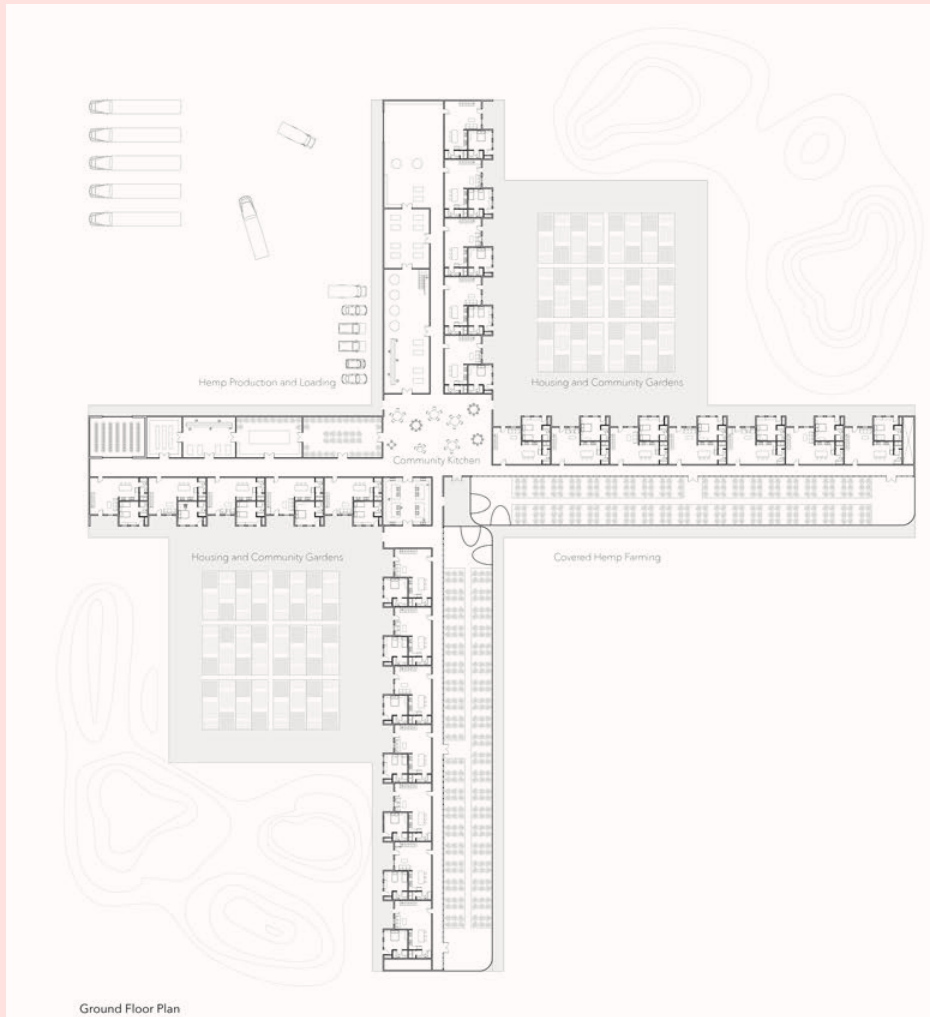


Hydroponic Berry Farm  
 Jamming Facility  
 Childcare Center  
 10 employees per site





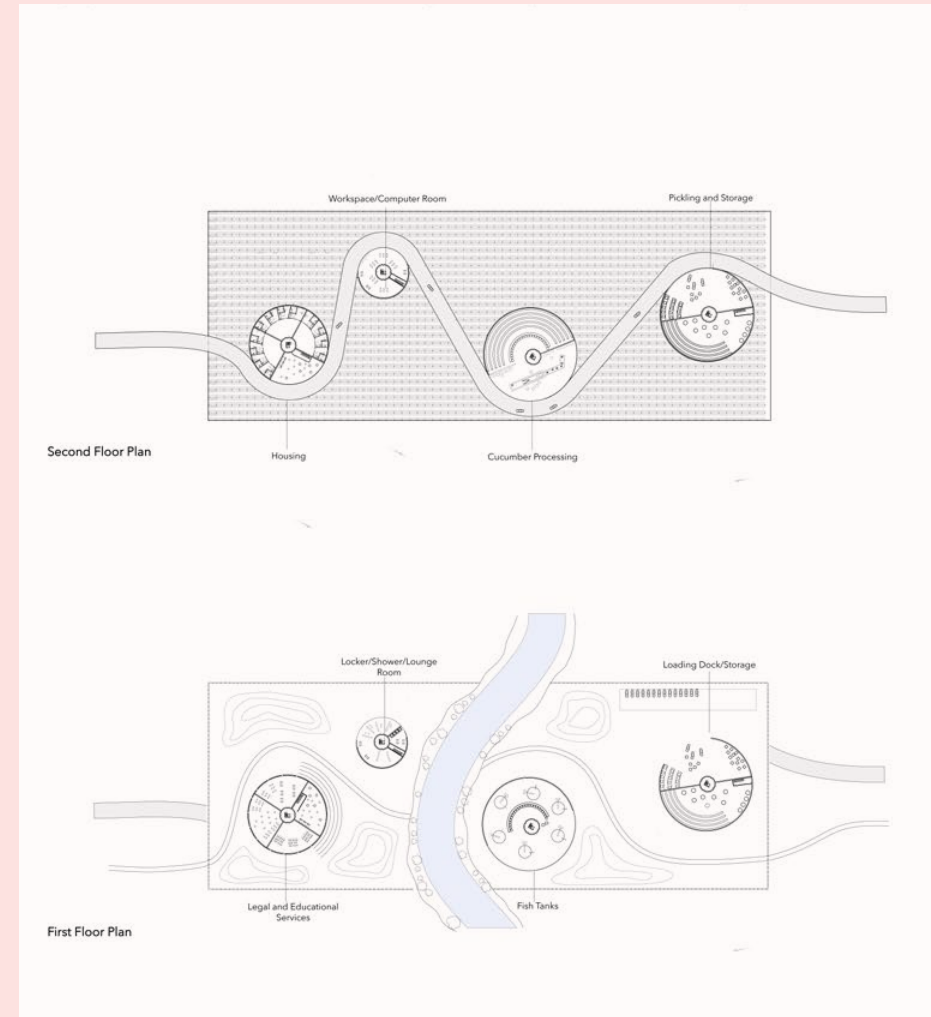
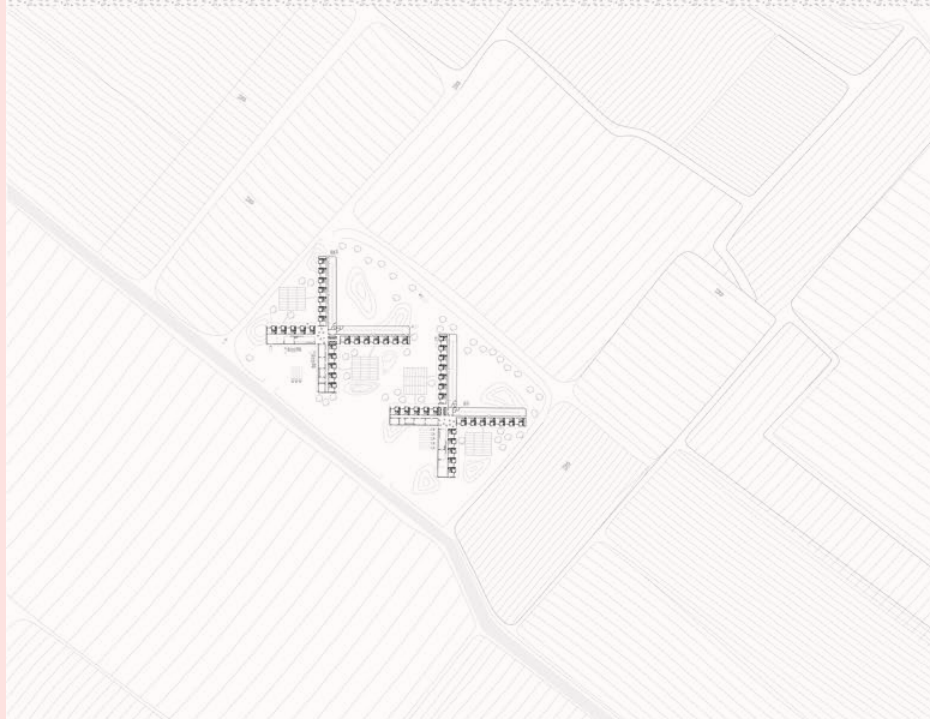
**Airstream Covered Hemp Farm  
Hempcrete Factory  
Housing**  
35 employees per site



Ground Floor Plan



Section



Second Floor Plan

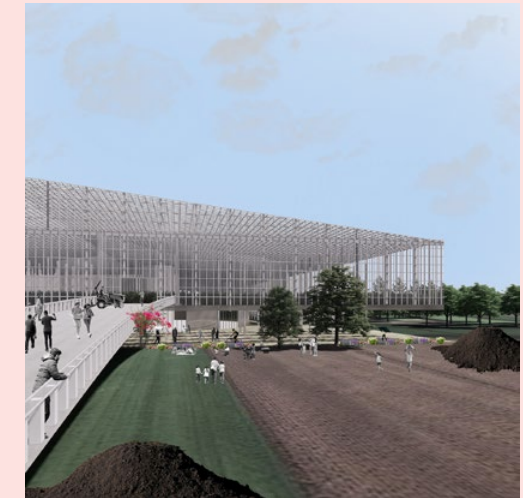


Section



On Site

**Aquaponic Cucumber Greenhouse  
Pickling Plant  
Adult Education & Legal Services  
Pedestrian Bridge**  
45 employees per site

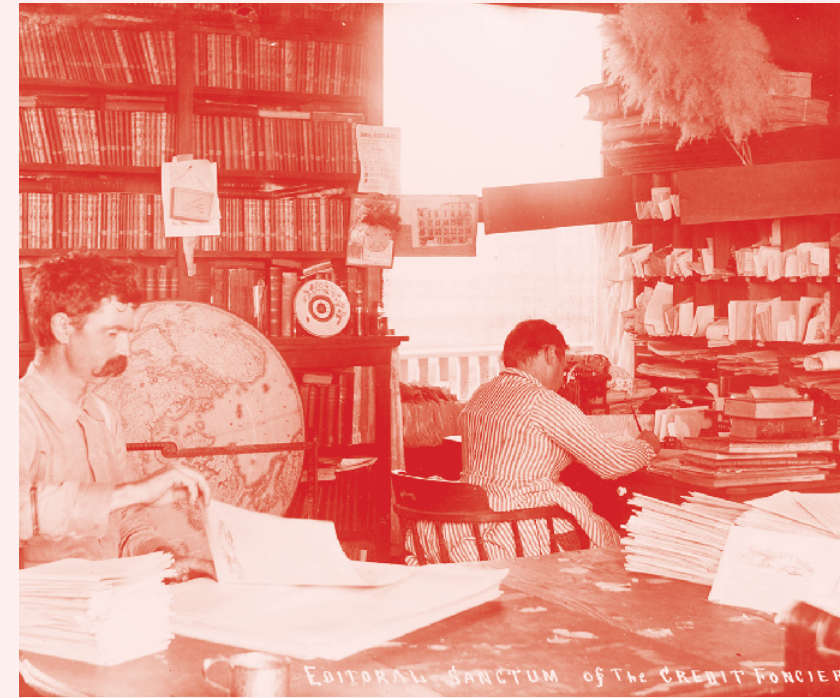
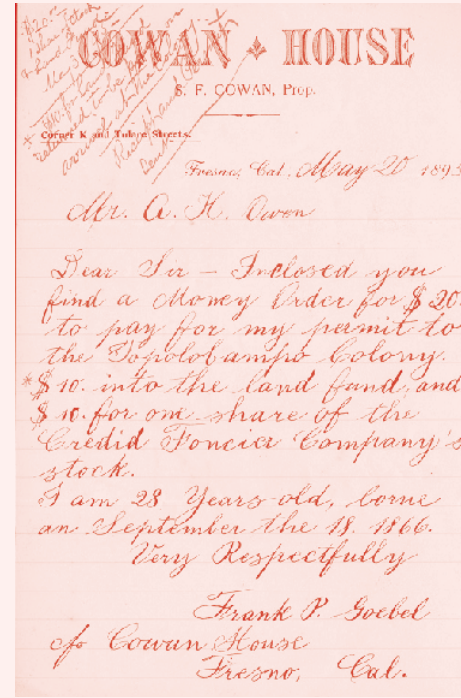
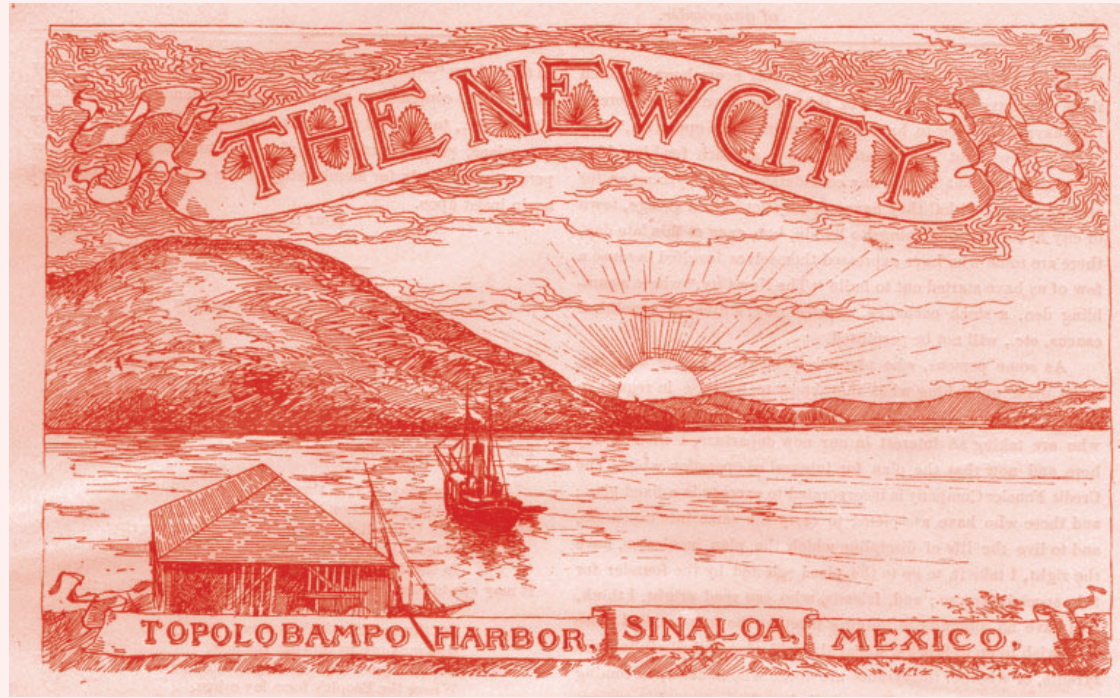


## UNDERSTANDING UTOPIA: TOPOLOBAMPO

Course Utopian Visions of Latin America

Professor Luis E. Carranza

Term Fall 2020



Topolobampo in Sinaloa, Mexico was a semi-realized utopia that lasted from around 1886 to 1904. The socialist colony followed the writings of American civil engineer Albert Kimsey Owen, who hoped to combine capitalist-led industrialization with socialist ideals of shared municipal resources, limited taxation, and community-owned land.

Owen was born at the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848. The United States' victory shifted most of Texas, the southwest, and California north of the Mexican-American border and solidified the United States' access to the Pacific. The decades following consisted of the American Civil War between 1861 through 1865, and the Napoleonic French occupation of Mexico, known as the Second Mexican Empire, from 1864 to 1867.

The late nineteenth century saw attempts to relink Mexican and American markets through railroads and agricultural industrialization. As a civil engineer, Owen explored land both north and south of the border for potential railroad locations.

Owen first visited the Ohuira bay in Sinaloa in 1872. The natural harbor, which Owen would later name Topolobampo, sat on the southeast coast of the California Gulf. Owen calculated that Ohuira was closer to most of the American East

Coast and Midwest than San Francisco, Los Angeles, or San Diego and assumed it would make an ideal international trade capital. Many Americans, including Owens in his writings, envisioned Mexico as the link between Europe and Asia. The United States was positioned to guide Mexico and optimize economic success.

For several years, Owen focused exclusively on raising capital and political support for the railroad, going as far as to ask the United States government for financial backing. When he failed to secure government funding, Owens blamed northern railroad barons and became wary of both industrialists and the United States Government (Mosk, 245). He created several schemes with businessmen from Texas, Kansas, and other parts of the US as well as the Mexican government without laying a single track. The idea of a colony at Topolobampo did not appear in contracts until 1882 (Mosk, 249).

Owen was, however, aware of socialist utopian thinking and met with socialist feminist Marie Stevens Howland in 1875. He relied on many intellectuals and businessmen, such as Marie and Edward Howland and C.B. Hoffman to promote the colony with settlers and investors alike as well as run operations as Owen continued to fundraise for the railroad and colony abroad.

While the idea of the colony was born after the railroad, Owen argued that the two projects could not excel without the other. The colony would provide labor for the railroad and other industrial projects necessary for a trade capital, while the railroad would bring wealth and prosperity to the colony. He drummed up support for the colony through extensive writings published in socialist journals, newspaper advertisements, and eventually Owen's own publication and credit union the Credit Foncier.

The economic framework of the colony changed from one publication to the next, depending on the audience, but the main criteria was a utopia of no individual land ownership, taxation, or interest. Instead, colonists owned stock options of the Credit Foncier, which owned both the land and means of production. The wealth accrued from international trade would fund all public goods and services while producing high returns on investments for all shareholders. Every family of the colony had to own at least one stock and pay an entrance fee to live in Topolobampo, but wealthy families were encouraged to buy additional shares and provide interest-free loans to the company. Owen and the Credit Foncier also looked to outside investors for funding.

## Marie Stevens Howland



Marie Stevens Howland was an ardent feminist born in 1836. Spending her teen years as a mill worker in Lowell, MA, she later became a school principal, Fourierist, and published writer before working with Owens to design and run Topolobampo (Hayden, 276).

Howland's views of communal living were deeply influenced by the year she lived at the Familistere in Guise, France in the 1860s. Having seen the benefits of shared services, she became an advocate of communal domestic spaces, known as the "Combined Household." Upon returning to the United States, Howland made a name for herself in socialist circles with the publication of Papa's Own Girl. The novel tied Fourier's visions of the Familistere with women's suffrage.

After meeting Owen in 1874, Howland became the head of the Credit Foncier newspaper and had a strong influence on the proposed design of Topolobampo. She moved down to Topolobampo in 1886 with her husband to help manage the colony as well as run the library and school system.

Howland and the more liberal women of Topolobampo fought for their promised right of equality with men, but they were often dismissed. She was eventually put on trial by the colony's men for promoting free love (Foster, 89).

## Race in Topolobampo

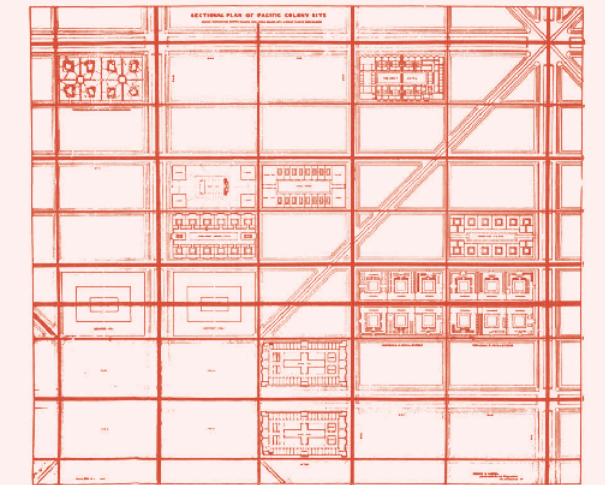
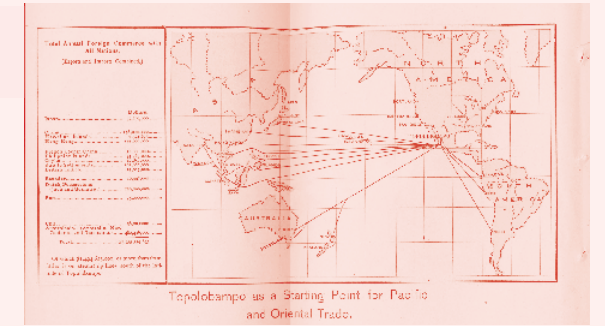
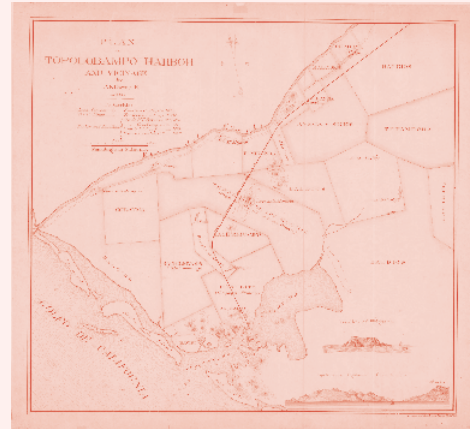


The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa proclaimed to be a utopia for all freemen of all races. Its intellectuals often wrote on the moral depravity of slavery, comparing antebellum industrial labor to chattel slavery. In pamphlets and advertising, Owen and Howland would even invite men of color to apply, however, colonists were mainly American, Western European, and Russian. There is evidence of a Black American woman sending an application for an illiterate former slave directly to Owen, but no response was found (Foster, 90).

Some, including Owen, hoped to attract cheap Japanese, Chinese, and Indian labor through a system similar to indentured servitude. Credit Foncier and investors would pay for the voyage from Asia, then pay laborers far less in credits than white colonists (Foster, 91).

Though Owen never lived up to his word of accepting applications from Black, Asian, or Southasian applicants, he was required by Mexican law to welcome all Mexican applicants to Topolobampo. In addition, the colony was required to teach Spanish in its schools.

From colonists' accounts, it seems that there was a keen interest in learning Spanish and engaging often with neighboring Mexican communities. A few even became Mexican (Foster, 33).



Far left: children in front of the school house at Topolobampo Right: portrait of Albert Owen; drawings and maps promoting Topolobampo

While cash was required to get into Topolobampo, it was useless once in the colony. Instead, colonists would work for credits given by the Credit Foncier to spend on goods produced by their neighbors. Everyone would make the same hourly wage for their labor.

The design of Topolobampo also morphed between publications thanks to the influence of Marie Stevens Howland. Pacific City, the capital of Topolobampo, was placed adjacent to the harbor. A rigid grid broken by diagonal avenues was stretched over undeveloped land. Residential zones were broken up by commercial avenues, industry, and parks. Civil buildings for both the colony and the Mexican government, the train station, hotels for visitors, and the docks sat at the mouth of the harbor.

Owen and Howland, with the help of architect John J. Derry, developed several typologies of blocks for both housing and public utilities. While Owen originally advocated for more traditional individualistic housing and commercial spaces, Howland pushed for communal domestic and public programming (Hayden, 277).

Housing was divided into three categories, each with a particular block design. Uniquely designed cottages were the most suburban typology, with eight to a block. The cottages, however, lacked individual kitchens and laundry facilities. Four houses would share domestic labor spaces in a central building, where a live-in staff would provide essential services. At twelve to a block, row houses shared more communal spaces, including intimate dining rooms and gardens. Residential hotels, designed for poorer colonists, resembled early nineteenth-century commune designs. Residents lived in either suites or single rooms and shared large communal spaces (Hayden, 280).

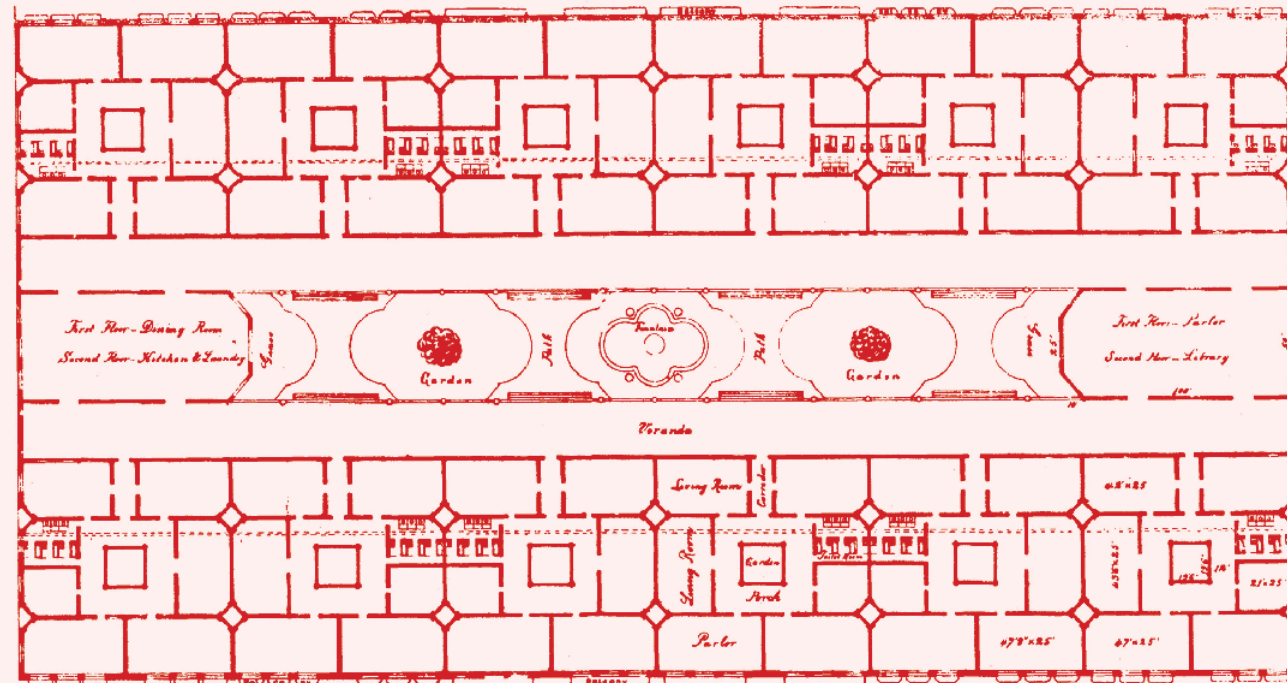
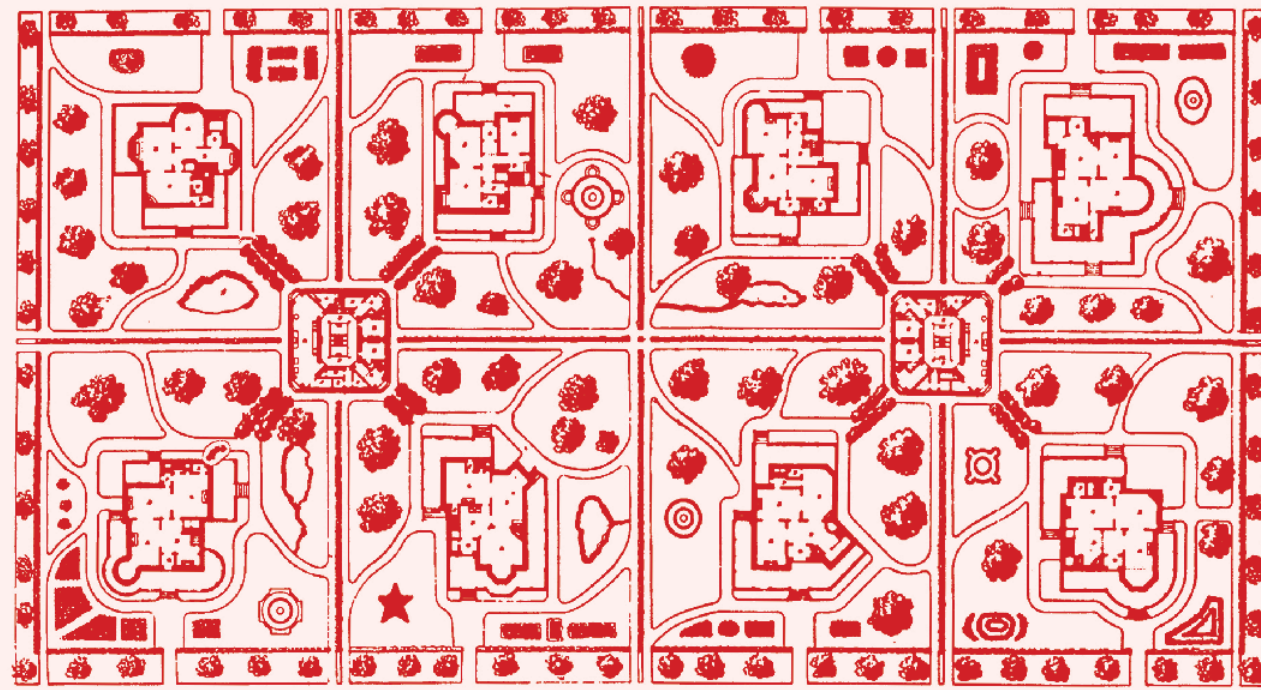
Public spaces scattered around Pacific City included child care facilities, stores, libraries, concert halls, and homes for the sick. Owen dreamed of parks littering the streets, covering three-fifths of open space (Owen, 11).

Topolobampo became a reality, though it looked much different than the advertised utopia. In December 1886, approximately 140 settlers arrived in Ohuira from the United States and Europe. Colonists found it challenging to build Pacific City and the necessary infrastructure for the new colony from

scratch. Many colonists abandoned the project after a year, while many others died of smallpox and typhoid. All the same, Owen continued to recruit new settlers to fund his utopia.

One of the biggest challenges was that the site for Pacific City had no access to freshwater. Teams of colonists transported water for miles from the other side of the harbor daily. They also have limited access to food and essential supplies as well as proper leadership. Many families moved north toward the Fuerte River and long-established Mexican communities. Those who did move had some success trading with their Mexican neighbors. Eventually, the colony would build a school, library, custom's house, commissary, sawmill, and flour mill.

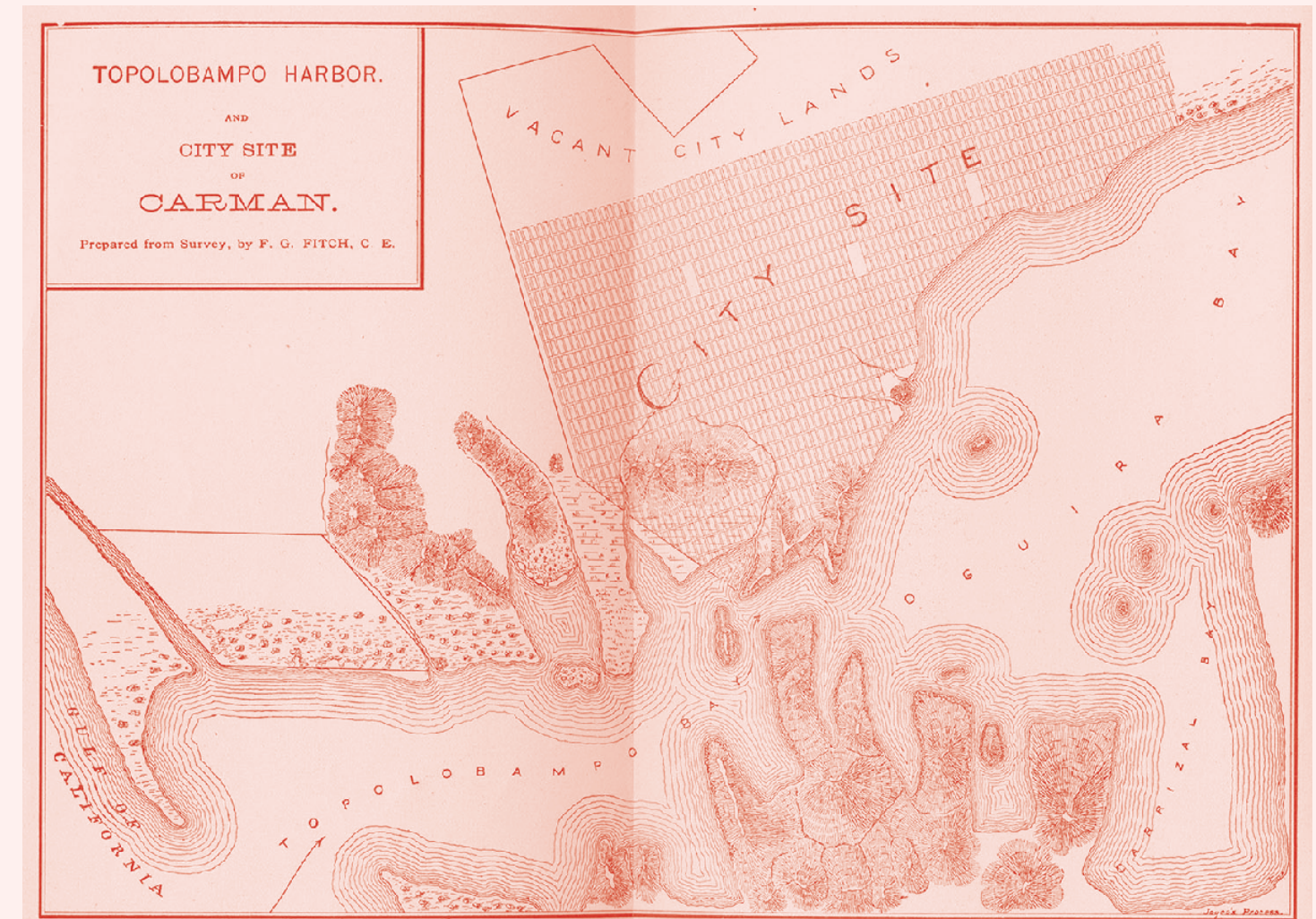
While conditions improved by 1889, Topolobampo was still in dire need of funding. Owen created new shell companies to entice more investors and settlers from Kansas. He worked closely with businessman Christian B. Hoffman to fund an irrigation ditch. The partnership quickly dwindled once Hoffman arrived in Mexico, causing a divide in the colony. Those who backed Owen remained in Topolobampo while Hoffman's support started a new colony called Libertad. The two col-



onies sued each other over water rights, leading the Credit Foncier to bankruptcy.

At the news of Topolobampo's financial distress, American entrepreneur Benjamin Johnston went down to Sinaloa and bought much of the water rights from colonists to start a new sugar factory. Legal battles over water ensued, eventually leading to the eviction of the colonists in 1904.

Top: Plans of proposed residential blocks  
Right: Official plan of Topolobampo



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# COOPERATIVE PUBLIC PLAY

Studio Advanced V: Sensory Publics

Critic Bryony Roberts

Term Fall 2021

This project explores opportunities created by underused Privately Owned Public Spaces as well as creating safe and welcoming spaces for individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Located in Lenox Hill, the site is a unique elevated POP that was created when the owner built a restaurant on the original POP.

The project occupies both the plaza and the existing commercial space below to create a food and care cooperative run for and by the autism community. One issue for those on the spectrum is job retention. Job loss and instability entail large economic repercussions for individuals as well as unique social and psychological costs. Jobs can give those on the spectrum independence and self-worth, routine, and community.

The coop will run a community kitchen, restaurant, and park-playground for the ASD community, by the ASD community, while also allowing access to services and spaces to non-members. Play spaces open to adults and teens are rare in New York, but they are crucial to the daily routine of many people on the ASD spectrum.

The new coop aims to welcome those who are both sensory seeking and sensory avoiding with separate spaces for respite, community, and play. The coop's public space has entrances relating to different sensory needs. There is a quiet pocket part on Third Avenue, protected by remnants of a former structure; an ADA-accessible entrance on 64th, lined with seating and leading to a transition garden; and an active entrance on Third, leading directly to play.

The play space comprises of two winding ramps, leading to the roof of the structure, and is lined with netting to support both rest and play. There is also equipment that target various forms of movement, such as trampolines, balance ropes, a noodle pool, and swings on the ground play scape. Materials balance the context of the busy intersection with sensory needs of texture, tactility, acoustic dampening, and surprise.

The interior houses a cafe on the first floor and a restaurant below grade. The restaurant is divided into areas of different senses, with quiet and active dining, a community kitchen, bar, and staff lounge. Quiet spaces and storage develop within the wall poche. Quiet dining utilizes muted colors, soft textiles, and natural lighting from above. Active dining employs reflective surfaces, bright colors, and active furniture.

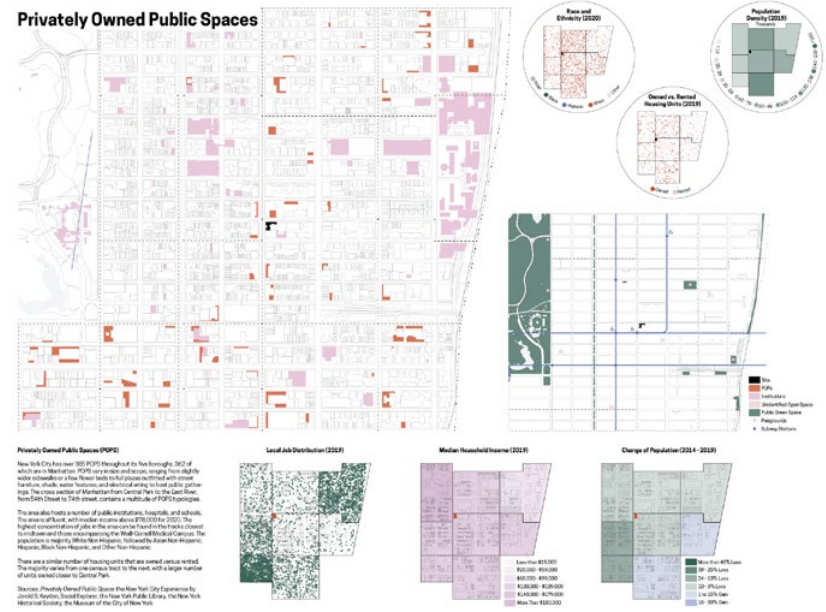


Housing

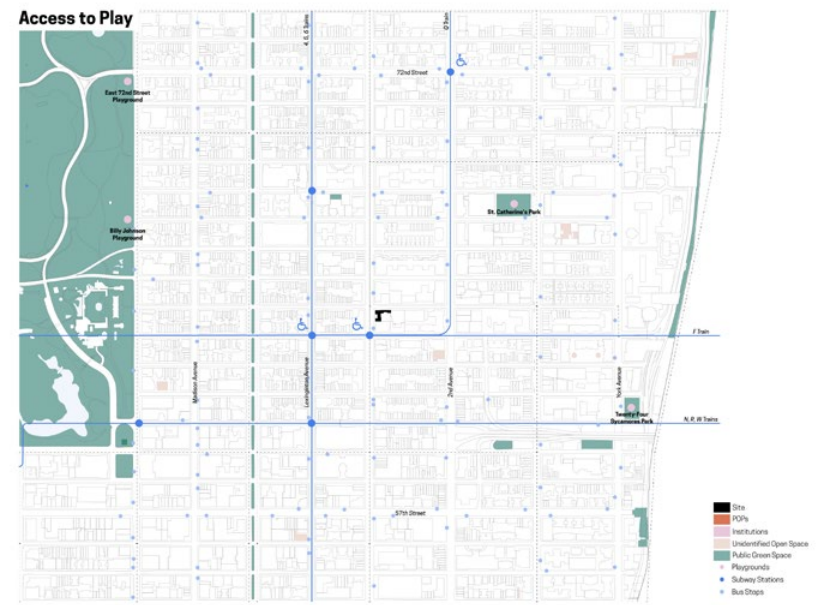
Parking

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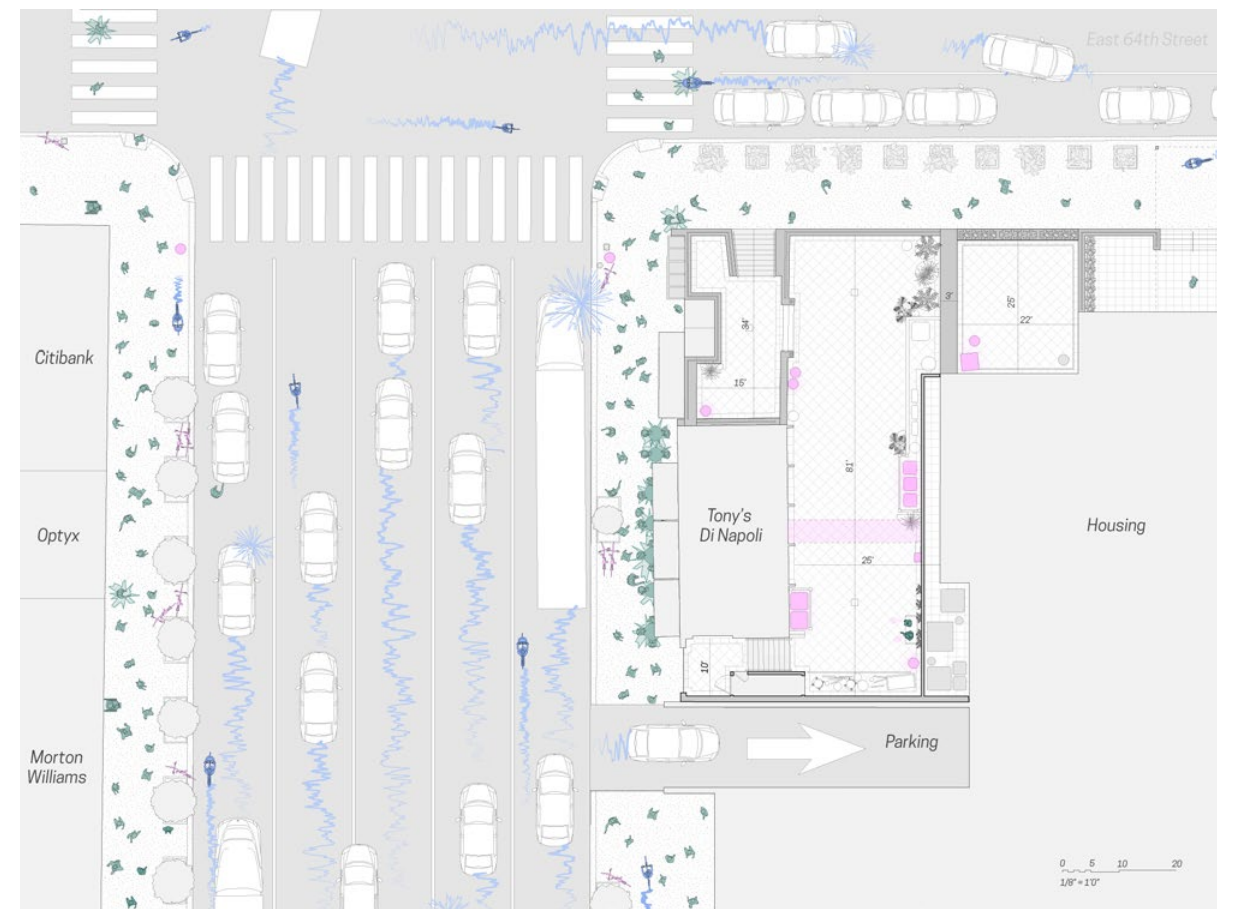
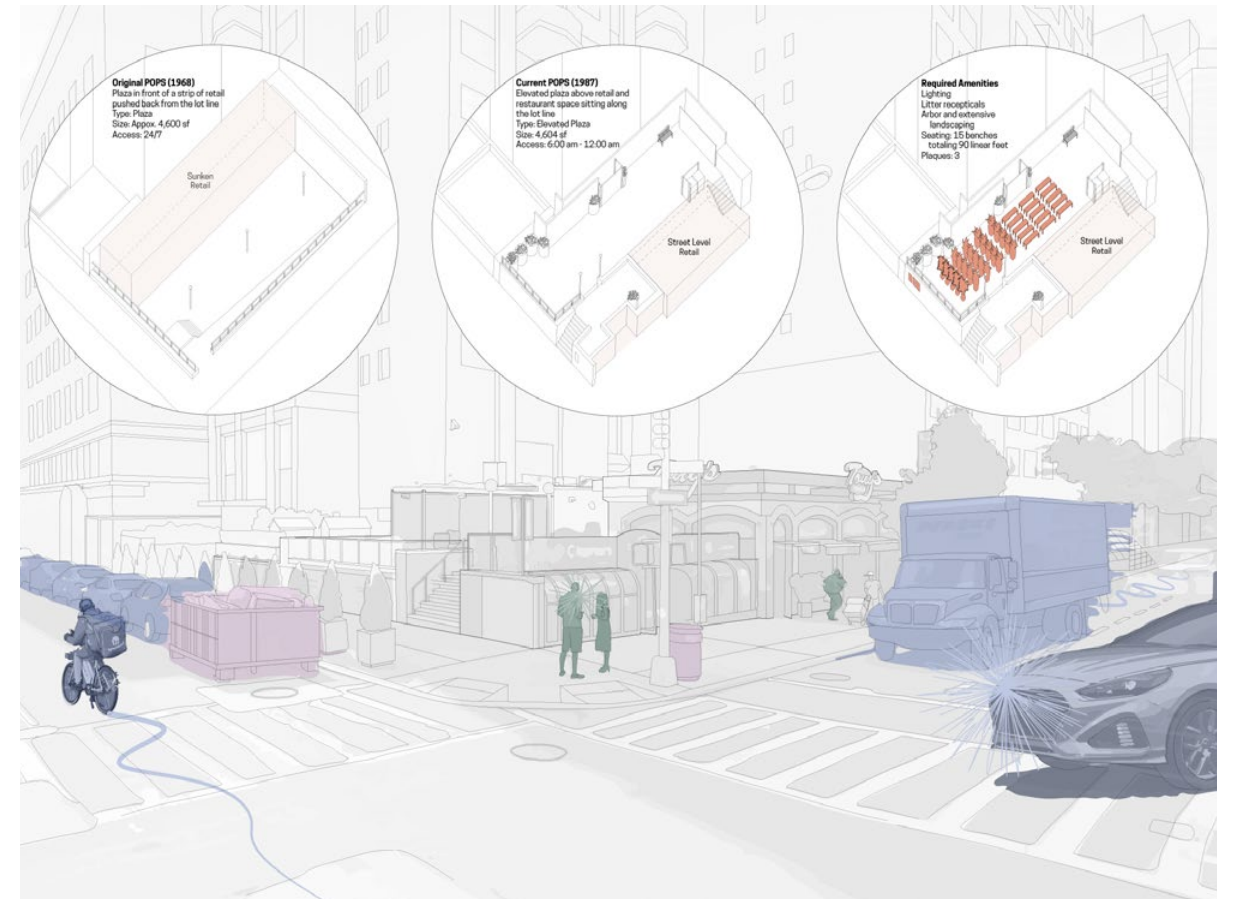
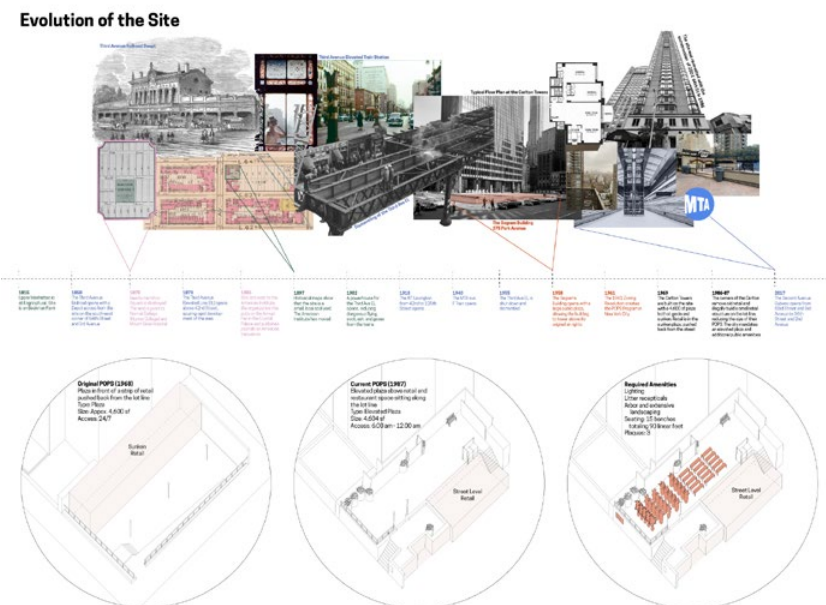
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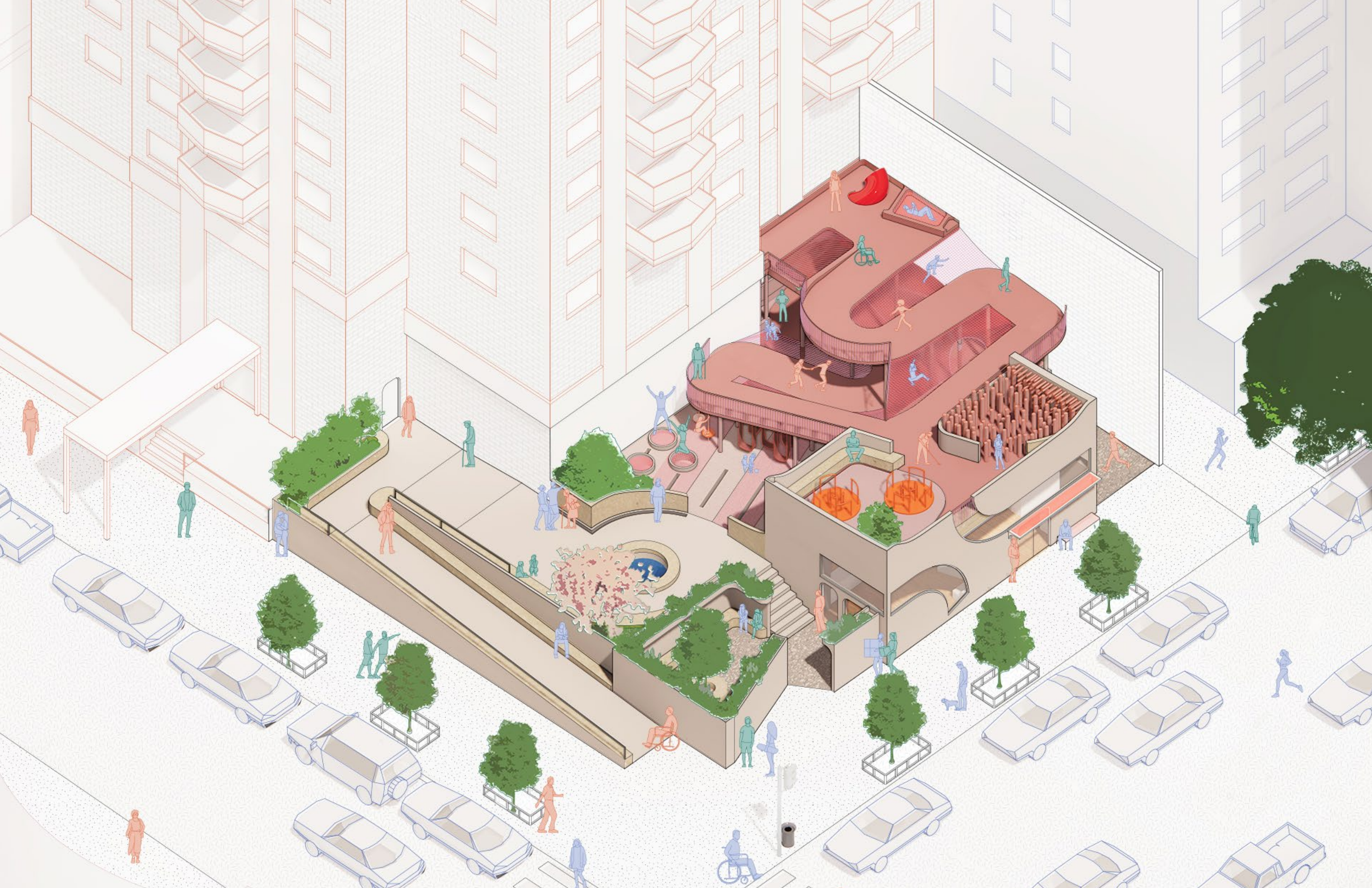


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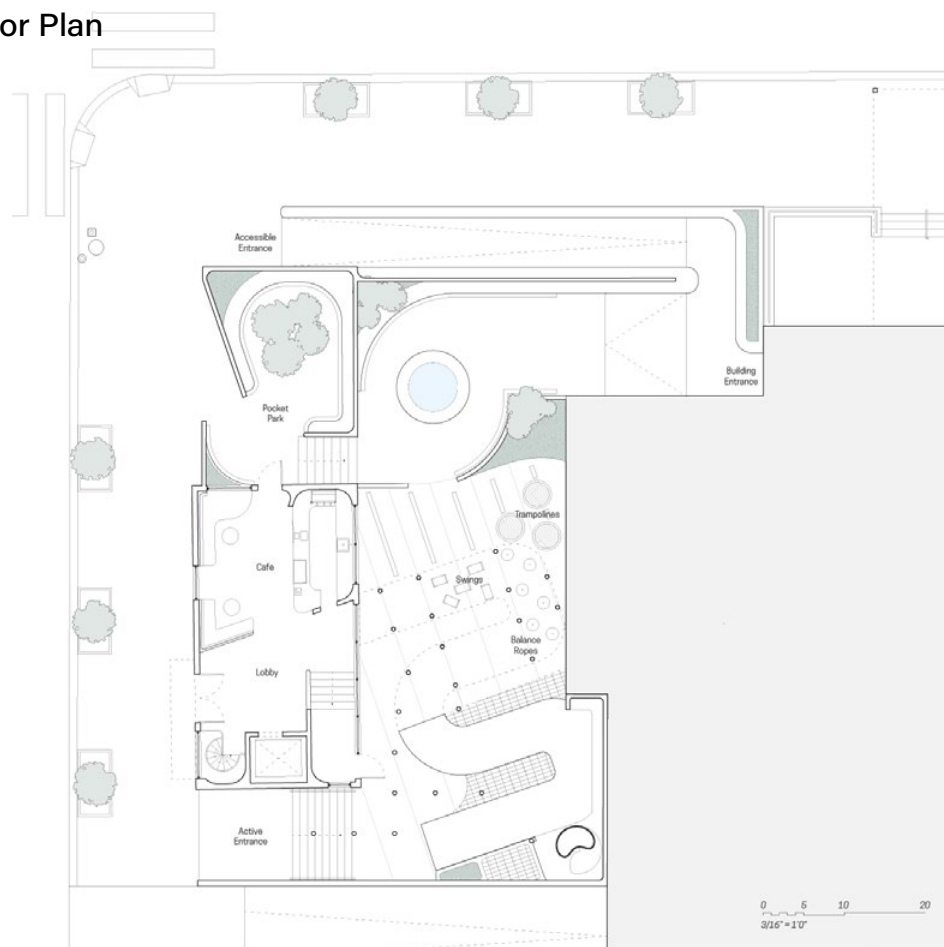


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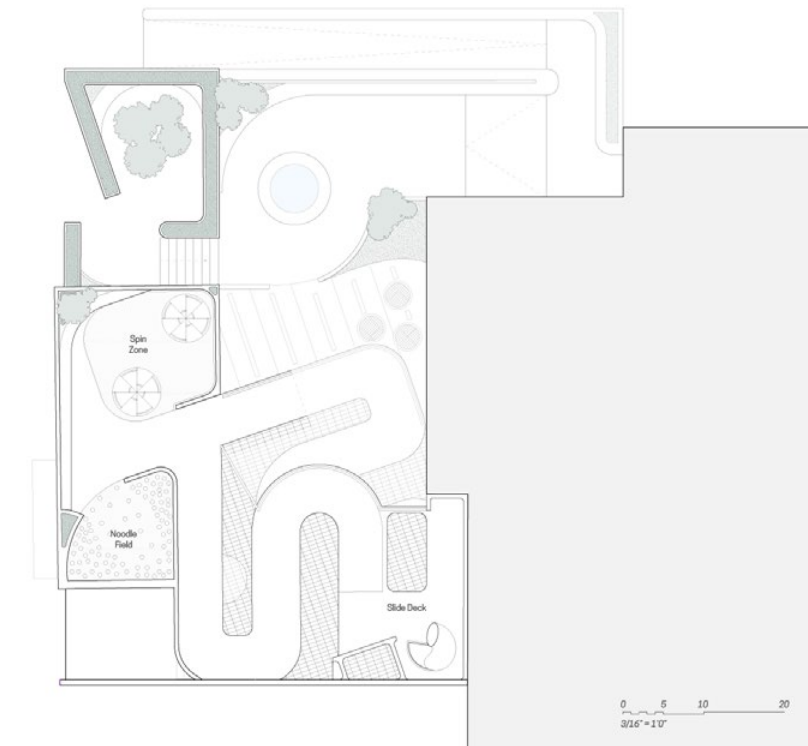




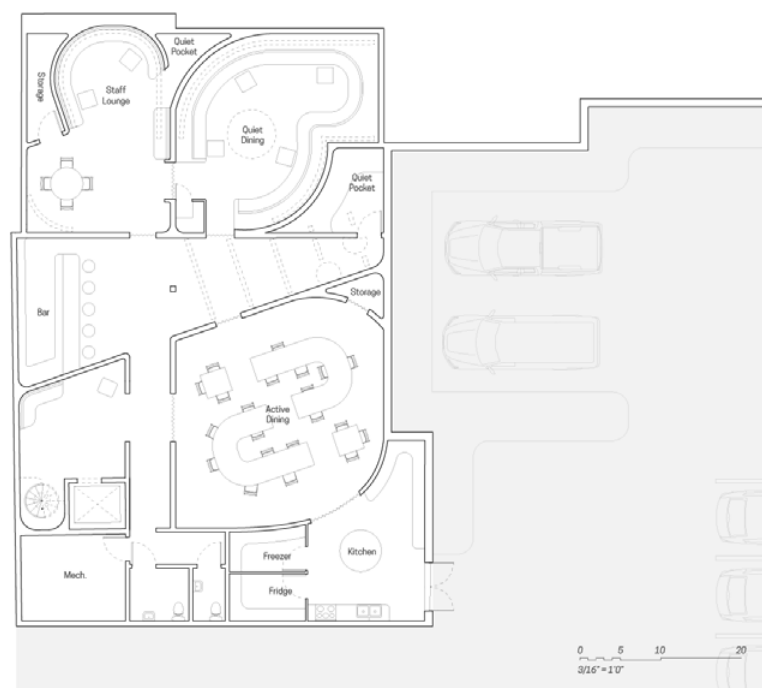
Ground Floor Plan



Roof Plan



Basement Plan



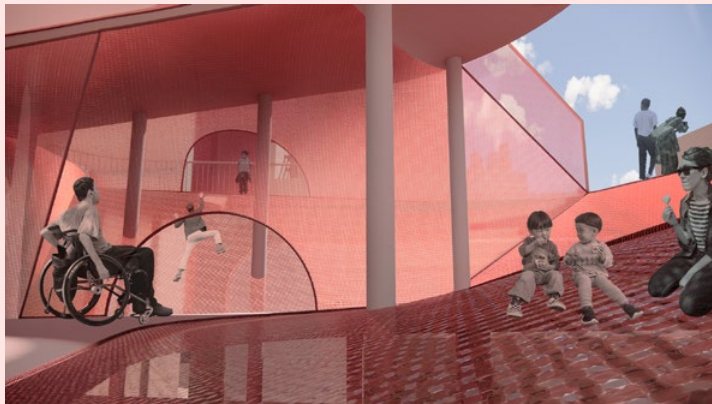
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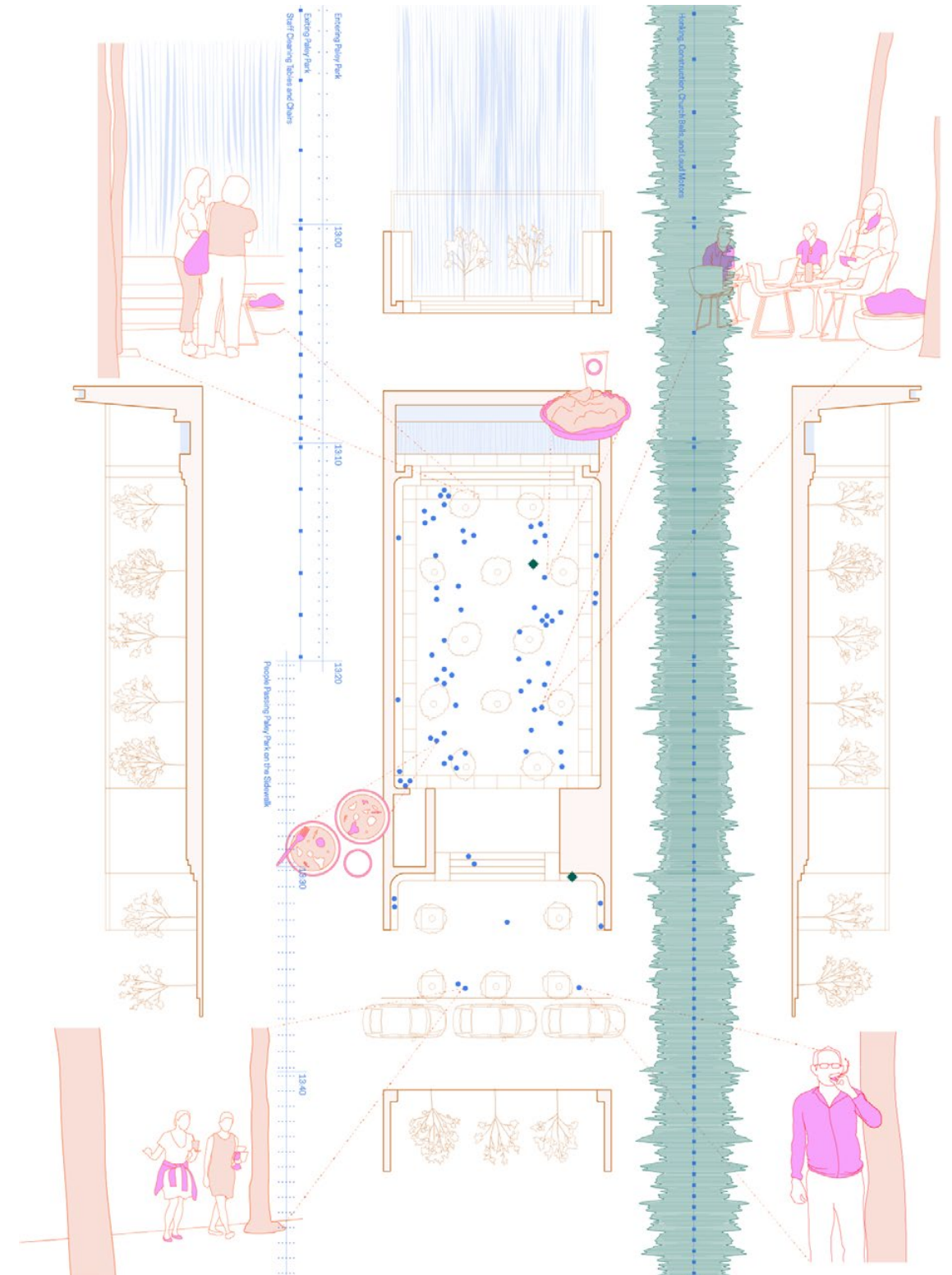
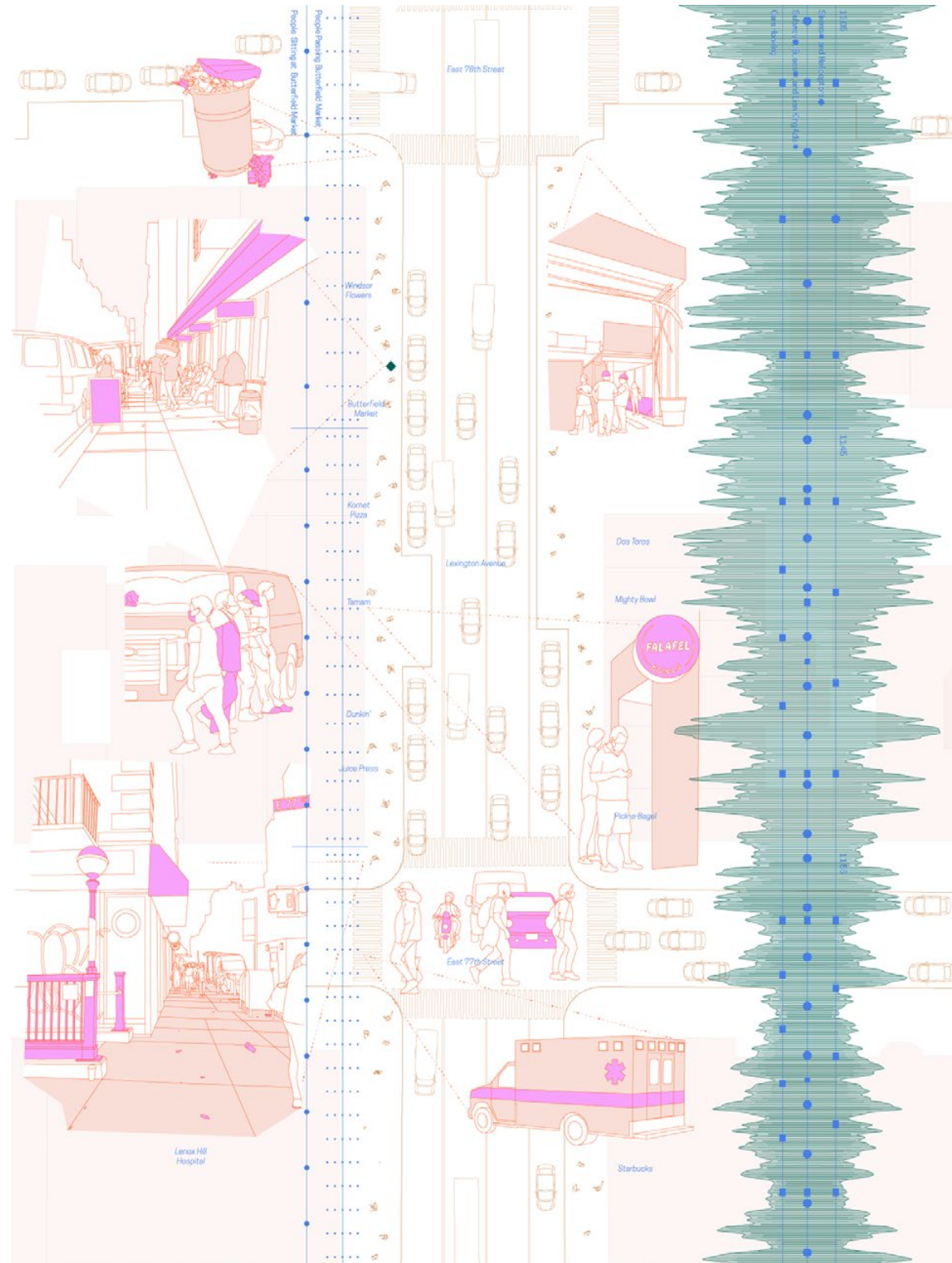


Sections





Precedent Sensory Drawings



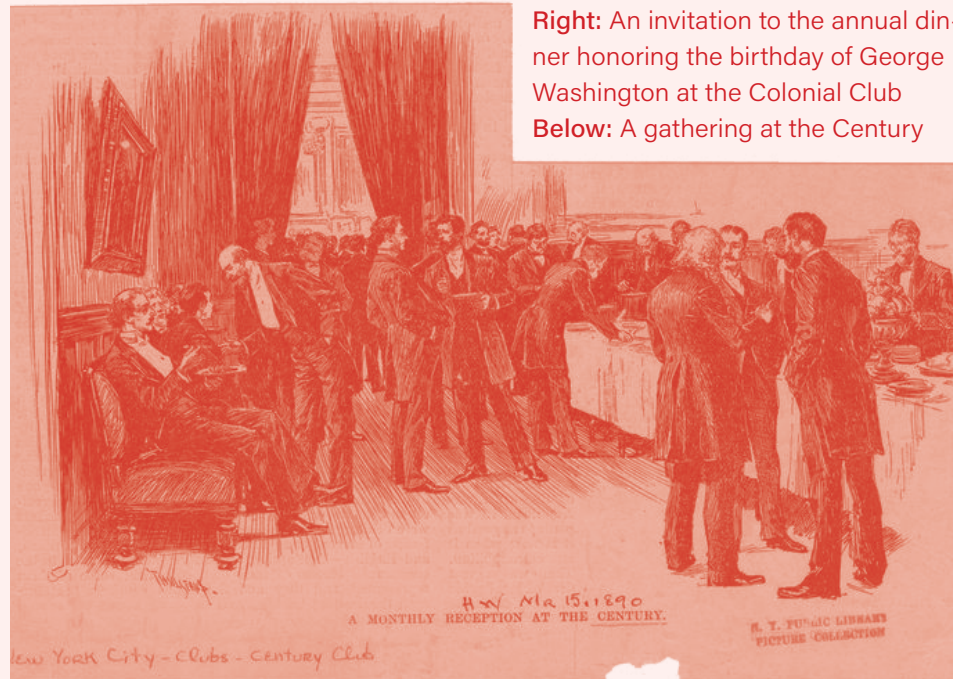
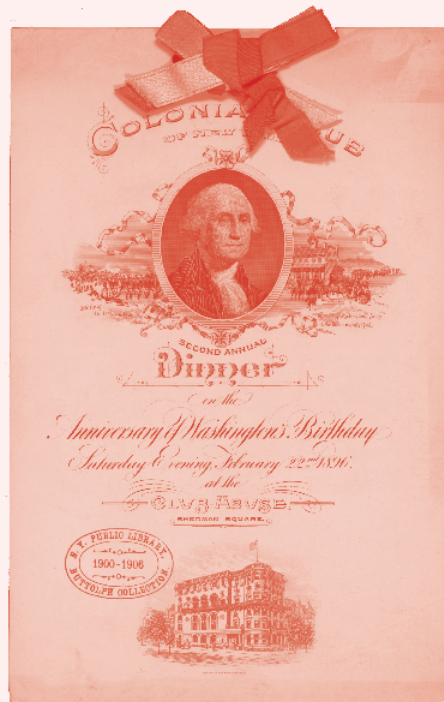
## PRIVATE PRIVILEGE

### Male Social Clubs of Mid- to Late-Nineteenth-Century New York

Course Traditional American Architecture

Professor Andrew Dolkart

Term Fall 2021



**Right:** An invitation to the annual dinner honoring the birthday of George Washington at the Colonial Club

**Below:** A gathering at the Century

New York City underwent a dizzying transformation between the 1830s and 1890s. What began as a provincial city condensed below 14th Street would explode into an expanse that stretched most of Manhattan; before merging with Brooklyn in 1898. By 1875, more than half of New York, 511,021 people, would live between the previously undeveloped 14th to 42nd Street.<sup>1</sup> In 1836, over 250,000 people lived in New York, centering their lives around City Hall. A new park was established that year at Madison and Broadway, but most land remained open farmland waiting to be developed along the city grid. The city was low, consisting of mostly four to six-story buildings made of brick, although stone was growing in popularity.<sup>2</sup> The tallest structures were church spires that poked through the skyline. Built in 1846, Richard Upjohn's Trinity Church on Broadway was the tallest structure at 284 feet.<sup>3</sup> Many of the male social clubs of the city began in this version of New York. They built grand clubhouses in the fashionable neighborhoods developing north of 14th Street. These neighborhoods, though built in brick and stone, continued to morph as the city expanded. By the time the Union League Club left its clubhouse on 39th Street and Fifth Avenue in 1929, the block was engulfed by tall office buildings and department stores.<sup>4</sup>

The male social clubs of New York society blossomed into a complex tree structure, with different clubs falling into dif-

ferent categories. Clubs could be social, heritage or ethnic, political, interest or profession oriented, athletic, or rooted in geography. The diversity of club-type shows the desire to create communities of an ever-expanding city. Groups of many backgrounds formed urban organizations in the nineteenth century, but few had the financial capacity and agency to build and document their community spaces to the extent of the upper class, white male social clubs. An investigation of the first purpose-built clubs of the premier clubhouses of each type shows the intricate connection between identity and architecture in a society under constant change.

The exclusive, white male social clubs evolved from earlier, informal gatherings in the taverns of colonial New Amsterdam and New York. The earliest examples of political elite gatherings include those at Governor of New Netherlands Wouter Van Twiller's brewery in 1629 and Governor William Kieft's tavern in 1634. Breweries, taverns, and hotels in British-colonial New York became further entrenched in the gathering of the city's elite. Places like Fraunce's Tavern, The King's Arm, and Burn's City Arms were defined by their customers and in turn, became the locations of historical decisions regarding the city and future country.<sup>5</sup> As the country grew and solidified after the American Revolution and subsequent War of 1812, Americans began to look towards London and its social organizations as a blueprint for creating an institu-

tionalized social order. As noted in *Mother of Clubs*, a book published in 1936 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Union Club:

*More and more Americans were going abroad, especially to England, since the bitterness between the two countries had long since died down, and the more educated classes were ardent admirers of the British mode of living. It was but natural, therefore, that a movement for the establishment of a club patterned after those of St. James Square should gain considerable momentum.<sup>6</sup>*

Upper class New Yorkers copied London in both the organization of clubs and the designs. London clubhouse architecture of the 1830s and 1840s was particularly influential on American clubhouse design when clubs began commissioning purpose-built homes in the 1850s and 1860s. As New York's influence grew over the country following the Civil War, cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago would copy New York's social clubs and architectural representations of them.<sup>7</sup> Just as purpose-built clubhouses shaped the development of New York above 14th Street, that influenced nineteenth-century American urban architecture elsewhere.

The Union Club blazed the trail for Protestant Anglo-Saxon men's social clubs in New York, as it was the first of its kind in the city. While New Yorkers had previously organized periodic meetings in pubs, taverns, and assembly halls, the Union Club was the first to formalize a group of men and aim to have a dedicated space of its own.<sup>8</sup> It drew much of its organized inspiration from the famous London clubs. Former Mayor Philip Hone, known for his published social diary recounting upper-class life in New York in excruciating detail, noted in June 1836:

*A new club is about being established, at the head of which are a number of our most distinguished citizens, to consist of four hundred members, and to be similar in its plan and regulations to the great clubs of London, which give a tone and character to the society of the London metropolis.<sup>9</sup>*

In the first article of the Union Club's constitution, members insisted the club would provide: "social intercourse amongst its members, and afford them the convenience and advantages of a well-kept hotel."<sup>10</sup> Space and luxury were at the root

of the club's identity. Both came to define the club's membership as the Union Club leaptfrogged from one mansion to the next, following prestigious real estate and more square footage. The first clubhouses occupied existing mansions, though eventually the Union Club would build and design their own. From its start, the Union Club was elite and exclusive. Its original 135 members came from some of the oldest and most prominent families in New York.<sup>11</sup> While they opened membership wider than clubs defined by heritage, such as the Knickerbocker Club, the Union Club maintained a notoriously long wait-list and tight grip on the type of New Yorkers allowed to join. Members were extremely wealthy, white, and male. The club grew increasingly anti-Semitic over time and also limited connections with Central European gentiles.<sup>12</sup> Many copy-cat clubs in New York and other American cities would spring up after its creation, including many clubs founded by groups of New Yorkers excluded from the Union Club due to nationality, gender, creed, or politics.

In dialogue with a rapidly changing New York, the Union Club moved clubhouses several times between 1836 and 1902. They grew out of one space, were kicked out of another, and abandoned the third to keep pace with the development of exclusive residential neighborhoods moving further and further uptown. While the Union Club's first several clubhouses embodied luxurious design and fashionable addresses, its fourth and penultimate club on 21st Street and Fifth Avenue was the first clubhouse specifically designed for a club.<sup>13</sup> The Union Club bought land in the most socially important neighborhood of 1854 and hired Thomas and Son to design a scheme. Completed in 1855, the new clubhouse solidified the experiment of a social club in New York into a type of institution with longevity.<sup>14</sup> The three-story building was erected in fashionable brownstone, with pediments over the windows. Maintaining the proportions of a typical brownstone on its avenue-facing facade to create a homelike quality, the building was massive. The entire building was 63 feet by 120 feet in length; its massing resembled clubhouses constructed in London during the 1830s and 1840s. Members entered at the middle of the long side of the building along 21st Street through a recessed porch flanked by Corinthian columns. The first floor consisted of lounging rooms and the main office, with a large reading room and lounge room facing Fifth Avenue.<sup>15</sup> Other club spaces included a library, parlor, reception room, billiard room, and dining room with carved black walnut paneling. As the *Morning Courier* noted in its review of

the new clubhouse on Fifth Avenue and 21st Street:

The new Club House... sufficiently attests the solid character of its present members, who have now permanently arranged for their comfort....the whole edifice presenting a massive, chaste, and splendid appearance, even in that long array of magnificent structures—the Fifth Avenue. We shall not pretend to enter into details of the interior. It is sufficient to say that it is complete in every part.<sup>16</sup>

The new clubhouse successfully symbolized the power and influence of the Union Club through its popular address, regal exterior, and lush interiors. Hardly any New Yorkers other than members and the club's staff saw the interiors of the club. White women and all non-employed people of color were barred from stepping foot inside the building. Women were only invited into the building once, during an open house that occurred before the club's official opening.<sup>17</sup> Journalist James Gordon Bennett complained in the *New York Herald* that the practice of London clubs to exclude women from social gatherings was arcane and unpopular with young members. He hoped that eventually social clubs like the Union would shift their model to that of Parisian salons. Of the Union Club he stated:

Their exclusive institution, so glaringly and brazenly hostile to woman's rights, will go the way of the Crystal Palace. This nursery for old bachelors and their conspiracies, cannot resist the opposing forces of the ladies, with their genial re-unions of the young and old of both sexes mingling together.<sup>18</sup>

While the Union Club would only admit women into their club years later farther uptown, Bennett's article hints at the variety of social club models that would diverge from that of the Union Club. While most clubs remained extremely white, extremely Christian, and extremely male, their use of spaces grounded their club missions and identities in the New York City grid.

Considered the second oldest social club of New York, the Harmonie Club emerged from the New York society's growing anti-Semitism and gained its influence and prestige as its members were increasingly excluded from spaces of wealth and power.<sup>19</sup> When the club started in October 1852 by six German-Jewish men, it was a small organization dedicated to singing, lectures, debate, and promotion of German culture. Unlike the Union Club, which occupied grand old mansions before building a clubhouse, the Harmonie Club first rented a series of humble apartments and furnishings downtown. They moved frequently in their initial years of incorporation; oven due to either the anti-Semitic nature or financial difficulties of their landlords. During this time, the Harmonie Club remained

small and identified with its origins as a German and Central European singing club. Leasing an entire building on 8th Street changed the character of the club.<sup>20</sup> The club began hosting dances, balls, and performances that permitted women limited access to the club while raising the club's wealth and prestige. They also opened a restaurant and dedicated spaces for card games and billiards.<sup>21</sup>

The Harmonie Club seldom advertised itself as a Jewish organization. Instead, they focused on their German heritage, enforcing German as the language of choice until 1905. They wanted to be seen as a cohesive community with different morals, tastes, and character than the lower-class Jewish communities in New York. As more Jews gained wealth and influence in New York before and after the Civil War, they were increasingly pushed out or blackballed from joining elite clubs, schools, and other powerful organizations they once could access.<sup>22</sup> The clubhouse became a crucial space for elite Jewish men to establish their identity and separate from poor Jewish communities and on par with the white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant communities closed to them.

As the club rapidly grew in wealth and membership, the Harmonie Club decided to build a new clubhouse designed specifically for its needs. In 1865 the club leased a 104 feet by 100 feet plot on 42nd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenue overlooking the Croton Reservoir. They commissioned member Henry Fernbach, a Prussian-Jewish architect who had studied in Berlin, to design the new clubhouse. Before designing the Harmonie Club, Fernbach had designed several prominent spaces for New York Jewish communities, including a few prominent synagogues.<sup>23</sup> While many clubs looked towards the architecture of elite London clubs for inspiration, the Harmonie Club took inspiration from continental Europe. Fernbach's scheme, completed in 1867, references the French Second Empire aesthetic that was popular in contemporary Paris. There was a feeling in New York that Paris was perhaps inferior to London or even New York, in terms of institutional strength and influence, but that it was still the most beautiful city.<sup>24</sup> Members entered the club by ascending a tall stone staircase that led to a porticoed entrance. The facade of the four-story building combined pediments above its second-story windows, as a nod to Italian Renaissance architecture, with a tall mansard roof on the fourth floor. The *New York Tribune* described the exterior appearance of the club as a building "of solid construction, as well as offering a general appearance of comfort and repose."<sup>25</sup> Inside, the club featured "all the details of a first-class clubhouse"<sup>26</sup> with a library of 18,000 German, French, and English volumes; a large reading room; six billiard tables; and four bowling lanes in the basement. The main attraction of the club was the grand ballroom on the third floor. At the time, annual balls, small dances, operettas, and art exhibitions were tightly wound

with the club's identity. These events allowed both women and non-members to enter the clubhouse and spread news of the Harmonie Club's retreat. As the *King's Views of New York* guidebook noted, the clubhouse was "the most homelike in jealous regard for privacy of clubs."<sup>27</sup> The building did not occupy the full lot or expand the full stretch of its 42nd Street border. A twenty-foot garden was left open on the east side of the building to be used by members and their families during summer evenings. It was eventually transformed into a club space for women that connected to the main clubhouse.<sup>28</sup>

The Harmonie Club on 42nd Street exemplified a social club that was growing increasingly exclusive and elite. The building's reputation for luxury cemented the Harmonie Club's status as "an ancient and honored institution of the German colony of New York, an aristocratic club,... reputed to be very wealthy, and one of the most delightful of social circles."<sup>29</sup> Its location just below Central Park was also a benefit, as noted by its President to the *New York Tribune* in spring 1896.<sup>30</sup> The program, however, eventually stifled the club. As the nineteenth century progressed, more wealthy families threw events in their new mansions and social balls lost their luster. The Harmonie Club, tight on space, decided to abandon its home of forty years for a clubhouse without a ballroom or designated space for women farther uptown on East 61st Street, closer to the homes of many members.<sup>31</sup>

The Union League Club began in 1863 as a protest to the Union Club. Feeling ashamed by the Union Club's inability to sever ties with its Confederate members and attacked by Union members who supported the southern secession, seventy members withdrew from the Union Club to start a new political club.<sup>32</sup> Considered the "pioneer of political clubs," the Union League Club grew into a powerful Republican organization in an otherwise Democratic city.<sup>33</sup> The club hosted politicians, sponsored lectures, and fundraised for the Union Army during the Civil War, later shifting efforts to Republican politicians. The club even supported Black regiments heading into battle. The Union League Club advertised their organization as far more inclusive than its predecessors, stating that: "the only requisite for membership, besides unblemished reputation, should be an uncompromising and unconditional loyalty to Nation and a complete subordination thereto of all other political ideas."<sup>34</sup> The club, however, excluded women, people of color, and increasingly after the war, elite Jewish men. Only white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant men of the highest society could join the club; it resembled organizations like the Union Club much more than the political organizations of the working classes.

The Union League Club first considered building a uniquely tailored clubhouse in 1867. They commissioned designs from Richard Morris Hunt for a plot on 23rd Street and Fourth



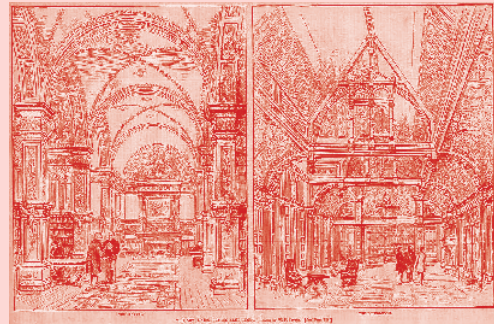
Above: The Union League Club

Avenue. The club moved into the Leonard P. Jerome mansion on Madison Square the following year instead.<sup>35</sup> The Union League Club, however, continued its search for a home near Fifth Avenue. The *New York Times* described this move as:

Natural and proper. For it is not a conservative club, nor one that can afford to shrug its shoulders at wealth which is not supported by brains or birth. It is a progressive, alert club, a young man's club.... In moving to a building on Fifth-avenue it may really express a desire on the part of the members who accomplished the move to make it a fashionable club.<sup>36</sup>

The Union League Club eventually found a plot on 39th Street and Fifth Avenue and held an architectural competition for the design of their new clubhouse. A mixture of New York City's most renowned and up-and-coming architecture firms submitted schemes for the clubhouse, with Peabody and Stearns winning the competition with a Queen Anne-style brick mansion that emphasized Baroque forms.<sup>37</sup> The final design drastically transformed from the winning competition entry. While the exterior lost many of its bold features, it remained romantically picturesque: combining a cocktail of elements underneath a steep mansard roof. The two corner facades were distantly related, rather than acting as a single landscape, they fought for attention. And the chimneys

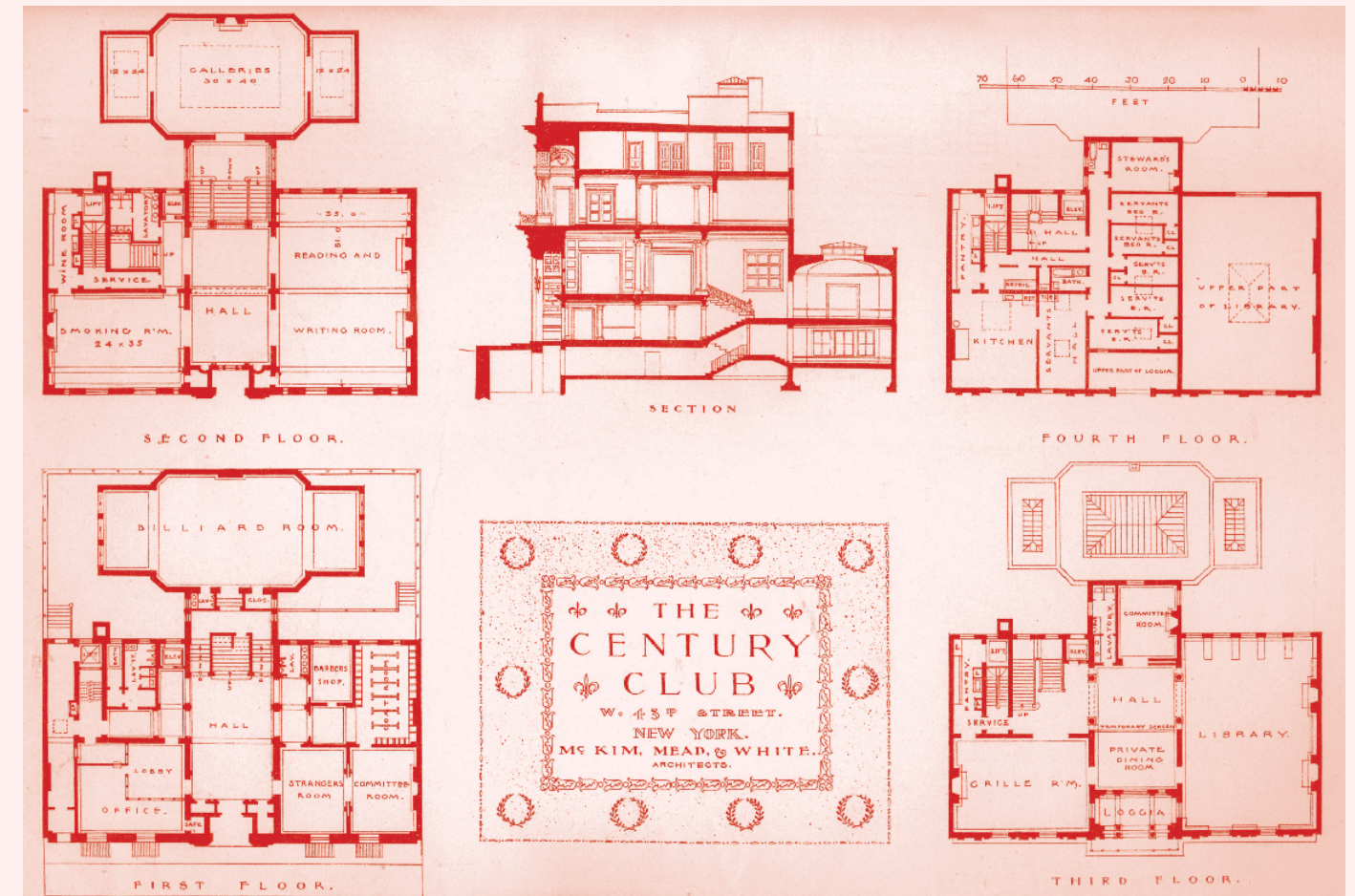
## Club Interiors



popped out of the roof as they desired. While many critics despised the exterior, others agreed that it was a marvel for the untrained eye.<sup>38</sup> The interiors had features such as a giant lounge room overlooking Fifth Avenue, ideal for young bachelors eager to watch the promenade down the street. Other spaces included the reception, reading, writing, and dining rooms; the grand library; and the art gallery. Hosting exhibitions once a month, the gallery welcomed the public, including women during limited hours.<sup>39</sup> Similar to the exteriors, the interiors received mixed reviews from critics. While they all agreed on the sumptuous materials, art, and furnishings, some felt that the designs by LaFarge, Tiffanys, Frank Hall Smith, and others were incongruous. Design decisions that would have been luxuries on their own fell flat against neighboring rooms.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, critics and visitors praised the clubhouse for its bold, innovative choices. A reflection of the club itself, the design was forward-looking and unafraid to bend conventions. The club remained in the building until 1931, after significant changes to the neighborhood.

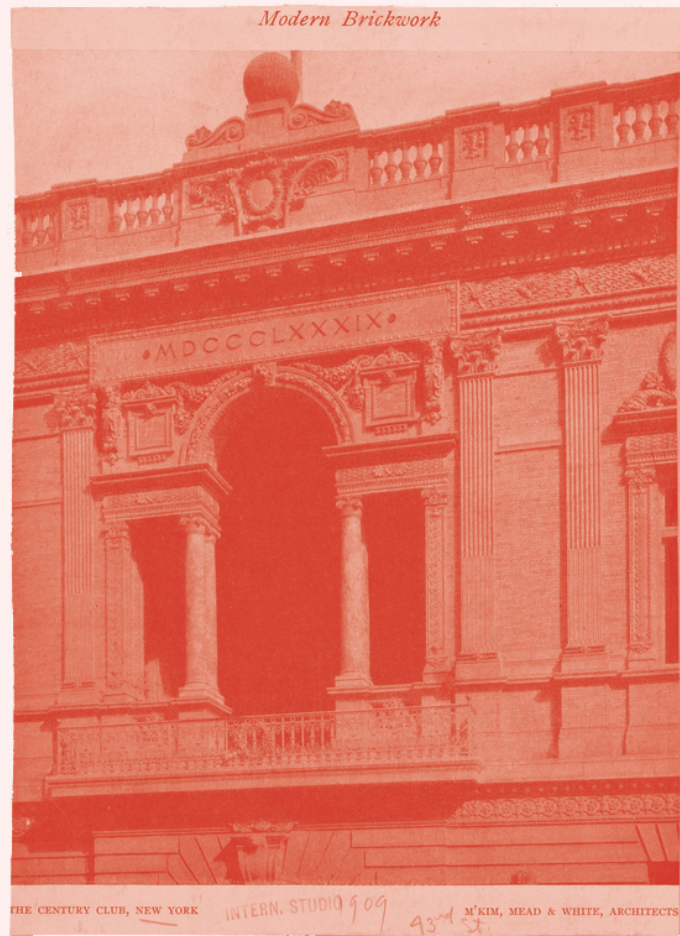
The Century Association commenced in 1947 as a club for artists, writers, professors, intellectuals, and businessmen interested in the arts. Unlike the other prominent social clubs of the mid-nineteenth century, the Century Association built a membership resembling the French Academy rather than growing a club based on wealth.<sup>41</sup> Members were at the core of the club. Its name came from the club's initial limit of 100 men of influence in the worlds of art and literature, although the club would grow to over 900 by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup> The club bounced around to several locations until it purchased an industrial building in the newly fashionable Union Square area in 1857, where they stayed for 34 years. When the Century Association first moved to Union Square, the neighborhood was filled with beautiful residential homes of brick and greenery. By the 1880s, however, the area transformed into a bustling commercial center far away from fashionable neighborhoods. Many younger members hoped to move the club up to the fashionable 40s and 50s from Fifth to Park Avenue, though older members feared the move would change the character of the arts club: "The idea of moving was anathema to some Centurians, however. They feared that a new and grander clubhouse might result in an intrinsically different Century, one with a more formal and restrained manner."<sup>43</sup> The Century Association's clubhouse had been looser, more comfortable, and more casual than the other types of prestigious clubs, hanging art of its members over every surface of wall. A more formal space might inhibit conversations and alter the relatively more bohemian nature of the organization.

For a project of such sensitivity, the Century Association looked for an architect internally. The club had several prominent architects as members to choose from, including James



Renwick and Richard Morris Hunt, but they ultimately chose McKim, Mead, and White in 1899. While Stanford White led the project, the entire firm contributed to the design of the Century Association. White designed the facade and massing, McKim developed the plans, and Joseph Wells fine-tuned the details.<sup>44</sup> The building, located just west of Fifth Avenue on 43rd Street, occupied four 25 feet by 100 feet lots. The cubic massing resembled prominent London clubs of 1830s St. James Square, and the facade's composition referenced grand Italian palazzos, yet the club appearance was joyful and light. The smooth, light stone base supported an exuberant edifice of cream-colored roman brick and ornate terracotta. The alternating runs of smooth, buff brick with terracotta created a highly textural quality and exciting rhythm on the building.<sup>45</sup> The horizontality of the building's massing, emphasized by the banded rustication of stone, allowed the 60-foot tall clubhouse to read as an intimate two-story building. A palladian loggia above the entrance enabled discussions of literature and art to flow out onto 43rd street on warm summer nights.<sup>46</sup> Critic Russell Strugis praised the exterior of the building. Not only was it: "an excellent design of its kind; perhaps the most pleasing front in New York," but it also acknowledged the urban condition of New York.<sup>47</sup> White fully embraced the single-frontage of the building with a front facade that had enough ornamentation for an entirely exposed building.

The interiors of the Century Association also addressed the needs and conditions of the club.<sup>48</sup> McKim designed an orderly and almost symmetrical plan that White softened with materiality and furnishing. The entrance led to a long, central hall that ran to a broad staircase and mezzanine-level, light filled gallery in the back. The hall allowed society women and the non-member men access to the galleries during limited hours without intruding on the rest of the club.<sup>49</sup> The hall was flanked by a smoking room to the west and a large reading and writing room to the east. The second floor hosted the double story library and a grill that opened onto the palladian loggia. The fourth floor contained service spaces, including six bedrooms for live-in staff. The basement floor consisted of the office, lobby, barbershop, cloak room, committee room, reception room, and billiard room below the galleries. The lounging spaces were large and furnishings comfortable, allowing members to feel as though they were home and engage in casual conversation. The dining room was also luxuriously domestic, resembling a great hall in an old English mansion.<sup>50</sup> The casual luxury of the clubhouse fit with the club's bohemian bourgeois character and received praise from journalists and members alike. The clubhouse was one of the few to survive the social clubs' continuous march up-town and New York's changing social scene.



must come from that district east or west of Central Park in which it is situated.<sup>53</sup>

As wealthy families moved above 59th Street, they were divided by Central Park. With only four park crossings available, it was challenging for residents of either side to frequently traverse the park other than for leisure. The Occident Club's initial intent was to provide a space for white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant men who felt abandoned by their clubs on the Upper East Side, hence its name. As a result of the Occident Club's proximity to the burgeoning Upper West Side, membership rapidly rose, encouraging the club to find a larger home.

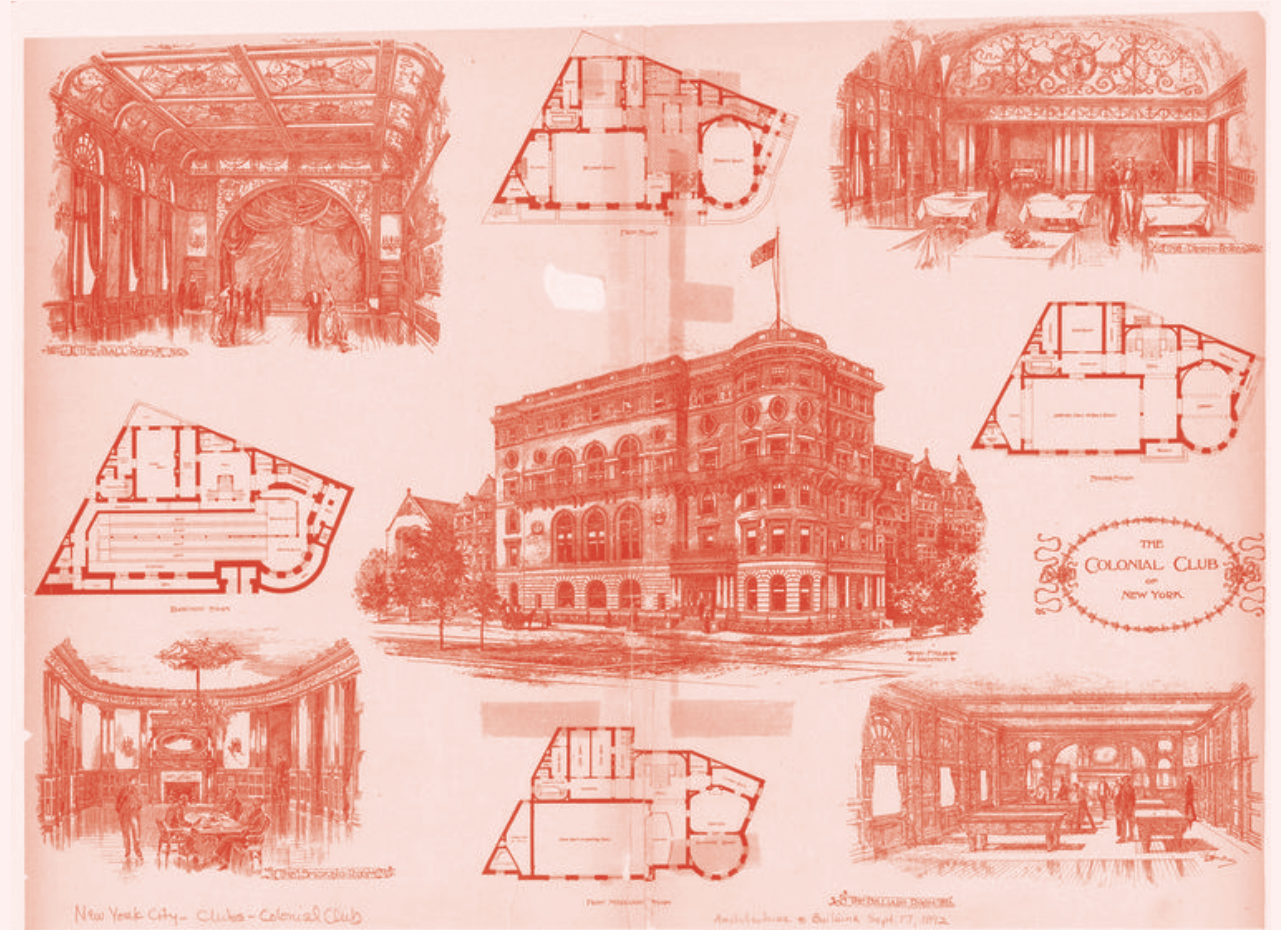
The Occident Club purchased a site at 72nd Street and Broadway and changed its name to the Colonial Club. True to its original intent of organizing around location, the name signified the historical importance of the Upper West Side in the Revolutionary War.<sup>54</sup> The club began collecting artifacts from the war and colonial New York. It also adopted the war, the American founding fathers, and colonial architecture as a visual language to symbolize its identity. Portraits of George Washington and revolutionary insignia emblazoned menus, invitation, and club memorabilia.<sup>55</sup> Member and Upper West Side architect Henry Kilburn proposed an urban clubhouse that adopted the language and interior furnishings of colonial vernacular.

The Colonial Club's beginnings uniquely align with the changing built environment of New York City. Unlike clubs founded around similarities in status, heritage, politics, or interest and profession, the Colonial Club started as a club that united wealthy men in the same neighborhood. The Colonial Club was established in 1889 as the Occident Club in a few private rooms of a townhouse located at 127 West 72nd Street.<sup>51</sup> By 1899, social clubs were seen as a necessity for men of elite classes. Bachelors enjoyed living near social clubs as they often ate breakfast and dinner in the club restaurants. Married men also made frequent use of clubhouses during summer months, when their families would leave New York for resort towns by the water or upstate. Many businessmen, staying in the city to attend to their affairs, would utilize the clubhouses for meals and company. Some would rent suites in the clubhouses.<sup>52</sup> The president of the Harmonie Club noted when it was looking for a new site, location was critical in the late nineteenth century.

To revert to the question of going above Fifty-ninth-st., we might divorce our membership by its doing. To show how this might happen, let me cite the case of the Colonial Club at Seventy-second-st. and the boulevard. The members are all from the West Side. Most of them at one time belonged to downtown clubs. But as soon as a club takes a site about Fifty-ninth-st., its membership

Located on a prominent corner, the Colonial Clubhouse was wrapped in a uniform facade of gray stone, brick, and white terracotta. Palladian details created both flatness and a textile-like quality to the building. The main entrance for male members was through a deep porch on Broadway, topped by a balustrade that wrapped around the building's single Palladian window, signifying the nexus of the building. The clubhouse was unique at the time, as it designed designated spaces for the member's female family members. Women, however, still had to enter through a separate entrance.<sup>56</sup> Women entered on 72nd Street, through a shallow porch. The porch, divided between the women's entrance and a smoking veranda, ran the length of the 72nd Street side. Lastly, the building is entered by descending an exterior staircase to a basement entrance on the south side of the building.<sup>57</sup>

The plans similarly divided the interiors between male club space, allocated space for women, and service space tucked in the back of the building and in between club floors. The main entrance led into a deep vestibule, followed by a grand hall with a double staircase with wide landings. To the right, members could either enter the cafe, passing a large cloakroom, or the billiard room, passing the main office. Beyond the billiard room was a barbershop and eventually service space, outfitted with a dumbwaiter and fire-rated stairs for staff. To



the left of the hall was an oval smoking room with large windows facing onto Broadway and Sherman Square. The cafe, billiard room, and smoking room all had large, welcoming fireplaces. The women's entrance was behind the smoking room, down a seven-foot corridor that led to an elevator. Other than circulation and occasionally the hall, there were no places women could occupy on the first floor.<sup>58</sup>

The second floor contained a 26-foot high assembly room and ballroom with expansive windows above the billiard room. In Palladian fashion, this room could be read from the exterior of the building. The rest of the floor contained a library and writing room above the smoking room and women's hallway on the first floor. The double-height ballroom created a mezzanine level above the library, where fire-proof service spaces, including the kitchen, pantries, storerooms, and servant quarters were squeezed in, out of sight of the members or guests.<sup>59</sup>

The fourth floor contained the member's dining room, private dining rooms, and the women's dining room. The private dining rooms could open onto the main dining room to host large dinner parties for members. One of the few spaces allocated for women in the club and the city, the women's dining room became extremely popular over the years. By 1895, the club flipped the two dining rooms: the members' main dining

room became a coed space while the smaller women's room became a male-only dining room.<sup>60</sup> The fifth floor contained suites for members. The roof was an open garden for warm summer evenings.

While the Colonial Club closed due to financial constraints in the early 1900s, its clubhouse on 72nd Street was considered a success from its opening and created a visual identity for the newly developed West Side. The building inspired other colonial-styled clubs on the Upper West Side, including the West Side Republican Club, New-Amsterdam Republican Club, and the West End Women's Republican Club.<sup>61</sup>

Spaces of enormous wealth, influence, and exclusion, the social clubs of the mid- to late- nineteenth century shed light on New York's development and a general anxiety about the ever-expanding city. As each club grappled to define its identity, its members struggled to find footing in a city of high population turnover and weakening social nets. Unlike Boston or Philadelphia, where a collection of elite families held a tight grip over city development, politics, and philanthropy, New York faced the continuous introduction of new wealth and touting influence.<sup>62</sup> Luxurious by design, they also symbolized a city splintering along lines of class, gender, race, and religion.

## Endnotes

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## **3. Reimagining Public**

## THE FIELDWORK SCHOOL

**Studio** Core II: Grounds for Play

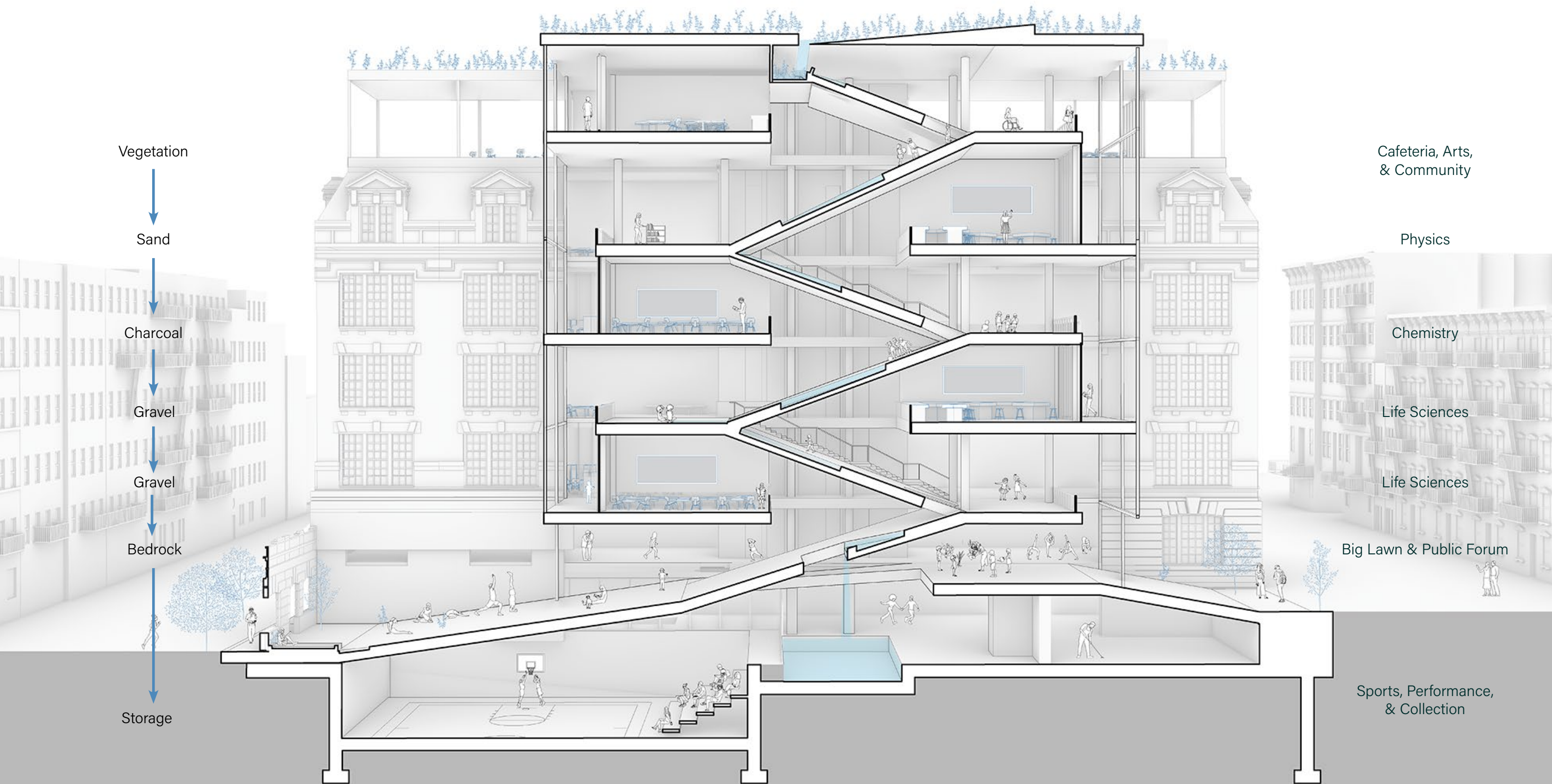
**Critic** Erica Goetz

**Term** Spring 2020

The former P.S. 64 building on East 9th Street gives us a rare opportunity to address shifting perception of stability in lower Manhattan. As sea levels rise and 'once-in-a-lifetime' storms become significantly more frequent, the city's historic buildings are increasingly in danger of irrevocable damage.

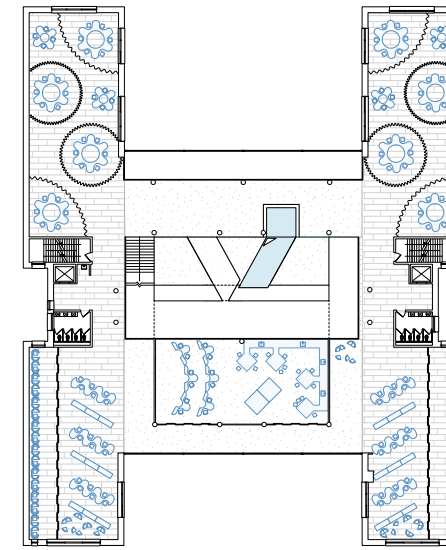
The Fieldwork School centers around experimental learning, community, and grounds for play. Labs are tucked below a central folding river that filters gray water while providing continuous play from the top floor indoor garden out onto East 10th Street where learning continues in the city. Traditional classrooms are transformed into zones of individual and group reflection. The top floor clad entirely in glass brings the school community together, combining cafeteria, music, theater and the arts.

The Fieldwork aims to connect urban practicalities with future realities. While the school will sit at the forefront of environmental education—focusing on the sciences—it will try to fit its studies on ecology and water into the larger picture of New York. The school does not aim to send every student down a path to scientific research. It does, however, want to ensure that each student leaves with a greater understanding of the natural world around them and how it affects everything they do. Non-science courses will focus on both the social and political histories of the city as well as activism through literature, arts, and protest. Students will leave the school with a greater sense of how the city is changing and of how they can improve and protect lives in their communities as young adults.

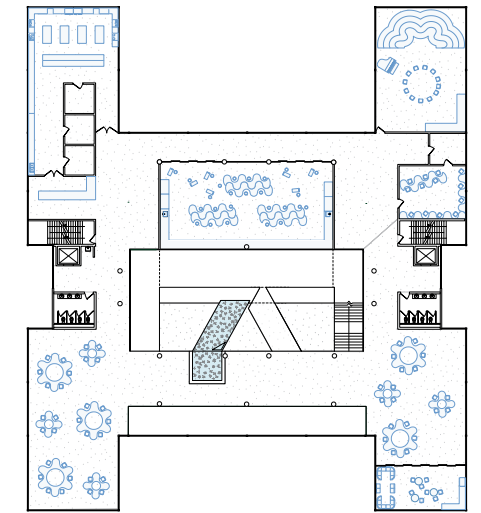




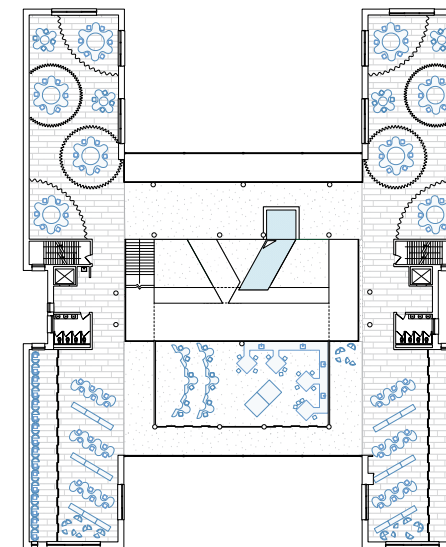
Concept Collage



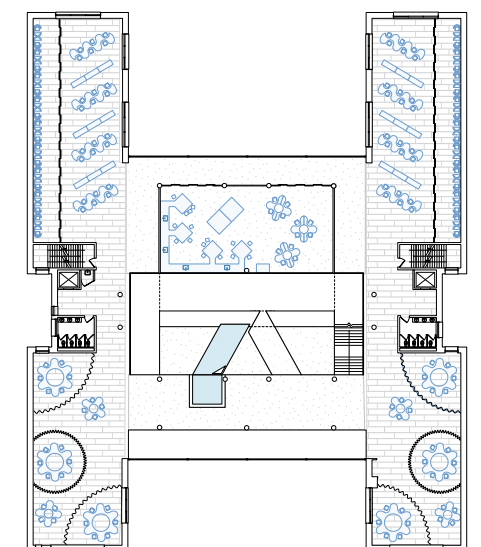
Fifth Floor: Sand



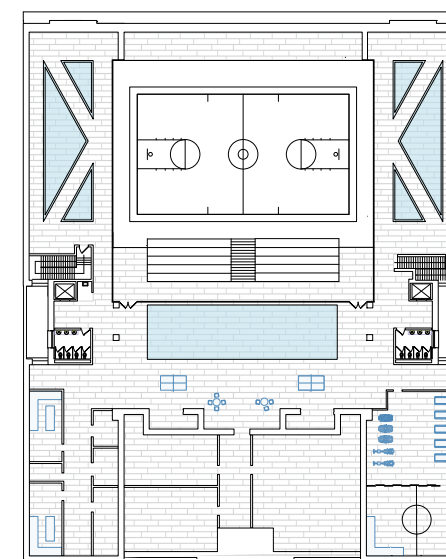
Sixth Floor: Vegetation



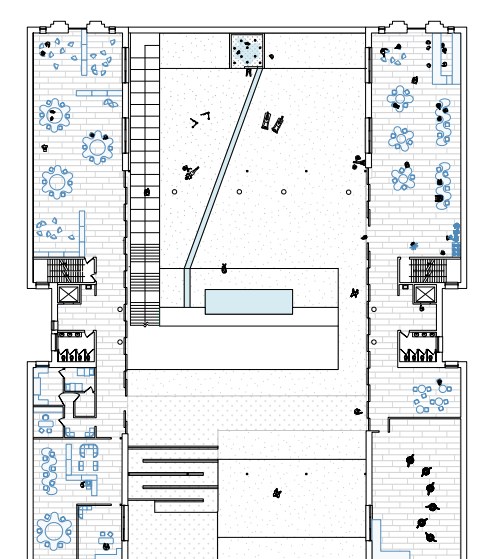
Third Floor: Gravel



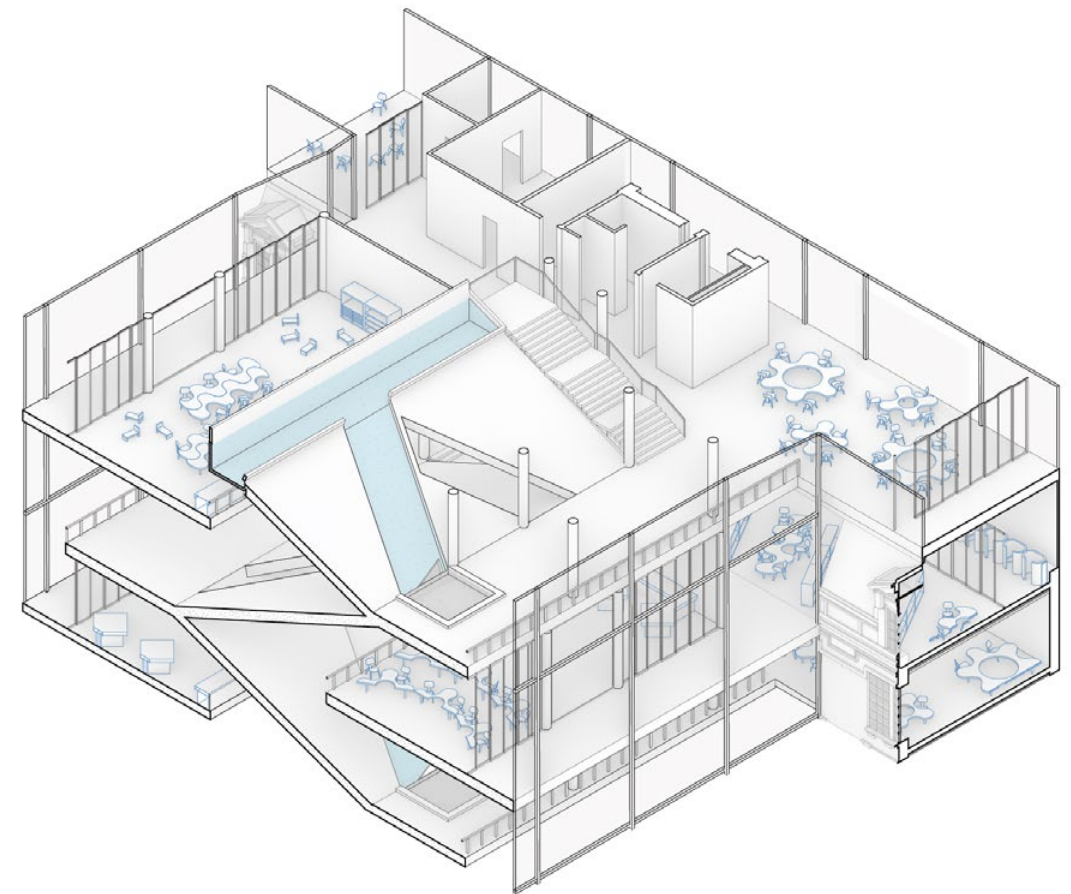
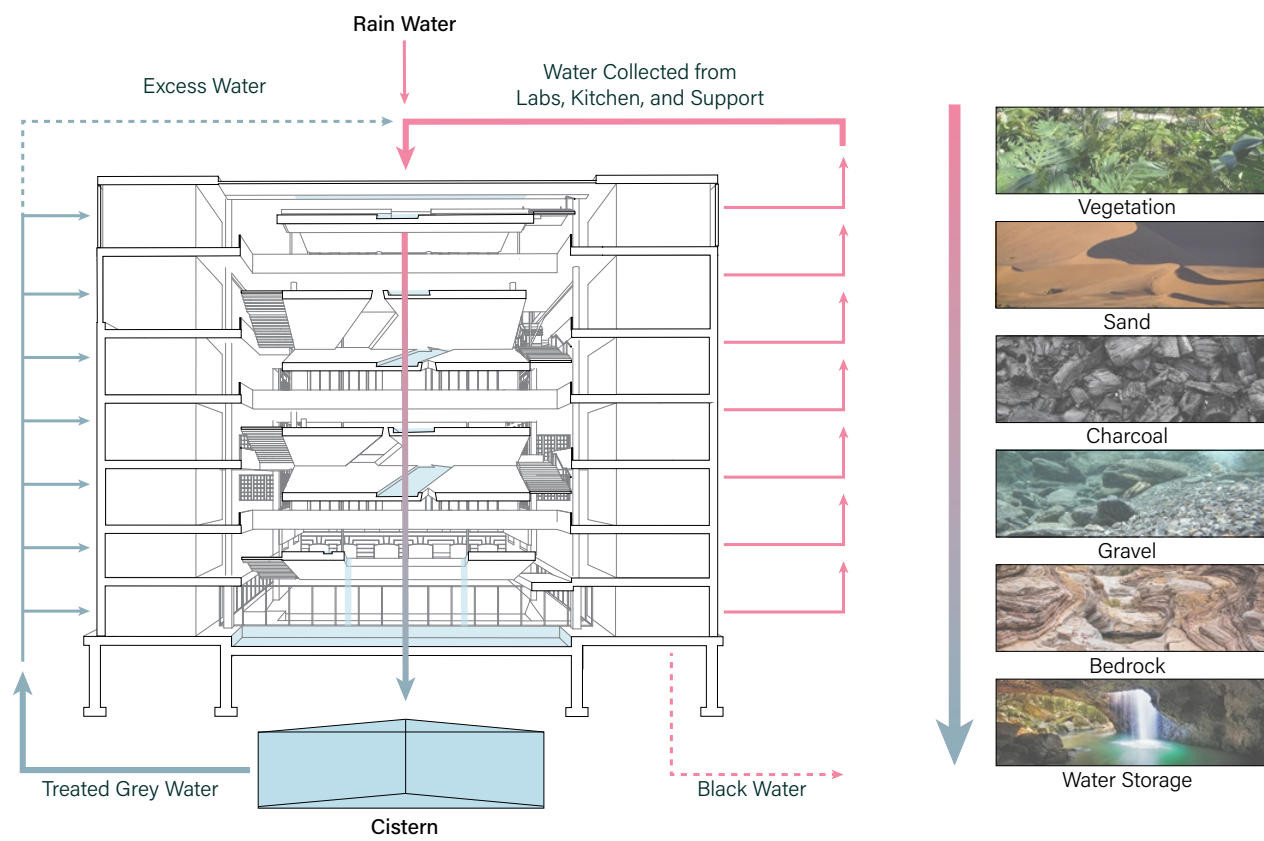
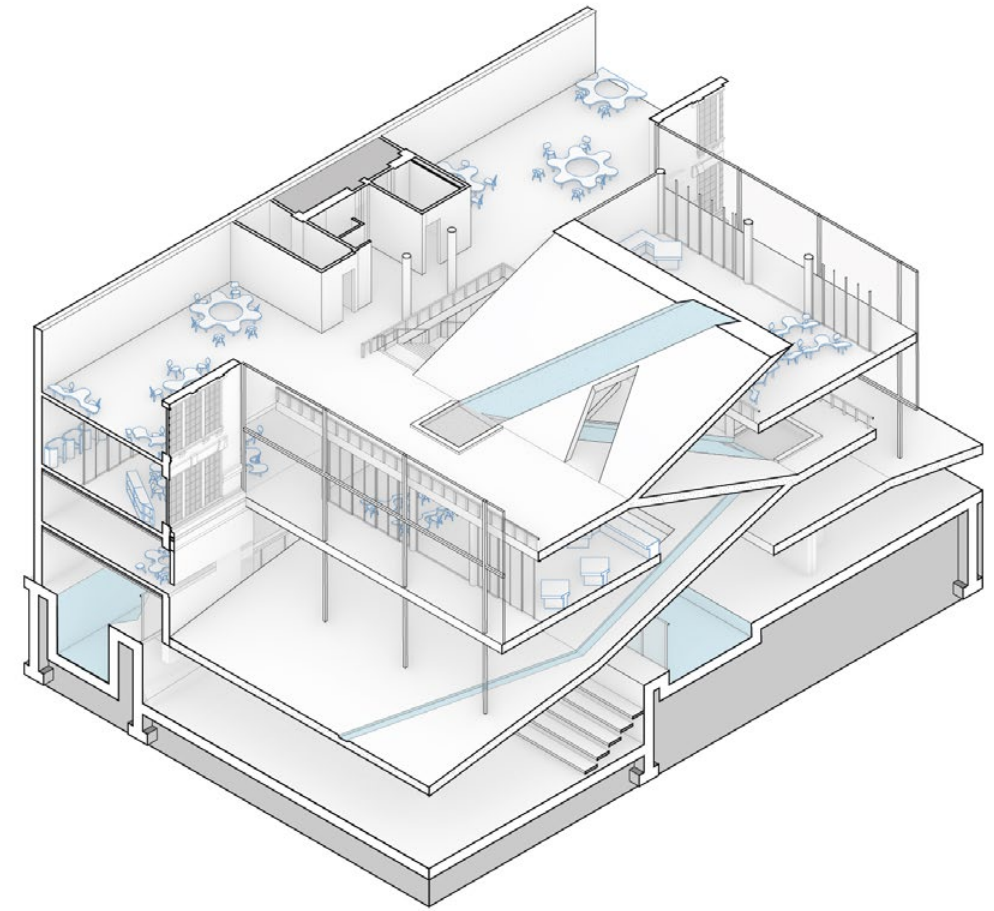
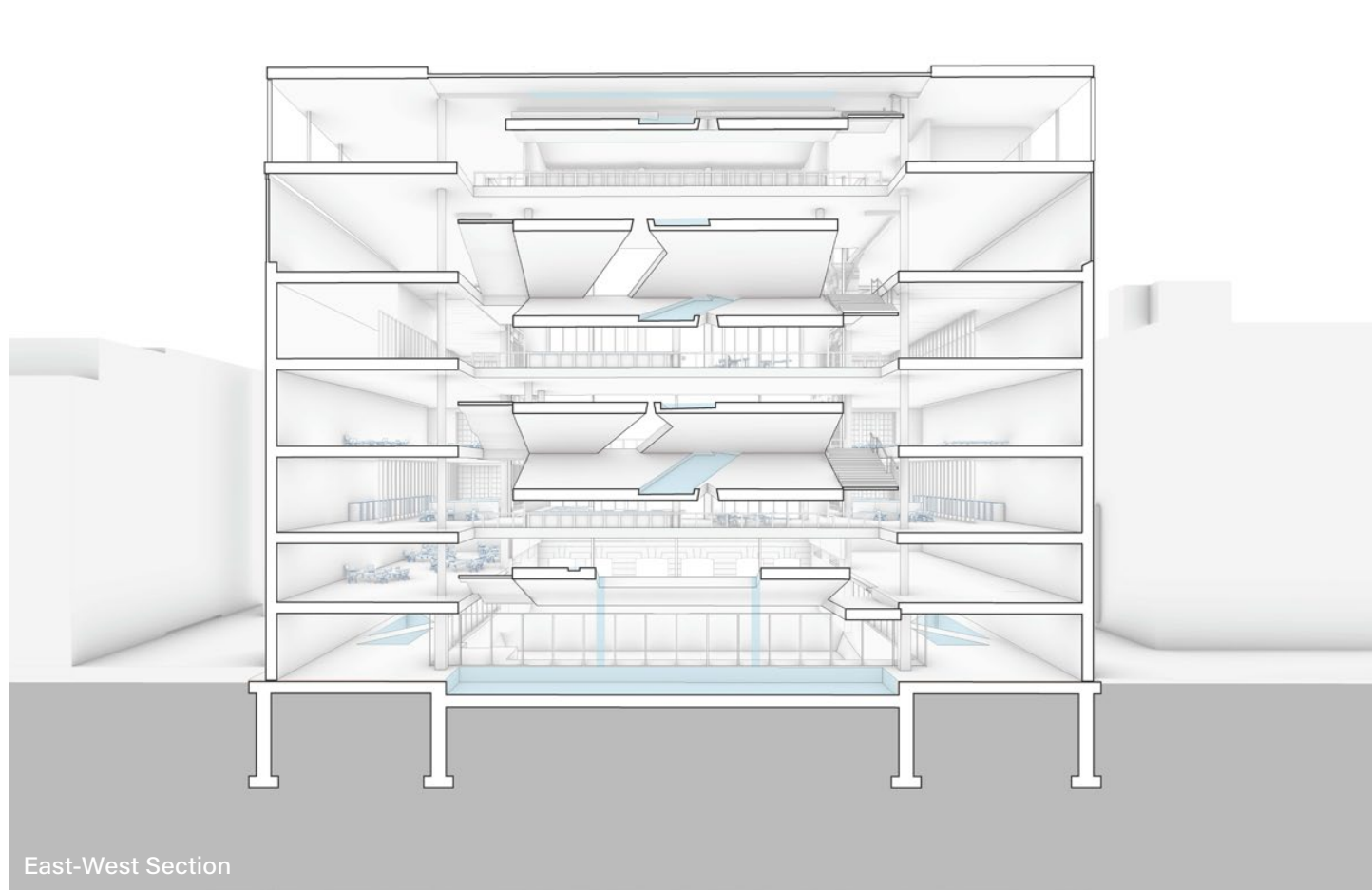
Fourth Floor: Charcoal



Basement: Storage



First Floor: Bedrock





# THE OFFICE AND THE CITY

Text by Nikil Saval

Course Graphic Architecture Project I (GAP I)

Critic Yoonjai Choi

Term Spring 2021



The Office and the City

Nikil Saval



spaces in the western United States, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area, where the office became a dominant form of urban organization. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the office was often a place of manual labor, but as the economy shifted towards services and finance, the office became a place of white-collar work. This shift was driven by the need for more efficient communication and coordination, which led to the development of the modern office building. The office building became a symbol of progress and modernity, and it played a central role in the development of the city. The office building was not just a place of work, but a place of social interaction and community. It was a place where people from different backgrounds and social classes came together, and it was a place where new ideas and innovations were often born. The office building was a key element of the city's infrastructure, and it was a place that shaped the way we live and work today.

In Graphic Architecture Project we explored graphic design and typography through a series of exercises looking at photography, white space, character styles, and typefaces while comparing them to the architectural field. Our final exercise is creating a book centered on a text related to architecture or the built environment. The text must be paired with images found from museum archives.

The text I chose to address is a piece by Nikil Saval that wrote shortly after the Great Recession. The piece dissects the relationship between commercial development and American cities, in particular, New York and its eternal glut of office space. The

piece feels encapsulated in time yet might act as a guide as we move beyond the pandemic.

The book is formatted 4 x 6, to be the size of a photograph. The text grows and shrinks along the bottom of each page, mimicking the feeling of walking in a city. The text slowly takes over the page as Saval talks about the construction boom of the 1980s.

The materiality of the book is meant to be cheap and fast, like silk-screen print. The colors are an ode to the financial institutions that have historically fueled commercial construction and filled completed towers.



of the office as a system that no longer needs them or their workers. According to the historian of the city, the office building was a place of social interaction and community. It was a place where people from different backgrounds and social classes came together, and it was a place where new ideas and innovations were often born. The office building was a key element of the city's infrastructure, and it was a place that shaped the way we live and work today.



new estate developers, who saw higher returns on investment coming from office towers than city planners and politicians, who saw the tax base of white-collar professionals as essential to their city's future. The amalgam of interests and ideologies would help the American city become a white-collar phenomenon. Office workers emerged as a distinct group, the new middle class. In the 1980s, liberal economists saw the fastest-growing segment of the largest American cities, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. In their companies, the vast wealth of land and the growing ranks of factory workers, white-collar labor was negligible in the eyes of commentators and even in the city itself. A new middle class, coinciding with their burgeoning city presence, felt as peculiar to themselves as factory workers. They began to be... not conscious of themselves, exactly—that is, not in the liberal sense of considering themselves antagonistic to their groupings and capable of action—but more vaguely aware of themselves as a distinct middle stratum, below the wielders of capital, whom they

**18**

**Y**ork, the courthouse of merchants clustered around and below Canal Street, close to the busy docks, where the regular arrival of packet ships determined the broad address of the working. Many mercantile concerns also operated dry-docks above, where they displayed their wares, such as textiles, the clerks directed their duties between marring the stores and keeping track of the great accounts.

The lives of a merchant clerk, Edward N. Take give us some flavor of the geography of the white-collar

**19**

**W**orkday, the sheer range of the city that it encompassed—such a level of mobility that even the most "honest" office workers today might envy, in one way or another. Take records going to the Bank of Commerce on Nassau Street in the morning going to the company on Fleet Street to collect bills, meeting a deposit at the Merchants Club bank on Beekman Street, meeting up with his friends on Broadway and Wall and going to the gym on Greenwich Village by 10:00 pm. Other days he stopped

**20**

**W**hite-collar work and repeated it from blue-collar work.

Chicago was an especially early example of the embedded separation in Chicago. The area that eventually became the Loop was originally a working-class district. Marshall Ogden, a real estate developer, made the area into an example of the "Chicago" style of American cities. He used the area to experiment with different kinds of buildings, such as the first skyscraper, the Home Insurance Building, and the first office building, the First National Bank Building.

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## WATERLOO

Partners Alexa Greene, Andrew Magnus, & Hannah Stollery

Course ATV: Urban Systems Integration

Critic Earl Jackson

Term Spring 2021

Waterloo is a mixed used, public-facing development that focuses on how to live with the growing threat of water. Data has shown that by 2050 the New York City Climate will closely resemble Charleston, South Carolina. Our proposal aims to resolve flooding and local water quality and includes a series of bioswales, rain gardens, wet meadows, and oyster reef scaffolds which occupy most of the space adjacent to the inlet. Additional programming starts further back from the inlet, including a combined skate park and water treatment facility and open-air food hall.

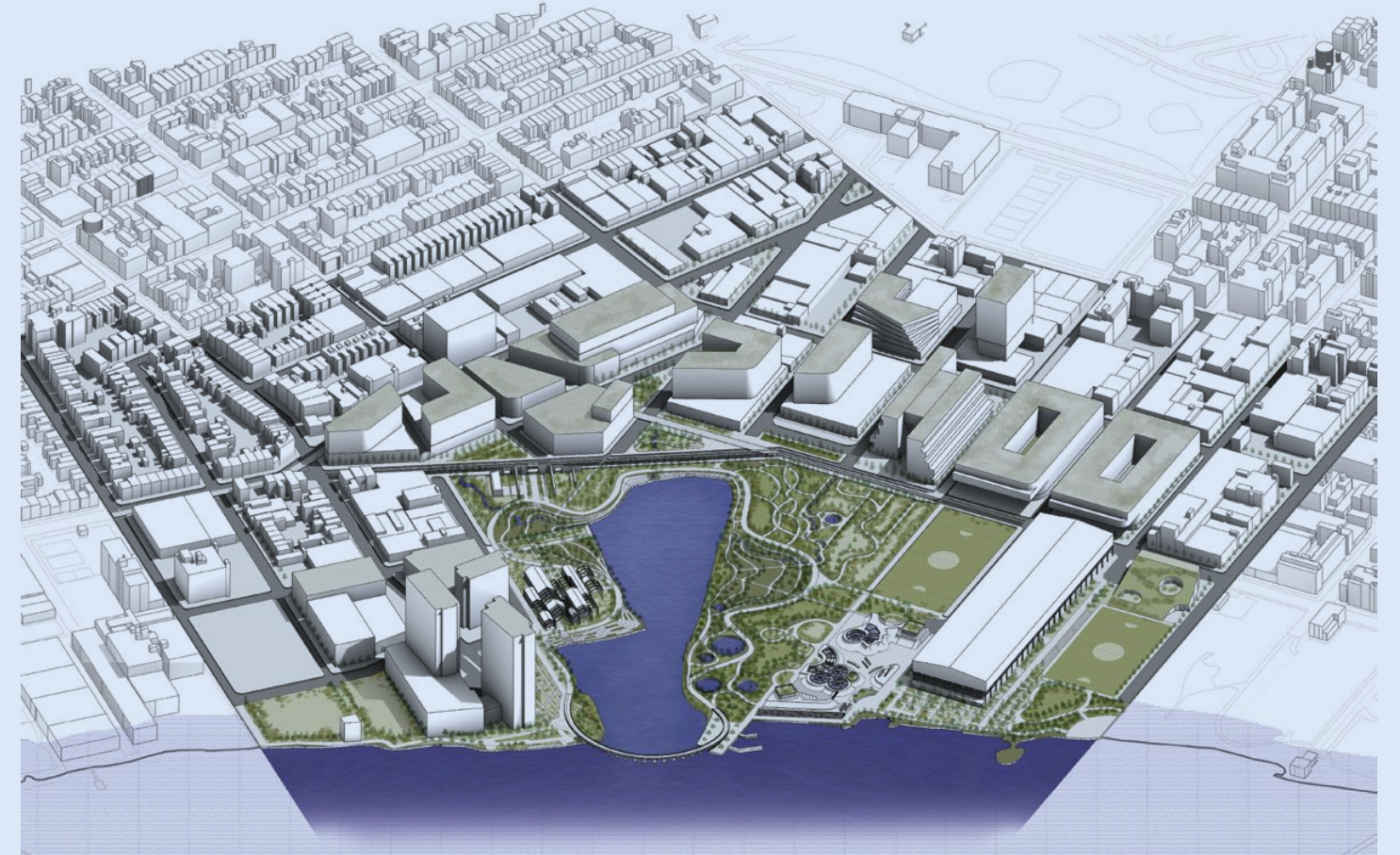
The site is extremely close to sea level, and is prone to flooding. This is due to the history of the site, where a pre-colonial creek ran through what is now infill. This area also represents the one of the largest sewersheds in Brooklyn, meaning that any stormwater event with more than .3" of rain will dump more than 6 million gallons of untreated water into the inlet and river.

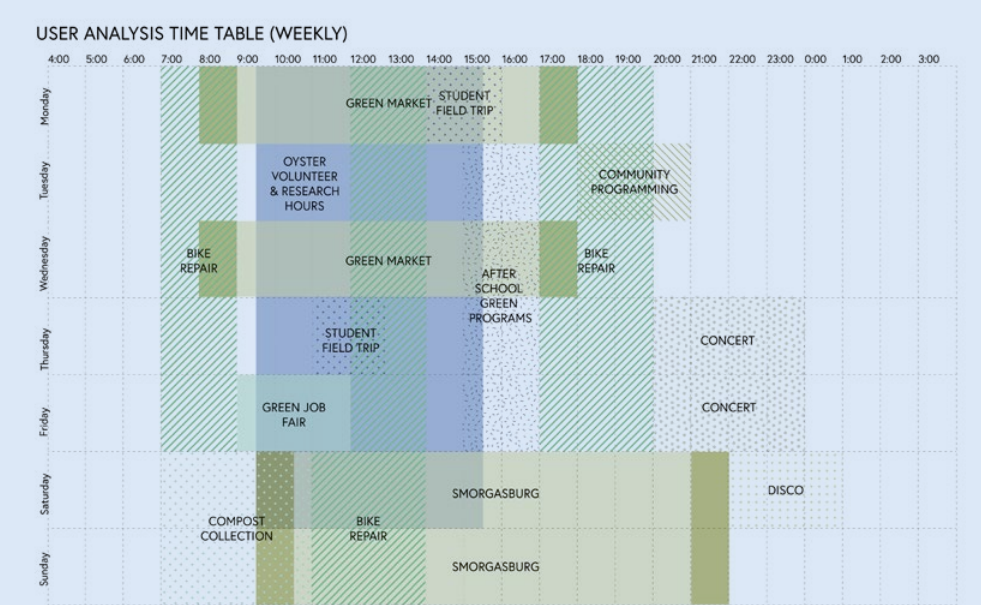
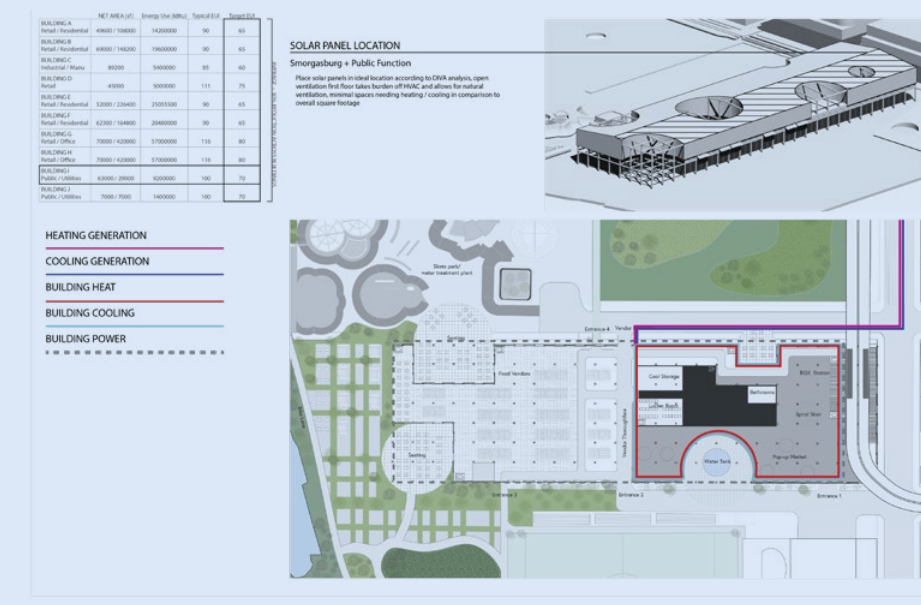
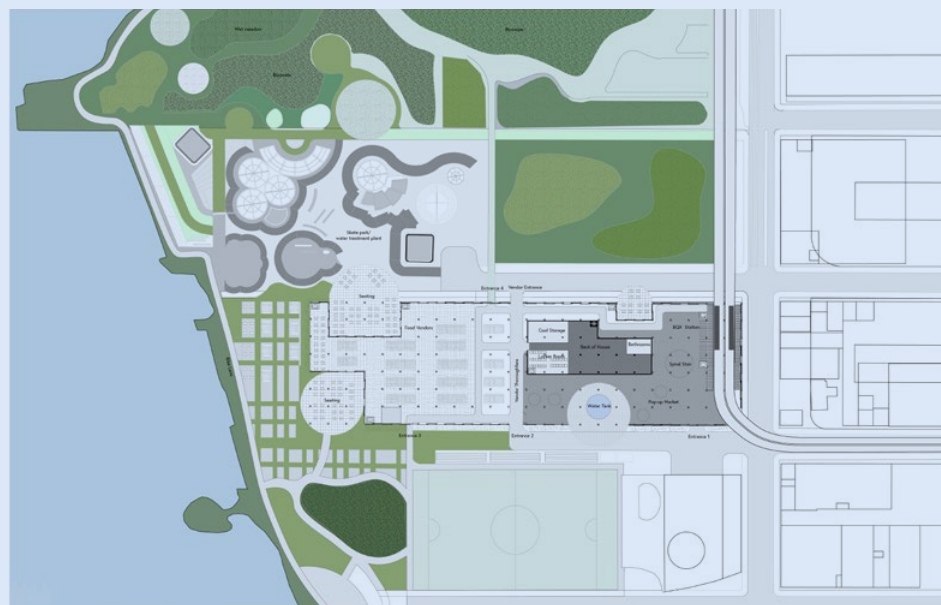
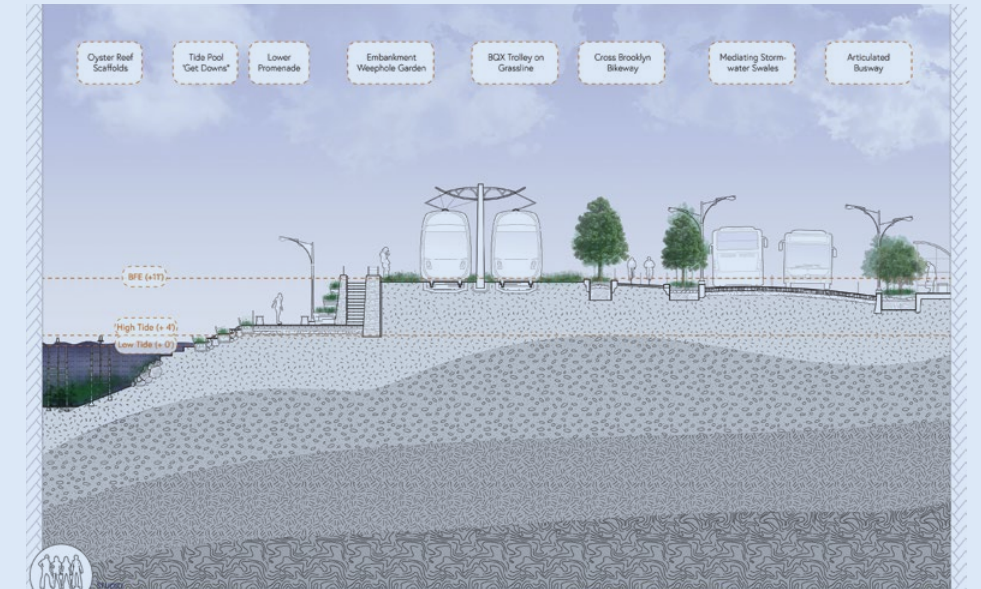
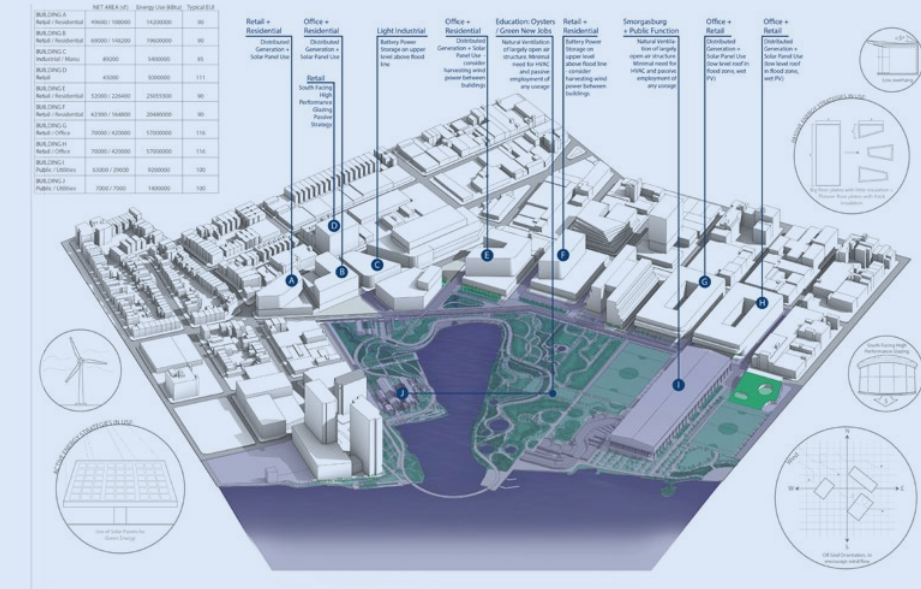
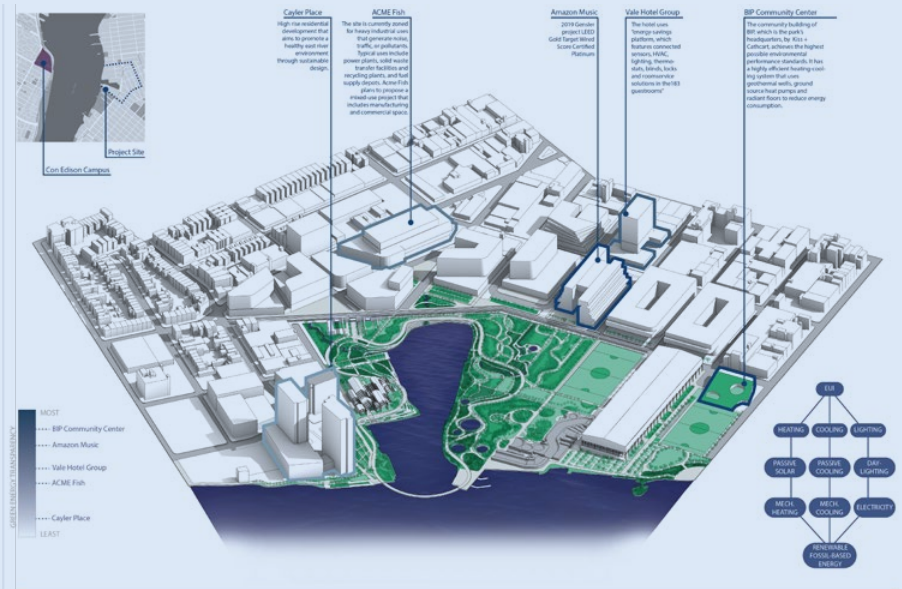
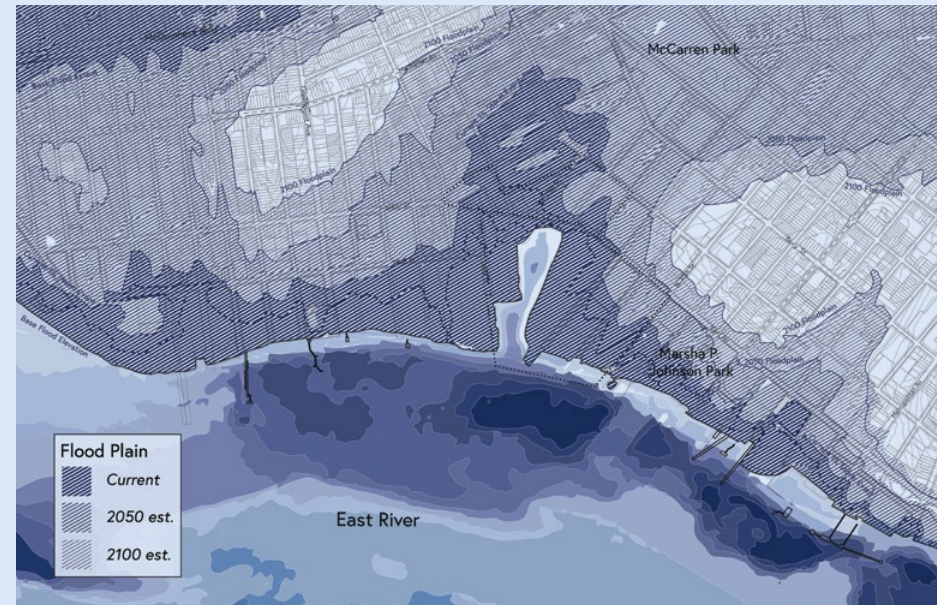
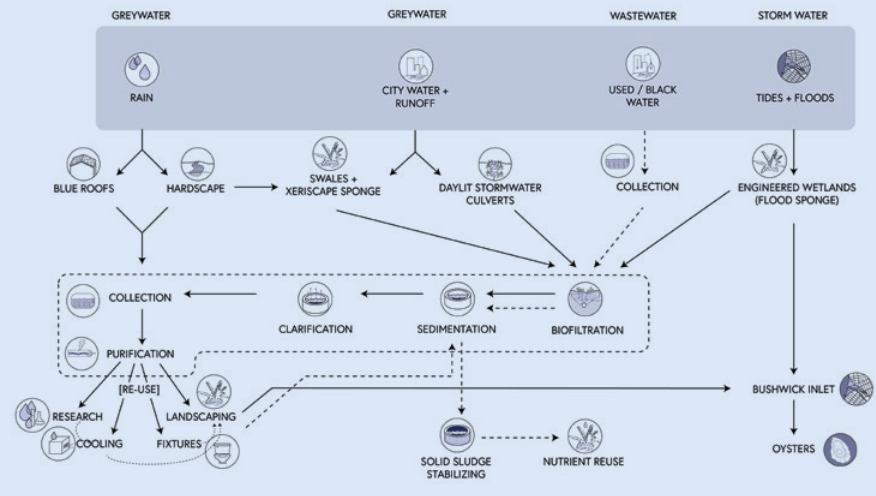
Waterloo is water zero campus during wet days, and one that would be water negative during dry weather by mining the sewer interceptor at North 12th Street and Kent Avenue. The inner loop of the park is designed to flood and store water as a salt-marsh engineered wetland. Native species are reintroduced in topographic zones that correspond to the amount of water intensity expected in the coming years, this has the added benefit of cleaning runoff from adjacent sites and metabolizing the toxins in the soil.

The prospectus BQX tram line runs through the site, before it heads over to Manhattan Avenue. It moves along Kent and Franklin Avenue, which have been raised 6 feet to mitigate frequent flooding. The tram will be powered by wires above. This will give commuters easy access to the new development in the area as well as the new public green space while reducing car traffic.

Kent-Franklin transforms into an Open Street from North 13th to Clayer Street. The city grid extends to create a new pedestrian and bike meow.

Waterloo reutilizes an existing warehouse that is adjacent to the inlet as well as our proposed skate park water treatment facility. The warehouse is cut in multiple locations to allow more light into the building and unify the language used at the existing Bushwick Inlet Park and new skate park. Hydroponic farming, used to test water quality, inhabit the exposed structure. The first floor of the warehouse acts as an open flexible venue space. It can host a food hall, school field trips, green jobs fairs, concerts, or future programming for the community's needs. The middle portion of the building contains the back of the house, maximizing user access around the building. The BQX cuts through the building along Kent Avenue. The second floor houses the Billion Oyster Research Center.





## UNDER THE LINE

Studio Core I: The Grand Interior

Critic Alessandro Orsini

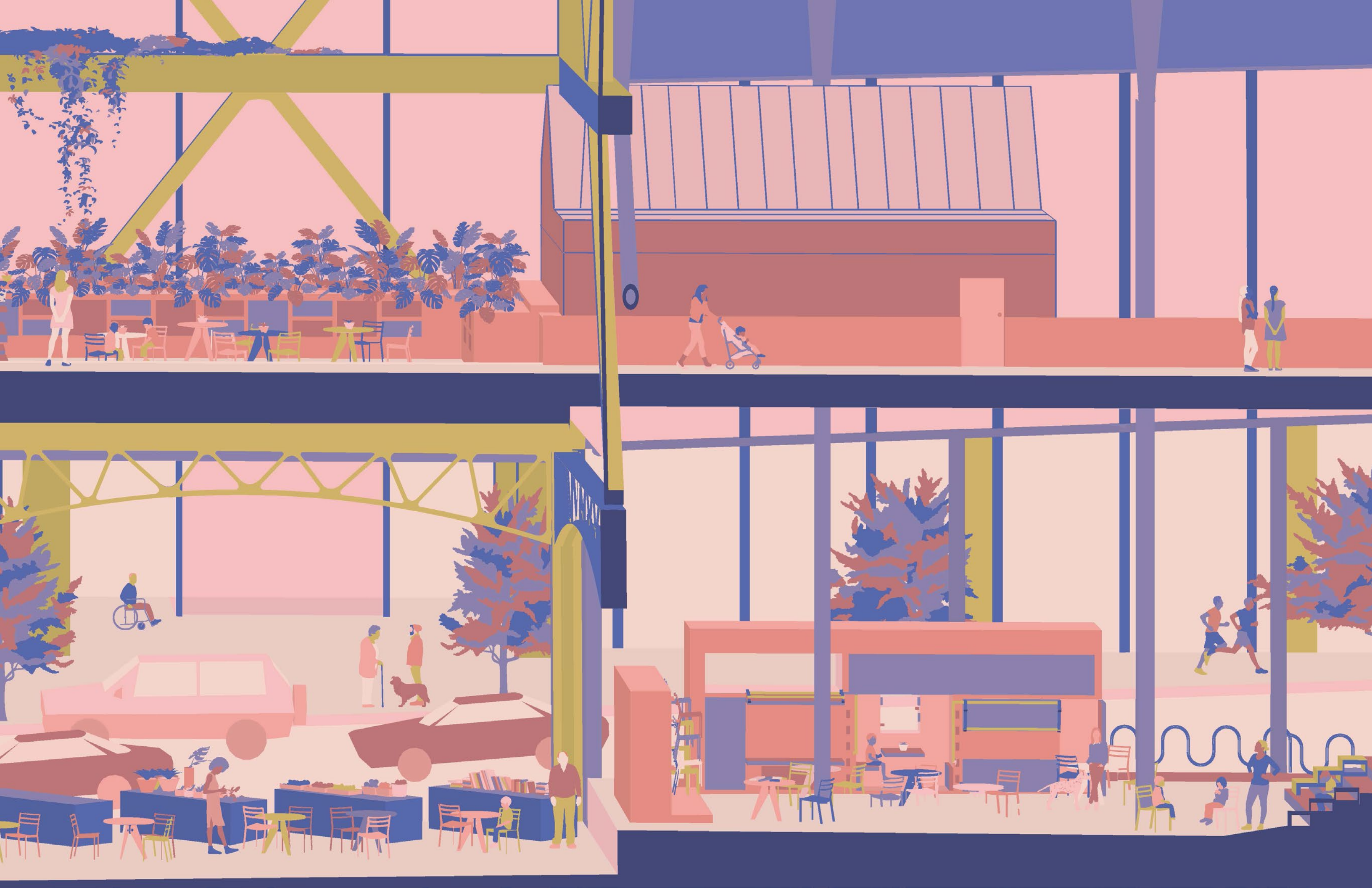
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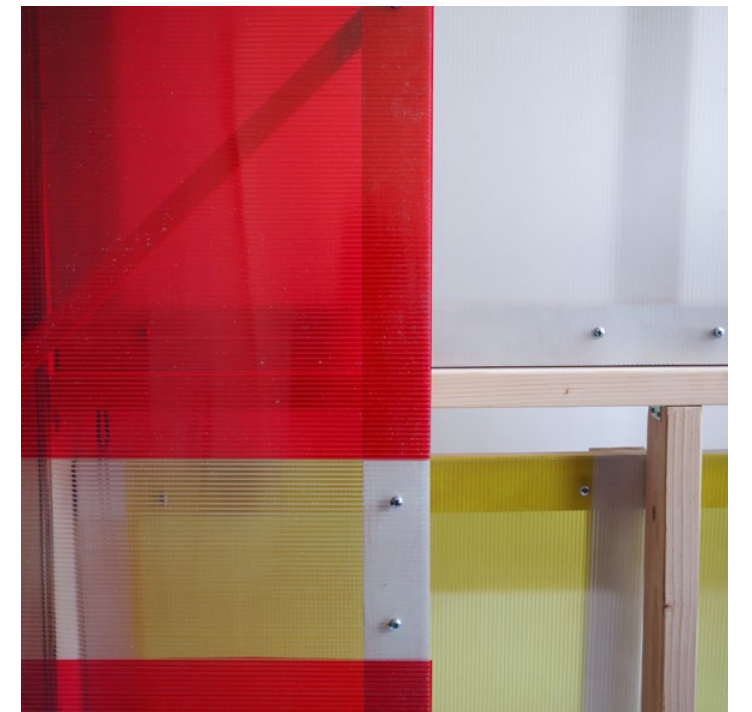
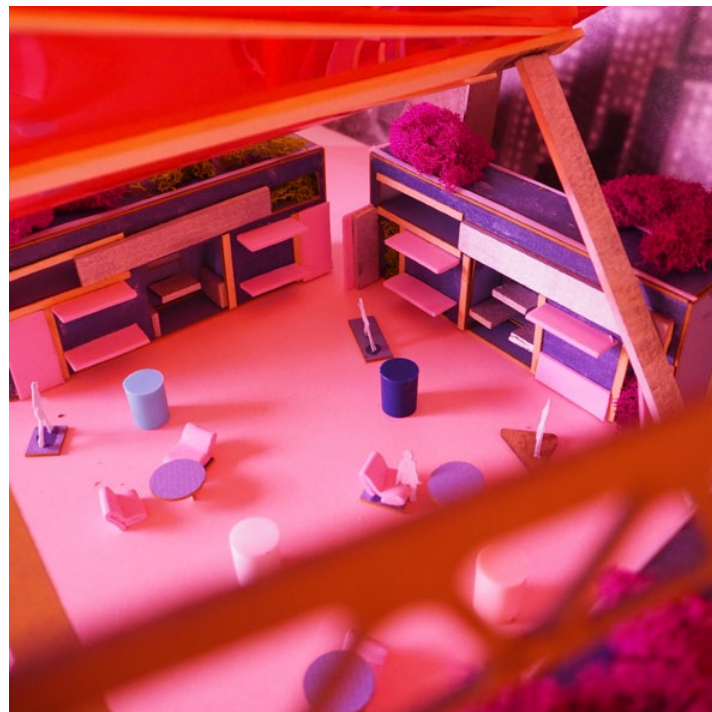
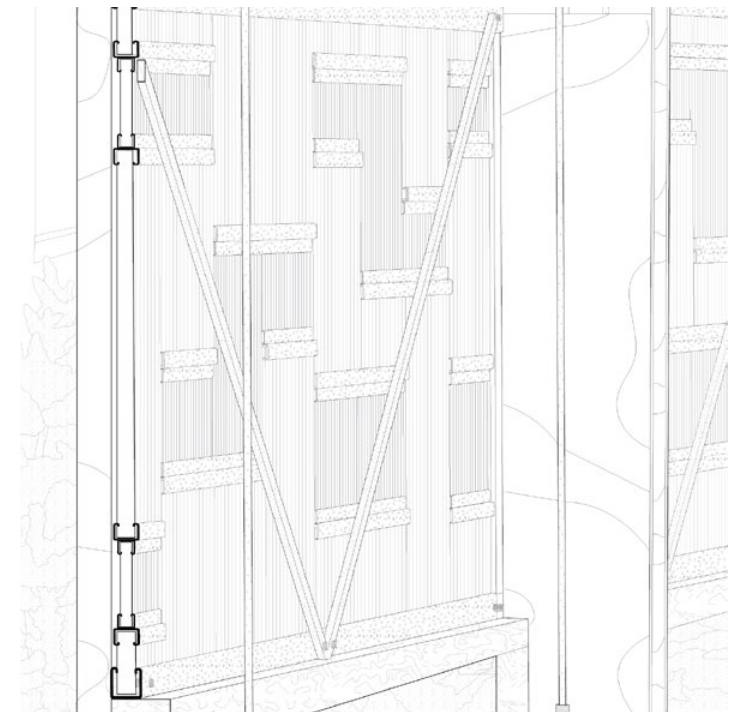
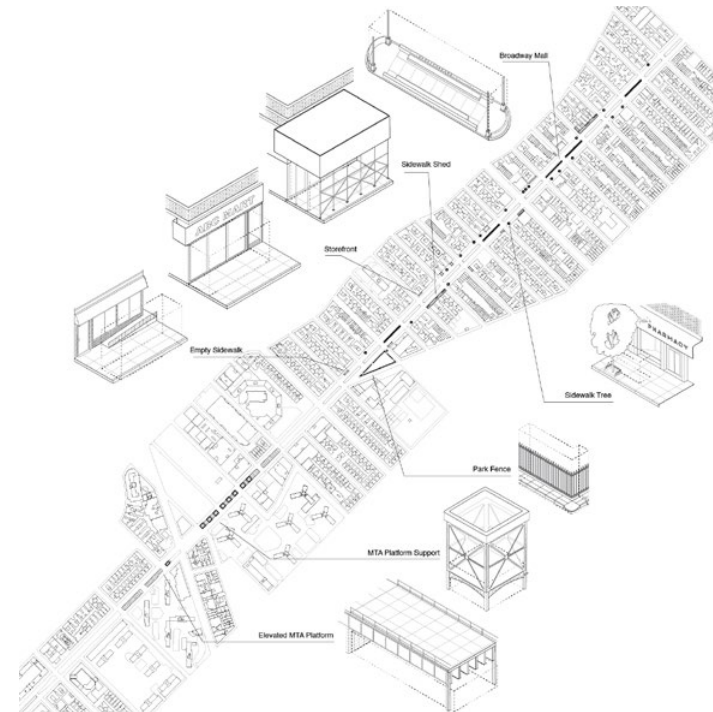
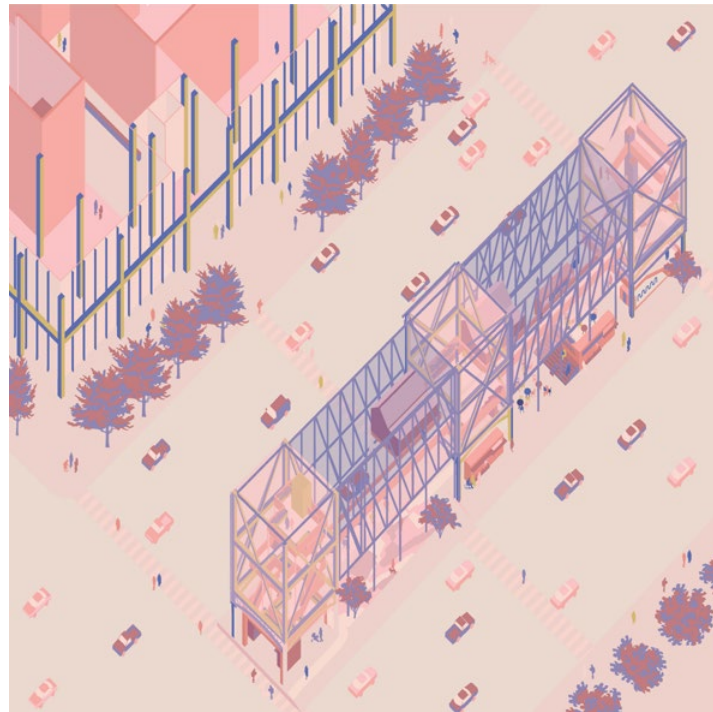
This project addresses the common conceptions of public and private spaces around Broadway in Manhattan. Exercises included observational diagramming, design through model-making and photography, color-block drawings, and drawing and building a 1:1 mock-up. My studio focused on a section from 120th to 152nd Street, where I observed public space reclaimed as private storage.

My observations lead me to the reclaiming of space at Columbia University's new Manhattanville Campus. The new master plan isolates the new campus from the remaining Manhattanville community. As a response, this project aims to weave the University with its neighbors.

The park is situated on Broadway, under the elevated IRT platform and directly across from the Jerome L. Greene Science Center. Programming includes public storage, urban agriculture, a marketplace, and community gathering space to provide economic empowerment and act as a social condenser for a diverse range of users. Storage spaces, used by students and residents alike, turn into temporary shelters for displaced residents. The vertical farm provides research samples to Columbia and jobs for displaced workers. The upper levels are enclosed in a polycarbonate skin with panels that drop down to shield the ground level in winter and at night. Following phases would include new Columbia facilities open to the public, including a makerspace and perhaps a new gym.







## TOP TO BOTTOM / BOTTOM TO TOP

### Experiments in Public Space in Houston and Pau

Course Public Space: Rhetorics and Practices,

Professor David Smiley

Term Spring 2022



### INTRODUCTION

Questions of publicness arise in big cities like New York, London, or Paris, where people have varying degrees of access to parks, plazas, squares, and privately owned civic spaces. In regional cities as large as Houston, Texas and as small as Pau, in southwestern France, the question becomes: is there adequate public space? And what constitutes public space? Development of new public spaces in both cities offers insight into how public space is created and by whom. Are these spaces designed by the communities that encompass them? Or are they the products of ‘top-down’ or institutionalized urban planning? Is there a tipping point or is the binary between bottom-up and top-down useful? Or are all projects always a hybrid of the two?

The key players involved in designing public spaces shape their characteristics and accessibility. As Matthew Carmona argues, *there are types of undermanaged and overmanaged public spaces with different roles and effects.*<sup>1</sup> Such spaces emerge through different historical and political factors, but both limit access to the public realm. This paper compares two linear parks, one built and one imagined, the former in Houston, the latter in Pau. Buffalo Bayou Park in Houston sits on the abandoned banks of the city’s main bayou (a marshy outlet or river). The Park’s creation is a product of

both local activism and high-level political negotiations. *Le Jardin Invisible* is a series of activations, in which citizens were asked to redesign a series of neglected spaces. While *Le Jardin Invisible* is rooted in collective action, it is also linked to city, regional, and EU cultural organizations hoping to spur economic growth.

### A BIT ABOUT HOUSTON

Houston was founded in 1836 at the intersection of the Buffalo Bayou and White Oak Bayou. Originally a railroad trading post for cotton and chattel slavery, the city struck oil in the early 1900s. Around the same time, a devastating hurricane struck the neighboring port city of Galveston, allowing Houston to emerge as the economic center of the region.

The city grew exponentially in population, wealth, and sprawl over the twentieth century. According to a 2017 report, shortly after the creation of the Buffalo Bayou Park, Houston was the second most prosperous city in the US as well as the fifth fastest-growing. The city, however, ranked 64th in economic inclusivity with 35% of its children living in poverty.<sup>2</sup>

The city has recently undergone a public space renaissance with the creation and revitalization of undermanaged parks and civic spaces including the Buffalo Bayou Park, the Bayou

Greenways 2020, Market Square Park, Discovery Green, a redesign of Memorial Park, the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, the Houston Botanical Garden, a redesign of Emancipation Park, and Rockstar Energy Bike Park, to name a few. Most of these projects were created through public-private partnerships. As Joe Turner, the director of Houston Parks and Recreation, stated in 2009: “Almost all of our park projects involve public-private partnerships. It’s just how we do business in Houston.”<sup>3</sup>

### Houston as a “No Zoning City”

The Houston metropolitan area sprawls over southeast Texas. The conglomerate of Houston, Galveston, and Brazoria take up 9,444 square miles, which is larger than the state of New Jersey.<sup>4</sup> For such a large area, however, Houston appears to lack adequate public space, public transportation, or even regional planning. In fact, despite Houston’s large size, the city lacks any official zoning.<sup>5</sup>

At first glance, the city grows haphazardly. Commuters in Houston drive on flat streets and massive highways that cut through low-rise sprawl. Occasionally a driver will see an agglomeration of tall buildings outside of Downtown in Uptown, the Energy Corridor, or the Medical Center, but just as likely, a lone twenty-story tower will cast its shadow on one-story strip malls and suburban neighborhoods. Garden apartments sit next to cemeteries, upscale restaurants neighbor gas stations, and pawnshops share parking lots with upscale gyms.

### The Great Libertarian Myth

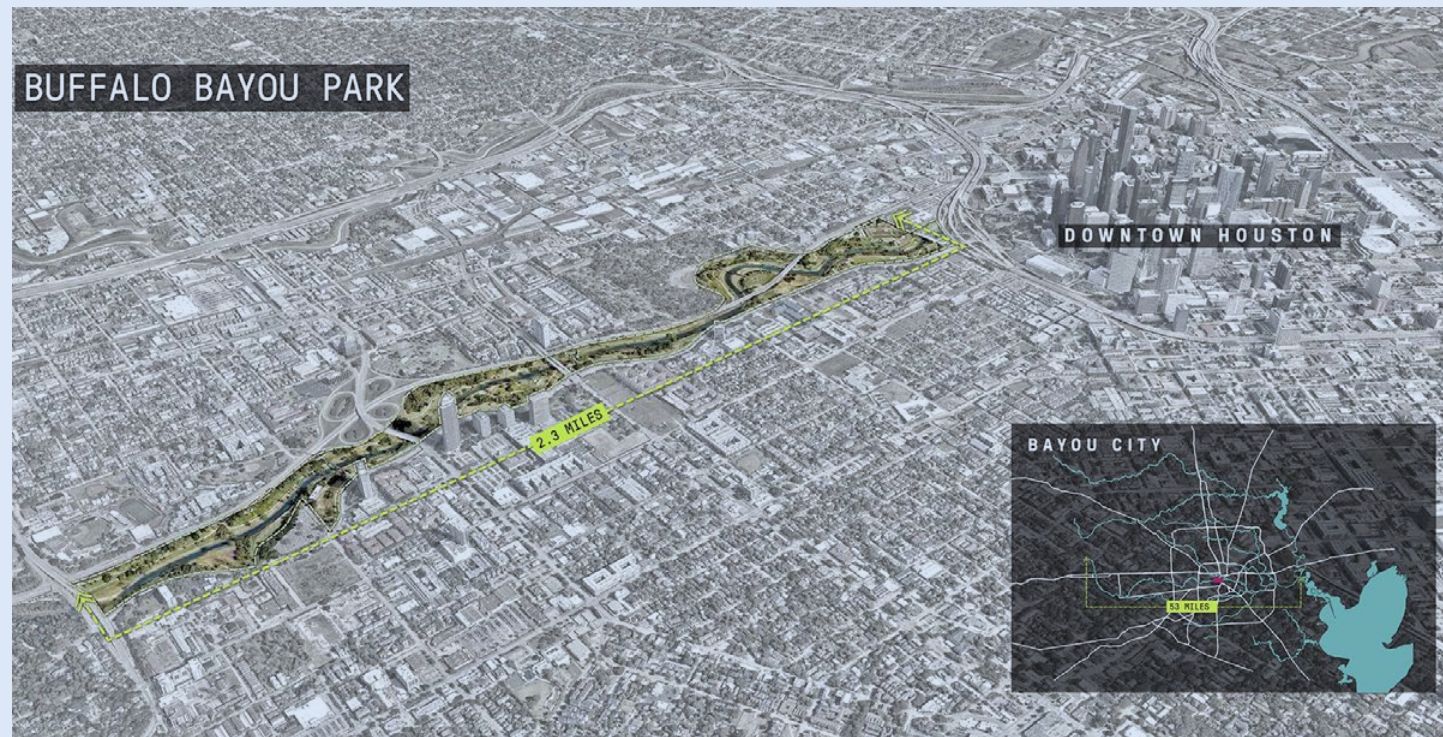
Houston’s lack of zoning is both a product and producer of the idea of Houston as the great libertarian city. As one reporter wrote in the 1960s: Houston’s government system is “unique in the United States, one patterned more after the style of a private corporation than a public agency.”<sup>6</sup> For much of Houston’s existence, the municipal government has worked to aid businesses and the powerful executives who control them over the general public, leading to the undermanagement of public resources.

While the city first found economic success through luck in the early 1900s, its second economic boom came through federal grants in the 1940s and 1950s. The U.S. government poured money into aerospace, petroleum, scientific research, and other industries during and after World War II. As new industry thrived thanks to federal investment, however, city

elites cut Houston off from both government regulation and aid.<sup>7</sup> As Kevin Loughran points out, Houston’s white power brokers were eliminating aid as late as the 1970s: “The ol’ boys were staunchly pro-business and, in the tenor of the postwar period, staunchly anti-communist.... Many of the federal government’s social programs were shunned: notably, the city’s school board rejected the federal free lunch program for two decades over concerns about communist influence.”<sup>8</sup> The libertarianism of the city elites was selective. It boasted its disdain for public goods and services that could serve a large swath of Houstonians. Yet it quietly fostered public infrastructure that favored individuals and organizations that already had access to wealth and power. As Davidson summarizes, the government pushed policies that would help spur rapid economic growth of Houston, but it ignored the social needs of a rapidly growing city.<sup>9</sup>

Attitudes about social programs spilled into ideas about urban planning, especially parks and other forms of public space. While the city continued to accept federal funding to expand roads and build flood mitigation projects, it ignored funding opportunities to improve and expand the city’s weak park system for over 60 years.<sup>10</sup> Refusing federal donations compounded Houston’s tight budget. What little budget the city did spend on city services often went to the periphery of city limits. As Houston looked to keep tax rates low, it continued to annex its surrounding suburbs and wealthy tax base. Tax revenue collected often went to unifying city services across rapidly expanding territory rather than improving dilapidated parks, sewers, and streets in the center of the city.<sup>11</sup>

Zoning, too, was seen by leaders as a hurdle to city growth. City-wide votes to create zoning ordinances were heavily lobbied against by real estate developers with success. As Loughran states: the “long-standing antigovernment streak among Houston’s governing class enabled ascendant economic sectors—especially real estate—to progress unencumbered by regulation, to the point that the city’s ‘no zoning’ mandate has long been its most sacred political cow.”<sup>12</sup> As opposed to what they saw as strict, unmalleable rules about city land use, Houston’s elites installed a decentralized collection of government agencies and departments to control development. Yet, despite Houston’s dislike of centralized planning, its more diffused system was susceptible to political influence by a powerful few.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 1:** The master plan of the Buffalo Bayou Park as designed by SWA group. The Park cuts across the city to connect Downtown to River Oaks.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 2:** This photo highlights Buffalo Bayou Park's intimate relationship with the automobile. While the photograph is almost sublime, the reality is that the Park weaves under elevated highways and complex intersections, as well as between large speedways, and from the author's own experience, it can be dangerous to access the Park on foot or bike.<sup>2</sup>

### "Selective" Land Use Control

Aside from zoning, part of Houston's idiosyncratic urbanism comes from its governing structure. The City of Houston includes portions of several state counties, yet no county is fully enclosed in the City. Harris County, which makes up the majority of Houston, also contains unincorporated towns that sit inside of the City's boundaries. The State of Texas regulates some land use issues, such as transportation. Harris County controls other land use issues, such as water and flooding. The City of Houston controls other land use issues. For example, while suburban municipalities encroach on the City of Houston's terrain, the City has control over the annexation of land. The State of Texas grants Houston sole access to all of the land within five miles of the city's legal boundaries.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, new municipalities cannot form new, zoned communities that might draw middle-class taxpayers, nor can they annex more land without the permission of the City of Houston. In addition, some neighborhoods, incorporated or not, have enforceable deed restrictions or covenants – often with a history of exclusion and racism.<sup>15</sup>

Flood control, run through Harris County, is one of Houston's most powerful forms of non-zoning land control. Created in 1935, the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) controls Houston's waterways and watersheds. From the 1930s through the 1950s, the HCFCD worked closely with the Army Corps of Engineers to attempt to control the bayous and streams. Much of this work included channelizing bayous, going so far as to line strips of the bayou network in concrete.<sup>16</sup> In 1966 the HCFCD began creating master plans for the major watersheds in southeast Texas, and by the 1980s, it was regulating flood control and drainage for land outside of the county boundaries but upstream of Harris County watersheds.<sup>17</sup>

The HCFCD continues to regulate land both in Harris County and beyond county lines as they relate to flooding and the bayous. The department also has the "right to make use of the bed and banks of the bayous, rivers, and streams lying within the District, subject to the prior right and authority of the [Port of Houston]."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, any long-term project along the bayous must include the HCFCD in its planning. Even in a city where the individual is favored over the collective public, government must be involved in developing non-commercial land.

### BUFFALO BAYOU PARK

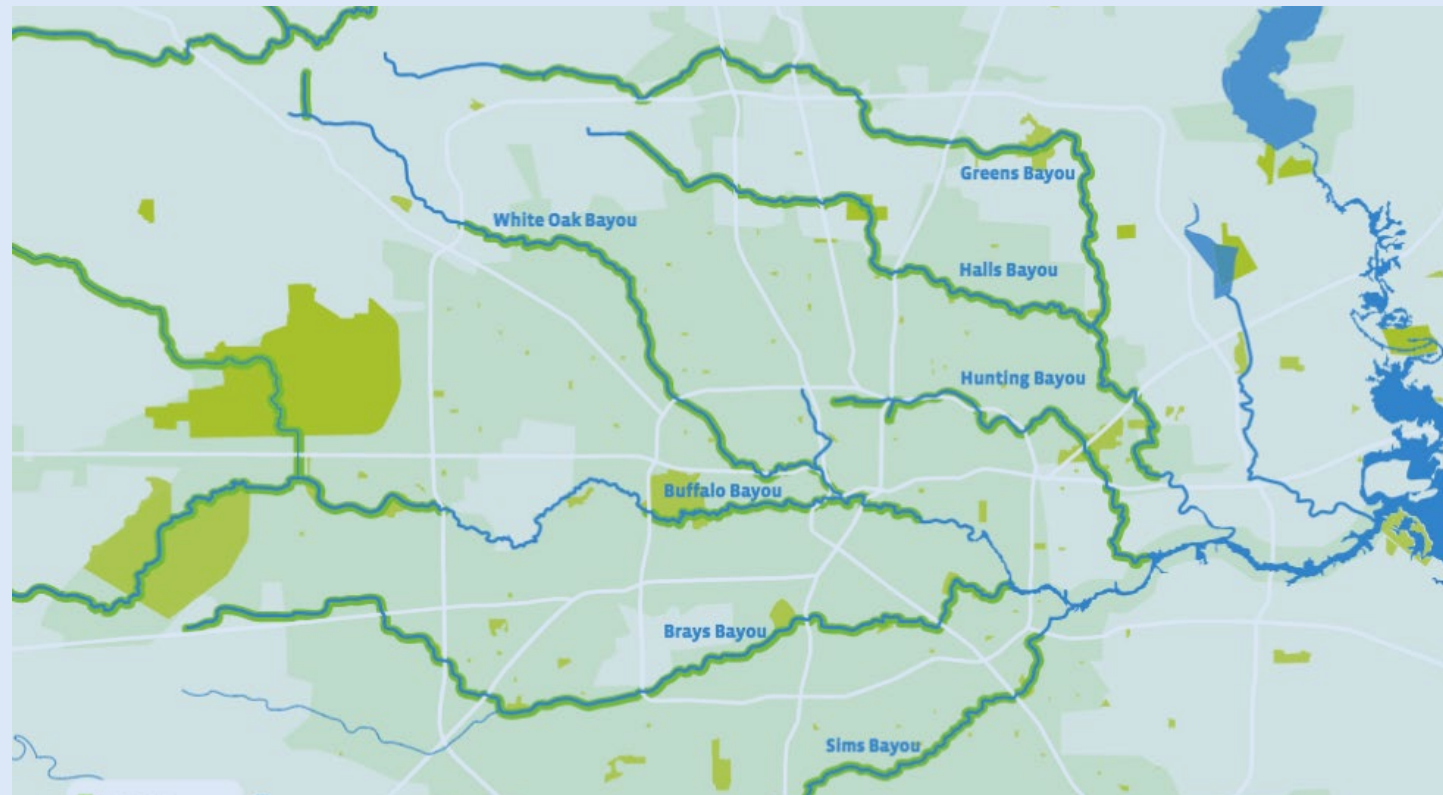
Opened in 2015, Buffalo Bayou Park is an example of a Houston civic project only possible through the actions and influence of powerful individuals. What started as a local conservation project snowballed into a \$75 million public-private partnership involving large private donors, non-profits, and government agencies at the city, county, state, and feder-

al levels that would go on to inspire even larger projects.<sup>19</sup> This process brings into question the relationship between bottom-up, grassroots organizations and top-down, urban planning. The development of the Park highlights the questions and effects of unequal power and decision-making in the planning process.

Buffalo Bayou Park is a linear park that runs along a 2.3-mile stretch of the Buffalo Bayou and is about 10 square miles. While the bayou flows from west Houston, along Allen Parkway, through Downtown Houston, and out to the Port of Houston, the Park begins at the edge of the upscale neighborhood of River Oaks to the edge of Downtown. It links up with several parks developed by the Buffalo Bayou Partnership in the 90s and 00s. Currently, there are plans to expand the Buffalo Bayou Park Downtown into the rapidly gentrifying EaDo (East Downtown).

Although situated between white majority areas of River Oaks and Downtown, the neighborhoods surrounding Buffalo Bayou Park are diverse in income and race. Since the 1990s, nearby neighborhoods, such as Freedmen's Town and the Sixth Ward, have experienced increasing gentrification; the area closely reflects Houston's current population.<sup>20</sup> The 2017 population living within a 30-minute bike ride of the park was 43% Hispanic, 30% White Non-Hispanic, and 23% Black. Within a 15-minute walk, however, the population is much whiter and wealthier, with an average of 51% White Non-Hispanic.<sup>21</sup> These statistics help understand the context of the Park, but not its user group because high-speed, high-traffic roads make it challenging to access the Buffalo Bayou safely without a car. Limited accessibility to public transportation in Houston further limits public access to the Park. While 87% of visitors surveyed in 2013 used the Buffalo Bayou Park at least once a month, 45% used a personal vehicle, 31% used a bicycle, and 26% came by foot to access the Park.<sup>22</sup> The data shows that some visitors used multiple forms of personal transportation to access the site, but no use of public transportation was recorded. The survey also found that the Park had encouraged 62% of participants to live within walking distance.<sup>23</sup> While this proves a success for improving walkability in a Houston neighborhood, it also points to rising property values and questions the Park's accessibility to residents in other parts of the city.

The Buffalo Bayou Park, however, is considered a jewel of Houston and is also the catalyst for a repositioning of the city's relationship with its long-forgotten bayou system. Buffalo Greenways 2020 is a more recent and larger public-private initiative to activate the banks of Houston's eight additional bayous with running and biking trails. Figure 3: The 160-acre Buffalo Bayou Park in the center of Houston has spurred a frenzy of park expansion. Bayou



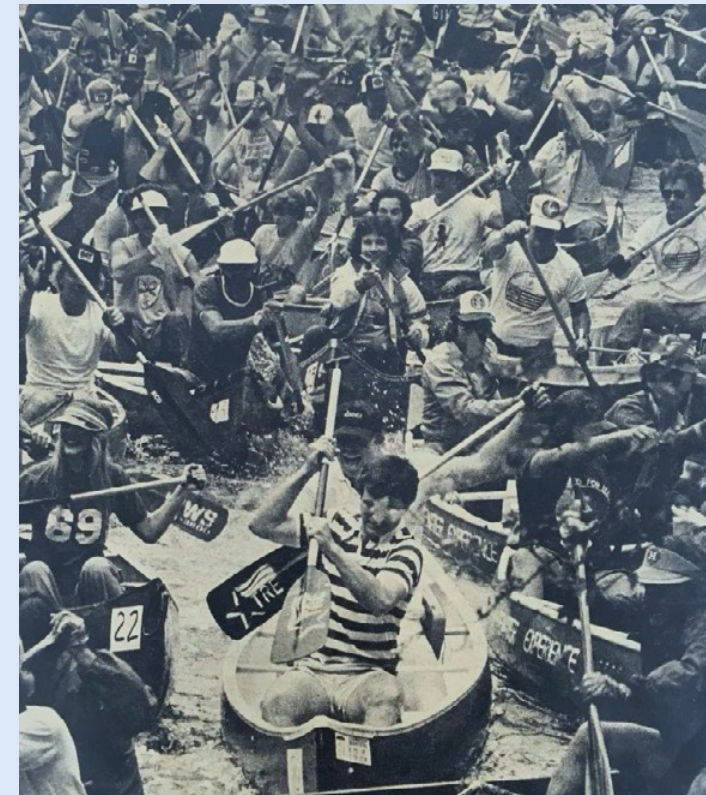
**Figure 3:** The 160-acre Buffalo Bayou Park in the center of Houston has spurred a frenzy of park expansion. Bayou Greenways 2020 is adding 3,000 acres of new parkland along all the bayous in and around Houston, including parts of Buffalo Bayou near Memorial Villages. The network is approximately nineteen times larger than the initial Buffalo Bayou Park and includes over 150 miles of trails.<sup>3</sup>

Greenways 2020 is adding 3,000 acres of new parkland along all the bayous in and around Houston, including parts of Buffalo Bayou near Memorial Villages. The network is approximately nineteen times larger than the initial Buffalo Bayou Park and includes over 150 miles of trails.<sup>24</sup>

#### History of the Park

The Harris County Flood Control District was a powerful entity from the 30s to the 70s, demolishing river bank ecosystems and transforming over 1,260 miles of streams and bayous into straight, deep waterways to mitigate flooding.<sup>25</sup> The HCFCD also inspired fear among bayou communities. One group from the new Memorial Villages (west of present Buffalo Bayou Park) banded together in the late 1950s to halt intervention in their unincorporated town. While this group of protestors was comprised of well-connected, upper-class citizens – members included the young congressman George H.W. Bush – it was not affiliated with the old Houston elites of Downtown and River Oaks that had a hand in transforming the city since the 1900s. The efforts of Memorial Villages to conserve the natural bayou resulted in the creation of the Buffalo Bayou Preservation Association (BBPA) in 1966.<sup>26</sup>

As the city continued to transform through the 1960s and 1970s, the BBPA slowly picked up influence and connections among the city's powerbrokers, and interest in Buffalo Bayou rose. Disjointed and unregulated trails began to appear along the Buffalo Bayou and unofficial master plans for Buffalo Bayou were drawn by members of Houston's elite, yet no plans were formalized or expanded upon.<sup>27</sup> It was not until 1986, that a formalized goal for the banks of the bayous began to crystalize. That year then-former Mayor Kathy Whitmire tied BBPA's conservation efforts with the Downtown business improvement district's goals of real estate stability and growth to create the Buffalo Bayou Partnership (the Partnership). While this new organization was much more connected to city politics, it was also more concentrated on the bayous' relationship with commercial real estate than nature conservation or living amenities.<sup>28</sup> As a framework around the Buffalo Bayou solidified, however, or perhaps because of the city's focus on Downtown, there was still space for informal community interventions on the Buffalo Bayou. Beginning in 1970, for example, a group of Houston paddlers formed an annual regatta to highlight the Bayou's pollution but also its potential as a recreational resource. While the regatta is celebrated by the city and the Partnership today, it was originally an unsanctioned spectacle.<sup>29</sup>



**Figure 4:** Canoes pile up at an early Buffalo Bayou Regatta. Strict rules and regulations do not seem to be mandated or enforced.<sup>4</sup>

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership set new downtown parks into motion with the help of powerful downtown real estate interests. These parks, located along the abandoned shipyards of the bayous, were a calculated move to bring white citizens from new decentralized business districts back to an increasingly Black Downtown. A master plan to design a linear park, connecting the Partnership's interventions Downtown with the city's powerful, wealthy, and majority-white River Oaks neighborhood was created in 2002.<sup>30</sup>

Plans were left untouched until 2010 when the privately funded Kinder Foundation took notice of Houston's lack of green space and abandoned bayous. New parks like the High Line in New York City were inspiring Houston elites to use parks to compete for cultural supremacy over its Texas neighbors.<sup>31</sup> Carmona, in *Contemporary Public Space*, describes projects like this as showing an interest in public space by urban elites not as a political concern but as a source of economic, social, and environmental benefit.<sup>32</sup> The Kinder Foundation had a reputation for funding highly publicized urban initiatives in Houston, such as The Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, the Discovery Green Park in Downtown Houston, and MD Anderson Cancer Center. The foundation's

funding came from Kinder Morgan, which owns or operates over 84,000 miles of pipelines that move natural gas, refined petroleum products, CO<sub>2</sub>, and crude oil. It also operates 180 terminals that handle gasoline, ethanol, coal, petroleum, and steel.<sup>33</sup> Also notable, the foundation has historically donated heavily to influential conservative organizations locally and nationally.

The Kinder Foundation donated \$30 million to create the Buffalo Bayou Park with the stipulation that the city, county, and state create the Buffalo Bayou Partnership (a public-private partnership) which would have maintenance and oversight control. The key players in creating the park were the Kinder Foundation, Houston Parks and Recreation Department (owner), Buffalo Bayou Partnership (operator), Harris County Flood Control District (land use authority), Downtown Redevelopment Authority, SWA Group (designer), and the Texas Department of Transportation.<sup>34</sup> The Harris County Flood Control District and the Texas Department of Transportation were brought on the project with the intentions of flood mitigation, traffic control, and additional funding. As Anne Olson, the executive director of the Buffalo Bayou Partnership said to *Parks & Recreation* in 2009:

We tried to seek out multiple sources of funding, and the Harris County Flood Control District as well as the Texas Department of Transportation both understood how this effort could meet their objectives, too. It was somewhat unusual for the flood district to be involved in such a large dual-use project, but they were enlightened enough to see that it would improve the floodway and create something special for Houston as well.<sup>35</sup>

The Kinder Foundation continues to donate substantially to the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, and Kinder family members sit on the board of the Partnership.

#### Buffalo Bayou Park Design and Benefits

While environmental organizations such as *Save Buffalo Bayou* have rallied against Buffalo Bayou Park's unnatural treatment of the waterway since 2015, it is hard to find harsh criticism of the park's general program and design. The 2.3-mile park contains miles of safe pedestrian and bicycle paths in an auto-centric city, new venues for festivals and art installations, rare spaces for public play and leisure, unique connections to local ecosystems, and opportunities for social mixing not often found outside of Houston's malls. Perhaps in another city with a legacy of public parks, Buffalo Bayou Park would be less exciting and harshly criticized for its lack of accessibility. In Houston, however, it is widely seen as a successful experiment and novel social condenser and a noble recipient of tax revenues.



The Buffalo Bayou Park inspired interest in a larger network of bayou trails, called the Bayou Greenways 2020. While the Kinder Foundation is one of the largest private donors with a gift of over \$50 million, it is also notable that much of the funding comes from local government. In both 2012 and 2017, Houston residents voted to award park funding bonds to the Buffalo Bayou Park and Bayou Greenways 2020.<sup>36</sup> Language of the 2017 bond states that funding went to:

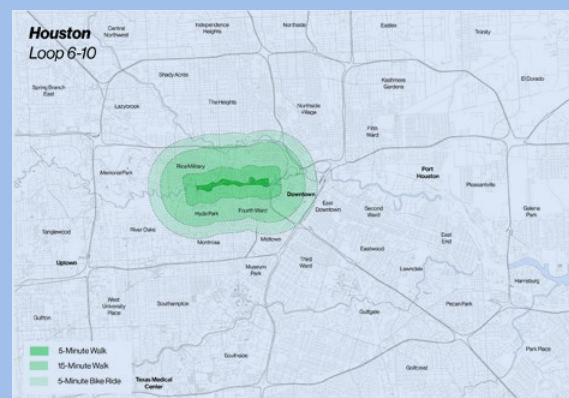
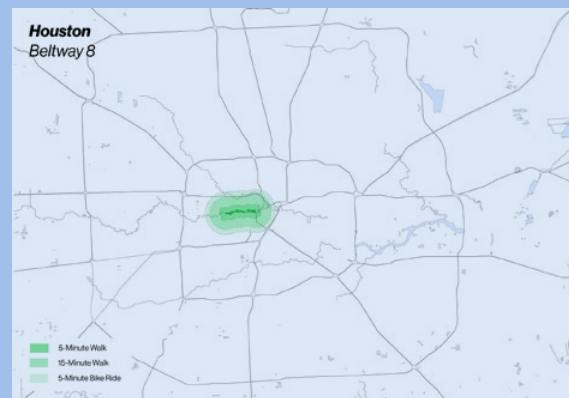
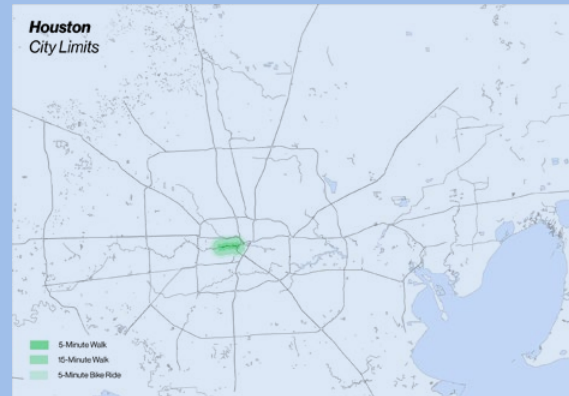
The conservation, improvement, acquisition, construction and equipment of neighborhood parks, recreational facilities and bayous, including such green spaces along all bayous to create an integrated system of bayou walking, running and bicycle trails to enhance, preserve and protect the health of citizens, water quality, natural habitat and native wildlife and the levying of taxes sufficient for the payment thereof and interest thereon.<sup>37</sup>

While many American cities fund new parks and restoration of public spaces through tax revenues, the approval of two park bonds indicates a new direction for Houston's approach to publicness. The great libertarian city that ignored its parks for 60 years might now see parks as a necessity for living. Or at the very least, it understands parks and public space as an infrastructure that propels economic growth.

Buffalo Bayou Park and the Buffalo Greenways 2020 give access to public space to many residents who did not have much before. Yet, it should be noted that not all Houstonians benefit from the creation of this park system. As the bayous formalize and become spaces of overmanagement, communities who once frequented the bayou banks are being removed. One of the initial goals of the Buffalo Bayou Park was to remove homeless encampments across the city.<sup>38</sup> One must question where these populations have gone and what benefit the city receives from their removal with proper services and in place.

#### A BIT ABOUT PAU

Pau, a small city in southwest France lies just north of the Spanish border on the Atlantic coast. It has a long tradition as a tourist destination given its location between the Pyrénées Mountains and the Atlantic. Upper-class and aristocratic travelers began visiting Pau in the 19th century for its mild climate, natural scenery, urban design, and cultural activities.<sup>39</sup> While the city still relies heavily on tourism, preserving sites, and old traditions to draw in international visitors, it also has a strong foundation in the aeronautics, energy, and petrochemicals industries. According to a 2017 report, the current population of Pau-Pyrénées is 145,7000. The larger metropolitan area, called Pau Béarn Pyrénées, consists of three small cities and has a total of 162,000 inhabitants. The region



Figures 5, 6, & 7: The Buffalo Bayou Park sits in the center of Houston with Downtown, the Fourth Ward, Hyde Park, Rice Military, and River Oaks within walking and biking distance.



Figure 8: The 1950s and 1960s Saragosse district sits in stark contrast with the radial city center. Mid-century slab towers snake through "gardens" in a scale much larger than earlier urban development.<sup>5</sup>

boasts a stable population as well as an unemployment rate and poverty rate below the French national average.<sup>40</sup>

it wholeheartedly because Pau will be the city, Garden Capital, by 2020.<sup>43</sup>

In contrast to Houston, Pau offers an extensive list of public spaces and public services. The city boasts over 1,850 acres of municipally managed green space, 25,000 trees for its population of 170,000, and 75 playgrounds.<sup>41</sup> By comparison, Pau contains 23.8% municipally managed green space while Houston dedicates 1.1% of land to parkland.<sup>42</sup> Pau prides itself in gardens and parks dating from medieval ages through to the present. Ville de Pau uses its green space as a tool of cultural capital and political strength. The Head Gardener of the Palace of Versailles, Alain Baraton, has observed:

The Baraton's praise of Pau reinforces the notion that its parks are more than just a public amenity for residents and visitors. They are a political tool to position the city and its politicians within French and European circles. At the same time, this pressure can lead to public spaces of overmanagement.

The city of Pau is undergoing a large transformation with plans for city-wide urban renewal and redesigning the city's undermanaged public spaces. In 2010, the city began to rework the city center, creating a master plan of intensified development.<sup>44</sup> One of the sites of importance was a functioning but dilapidated 1970s market hall and administrative tower in the center of Pau.<sup>45</sup> In 2014 the city held an international architecture competition, capturing the interests of firms such as MRVDR. The winning €24m scheme for a new mixed-use

Pau retains its charm. The city is changing without distorting its enormous potential. I support François Bayrou [Mayor of Pau] for his policy of embellishment through his parks, flowers and gardens. Pau presents the most beautiful garden project of the years to come. I support



**Figure 9:** Before beginning any design work or pre-design workshops, Bruit du frigo drove around Saragosse in a small green utility vehicle. The idea was to draw as much attention as possible from local residents while remaining approachable to initiate conversations.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 10:** The interventions, set in underused public space surrounding Saragosse's mid-century housing estates, created new connections in the neighborhood. Residents wanted new public pathways in Saragosse.<sup>7</sup>

market hall and office tower by Ameller Dubois was completed in October 2021.<sup>46</sup>

The city's latest plans of Pau 2030, the initiative started in 2015, touches all areas of life in the city but has a particular interest in reimagining the Saragosse District. The neighborhood consists of nearly 15,000 residents, five elementary schools, a middle school, a theater, sports facilities, a community center, a central park, and a string of underused plazas.<sup>47</sup>

The Saragosse District, located just outside of the historic city center of the city, is characterized by mid-20th century slab towers in a park-like setting. This open, modernist landscape is quite a contrast to the winding streets and low-rise buildings seen elsewhere in historic Pau. Saragosse was developed in the 1950s and 1960s to be the new modern center of the city. Its concentration of affordable housing makes it a haven for residents of low incomes and economic precariousness.<sup>48</sup> In 2016, the neighborhood had a much higher unemployment rate than the Pau Béarn Pyrénées region at 19% compared to 12%. The national average unemployment rate in France was 10.1% in 2016. In addition, 40% of the households living in Saragosse were below the poverty line.<sup>49</sup> As the affordable housing estates age, wealthier residents of Pau have moved to newer housing stock in different parts of the

city, isolating and entrenching low-income jobs and poverty into Saragosse.

Unlike the public-private partnerships of Houston, Pau's transformation derives from the local government's strong interest in controlling Pau's development through spending tax revenue. With support of the French l'Agence Nationale pour la Rénovation Urbain, the city has dedicated over €127m (\$138m) to redesigning the district.<sup>50</sup> The project in Saragosse includes renovations of existing affordable housing, the development of privately-owned and student housing, the creation and renovation of public space, and a new zero-emission bus connecting to other areas of the city to invigorate mixed-income communities. Old social and sports facilities are set to be renovated or replaced to better correspond with residents' needs.<sup>51</sup> The renovation of sports facilities also fits within the city's title of "European City of Sport" presented by the European Union's network of cities in 2018. Among the many issues addressed by the new planning is the status of public and open spaces in Saragosse.<sup>52</sup>

### Enter Bruit du Frigo

In May 2017, Ville de Pau put out a tender document for the redesign of the uninhabited or undermanaged public spaces around the modern slab towers of Saragosse. The site was a series of disparate spaces and a five-acre tree-lined park all to be redesigned to fit Pau's urban renewal plans and propagate the idea of an eco-friendly city. The tender was unique in that it required the winning team to implement several months of community engagement before submitting a design. The winning landscape architect BASE13 Studio picked Bruit du frigo as their community engagement team member.<sup>53</sup>

Bruit du frigo is an urban collective headquartered in Bordeaux, France. Founded in 1997, the group works with architects, artists, urban planners, builders, and most importantly, local communities, to create mostly temporary and ephemeral experiences that question the norms, habits, and spaces of daily life. Their practices engage local communities by utilizing what they describe as an "offbeat, playful and poetic approach".<sup>54</sup> Their projects range from pavilions and sports pitches to dinner parties and suburban walking trails, but a common factor of their work is their "utopian urbanism" workshops which engage residents in thinking about their public spaces and how they can be transformed.<sup>55</sup>

### LE JARDIN INVISIBLE

#### Process

Le Jardin Invisible was a series of events held on several weekends over two years to prepare for the design of a new park in Saragosse. While being a tool in the process of a final design, however, Le Jardin Invisible had a lengthy pre-event process as well. Le Jardin Invisible was not the final design for the park or Saragosse District redevelopment but rather a catalyst for conversation and reimagining with residents.

The Bruit du frigo team set up shop in Pau for a week to engage with residents on a daily basis. The team drove around in a small, green utility vehicle to call attention and engage residents. They asked locals to draw on maps and walk the team around to determine the best locations and program for Le Jardin Invisible.<sup>56</sup> Reviewing notes from the week of driving around, they devised a series of workshops and installations to engage residents further before implementing Le Jardin Invisible. These interventions related to the lived experience rather than ideas of the city. Bruit du frigo emphasizes that activities such as gardening workshops and public living rooms can lead to more nuanced and informal discussions of publicness in the urban realm. "We are committed to designing mediation or consultation tools inspired by games. Talking about town planning is not obvious. Adorned with a



**Figure 11:** Le Jardin Invisible was both a testing ground for new forms of public space and a polling apparatus. Urban Utopia Workshops were held concurrently to gather opinions and ideas for a more permanent public space from the residents of Saragosse. Ideas from the activations were shared with BASE13 and Ville de Pau.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 12:** Le SuperBall was one of three installations created during the first activation of Le Jardin. Residents asked for a place to play sports, so Bruit du frigo devised a soccer pitch that doubled as seating, a climbing play space, and an impromptu stage.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 13:** L'Agora was the third installation created during the first activation of Le Jardin. The installation acted as an amphitheater, dining room, and outdoor spa.<sup>10</sup>

playful dimension, the concept is made accessible and the discussion becomes more fluid.<sup>57</sup> While ultimately designing spaces commissioned by Ville de Pau and the French government, Bruit du frigo's process incorporates individuals' input at every stage of design.<sup>58</sup>

### Program

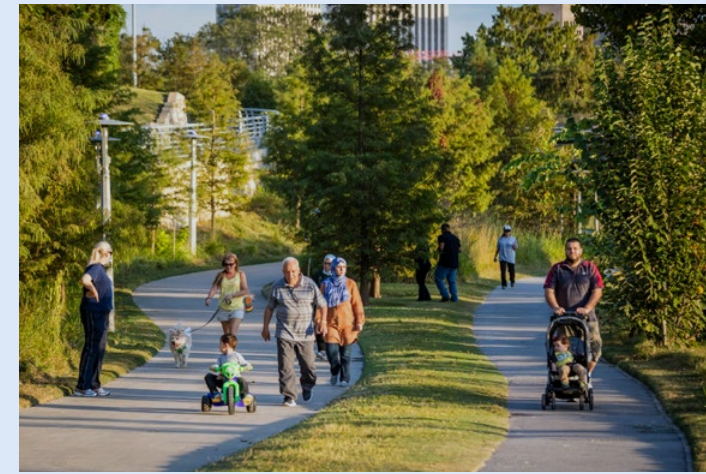
After a series of individual interventions, Bruit du frigo created Le Jardin Invisible, a recurring event to draw out ideas of future urbanisms from locals. From earlier interventions, Bruit du frigo found that residents viewed the disparate spaces of Saragosse as a series of separate spaces to move through. Drawing upon that observation and local desire for sports, recreational, and meeting space, Bruit du frigo aimed to create a linear intervention.<sup>59</sup>

The office created a series of three spaces, connected by graphic installations. The three spaces of the first Le Jardin Invisible included Le SuperBall, a sports pitch as seating, La Piste, a collection of play furniture next to a school, and L'Agora, an outdoor spa, complete with masseuses and soaking tubs. Graphic installations included paintings on the ground, murals, and lime painted on nearby trees.

Figure 10: The interventions, set in underused public space surrounding Saragosse's mid-century housing estates, created new connections in the neighborhood. Residents wanted new public pathways in Saragosse.

The first intervention was a series of events in May and June 2018. Bruit du frigo cultivated participation from the construction of the micro-architectures through to the end of celebrations that aligned with local holidays. Each event from construction to games, concerts, and utopian urban workshops was meant to activate discussions while inspiring residents to invest back in their neighborhoods.<sup>60</sup> While the team of designers, builders, and locals created the temporary park for government agencies, they were meant to take away their own understanding of agency in Saragosse.

Following the first Le Jardin Invisible, Bruit du frigo gathered notes and observations for BASE13 and Ville de Pau's future designs and imagined a second iteration of the intervention. In between the two interventions, they held more workshops and continued to roam the neighborhood in their green utility vehicle in search of dialogue. The second Le Jardin Invisible took place during a weekend in June 2019. The team installed two micro-architectures for play and shelter, focusing on the connection between the two spaces. While the spaces were more minimal than the sports field and spa of 2018, programming was created to spark imagination and the flexibility of public space. The second Le Jardin Invisible hosted a radio show, children's play, and a media library.



**Figure 14:** Pedestrian trails of the Buffalo Bayou Park are used for exercise and recreation. Office towers, highways, and a speedway hide behind native trees.<sup>11</sup>

A testament to the experimentation of Bruit du frigo's work, the second Le Jardin Invisible was less popular than the first. The team complained of low numbers, low morale, and minimal engagement on the last day of the intervention.<sup>61</sup> While some might consider the second installation as less of a success, it points to the strong need for community engagement to fortify otherwise undermanaged public spaces.

### Outcomes

Le Jardin Invisible was a testing ground to develop concepts for Pau's urban renewal initiative. Still in development, it is yet to be seen how Pau's new version of Saragosse will unfold, yet an emphasis has been placed on local demands of sports and recreation facilities as well as meeting spaces.<sup>62</sup> They plan to create a series of gardens, such as Le Jardin Invisible, to facilitate mobility and community connections.<sup>63</sup> As the project moves away from individual-input design back towards a more institutional creation and control of the public space, questions arise about what is gained through Bruit du frigo's interventions. While Pau has taken command of the urban fabric, it has done so in a way that produces agency in its citizens.



**Figure 15:** Two residents of the Saragosse District in Pau sit in the shade of L'Agora to have a smoke and read about Le Jardin Invisible.<sup>12</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The Buffalo Bayou Park and Le Jardin Invisible were created to connect the parts of the urban fabric and to foster community. The lack of funding and government initiative for public space in Houston instigated private citizens to take control of the banks of the bayous. While many of these citizens were wealthy and connected individuals, they maneuvered around a system of small government to create a new urban typology for a city that had previously rejected most forms of public space. A push from local and national governments to revitalize Pau created new opportunities for community-led design and a rethinking of the urban fabric. The local government engaged designers and residents alike to create a feedback loop that could invigorate investment while improving space for the community already present in Saragosse.

Though both can be seen as slightly atypical examples of urban development, they broaden one's understanding of creating public space in twenty-first century cities defined by twentieth-century urbanism. Both spaces were created in undermanaged public space, and they act as catalysts for larger, institutionalized urban redevelopment projects. While the two parks seem to be polar opposites in their designs and use of community engagement, they utilize smaller-scale interventions to test larger projects that affect an entire city. Both spaces walk a line between 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' planning – in fact showing that the dichotomy is less useful in practice. Ultimately these spaces may lead to more overmanaged public spaces, yet they will also add desired amenities lacking in both cities. Perhaps their success hinges on their future abilities to balance voices from the individual and collective.

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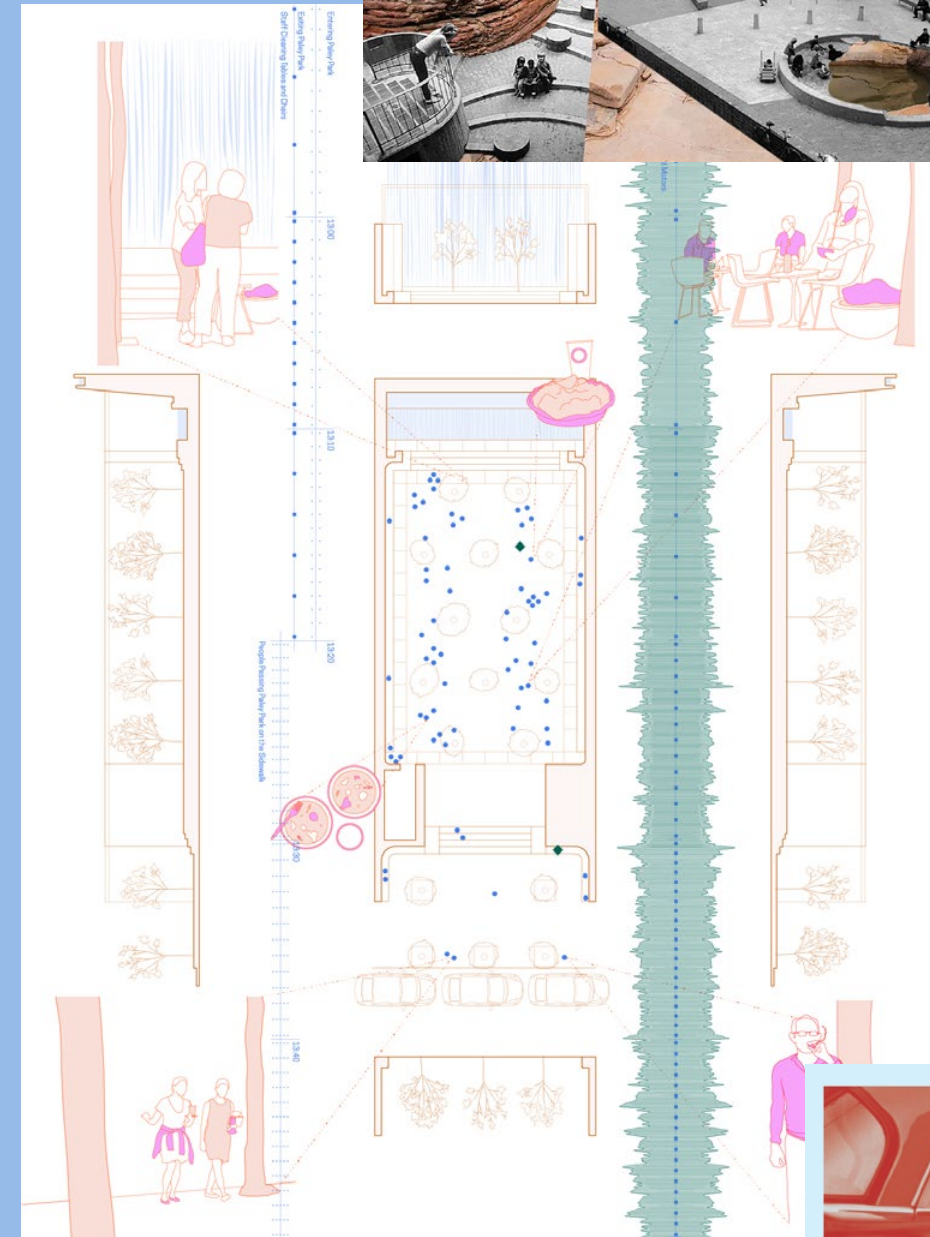
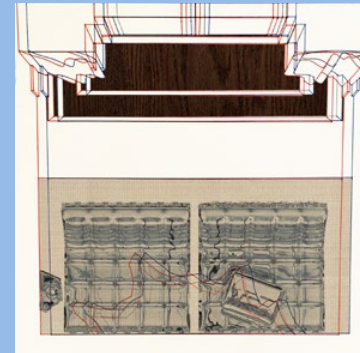
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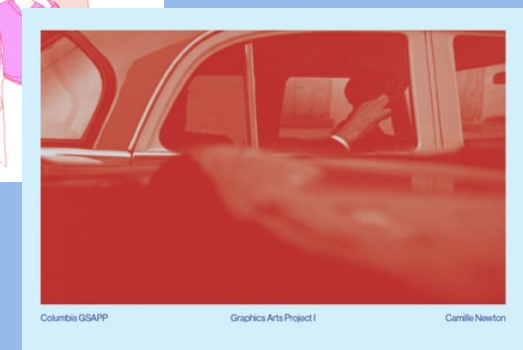
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Concept Collage



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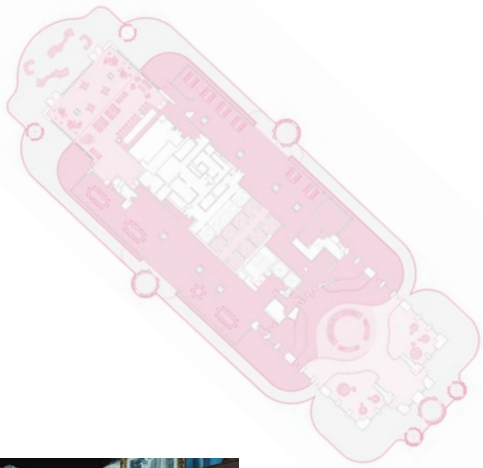
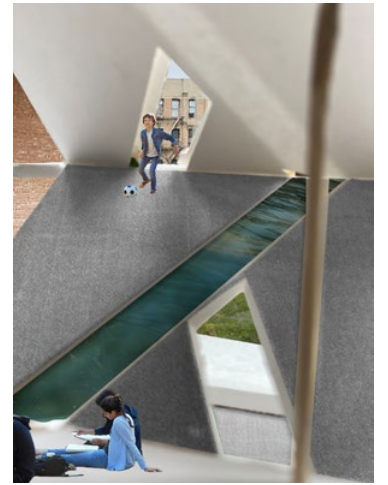
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