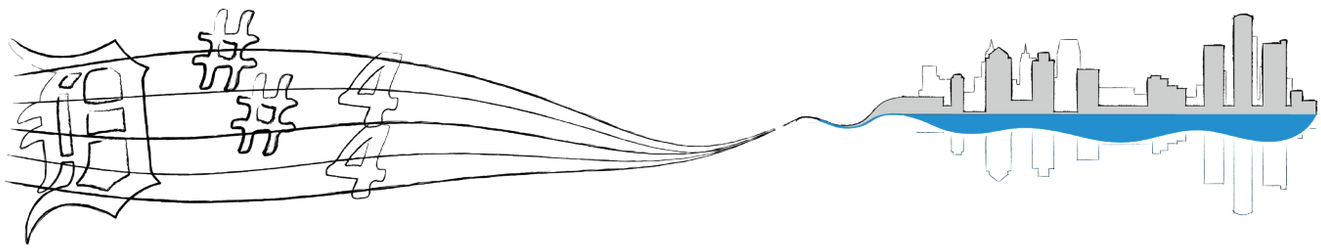
RebrandingDetroit

WrittenExploration



Rebranding Detroit: Music, Identity, and Perception in the New Post-Industrial City

ZACHARY CARMAN
Miami University

ABSTRACT

In post-industrial society, economic globalization has overpowered local culture. By establishing a mobilized task force to achieve top levels of efficiency, society has effectively reduced identity and spirit through decentralization of place. "Re-Branding Detroit" explores the issues of identity and brand within modern Detroit to help propose a design methodology for the city as it moves forward, utilizing music, abandoned architecture and the youthful, grassroots movement to achieve the goal of maintaining local identity, spurring social justice, and stabilizing neighborhoods for future growth. First, this thesis defines the proper context of identity and branding within post-industrial society. Secondly, it analyzes the historical and cultural precedents of Detroit to find a unique solution. Lastly, it examines specific grassroots case studies in Detroit: the Heidelberg Project, The Black History 101 Mobile Museum, and PlayHouse to offer a design solution. This thesis also explores the overarching ideas of politics, race, and economics that act as the proverbial foundation that the cultural narrative rests upon, which advocates the use of music and abandoned architecture within the growing, grassroots movement, effectively linking society with an ethical and effective type of rhetorical brand for Detroit.

KEYWORDS

Detroit, Music, Perception, Brand, Identity, Grassroots, Rhetoric, Post-Industrial

Introduction

The resurrection plan for Detroit, a city ironically named the "Renaissance City", has mutated into a plan for salvaging it. The only resistance that currently stands between the city and its demise is the pride the citizens have in preserving their namesake. The national perception of the city is decrepit, one that perpetuates a place no longer fit for duty. Detroit, from its conception has always been a place that wasn't a destination for its beauty but one galvanized in the economic vitality of the Industrial Age. Innovators, like Henry Ford, captured this potential and quickly engulfed the city with industry and economic prosperity. Detroit's identity was cast, engaging the blue collar work ethic and gritty spirit. Every time Detroit has gone through a collapse, from the Great Detroit Fire of 1805, industry has been there to rebuild it.

However, Detroit now resides in a post-industrial society. Detroit was fueled by a singular devotion, the automobile industry, for so long that the automobile became the instrument of its own demise. The feverish production in Detroit became the feverish production of Detroit and the industry manifested its principles into the spatial layout of the city, eventually becoming an urban product of decentralization. Because of that singular, industrial devotion, Detroit

no longer has commerce; it no longer has a strong industrial spine. That economic machine will never fully come back. The city should rebrand itself. Detroit needs to become a destination rather than just a product. How does Detroit rebrand itself in the Post-Industrial Age while maintaining its unique heritage, rich in architecture, culture, and music? More precisely, what in Detroit is worth saving?

"Re-branding Detroit" explores the specific steps taken to achieve a methodology of design, incorporating music and Detroit's abandoned architecture as the catalysts for identity preservation, social justice, and stable, networked communities through music. Part One defines identity and brand, exploring the rhetoric that the national media perpetuates and ways to properly counter that perception. Part Two examines the historical precedent of the Great Migration in Detroit and the manifestation of Motown music as a form of identity preservation, social justice, and networking for those communities. These sections rely heavily on Dan Pitera and the Detroit Future City project, as well as primary and secondary sources, including: "Detroit: An American Autopsy", "Stalking Detroit", and "The Available Means of Persuasion". Part Three examines individual case studies for precise modes of grassroots engagement: the Heidelberg Project, the Black History 101 Mobile Museum, and PlayHouse. In addition, I explore overarching ideas of politics, race, and economics that act as the proverbial foundation that the cultural narrative rests upon, allowing music and abandoned architecture to engage the growing, grassroots movement, effectively linking Detroit with a new rhetorical brand for its citizens.

Part 1: The Tourist & the Citizen

Identity is the amalgamated community spirit that gives a sense of place in a constantly-evolving society. Brand is an image that represents identity, which can inflict positive or negative emotions upon an individual. Brand is essential to the formation of national sentiment. Perspectives of places are created either as a tourist or citizen, which is intrinsically linked to the relationship between identity and brand. Tourists interact with sites at the shallowest levels, by visually engaging a place for short periods of time, or worse, appropriating other perspectives as their own, i.e. photographers and journalists. Citizens engage the place they live within. They let the human ecosystem mold their daily lives. They don't see their homes as an ideal, visual esthetic, but as a practical, functional entities.

National Media

Detroit's identity is rooted in the Industrial Revolution. It is forged in the copper and iron ore of the Upper Peninsula and molded by the minds of innovators like Henry Ford. Ford provided not only the ability for his workers to own the product of their labor, the automobile, but also single family dwellings through his $5 dollar a day wage. This system created an urbanism in which 85% of Detroit's housing became single family. To support this type of urbanism, Detroit expanded its borders to 139 square miles of land area, to accommodate a population of over 1.8 million residents by the year 1950 (US Census Bureau)

In the middle of the 20th century, Detroit began to substantially decentralize, due to the expanding highway system, fears of nuclear warfare, and the growing presence of a global economy. The housing and infrastructure exacerbated the existing tears in Detroit's urban fabric, creating an industrial residue that has been targeted by the growing industry of media in post-industrial society. A city built for nearly 2 million people now only services 700,000. And while Detroit offers many cultural, athletic, and music opportunities , its industrial residue unfortunately seems to offer the most profit in today's media-driven landscape.

Our society is increasingly dominated by these centralized, commercial media outlets, which has put public rhetoric into the hands of a small number of for-profit firms, whose main purpose is to sell a story (Sheridan, 2012: 25). In much of America, media coverage of urban events has trumped the lived experience. The media's rendering of Detroit as a mythic landscape mostly excludes the description of actual conditions on the ground. For the media, Detroit's urban landscape has more value in its empty state than if it were developed. The more impoverished Detroit appears to be, the more money media outlets can obtain. These views, while not necessarily false, often offer very limited views of Detroit. This perpetuates a stereotype that is bad for business and residential development.

The media's perception of Detroit is misappropriated by the national public, perpetuating a disease-ridden place, one that repels potential citizens and business developers alike. This process is the fulfillment of the shallow, tourist philosophy that, viewed out of context, breeds imaginary problems. See Figure 1.



Fig. 1 United Artists Theatre building

This image represents the stereotypes that have come to be known of Detroit: The city is dangerous and crime-ridden, a city beset by racial tension. An industrial has-been. The national perception, driven by a narrow, negative brand of Detroit, severely hinders its potential growth.

Counter Rhetoric

The power of perception has been taken out of the hands of its citizens, by the national media The solution is then finding a medium to properly engage and represent the population of Detroit. The vices of modernity that disenfranchised much of the current population of Detroit, mainly the poor African Americans, are now in the hands of those citizens. What is needed is a structure for changing nostalgia into intelligence, ruin into history, for recalling the sights of modernity to a still relevant specificity. This comes through a return to a state of using empirical evidence and justification for knowledge, by engaging the public sphere through music.

Music and Detroit have an intimate relationship. Initially known for its Jazz music, Detroit has produced some of the country's greatest musicians and genres of music, from Motown to Rap. Music is vital to the identity of the city. It is also vital to the re-establishment of the city. Music provides three key elements that make it important for the utilization on the grassroots level: identity preservation, social justice, and cultivating stable neighborhoods.

Compare Figure 1 to Figure 2. Grandmont-Rosedale is a networked, vital, close-knit community that cares for each other. Due to the strong presence of non-profit organization, this set of neighborhoods has taken it upon themselves to renovate a few houses each year to help stabilize groups of houses, leading to stable streets, then eventually stable neighborhoods, through focused development.



Fig.23 ***Grandmont-Rosedale neighborhood***

This image from its website counters mainstream media depictions that characterize Detroit as empty of people, order, and cultural value. Local images begin to develop a counter rhetoric to the mainstream, national rhetoric of Detroit. It choreographs a diversity of semiotic resources that fundamentally reshapes perception, attitude and identity (Sheridan, 2012: 146).

Music provides another medium. The rebranding that my thesis advocates isn't a commercial rebranding or an architectural rebranding. These issues can be polarizing within design discourse. Instead, it advocates a rhetorical rebranding of Detroit, through a shift in programmatic design, by engaging the grassroots movement at a neighborhood scale utilizing non-profit organization, effectively putting the power of perception and expression back in the hands of its citizens through the medium of music.

Part 2: Motown, Social Justice, and Universal Languages

Motown

Due to labor shortages stemming from World War I, the hungry and ambitious migrants of the Great Migration went to Detroit to find a source of economic prosperity. Particularly African American citizens from the rural Deep South, these migrants tried escaping the Jim Crow laws enacted mainly in the states formerly of the Confederacy.[1] However, for the United States during this period, no place was immune to widespread, rampant racial tension. These migrants struggled to find economic freedom and racial equality in Detroit. In an attempt to make themselves more viable to the sea of white business owners, many migrants battled with issues of identity and perception as they rebranded themselves for hiring manufacturers.

In 1916 the Urban League was created to help African American immigrants to adapt and adjust to industrial life. As a part of its mission it “aimed to develop individual industrial efficiency by calling the attention of Negro employees to the fact that they must be punctual, zealous, and ambitious in their work." [2] In addition to the Urban League, Forrester B. Washington “also helped create the Detroit Dress Well Club to persuade fellow black families to become more conservative in their dress and demeanor as a tactic to attack segregation." [3] In Charlie LeDuff’s book, *Detroit: An American Autopsy*, he recalls the drastic measure his great-grandfather took to achieve prosperity for his lineage. In his story, Charlie recalls his great-grandfather Henry, from Louisiana, who was of French Creole descent. In 1930, he convinced the census taker, shortly after moving to Detroit, that his fair skin was of a darker, European heritage. The census taker recorded him as 'white' and his new status altered the trajectory of his family thereafter. These organizations and events reflect the lengths that migrants went to alter their identity for future prosperity.

Struggling with the idea of sacrificing identity for economic and social acceptance, music became the outlet for the preservation of their identity. Due to the great public education system of Detroit, Berry Gordy Jr. captured this

identity and positively rebranded it to create the sound of Motown through his musical prodigies. Gordy made great music by tailoring black rhythm and blues to the taste of a notably open-minded generation of white American teenagers. With acts like The Miracles, The Temptations, The Supremes, and Marvin Gaye, known collectively as the "Funk Brothers", they were able to compile more number one hits than the Beach Boys, the Rolling Stones, Elvis and the Beatles combined. Thus Motown became a unique sound that allowed individuals an alternative commerce and form of expression. It put the power of perception and rhetoric back in the hands of its citizens. This heritage is vital and must be protected. This is something in Detroit worth saving: its music and the architecture in which it is housed.

Digital Age

Music provides a means for social justice in 21st century, due to the Digital Age. The advent of the personal computer has given the under-privileged a voice. "Digitization has rendered the world of music making infinitely more accessible to people who before had not the talent or the resources to make music and hear how it sounds." [4] Music not only gives individuals a medium for expression but it cultivates one as well. Digital technology has given people the freedom of expressive creation. Experimentation is not only available but warranted and expected. In many ways, the digital age has brought a new self-taught pedagogy to music, one that has existed and thrived in the art community for centuries. Digital music has brought the music to the masses. It allows people to experience and create music more easily and more efficiently than ever. To offer a counter-rhetoric to media perception, music is important for the establishment of social justice in Detroit.

Universal Language

Music is a universal language. We all understand rhythm, chord progression, and melody, if only on a subconscious level. It brings humanity together, a natural form of networking that can be utilized in local communities. As the digital age brought a form of introspective expression and education, music as a universal language can offer an extraverted avenue to link growing communities together, to help stabilize communal life and growth. Websites like YouTube help share music abilities with others. Blogs like the Detroit Music Initiative help to strive towards the organization's goal of providing free music lessons to young children in the surrounding communities. And even applications like Vine help to initiate a multimodal dialog around the subject of music. Music can engage a community by providing identity preservation, as well as intro- and extroverted qualities to grow and stabilize local communities in Detroit with social justice through universal language.

Part 3: Grassroots Campaign

In the fall of 2010, Mayor Dave Bing launched an initiative to revitalize the city, through the organization 'Detroit Works', currently titled 'Detroit Future City'. The plan draws upon the interactions between Detroit residents, civic leaders, and technical experts to craft and refine a shared vision for Detroit's future. Dan Pitera, a lead architect for the commission, and a professor at the University of Detroit Mercy, describes the initiative:

> It is seen as a framework for decision making more than a physical plan for what Detroit will be. Even though there are hundreds of pages in the document, it comes down to how we make decisions going forward. It makes designers excited and

> business people excited because it hasn't strapped anyone down. [5]

The Detroit Future City project provides the perfect foundation for "Re-branding Detroit", to help provide life to the city through community development.

"Re-branding Detroit" defines a grassroots movement as communities who tailor their lives around diversity and energy, without flocking to a single industry. Grassroots initiative properly navigates what David Sheridan calls the public sphere:

> The ideal model of the public sphere... each participant must have an equal chance to initiate and to continue communication and each must have an equal chance to make assertions, recommendations, explanations, and challenge justifications. [6]

Engaging the public sphere is about the philosophy that the best ideas, from whomever they come, take precedent. Ideas provide the currency for change, not money, which signals an ethical shift away from current rhetoric in Detroit. By understanding the local context through the public sphere, grassroots engagement is possible.

The Heidelberg Project

"Detroit did not become great through centrally planned visions. Detroit became great through the millions of spontaneous, very personal and not always beautiful visions of its people." [7] In 1986, Tyree Guyton, an artist, initiated a vision that would become one of the clearest forms of cultural activism through neighborhood engagement in Detroit, the Heidelberg Project. It has been deemed both successful and polarizing.

On the near East Side, neighborhoods were deteriorating. Guyton revealed in an interview, upon seeing Heidelberg Street, that a vision came to him, saying, "You'll think I'm crazy, but the houses began speaking to me." [8] The original intent of the project, which still thrives today, is to visually capture the history of a residential community coming undone and to educate with the expression of art.

Guyton achieves both identity preservation and social justice by creating art upon the abandoned structures, ones that are often mingled among the neighborhood's occupied houses. The community lives within the decay, but instead of letting them further deteriorate, they are developed by Guyton and the community. The project is a form of identity preservation.

> On Heidelberg Street, discarded objects embody optimism, memory, and hope for the area. Instead of ignoring the abandoned building, as is done in so many parts of the city, the Heidelberg Project marks their significance through Guyton's site-specific craftsmanship. [9]

The project is about a community's survival. The project recognizes the importance of documenting the events in people's lives that otherwise might go unrecorded, in order to prevent gaps in the communal knowledge of the past. This is achieved by the local donation of individual relics and trash.



Fig. 3 ***Baby Doll House***

The project also achieves an introspective form of neighborhood engagement, driving social justice. In Figure 9, the project, titled "Baby Doll House", is about the "tainted innocence of children growing up on the turbulent streets in Detroit as implicated by the collection of children's dolls." [10] The dolls, provided by the citizens, help to embrace the local community by creating an art project in which everyone has taken part, allowing the community to communicate what the experience is like, living on Heidelberg Street.

The project is also polarizing, shaping discussion on the proper place of art within the visual architectural landscape. The artwork has become a canvas for expression. Whether it be the politically charged tribute to Rosa Parks called 'The Bus' or about the car industry abandoning Detroit in 'Faces in the Hood', the decentralized museum helps nourish the community, which is in harmony with "Re-branding Detroit" .

However, there are two valid critiques that should be acknowledged. First, the Heidelberg Project doesn't help to develop and stabilize adjacent neighborhoods. The project, which utilizes only the abandoned buildings in the neighborhood, is viewed as off-putting to some residents from nearby neighborhoods, calling the artwork abrasive and distasteful. While the project helps to grow the specific Heidelberg community, it doesn't offer incentive for others to move close by. The second critique is that the artist's vision has dominated the vision of the neighborhood. The project promotes the artist's vision, acting more like a tourist attraction than a legitimate avenue to stabilize and develop vital neighborhoods.

Ultimately, the project is successful in the eyes of "Re-branding Detroit" because it preserves the identity and spirit of Detroit's past while promoting art education and expression, especially within the younger generation, for social justice. Using music can be just as successful, and with the integration of a more mobile architectural program, it can activate neighborhoods for the purpose of extroverted inter-community networking.

The Black History 101 Mobile Museum

Khalid el-Hakim is a teacher with two jobs in Detroit. His permanent job is teaching social studies at Detroit Lions Academy. His second job is much more unique. His second classroom takes him all over country, teaching about black history in the United States. A teacher who advocates engaging history through the collection of artifacts, el-Hakim drives a mobile home with a collection of artifacts that document the struggle of racism in the United States. The exhibit draws upon an archive of over 5,000 objects that include slave chains, a Ku Klux Klan hood and a document signed by Malcolm X. The activism he preaches isn't about the historical significance of certain events, but about the context which those events came out of.

Built and designed from an old mobile home by the Detroit Collaborative Design Center, it integrates a double skin interior to transform it into a dynamic museum. See Figure 4.

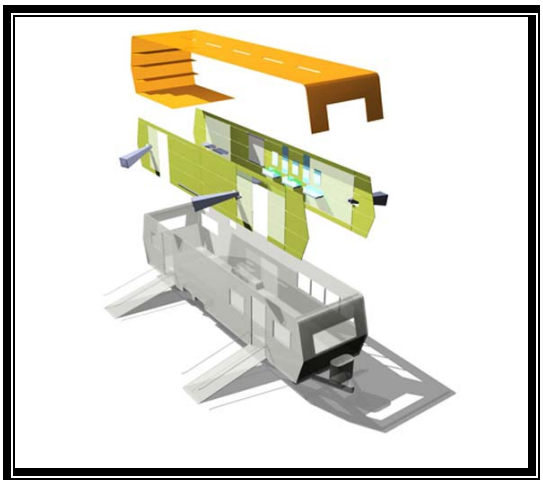


Fig. 4 Black History 101 Mobile Museum design

The exterior was painted by the local graffiti artist, Sintex. It embodies the local spirit of Detroit but also the struggle that their ancestors endured, many of which escaped the Jim Crow laws during the Great Migration.

Like the Heidelberg Project, the mobile museum provides a great form of education and engagement for historical preservation and blight. The activation of a mobile program allows for community networking, the last pillar of "Rebranding Detroit", not just within Detroit, but nationally, and gives el-Hakim, among others, a forum for counter rhetoric and freedom of expression that comes through a non-profit agenda. But like the Heidelberg Project, the museum doesn't offer a method of neighborhood growth that can be attributed to the functional repurposement of abandoned land in stable neighborhoods.

PlayHouse

In Detroit, houses can be purchased for as little as $1000. These houses remain in salvageable condition. However, their costs for renovation are well over $100,000. All across Detroit these useful buildings lie in architectural purgatory. Projects like PlayHouse serve as a prototype for an alternate strategy for reuse, one that advocates partial renovation. Dan Pitera describes:

> When we as designers enter a process, our jobs are to bring our expertise in design, to synthesize and connect everyone's different desires. Instead of us (designers) having to preconceive what the design should be, their desires and notions provide the content for our designs, and are not subservient to the design. That content should be what drives the design. [11]

Partial renovation provides a design solution that allows ruins to be activated bringing function to spaces, without substantial funding requirements.

Described as a 'patch' in the urban quilt, the project takes four parcels of land, on one of which rests an abandoned house, flanked by three consecutive vacant lots. The design tears away the side of the house facing the vacant lots, and through a process of gutting, weathering, and fabricating, the space is transformed into a band shell, for musical performance and civic engagement. The vacant lots become a modern amphitheater for the band shell, as seen in Figure 5. Fabricated by community residents, artists, and young people, PlayHouse will become an artistic and cultural centerpiece in an area of Detroit that has been listed as one of the top 3 poorest zip codes in the USA by the US Census Bureau.



Fig. 5 ***PlayHouse design***

Outlook

For the first time since the manifestation of post-industrialism, the US Census Bureau is showing a willingness of suburbanites to move back into the city, primarily due to proximity and energy that cities provide. Detroit has seen a 59% increase in educated citizens under the age of 35 in the last 10 years.[12] While the current

infrastructure makes it improbable to engage that energy on a civic scale, the ability to create thriving, energetic neighborhoods will help invite families back into the city, slowly raising the population, enlarging the tax base and local economic participation. The Detroit Future City Project has given the foundation for designers to create their own solutions, by providing a wealth of information that can provide the content for their designs. "Re-branding Detroit" is just one possible solution for one problem that currently exists. Using music, Detroit can harness the energy the citizens have in their city, while revitalizing the city through an altered perception, making it viable and livable for residents and businesses alike.

Conclusion:

There's an inherent irony in Detroit. A city that strived to be as efficient as possible, giving way to decentralization through nuclear fear, would see the effects of a nuclear explosion in its city. It happened at the hands of the car industry, who's prosperity through the realization of Fordist economics eventually deemed the city no longer necessary for its industrial prosperity. However, Detroit still has the opportunity to preserve itself, through its citizens, by developing reciprocal neighborhoods, ones that are both introverted and extraverted, in the name of identity preservation, social justice, and community networking. Like Charlie LeDuff said, "The man took his factory away, but he didn't take the people with him." [13] To disregard this fact and show neglect to its citizens, while proposing widespread change for the city is an injustice. "Re-branding Detroit" aims to provide a solution to a problem within the scope of the larger context. In Detroit's history, it took thousands of decisions, through decades of industrial evolution, questionable policy, rampant population flight, and ill-advised urban development to deliver Detroit where it is today. Only by the realization that it will take that many steps in the right direction, starting at the neighborhood level, will Detroit rise again.

NOTES

Figure References

Arens, R. (1999) 'the Heidelberg Project', in *Stalking Detroit*, 1st edn, Barcelona: Actar. pp. 126-129

Detroit Future City, (2013) 'The framework, Detroit Future City, viewed on 23 February 2013, http://detroitworksproject.com/

Detropia, Dir. Heidi Ewing, Rachel Grady (2011; New York, Loki Films) DVD.

Herron, J. (1999) 'three meditations on the ruins of Detroit', in *Stalking Detroit*, 1st edn, Barcelona: Actar. pp. 33-41

LeDuff, C. (2013) *Detroit: an American autopsy*, 1st edn, London: Penguin Books.

Martelle, S. (2012) *Detroit: a biography*, 1st edn, Chicago: Chicago Review.

Murray, C. (2000) Boogie man: the adventures of John Lee Hooker in the American twentieth century, 1st edn, New York City: St. Martins Press

Oaskalakis, G. Waldheim, C. & Young, J. (1999) 'Introduction: committee work', in *Stalking Detroit*, 1st edn, Barcelona: Actar. pp. 10-13

Pitera, D. (July 25, 2013) Personal interview.

Sands, D. (2012) 'Black history 101 mobile museum takes history out into the world', Huffington Post, viewed on 8 August 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/01/black-history-101-mobile-museum_n_1243956.html

Endnotes

[1] Scott Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography* (Chicago: Chicago Review, 2012), 85.

[2] Scott Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 88.

[3] Scott Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 89.

[4] David M. Sheridan, *The Available Means of Persuasion*, 30.

[5] Dan Pitera, Personal Interview, 2013.

[6] Dan M. Sheridan, *The Available Means of Persuasion*, 15.

[7] Robert Arens, "the Heidelberg Project," in *Stalking Detroit* (Barcelona, Actar, 1999) 126.

[8] Wendy S. Walters, "The Neighborhood Turning Inside Out: Imagining a New Detroit in Tyree Guyton's Heidelberg Project," in *The Drama Review,* Vol. 45, no. 4, 64. 2001.

[9] Wendy S. Walters, *The Drama Review*, 65.

[10] Robert Arens, *Stalking Detroit,* 127.

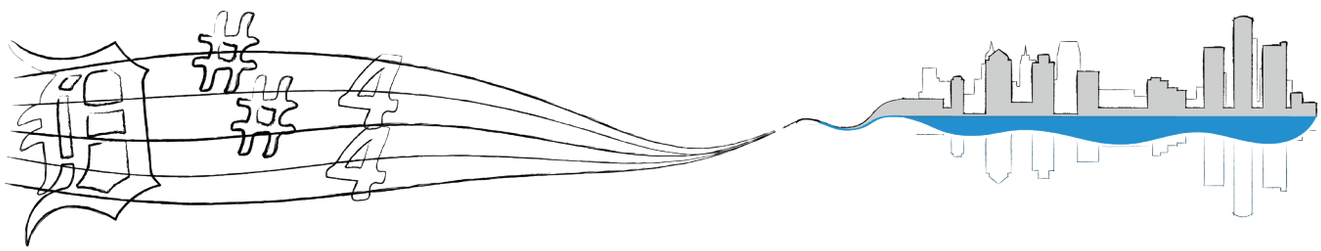
[11] Dan Pitera, Personal Interview, 2013.

[12] Detropia, Dir. Heidi Ewing, Rachel Grady (New York, Loki Films, 2011) DVD.

[13] Charlie LeDuff, *Detroit: An American Autopsy* (London: Penguin Books, 2013) 122.

RebrandingDetroit

DesignExploration



Design Addendum

“It is in dialogue with pain that many beautiful things acquire their value. Acquaintance with grief turns out to be one of the more unusual prerequisites of architectural appreciation. We might, quite aside from all other requirements, need to be a little sad before buildings can properly touch us.”

-Alain de Botton

I think this quote from *The Architecture of Happiness* is phenomenal and appropriate on multiple levels, in regards to my thesis. First, Detroit has seen so much degradation through the last sixty years, that a city built for industry and not aesthetic, has become beautiful, if for nothing else to remain a strong reminder of how the United States was built and from where it has come. Architectural ruins, for better or worse, have meaning to society, and Detroit is chalk full of them. Detroit's misery is displayed through its architecture, and much beauty is imbedded into this aesthetic.

Secondly, there is beauty in the pain endured to rebuild the city, through adaptive reuse of its infrastructure, built before the era of cheap suburban architecture. If and when Detroit can fully rebuild itself, it will be a gorgeous city, with vibrant neighborhoods, for the mere fact that it will be surrounded by lazy, standardized, suburban structures. Detroit has so much potential, that the pain is worth it.

And lastly, I experienced much pain through this thesis process to navigate such a large and complex problem, to try to propose a single solution to a single problem, in a city with thousands of them. The journey has be arduous and trying, but through that pain, I'm truly proud of the work I was able to complete and present for my final design critique.

Stepping Back

Following the presentation of my written thesis, the main debate for my eventual design became, through which scope and scale should music and architecture pervade Detroit? Ultimately, I settled on neighborhood life, because Detroit has proven time and time again that the city cannot be saved through monumental, public entities. Whether it be stadiums, civic centers, or casinos, until Detroit can convince citizens to live in the city and not just visit the city, the urban environment will struggle. The fabric of the city once held close to 2 millions people, but now only has merely 700,000, and this poses countless threats to life.

I chose Woodbridge due to the fact that it was a diverse community, close to the financial spine of Woodward Avenue, the last remaining stronghold of commerce in the city. I chose it, as well, because it had a strong educational base. Due to its proximity to Wayne State University, the neighborhood is filled with not just generational residents, but faculty and students of the university. This community was one of the few communities, if not the only one, that could fully support my program for a music colony, complete with an after-school education program, a performance venue, and a production facility, allowing for an alternative economic commerce.

Through many iterations of my design, I struggled to capture the narrative of the transformative, rebranding power of architecture. My site, on Trumbull St., gradually shifts from residential to a new, proposed commercial strip, on Trumbull. I

embraced this shift, noticing the potential to strike a balance between conserving the residential zones through preservation and conserving the commercial strip through transformation.

Ultimately, I embraced the metaphor of transformation through form, taking the typology of a warehouse, and morphing it to establish a new typology (brand) on the commercial strip. Through creating custom trusses, I was able to effectively separate interior spaces from the exterior skin, allowing the skin to create a new space, completing the metaphor of the caterpillar becoming a butterfly, by housing the recording studio inside the 'new' space, communicating the idea of creating a new, alternative commerce and rhetoric for the citizens of Woodbridge and Detroit.

I incorporated the idea of 'rebuilding Detroit from Detroit', by using existing materials that are being harvested from the demolition of more than 74,000 existing structures. hence the use of brick, steel I-beams, and wood in my design. The redefinition of the streetscape was also an attempt to lower the veil of the traditional 'street wall' and invite the pedestrian traffic into the building, through the implementation of an open space that acts as the proverbial sound box, engaging the user on not just a visual level, but auditory and tactile levels as well.

My design was generally well-received by the review committee for the final design critique, but a few legitimate points were raised. First, the general fire safety concerns of leaving a space uncontained, not to mention the acoustical concerns of having quiet spaces adjacent to a stage.

Secondly, and in my opinion the biggest opportunity lost, was to move the computer lab behind the stage somewhere closer to the recording studio, then remove the brick wall and allow for the transparency of the structure to penetrate to the neighborhood behind the stage, to allow the entire axis from commercial to residential to be transparent.

However, for the few concerns the committee had, they really enjoyed the changing thickness of the relation of the ceiling to the skin, communicating this metaphorical redefinition of the skin to represent a new, vibrant space. Ultimately, more development could have been put towards refining the form that greets Trumbull St., but they thought my most powerful drawing was my longitudinal section, in which this idea was effectively communicated

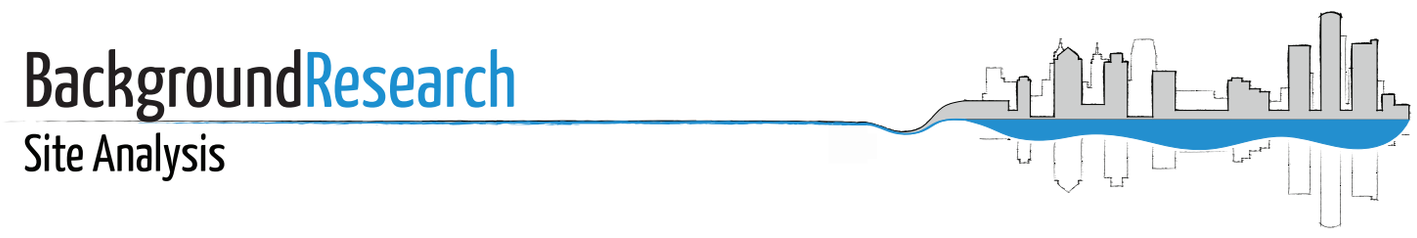
The moment I was finished presenting, I felt the pressure of the thesis process exit my body, I felt the release of responsibility for a project that consumed my life for a year and a half, but I haven't lost any of the fervor for the subject of my thesis. We as architects have a responsibility to design for the community, not our ego, to accurately represent the feelings and needs of society, and to not impose ourselves upon them. Through interviewing members of Detroit's society, researching tirelessly the history of the city, and being vigilant of the site and the energy that the community provided in Woodbridge, I think my project was an honest attempt to navigate the issues currently haunting Detroit. I tried to engage the artist community that is housed in the neighborhood, imbedding the artistic energy of sculpture, painting, and theater into my form and program. I used local materials to further connect to the industrial spirit of the city's past, while using them in a new way, to help rebrand the commercial streetscape of the often baron avenue. Ultimately, I think we as architects have much more power to destroy an environment than improve it, and I hope that this effort is just a little piece in the much larger puzzle to help Detroit regain its prominence and accurately represent the city that is near and dear to me.

RebrandingDetroit

BackgroundResearch

BackgroundResearch

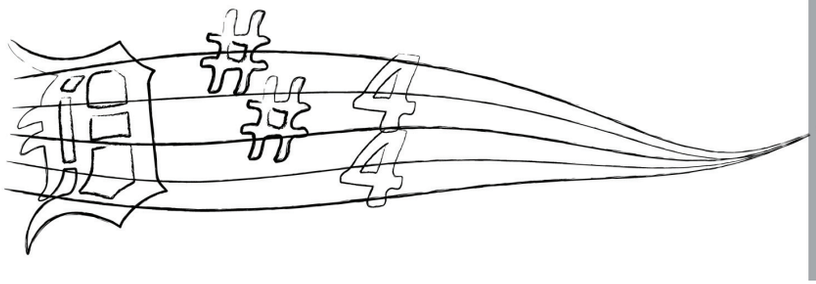
Site Analysis

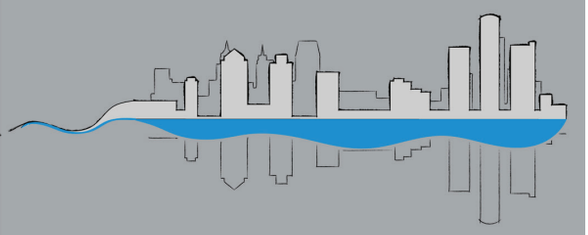


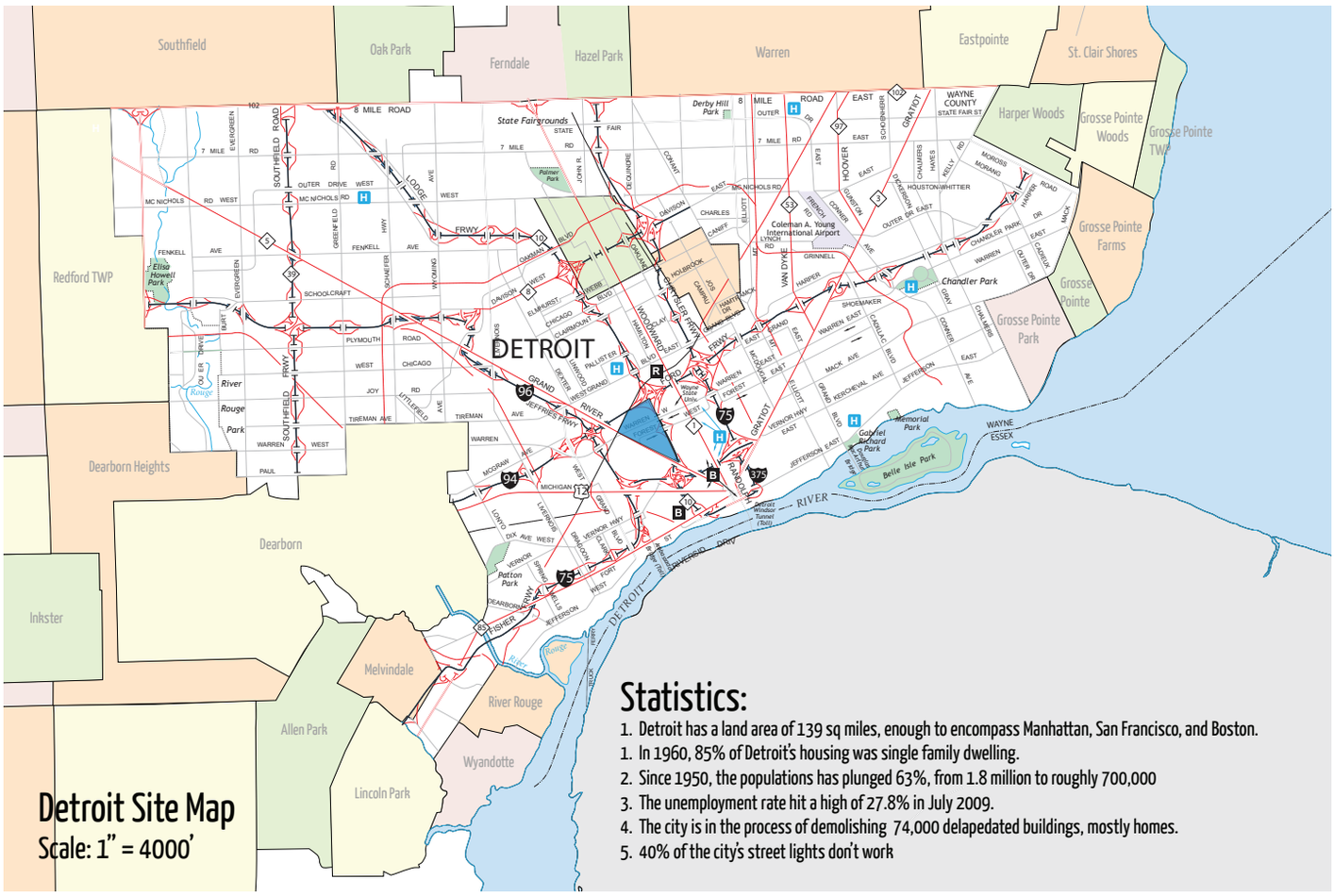
RebrandingDetroit

Music, Identity, and Perception in the New, Post-Industrial City

One of Detroit's biggest problems today isn't real, it's imaginary. The citizens of Detroit need a voice, a mode of expression to combat negative media perception that often exacerbates problems in the city and stunts growth. Music, a universal language, can provide this medium. Through the programmatic staples of education, production, and performance, a neighborhood prototype will be designed in Woodbridge to act as a static, stablizing force, but also a mobile networking tool, to strengthen the resolve and influence of its current populace.





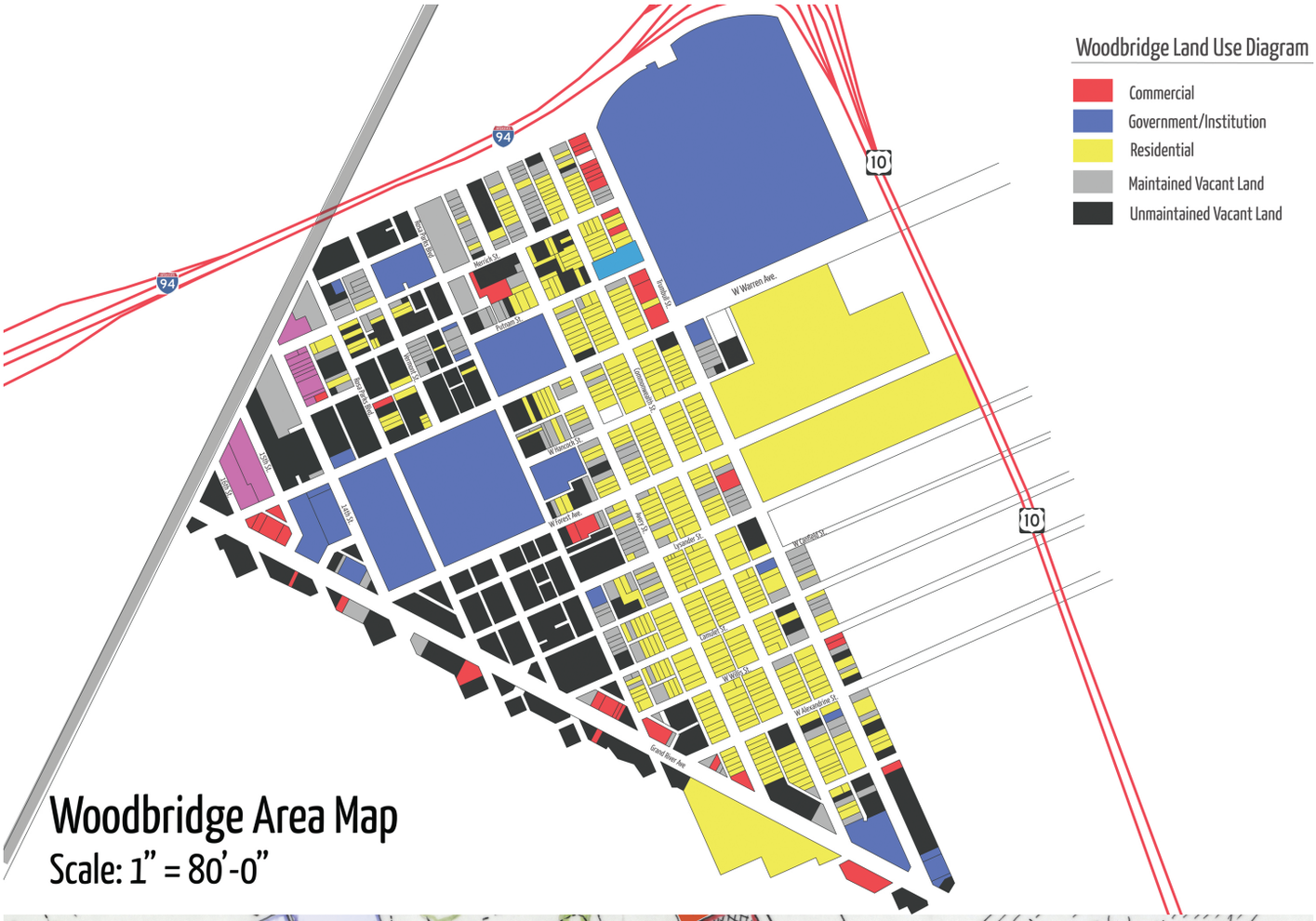


Detroit Site Map

Scale: 1" = 4000'

Statistics:

1. Detroit has a land area of 139 sq miles, enough to encompass Manhattan, San Francisco, and Boston.
1. In 1960, 85% of Detroit's housing was single family dwelling.
2. Since 1950, the populations has plunged 63%, from 1.8 million to roughly 700,000
3. The unemployment rate hit a high of 27.8% in July 2009.
4. The city is in the process of demolishing 74,000 delapedated buildings, mostly homes.
5. 40% of the city's street lights don't work



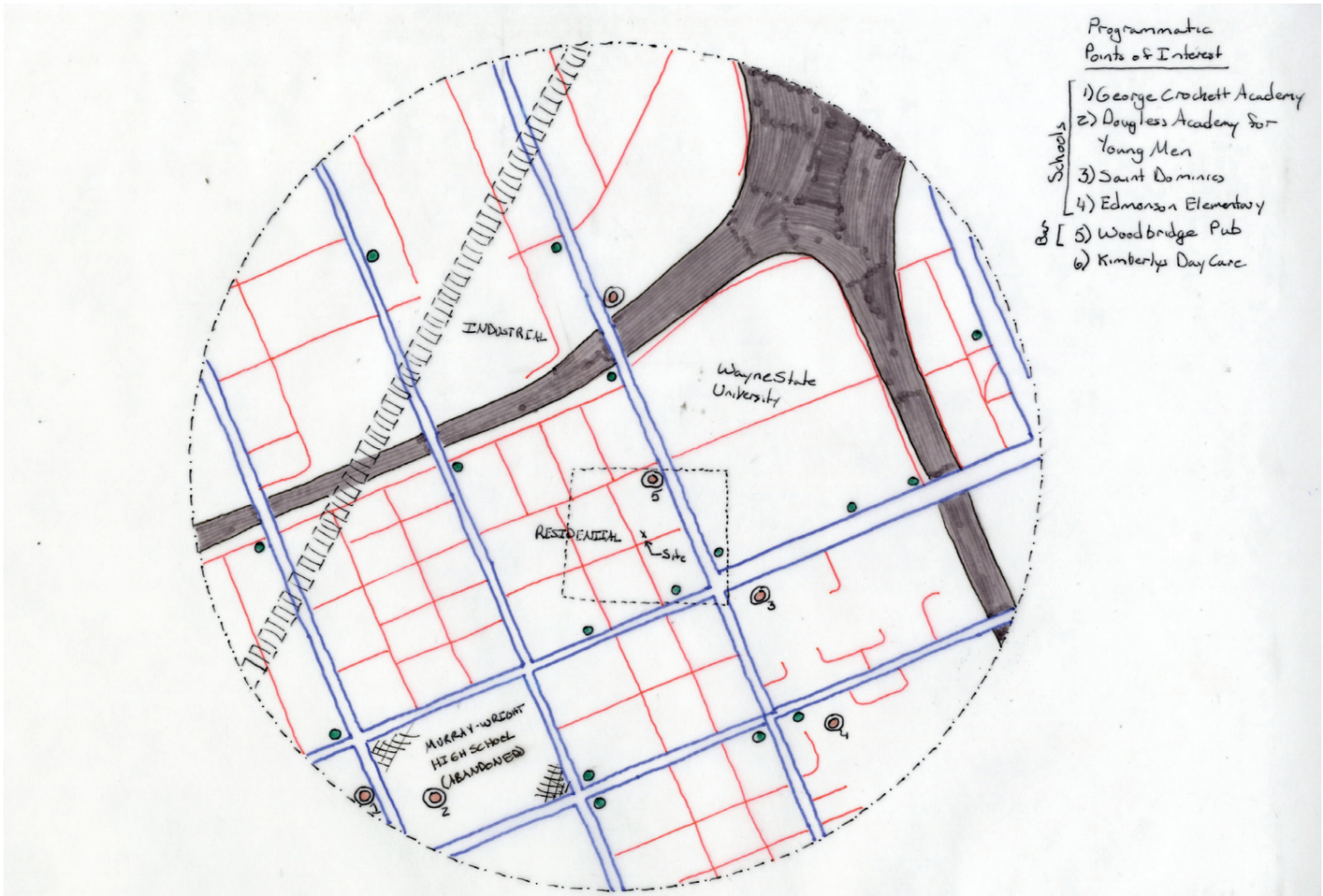
Woodbridge Area Map

Scale: 1" = 80'-0"



Site Analysis

Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"


Programmatic
Points of Interest
Schools
1) George Crockett Academy
2) Douglass Academy for
Young Men
3) Saint Dominics
4) Edmonson Elementary
5) Woodbridge Pub
6) Kimberlys Day Care
INDUSTRIAL
Wayne State
University
RESIDENTIAL
Site
MURRAY-WRIGHT
HIGH SCHOOL
(ABANDONED)
1
2
3
4
5


CAMP

ReciplocalDetroit

Site

PROBLEM: Detroit's biggest issue today is the battle over its perception, not reality. The city continues to struggle in its rebuilding efforts due to a negative branding technique used by for-profit media companies to perpetuate a poor living environment. The existing infrastructure doesn't help this stigma, as it easily allows the residents of metro Detroit to indulge in the city without living within its confines. Detroit doesn't need more visitors, it needs more citizens. The city must focus its efforts on rebuilding its neighborhoods. This means focusing on safety, education, and city services to capture the positive energy and organize it towards developing networked, thriving neighborhoods.



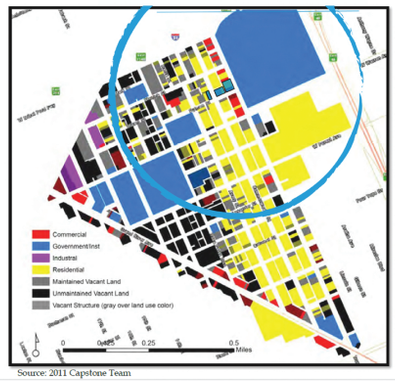
M1 Rail

The M-1 Rail Line is a 3.3-mile-long streetcar line that will run along Woodward Avenue. In December 2011, city and state leaders announced a plan to offer bus rapid transit service for the city and metropolitan area instead of light rail. Soon afterwards, M-1 Rail, a consortium of private and public businesses and institutions in the region, announced the plan for this 3.3-mile-long streetcar line along part of the same route, connecting the downtown Detroit People Mover to the railway station in New Center, which serves Amtrak.



Live in Woodbridge

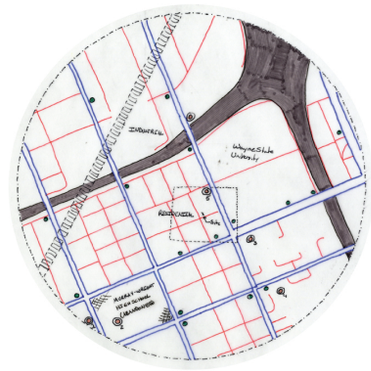
105	number of neighborhoods in Detroit
3	number of Detroit neighborhoods, including Woodbridge, that increased its population between 2000 & 2010
51.4	percentage of residents that are African-American, in comparison to 82.2 percent in Detroit proper
72	percent of single family housing
82	percent of residential buildings that are occupied in Woodbridge
800	medium rent in dollars for a 2 to 3 bedroom unit
12,000	number of cars that approach the intersection of Warren and Trumbull everyday, a popular thoroughfare to Wayne State Unviersity and Midtown



Source: 2011 Capstone Team

Strong Residential/Weak Commercial

The quest for a viable neighborhood begun with a look at both demographics and geographics. 105 neighborhoods are located in Detroit, but only three grew in population between 2000 and 2010, and among those Woodbridge had the most potential due to its location near the new M1 Rail and Wayne State University. With a more balanced population, focused on education and the fine arts, the residential sector is quite strong, but the commercial, while present, is still weak. This provides a great foundation to alter the existing landscape to profice a viable neighborhood in which to live.

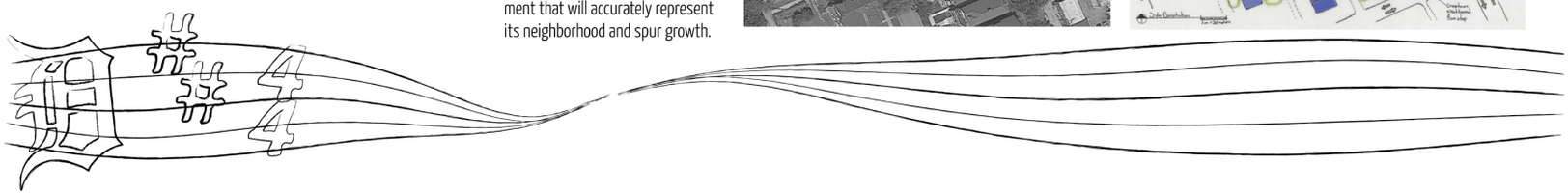


Proposed Site

The intersection of Warren and Trumbull is one of the busiest intersection in Detroit, with 12,000 cars/day. However, without a viable site to connect back to the residential district, one block north, at the intersection of Trumbull and Putnam, is my proposed site. The site literally creates a spectrum from residential to commercial, and allows for the creation of a development that will accurately represent its neighborhood and spur growth.



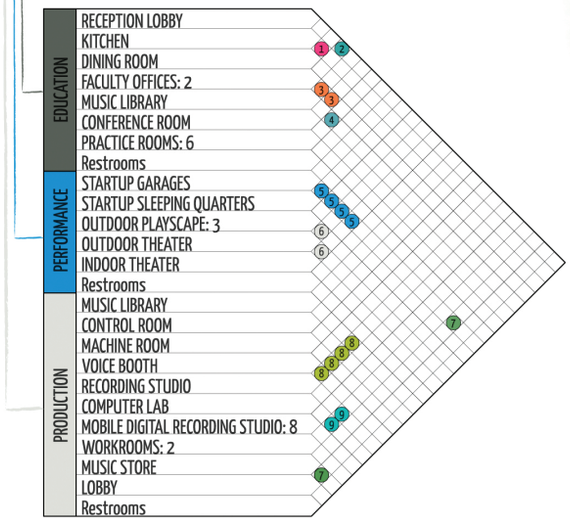




ReciplocalDetroit

Program

Woodbridge, besides being a thriving residential district near Woodward Avenue, is a community that values communication, education, and safety, in large part due to the residents who live there. A large fine arts spirit resides within the neighborhood, and with a city that needs to rebrand itself with positive energy and safe neighborhoods, and district that revolves around music is a natural choice. Sixto Rodriguez, a native of Woodbridge, is one of many Detroit music legends that were discovered, but with him, it happended much later in life. Giving the district the ability to bring musicians together will form a solid economic spine, with the integration of a music afterschool education facility, music startup facility, complete with performance venues, and a commercial strip, centered around the sale of its music and entertainment, with the integration of a Jazz club, night club, coffee shop, and music store.





One

Using the existing abandoned house on the property, the existing kitchen and dining room can provide the natural function for the school.

The reception area will utilize the public entrance into the existing house, and the faculty offices must be within earshot of the reception desk.

Two

Three

The faculty offices will utilize the conference room and music libraries to plan their classes, as well as hold meetings with parents and children. The space can double as a community center.

Four

The music library must also be near the practice rooms, which is where the students will practice. The music library will also house the storage facility of music instruments for rental use to students in the program.

Five

The startup village is the economic catalyst for the entire development, and in many ways, is the design repsonse to my written thesis. Within the site will be located spaces or "garages" at low costs, to allow novice musicians to become entrepeneus, selling their music to ouside pedestrians.

Six

Within the central program of the development needs a programmatic and visual magnet to attract the enthusiast and music novice. This will comes through the implementation of an indoor/outdoor theater, which will serve as an auditorium during the winter, and a band shell during the summer. As part of the space will be small performance venues, for individual musicians, integrated into the local, exiting vegetation.

Seven

Critical to the relationship of the pedestrian walking through the space and the garages themsevles is the placement of the coffee shop and music store. Allowing people to flow freely through the space and listen to the amateurs will allow for a broad range of music to be heard, and if the local musicians have a place close by where their music is sold, it allows for an easy transaction to occur between hearing the music and buying the CD.

Eight

To attract larger music talent and to harvest the existing novice talent will be a professional recording studio, with a control room, machine room, voice booth, and computer lab integrated nearby.

Nine

Adjacent to the recording studio will be workrooms for larger functions within the realm of music production.

BackgroundResearch

Site Photos






Putnam






the Shack
COMMUNITY
garden

BackgroundResearch

Demographics



Woodbridge, Detroit demographics profile

Statistic	Woodbridge	Detroit	Michigan
Population (2012)	n/a	713,777	9,883,640
Population (2000)	2,119	951,270	9,938,444
Population growth	n/a	-25.0%	-0.6%
Male/Female ratio	1.0:1	0.9:1	0.9:1
Married (15yrs & older)	29%	35%	55%
Speak English	93%	91%	94%
Speak Spanish	4%	5%	2%

Put this data on your website

The Detroit population was 713,777 in 2012 compared to 951,270 in 2000. The Detroit, MI population has decreased by 25.0% from 2000 to 2012.

In Detroit 91% of the people speak English and 5% of people speak Spanish, also in Detroit 35.4% of people are married.

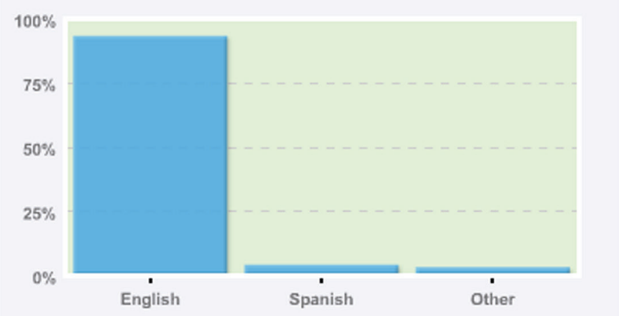
Woodbridge, Detroit population breakdown by race

Race	Woodbridge	Detroit	Michigan
Caucasian	27.89%	12.37%	90.56%
African American	67.82%	81.38%	4.86%
Asian	0.38%	1.00%	1.02%
American Indian	0.99%	0.34%	0.72%
Native Hawaiian	0.00%	0.02%	0.02%
Mixed race	2.50%	2.29%	1.78%
Other race	0.42%	2.59%	1.03%

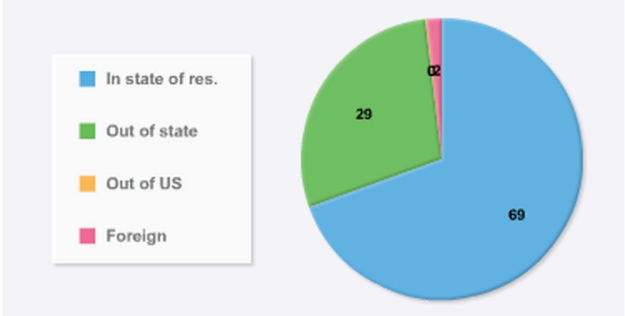
Put this data on your website

In Detroit, 5.0% of people are of Hispanic or Latino origin.
Please note: Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in any/all of the applicable race categories above.

Languages spoken



Place of birth by citizenship



Woodbridge, Detroit crime information

Statistic	Woodbridge /100K	Detroit /100K	Michigan /100K
Violent crime	1,830 (estimate)	2,137	266
Property crime	5,260 (estimate)	6,144	2,543
Total crime index	7,090 (estimate)	8,281	2,808

Put this data on your website

- The estimated Woodbridge crime index is 14% lower than the Detroit average and and the Detroit crime index is 194% higher than the Michigan average.
- The estimated Woodbridge violent crime rate is 14% lower than the Detroit average and and the Detroit violent crime rate is 704% higher than the Michigan average.
- The estimated Woodbridge property crime rate is 14% lower than the Detroit average and and the Detroit property crime rate is 141% higher than the Michigan average.

Did you know?

- Woodbridge is safer than 68.9% of the neighborhoods in Detroit.
- The crime rate in Woodbridge, Detroit is less than 1% of the cities in Michigan.
- The estimated chance of being a victim of a crime in Woodbridge is 1 in 15.
- The estimated chance of being a victim of a violent crime in Woodbridge is 1 in 55.
- The estimated chance of being a victim of a property crime in Woodbridge is 1 in 20.

Detroit violent crime breakdown

Crime	Detroit	Detroit /100K	Michigan /100K	National /100K
Murder	344	48	2	3
Rape	427	60	41	25
Robbery	4,962	696	43	59
Assault	9,512	1,334	179	214

Detroit property crime breakdown

Crime	Detroit	Detroit /100K	Michigan /100K	National /100K
Burglary	15,994	2,242	512	628
Theft	16,456	2,307	1,880	2,071
Vehichle theft	11,368	1,594	137	141

Sex offenders in Michigan

State	Total offenders	Michigan /100K	National /100K
Michigan	42,644	437	192

There are a total of 42,644 **sex offenders in Michigan**. This yields a total of 437 sex offenders in Michigan per 100,000 residents which is 127% greater than the national average.

Woodbridge, Detroit cost of living index

Index	Woodbridge	Detroit	Michigan
Cost of living index	102	95	95
Goods & Services index	96	96	96
Groceries index	99	99	98
Health care index	99	99	98
Housing index	111	88	88
Transportation index	102	102	101
Utilities index	104	104	103

In the event that the cost of living data was unavailable for this city, estimates based upon nearby cities were used.

Put this data on your website

- The cost of living in Woodbridge is **7.4**% greater than the Detroit average.
- The cost of living in Woodbridge is **2.4**% greater than the national average.
- Each cost of living index is based on a national average of 100. If the amount is below 100, it is lower than the national average. If the amount is above 100, it is higher than the national average.



Coffee

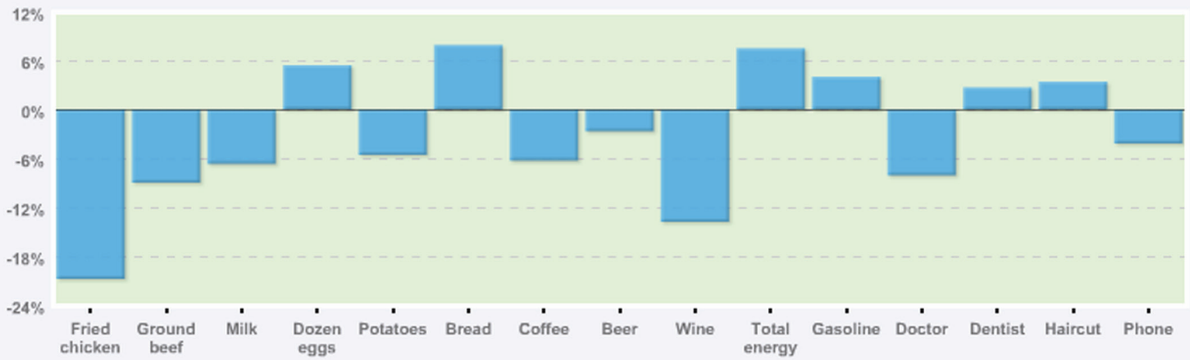
The price of coffee in Detroit, MI is $4.78.
The price of coffee in Detroit is 0.7% lower than the national average.
Juneau, AK is the most expensive city for coffee at $7.29.
Waco, TX is the least expensive city for coffee at $2.79.



Pizza

The price of pizza in Detroit, MI is $8.00.
The price of pizza in Detroit is 11.8% lower than the national average.
Dothan, AL is the most expensive city for pizza at $14.79.
Ogden, UT is the least expensive city for pizza at $6.33.

Michigan average prices compared to national average



The **average prices for Detroit, MI** goods and services that are below the "0" percentile are lower compared to the national average. If the average prices are above the "0" percentile, they are higher compared to the national average.

Woodbridge, Detroit employment information

Index	Woodbridge	Detroit	Michigan
Income per capita	$21,164	$15,062	$23,938
Median household income	$34,535	$28,357	$46,144
Median household income owner occupied	$46,034	$46,034	$59,607
Median household income renter occupied	$24,225	$24,225	$31,364
Median earnings male	$36,342	$27,232	$38,738
Median earnings female	$24,454	$22,480	$21,255
Unemployment rate (2000)	13.4%	13.8%	3.7%
Unemployment rate (2010)	n/a	24.8%	13.2%
Unemployment rate (2012)	n/a	9.7%	9.3%
Poverty level	28.7%	26.1%	10.1%

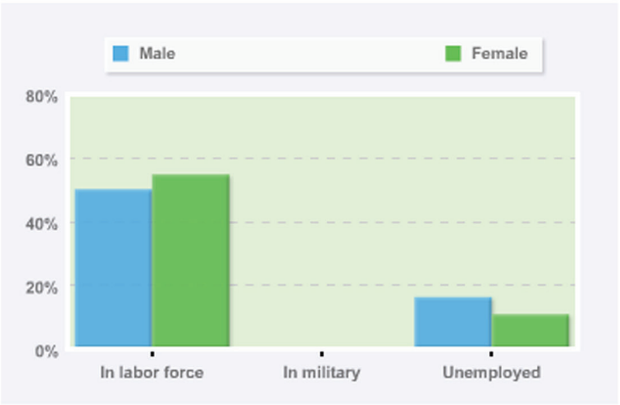
The data is based upon 2010 estimates.

Put this data on your website

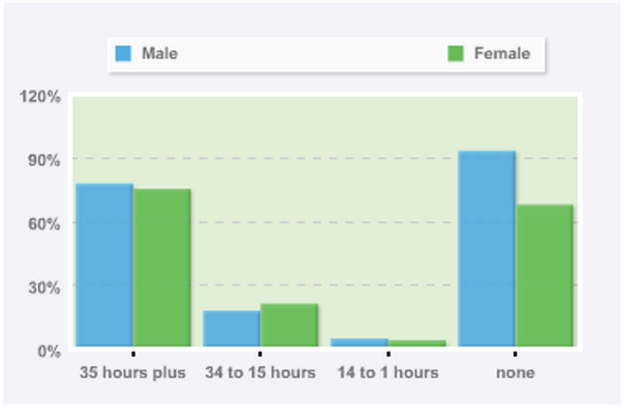
The **income per capita in Woodbridge** is 40.5% greater than the Detroit average and 11.6% less than the Michigan average. The **median household income in Woodbridge** is 21.8% greater than the Detroit average and 25.2% less than the Michigan average. The median household income in Woodbridge for owner occupied housing is 90% greater than the median household income for renter occupied housing in Woodbridge.

The **poverty level in Woodbridge** is 10.1% greater than the Detroit average and 183.5% greater than the Michigan average. The median earnings for males in Woodbridge is 48.6% greater than the median earnings for females in Woodbridge.

Employment status



Hours worked per week



Woodbridge, Detroit housing overview

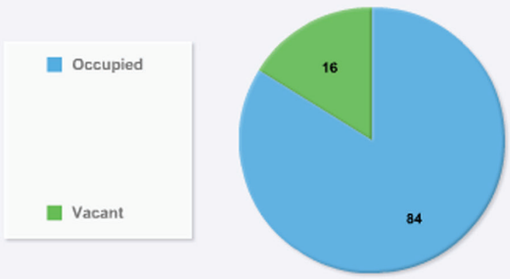
Statistic	Woodbridge	Detroit	Michigan
Average number of people per household	2.4	2.8	2
Median value owner occupied home	$122,682	$80,400	$135,008
Median property taxes paid	$967	$967	$1,710
Median rent asked	$752	$747	$658
Percent owner occupied	50.0%	56.8%	74.9%
Percent renter occupied	50.0%	43.2%	25.1%

The data is based upon 2010 estimates.

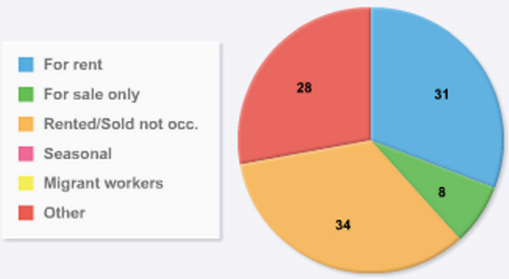
Put this data on your website

The **median home value in Woodbridge** is 52.6% greater than the Detroit average and 9.1% less than the Michigan average. The **median price asked for homes in Woodbridge** is 41.2% less than the Detroit average and 70% less than the Michigan average. The **median rental rates in Woodbridge** is 0.7% greater than the Detroit average and 14.3% greater than the Michigan average.

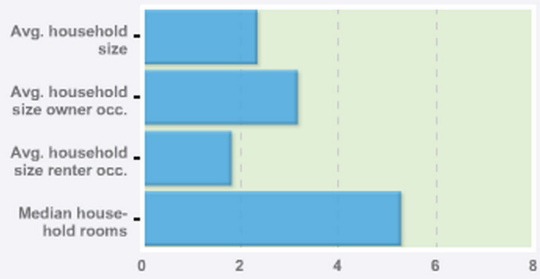
Vacancy vs. occupancy levels



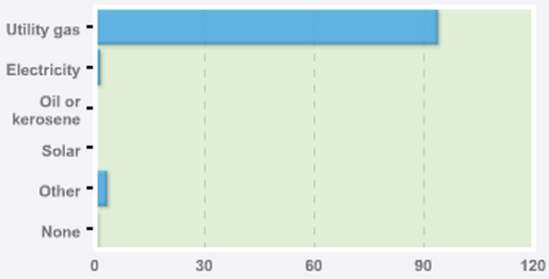
Vacancy status



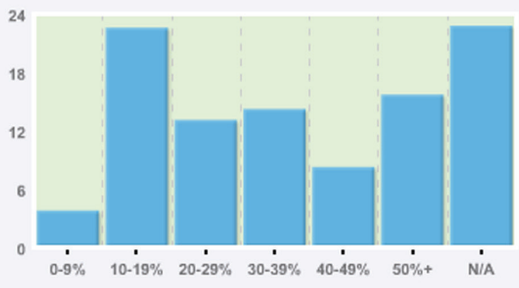
Household statistics



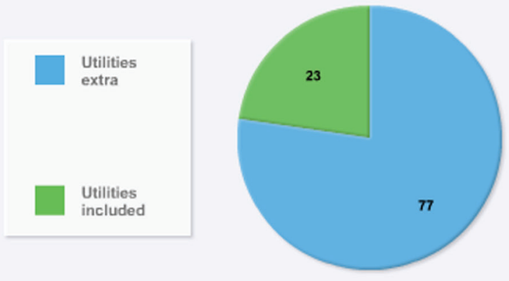
Heating methods



Rent as a percent of household income



Inclusion of utilites in rent

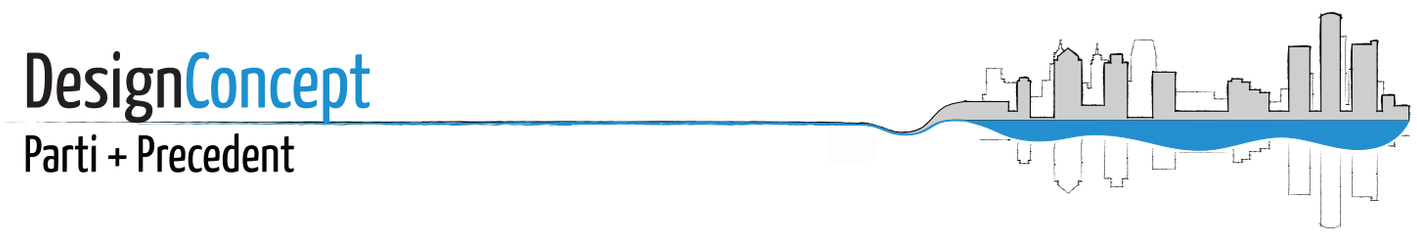


RebrandingDetroit

DesignConcept

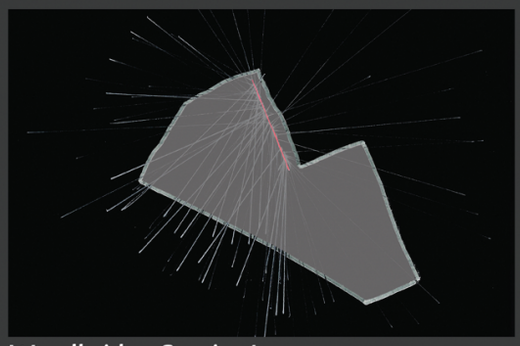
DesignConcept

Parti + Precedent

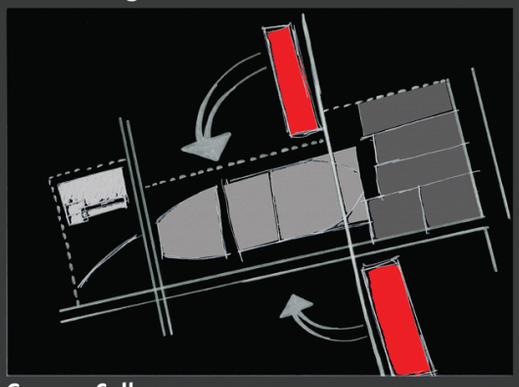


Design Parti

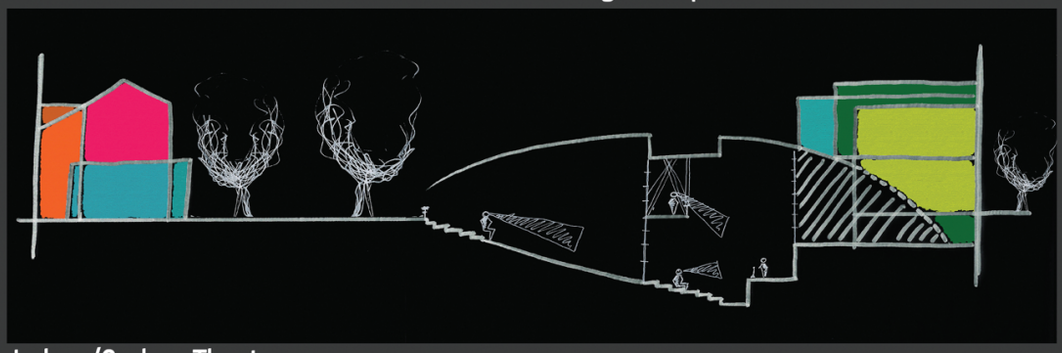
The site in Woodbridge is narrow, and cuts a path through the heart of its residential district to the new, proposed commercial strip. There is a natural gradation that happens and is appernet in my design parti. The education facility, which is firmily grounded in the community, with its pitched rooms translates into a commercial street through the indoor, outdoor theater. Surrounding the theater are the garage spaces, that are taken off the service lane and place around the theater. The theater carves out the back of the commercial spaces to act as a natural setting for organzied activity and leisure. The integration of a mechanical second deck to the indoor theather could be explored through a pully system that could raise part of the outdoor seating that could act as seating for summer performances.



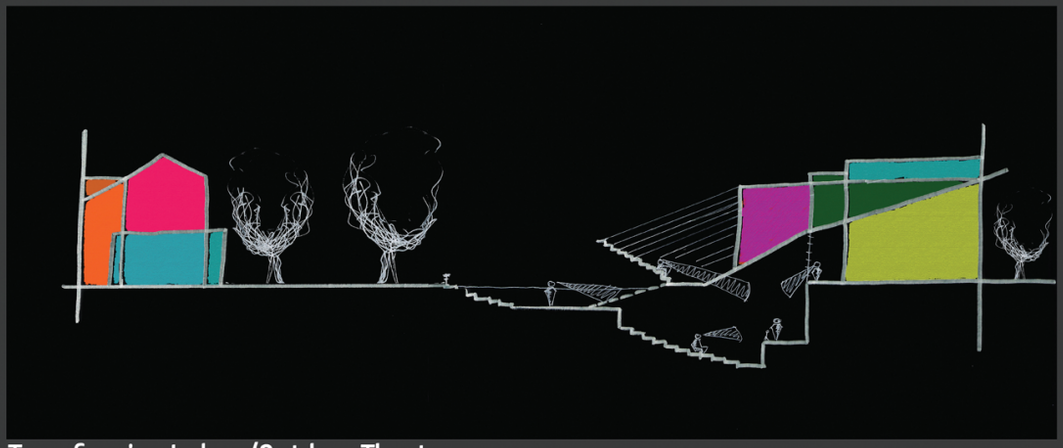
Woodbridge Service Lane



Garage Collapse

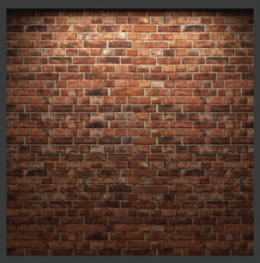


Indoor/Oudoor Theater

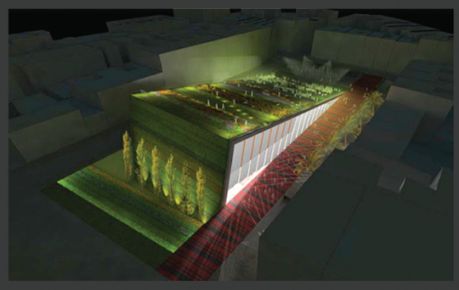


Transforming Indoor/Outdoor Theater

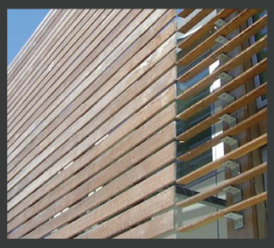
Precedents



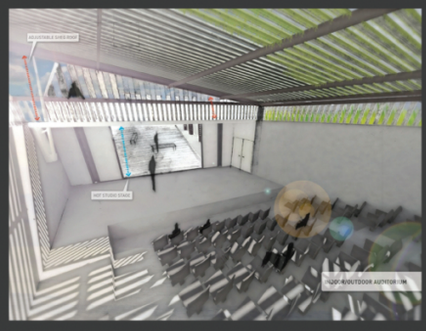


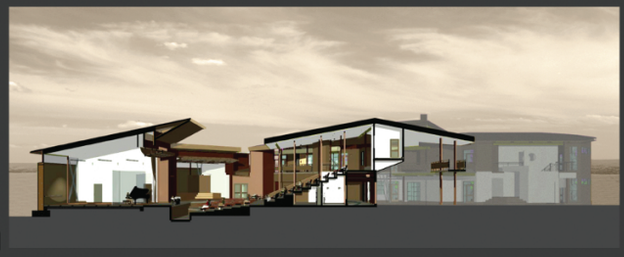




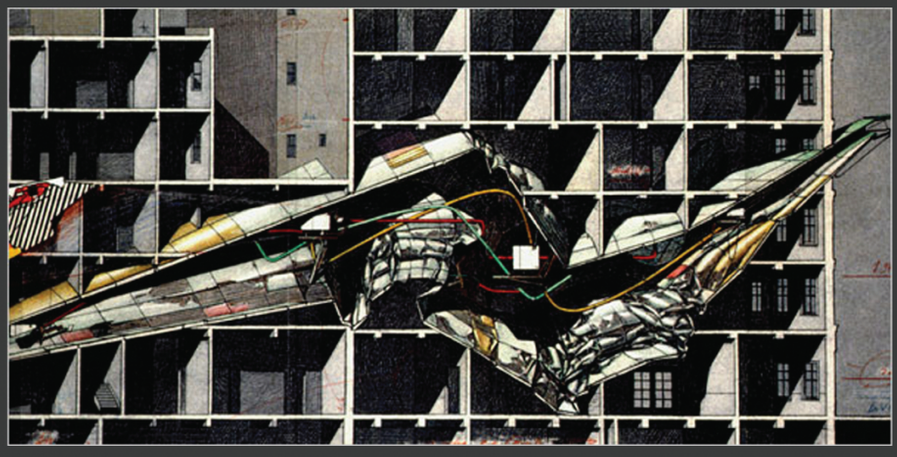


Materials





Indoor/Outdoor Auditorium







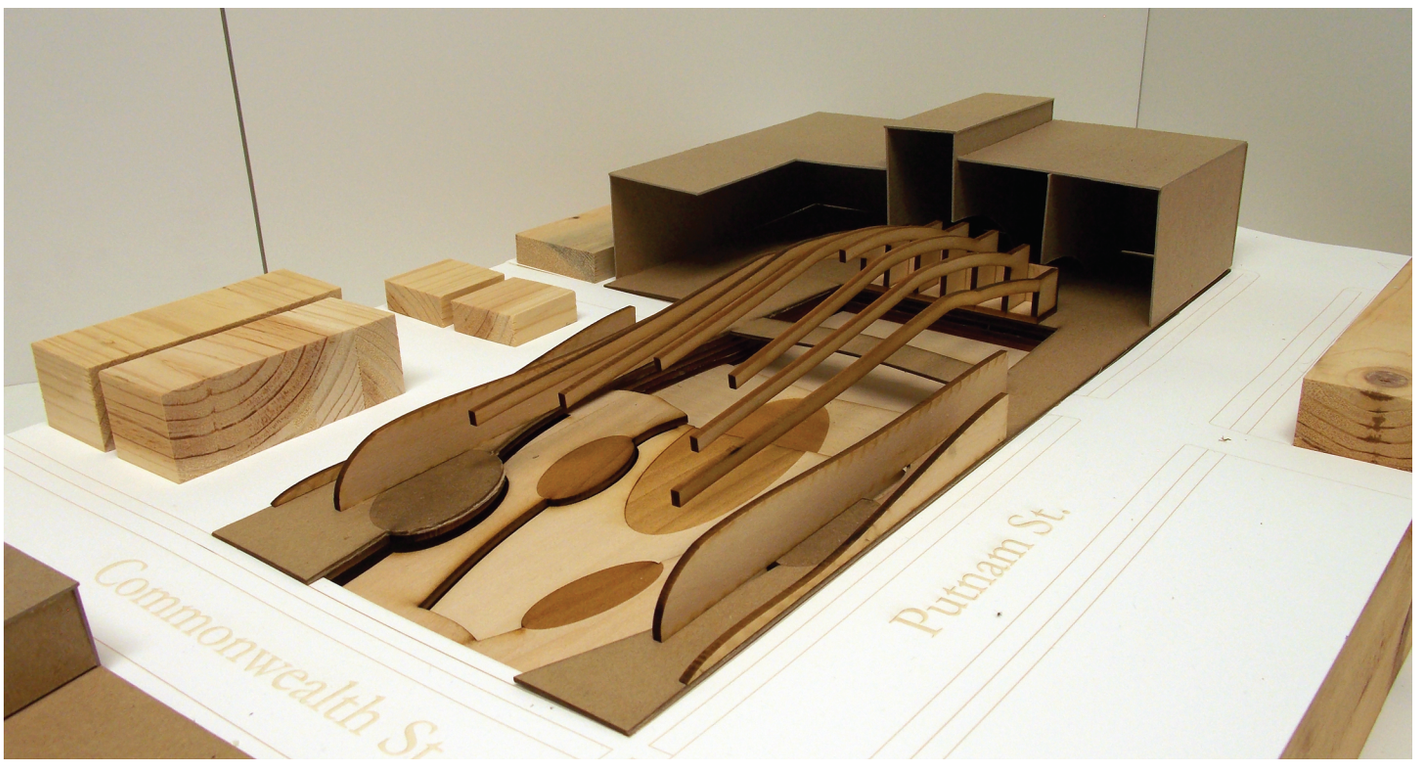
Parasitic Design

DesignConcept

Schematic 1

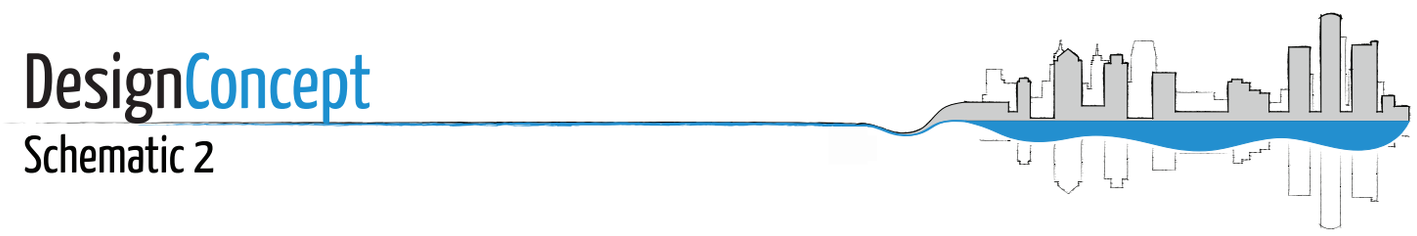



START UP SPACE
KITCHEN
SEATING
STAGE
STORAGE
SMALL STUDIO
RESTAURANT
MUSIC STORE
LOBBY
BACKROOM
RESTROOMS (PUBLIC)
WAREROOM
PRACTICE ROOMS
KITCHEN
SEATING
AUDITORIUM
OUTSIDE SEATING
START UP SPACE
SITE PLAN 1:30
SECTION 1:30
ELEVATION 1:30


Commonwealth St
Putnam St.

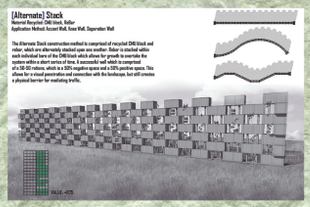
DesignConcept

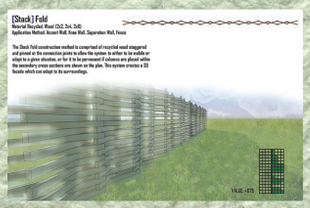
Schematic 2

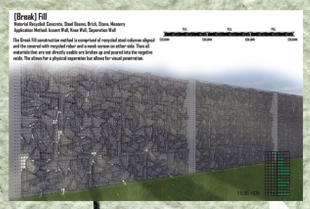


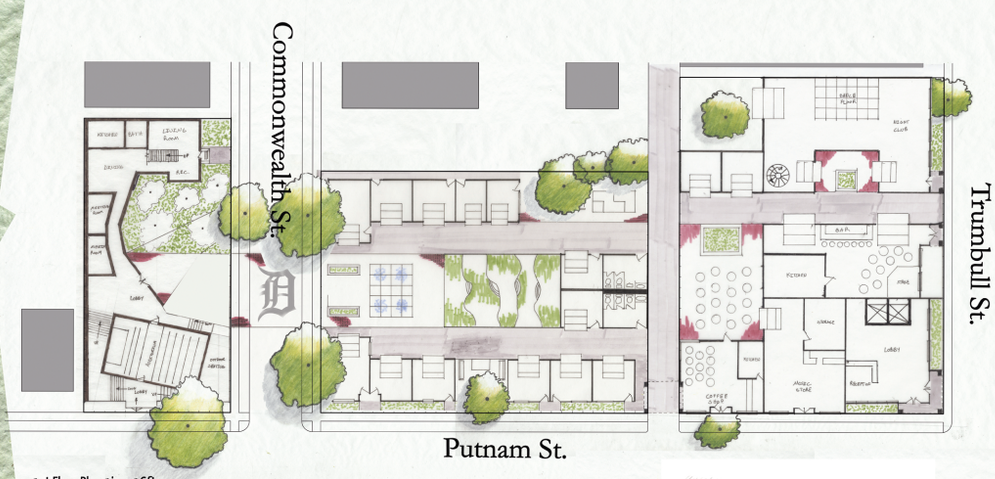
ReciplocalDetroit

Reciplocal Woodbridge will organize its program around music, and offer cheap startup spaces, or "garages" for those looking to become an entrepreneur in the field. This will be accomplished by partnering up with an established city initiative, Recycle Detroit. Recycle Detroit provides reusable building materials from torn down industrial buildings, with the most common materials being brick, steel, and CMU concrete blocks. A set of these startup garages, placed in succession, will provide a modern day marketplace, a set up of small shops for neighborhood residents and outsiders alike to come and enjoy the local flavor of music provided by musical entrepreneurs.

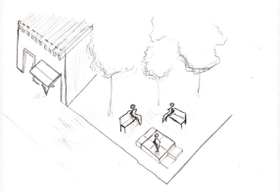








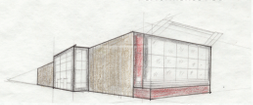
1st Floor Plan 1in = 16ft



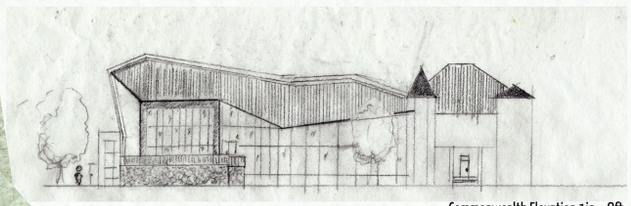
Performance Pad



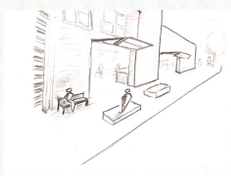
Trumbell Elevation 1in = 8ft



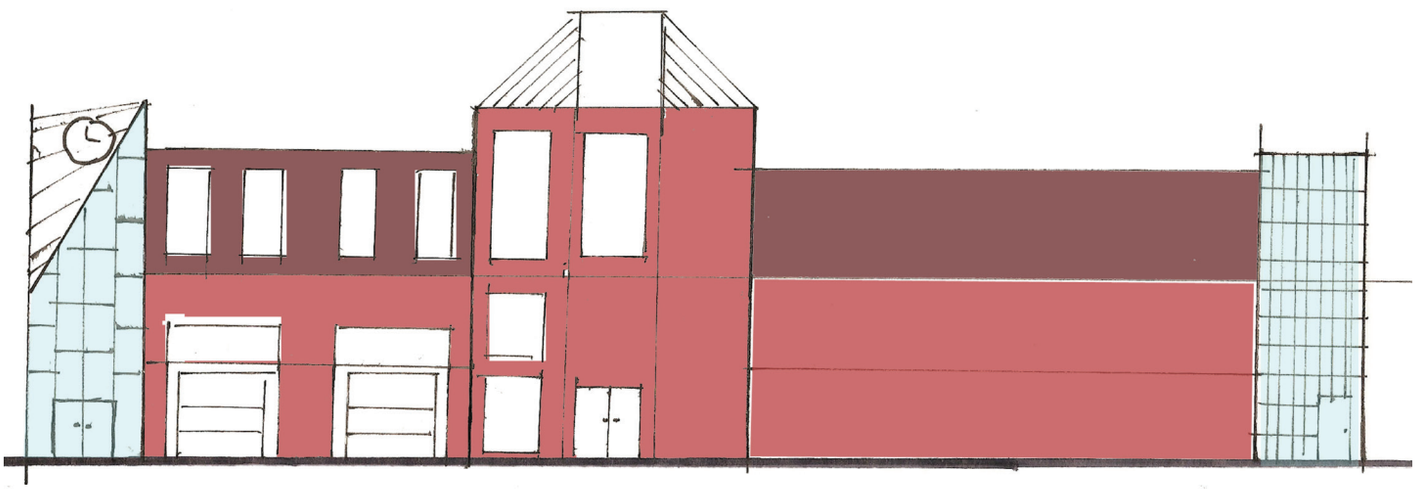
Auditorium

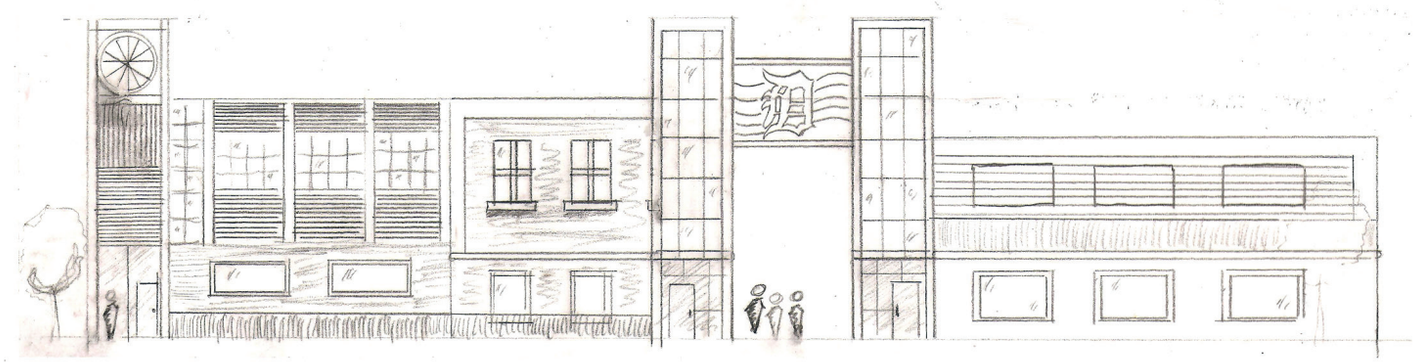


Commonwealth Elevation 1in = 8ft



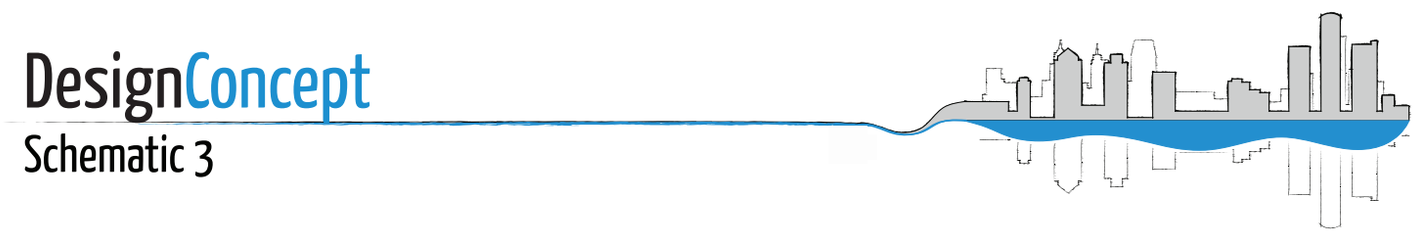
Startup Alley



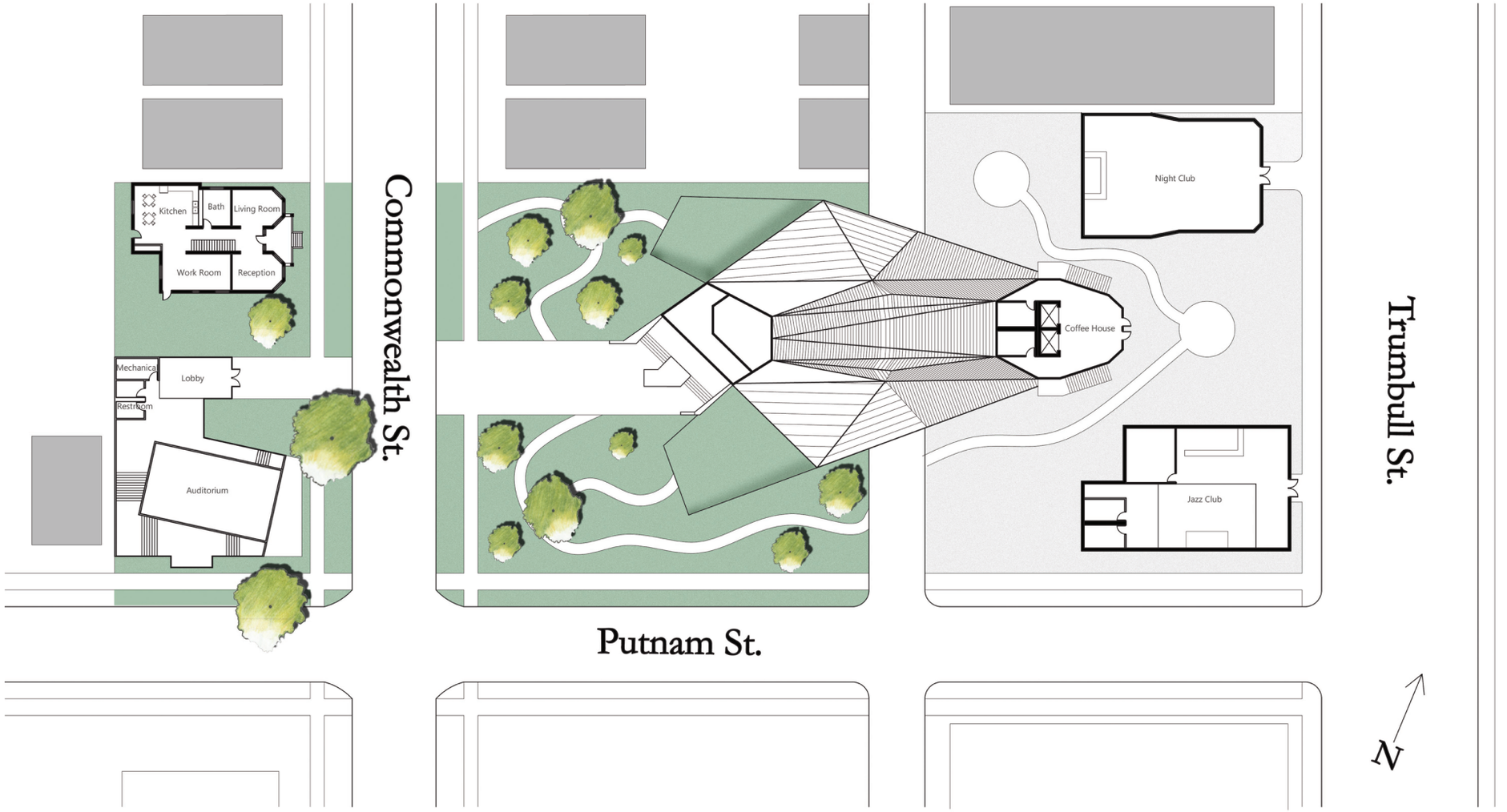


DesignConcept

Schematic 3



Trumbull St.
N
Restroom
Lobby
Theater
Box Office
Lobby
Putnam St.
Commonwealth St.
Bedroom
Bedroom
Bath
Storage
Entertainment
Subterranean Level



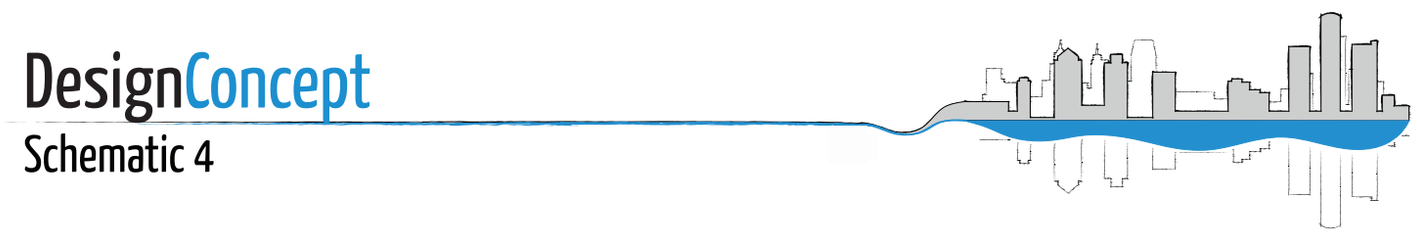
Ground Level

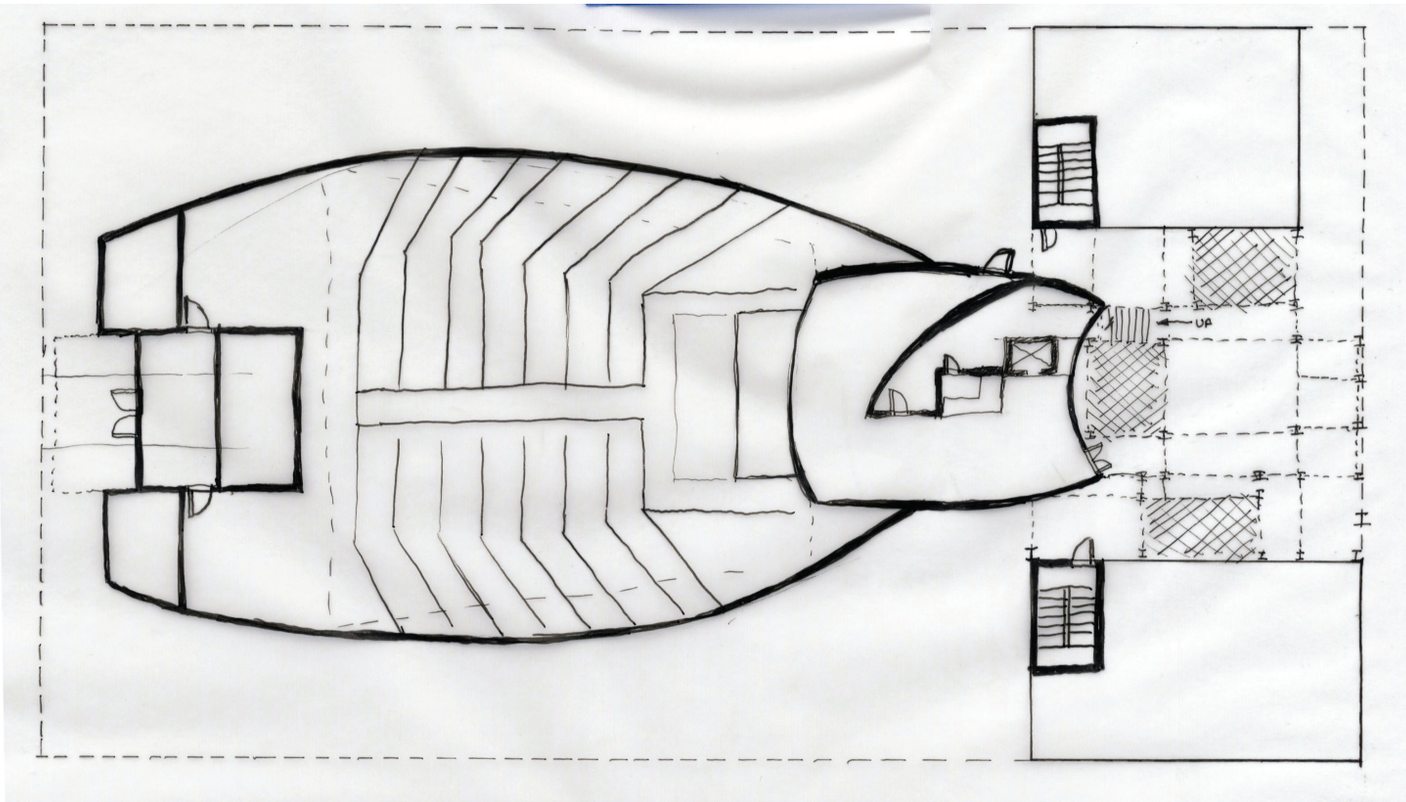
Trumbull St.
N
Recording Studio
Putnam St.
Commonwealth St.
Practice Room
Practice Room
Office
Classroom

2nd Level

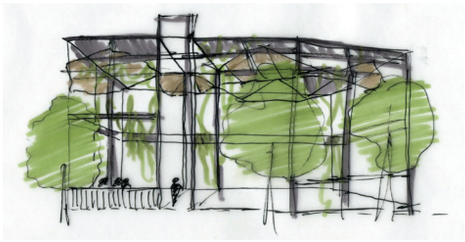
DesignConcept

Schematic 4

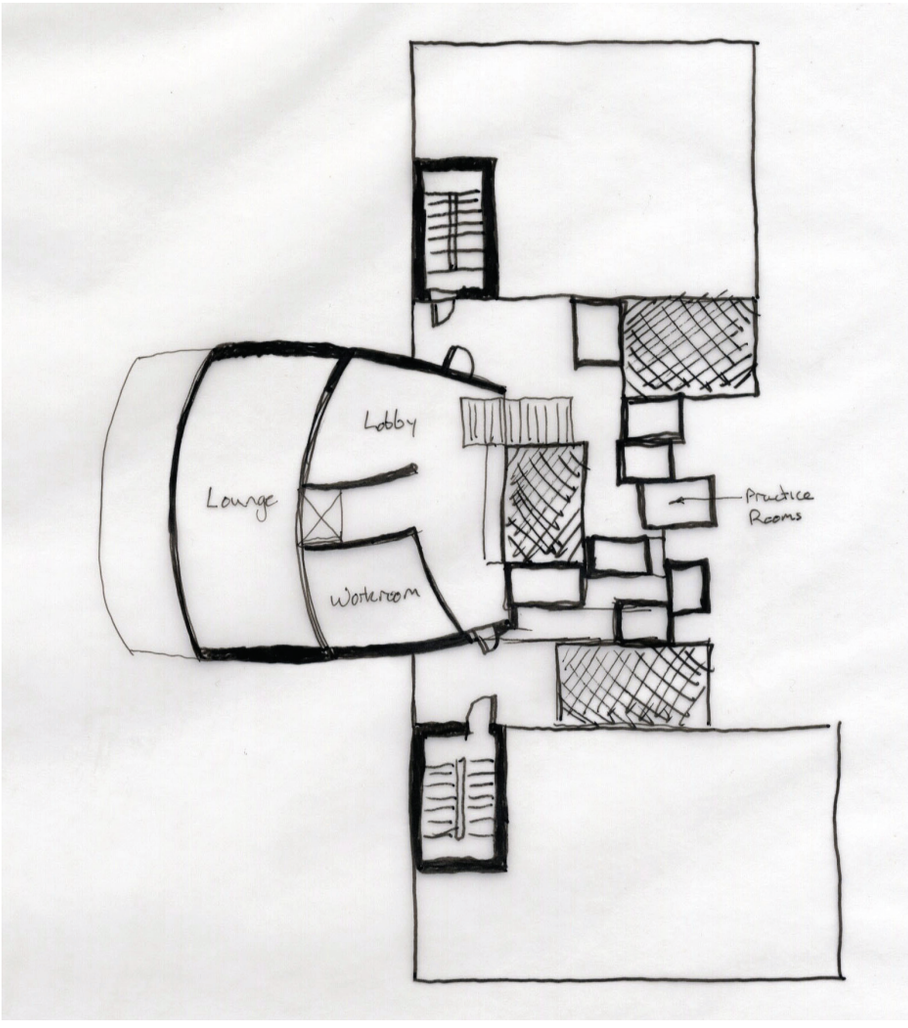


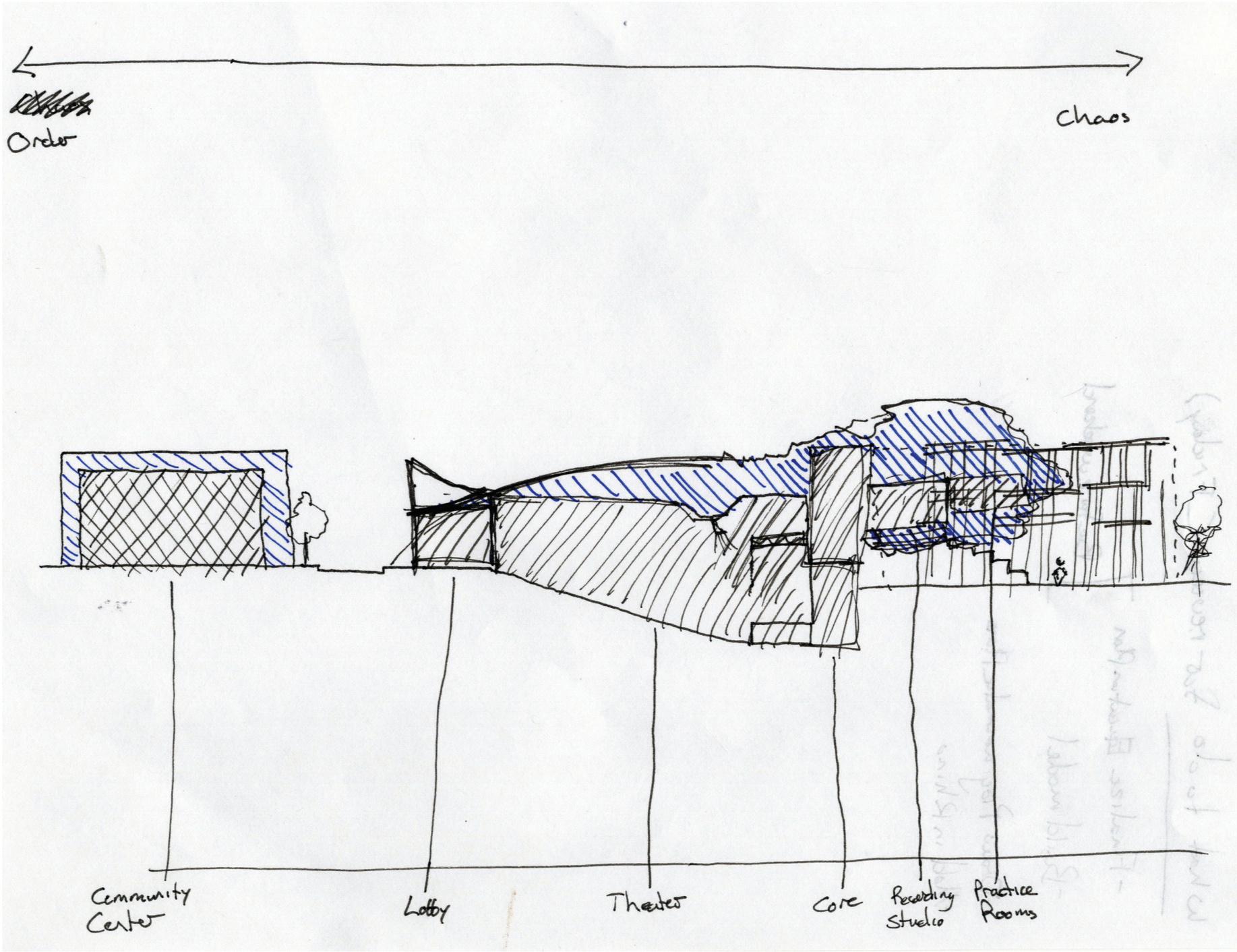

UP

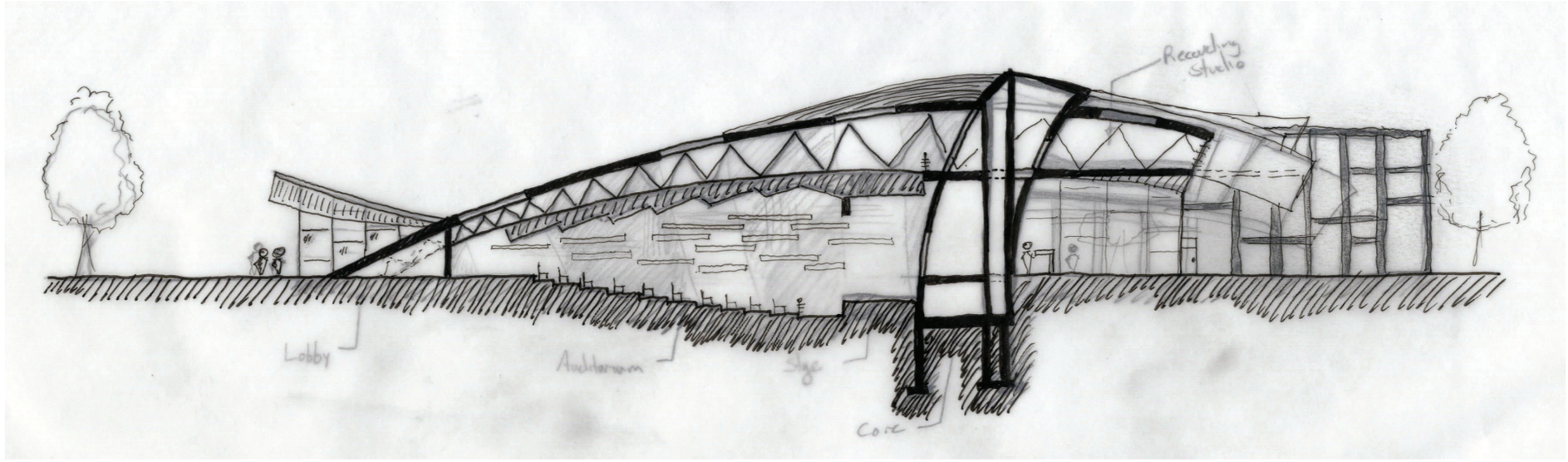


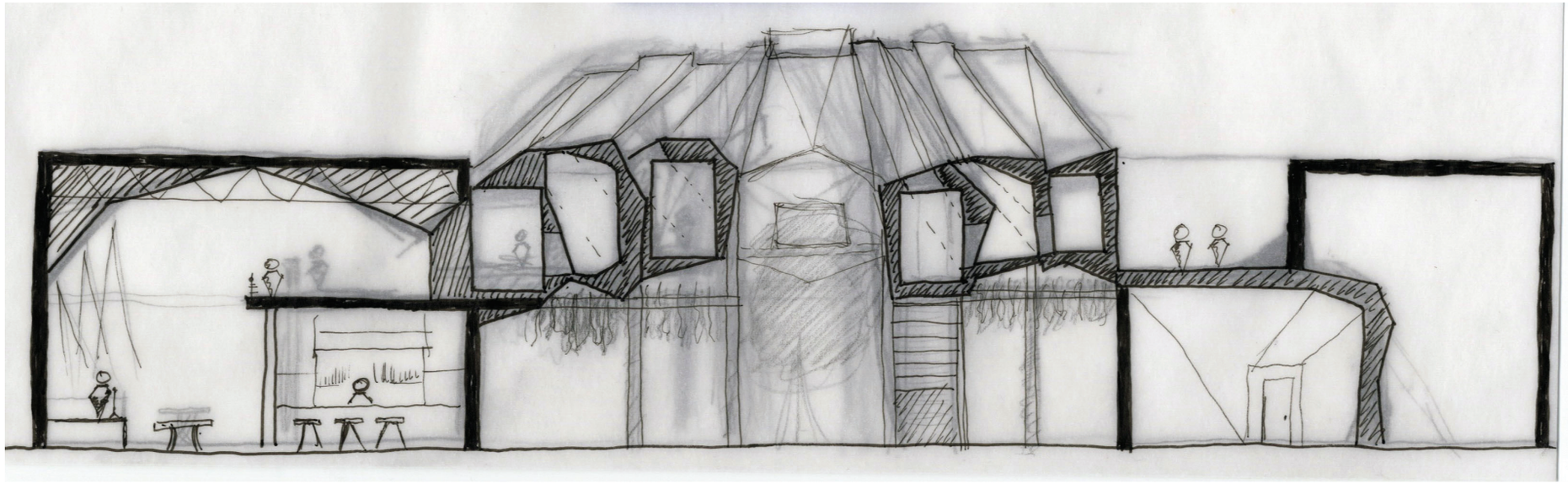





Lobby
Lounge
Workroom
Practice
Rooms

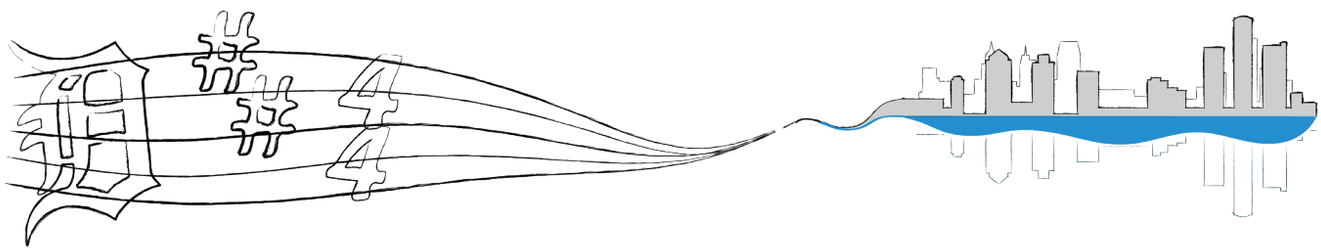

Order
Chaos
Community Center
Lobby
Theater
Core
Recording Studio
Practice Rooms

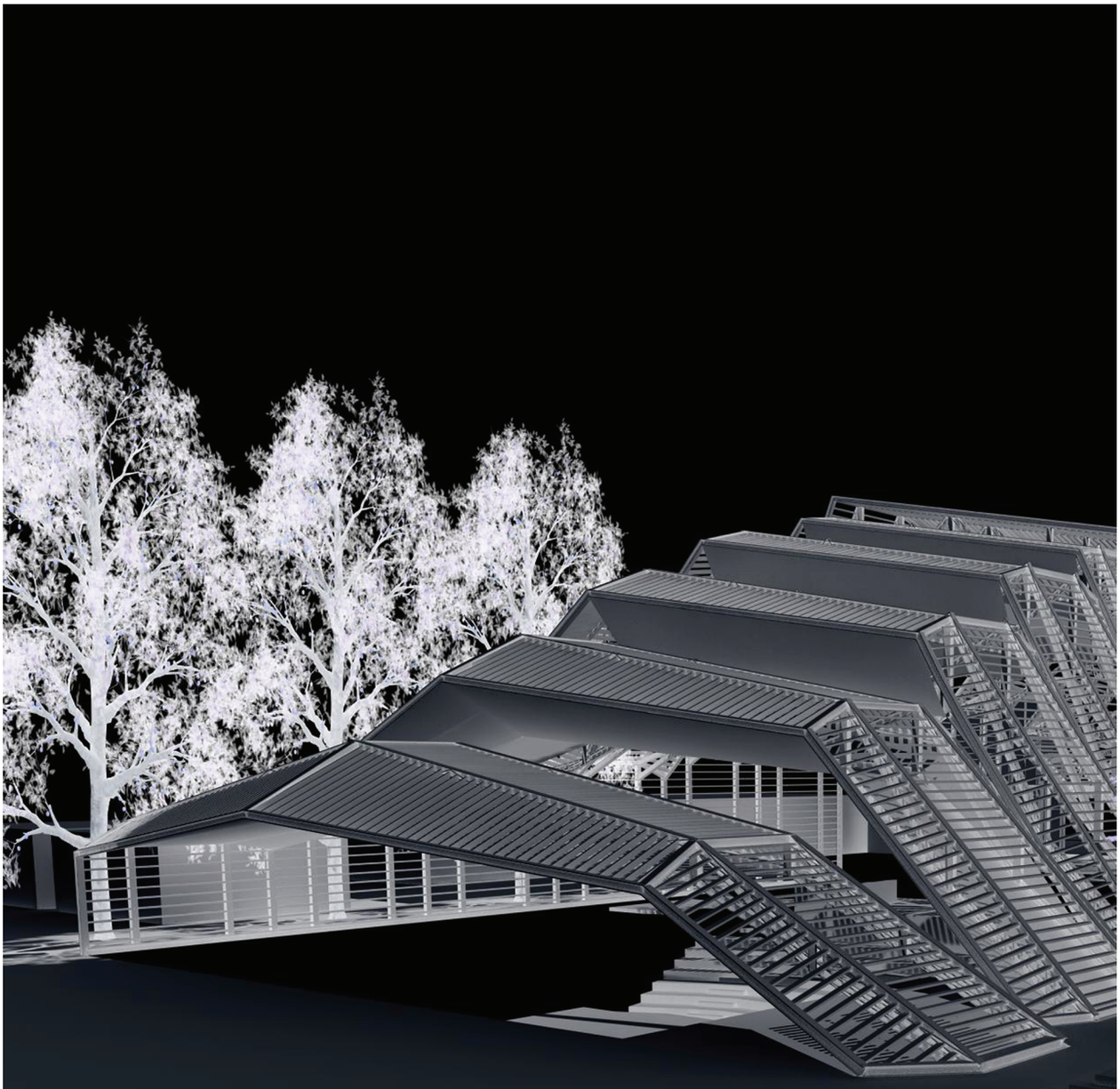

Recording studio
Lobby
Auditorium
Stage
Core



RebrandingDetroit

FinalPresentation

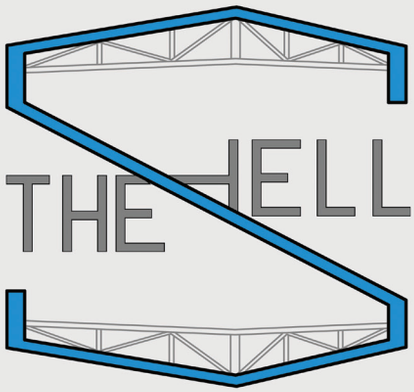




Rebranding Detroit

Music, Identity, and Perception in the New, Post-Industrial City

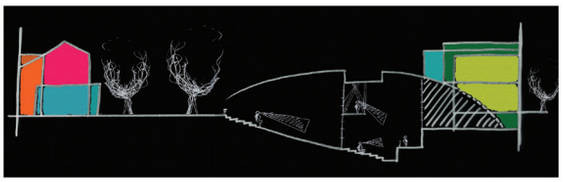
Zach Carman
Tuesday, April 22nd
5:15, Atrium



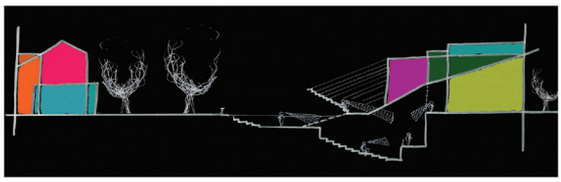
Woodbridge Music Center

Detroit's biggest issue today is the battle over its perception, not reality. The city continues to struggle in its rebuilding efforts due to a negative branding technique used by for-profit media companies to perpetuate a poor living environment. The existing infrastructure doesn't help this stigma, as it easily allows the residents of metrol Detroit to indulge in the city without living within its confines. Detroit doesn't need more visitors, it needs more citizens. The city must focus its efforts on rebuilding its neighborhoods. This means focusing on safety,education, and city services to capture the positive energy and organize it towards developing networked, thriving neighborhoods.

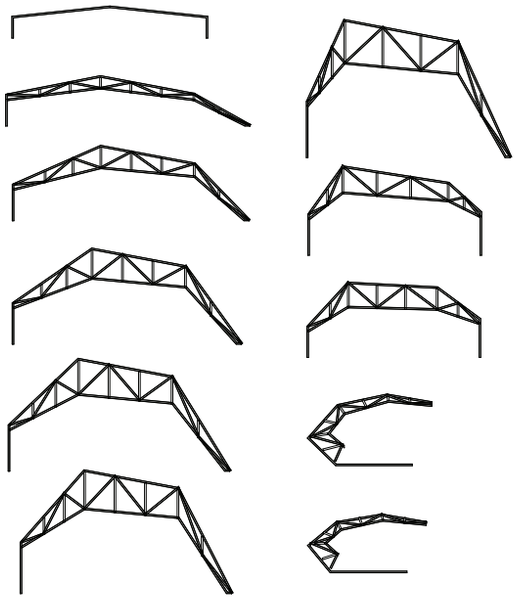
Design Parti

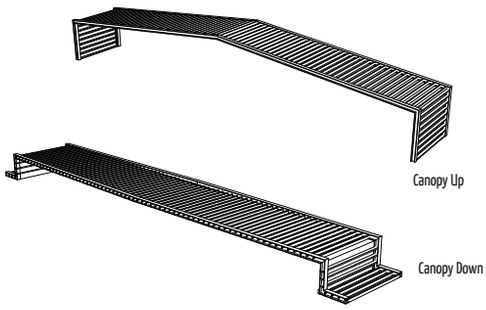


Structure Transformation



Stage Transformation

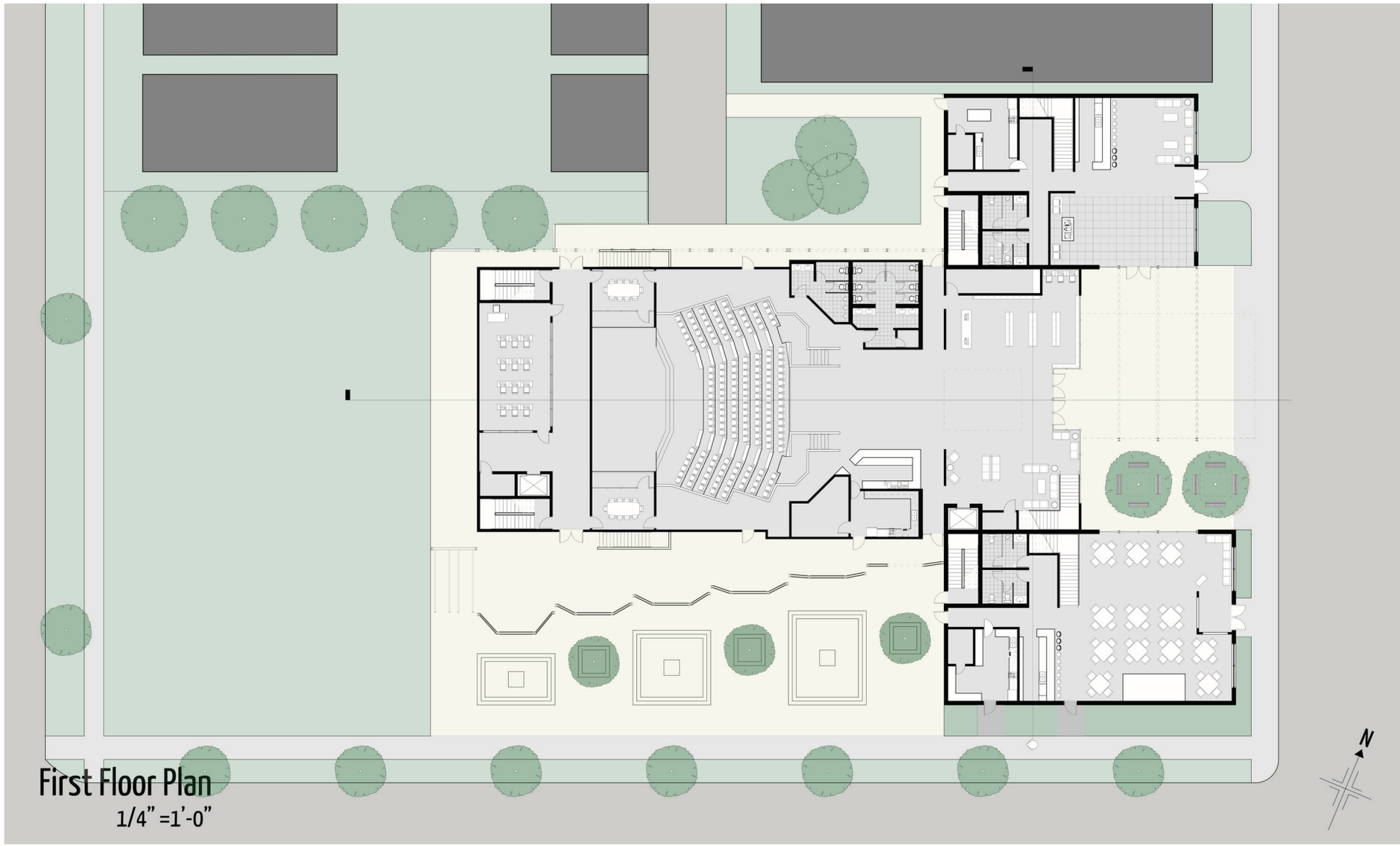




Program

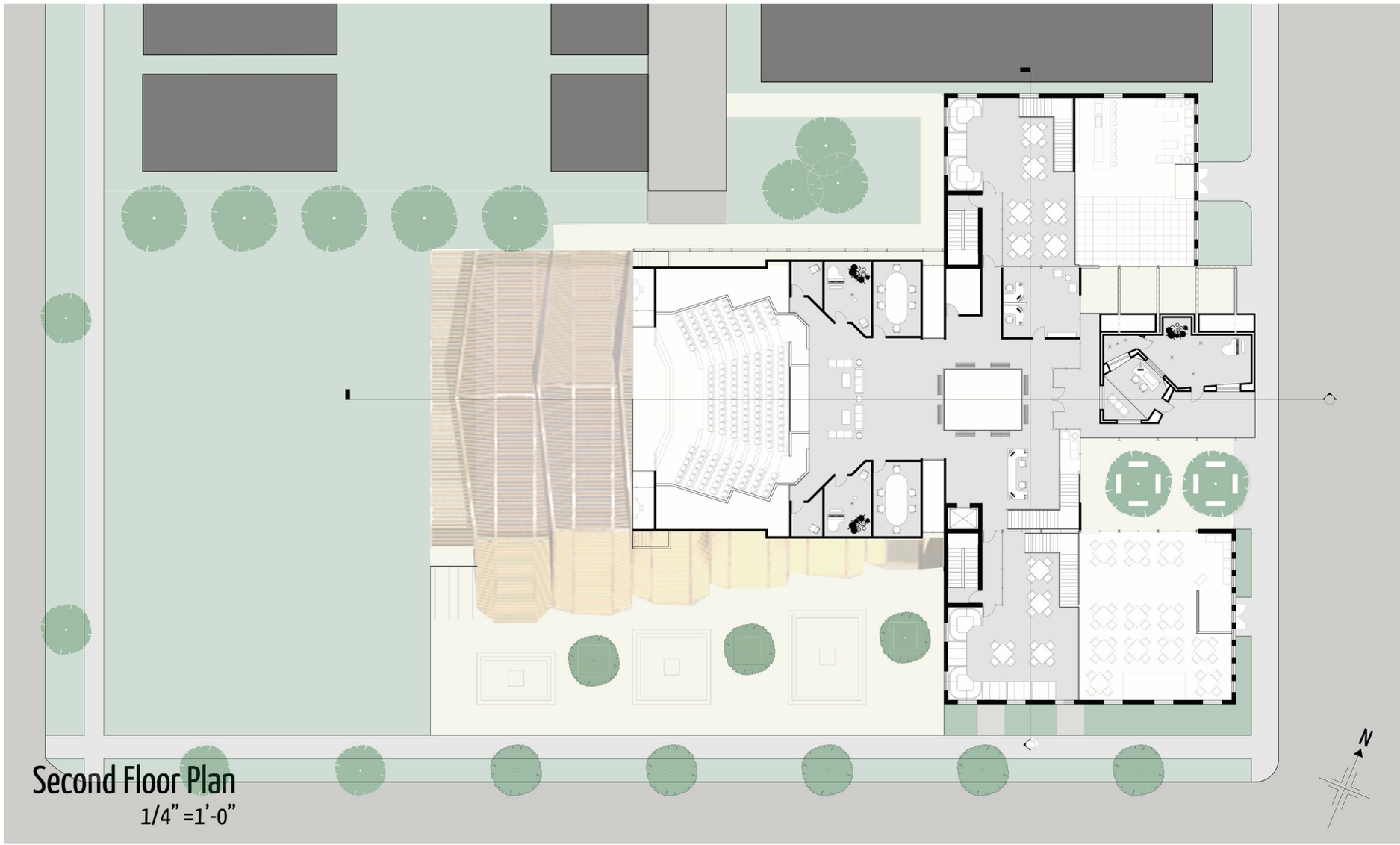
1. Computer Lab
2. Dressing Rooms
3. Workrooms
4. Stage
5. Bathrooms
6. Practice Rooms
7. Coffee Shop
8. Music Store
9. Offices
10. Lobby
11. Recording Studio





First Floor Plan

1/4" =1'-0"



Second Floor Plan

1/4" =1'-0"



Longitudinal Section

Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

Trumbull Street Elevation
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"





Cross Section
Scale: 1/4" = 1'0"

Commonwealth Street Elevation

Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"




Parkside Perspective


Trumbull St. Perspective
JAZZ

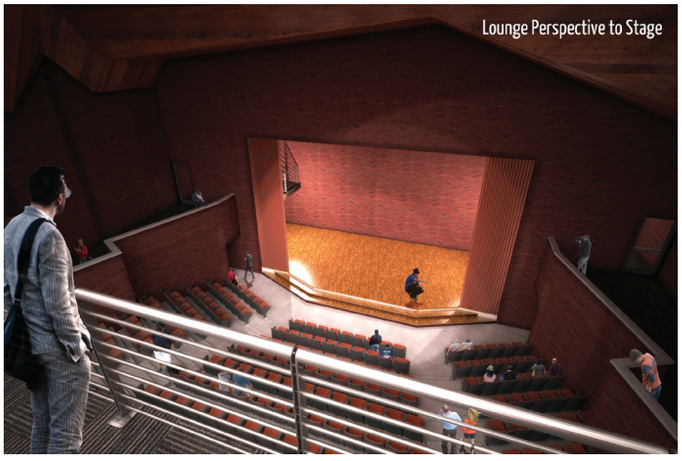

Entrance Perspective
bounce

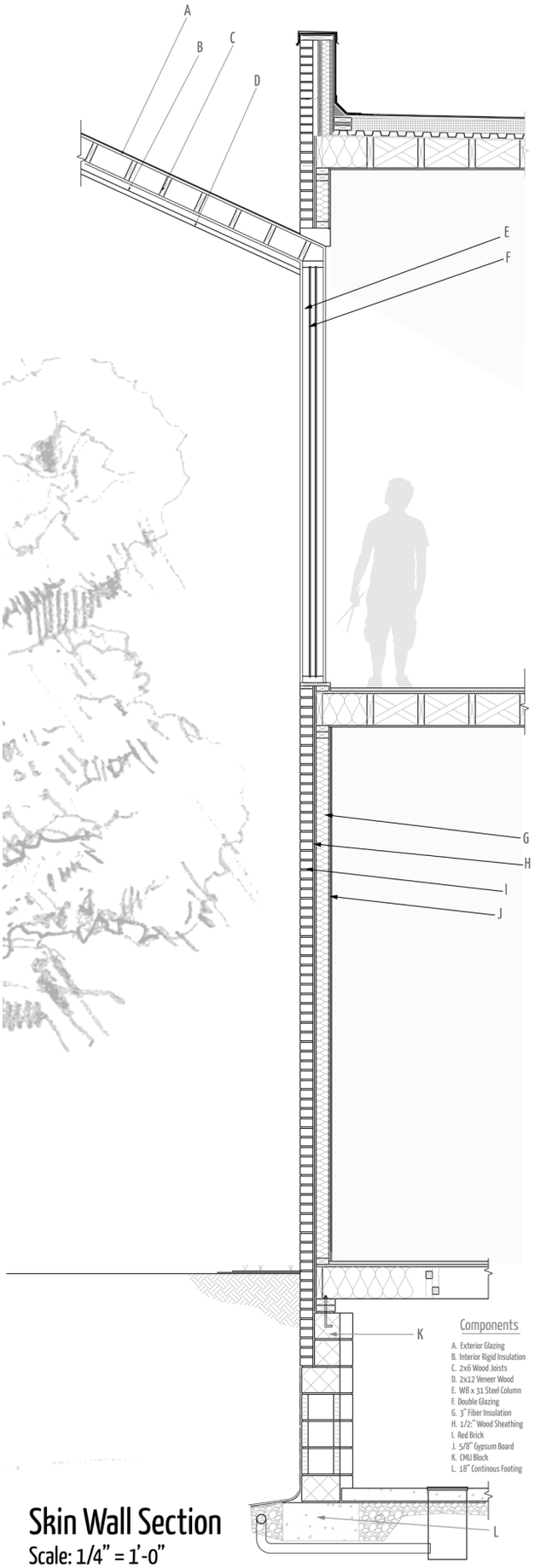

Recording Studio


Stage Perspective


Sculpture Park on Commwealth


2nd Floor Lounge


Lounge Perspective to Stage



Skin Wall Section

Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"


Putnam St.
Trumbull St.

