

making space : refuge to home

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Master of Architecture in Architecture

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abstract

Home - the universally understood and desired state of being that is existing naturally, harmoniously, familiar, and whole. What does it mean to leave home and to seek refuge? And how do we find home again? Throughout history and today, communities across the globe have either suffered in or been plagued with a refugee crisis in some form. Laos is the most bombed country per capita in history. During the American Secret War on Laos, 270 million tons of cluster bombs were dropped on Laos from 1964-1973: equivalent to a planeload of bombs every 8 minutes, 24 hours per day, for 9 years. Today, over 265,000 Lao Americans live in the United States with a majority of them arriving as refugees in the 1980s as a result of the Secret War. Lao Americans forced from their homes have since found refuge but what does it look like for them to come home? Understanding home as not only defined as a physical geospatial location, what creates the physiological sense being at home in one's body and one's mind?

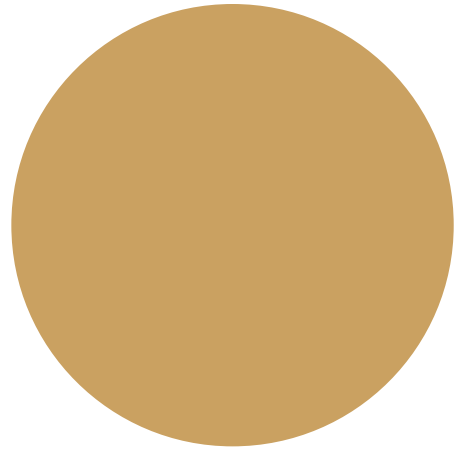
These are the questions underpinning this thesis. They necessitate an understanding of psychology, sociology, and neurology in a way that has traditionally not been a framework of architectural education and design process thinking. As the broader mental health crisis and concern for well-being continues to dominate societal struggles, architecture and design are called upon to evolve their methodologies. *Making Space: Refuge to Home* presents a design methodology that focuses on cultivating an informed and empathic client relationship in order to drive intentional design choices based on desired physiological outcomes. In doing so, this thesis offers an approach of how to navigate the complexities of place, home, safety, and identity in order to make space that shifts from providing refuge and safety, to being home and whole. By utilizing participatory story-telling, psycho-social outcome identification, and empathic imagination, this thesis develops a trauma-informed and well-being centric design approach for cultivating resilience and making space to come home. This methodological rigor is applied specifically to the Lao American community and their experience of forced resettlement and intergenerational trauma.

Making Space: Refuge to Home challenges traditional architectural approaches that often lean on cultural appropriation, iconographic motifs, or traditional programmatic understandings of what a cultural center is and instead, crafts a new design language. The result is a design approach that places the lived emotional and physiological experience of the user group first. The result is an attempt at a more authentic and complex understanding of home that straddles a multiplicity of cultures and lived realities.

general audience abstract

Home - the universally understood and desired state of being that is existing naturally, harmoniously, familiar, and whole. What does it mean to leave home and to seek refuge? And how do we find home again? Throughout history and presently, communities across the globe have either suffered in or been plagued with a refugee crisis. Laos is the most bombed country per capita in history. During the American Secret War on Laos, 270 million tons of cluster bombs were dropped on Laos from 1964-1973: equivalent to a planeload of bombs every 8 minutes, 24 hours per day, for 9 years. Today, over 265,000 Lao Americans live in the United States with a majority of them arriving as refugees in the 1980s as a result of the Secret War. Lao Americans forced from their homes have since found refuge but what does it look like for them to come home? Understanding home as not only defined as a physical geospatial location, what creates the physiological sense being at home in one's body and one's mind?

These are the questions underpinning this thesis. The direct connection of the built environment and individual well-being has only become more apparent in the past two years as a widespread societal awakening towards systemic issues around public health have been illuminated during the global pandemic. As the mental health crisis and concern for well-being continues to dominate societal struggles, *Making Space: Refuge to Home* presents a design methodology that focuses on using psychology, sociology, and neurology to inform an empathic client relationship that is better equipped to drive intentional design choices. In doing so, this thesis offers a trauma-informed and well-being centric design approach of how to navigate the complexities of place, home, safety, and identity in order to make space that transforms from simply offering refuge to being home. This method is applied specifically to a study of the Lao American community and their lived experience of forced resettlement and intergenerational trauma. Although the thesis focuses on the Lao American community, *Making Space: Refuge to Home*, speaks to all communities and individuals navigating multiple identities and cultures, seeking wholeness - seeking home.



contents

iii. abstract

1 introduction

6 definitions

17 context | seeking refuge

25 proposal | baan Lao

31 objectives + framework + process

37 program + vision

54 site strategy + context

71 existing conditions

77 design | baan Lao

122 conclusion | coming home

123 acknowledgments

124 bibliography

126 figure credits

He took one last fleeting look over his
shoulder at the shore of the Mekong river
at his home
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waters, and swam.

Paul Sodisongdao. 1973. LAOS.

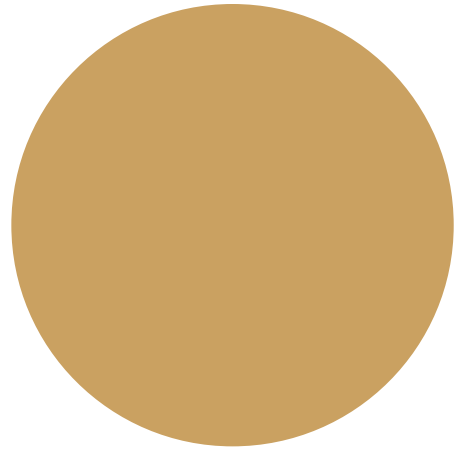


LUANG PRABANG
LAOS
+ memory



*they will never know what it's like
to lose home at risk of never finding home again
to have your entire life split between two lands
and become the bridge between two countries*

Rupi Kaur | "Immigrant"

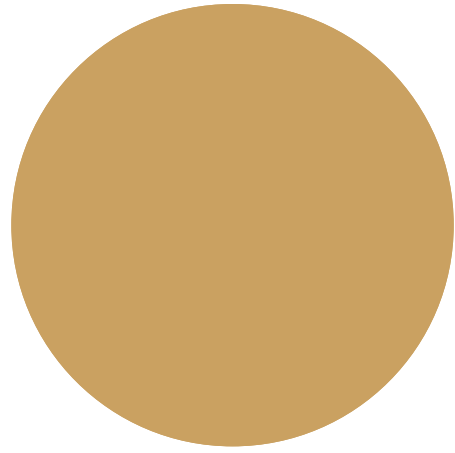


my thesis seeks to utilize
participatory story-telling,
empathic imagination,
psychology, sociology, and neuroscience
to develop a trauma-informed and well-being centric
design process and approach
for creating safety, cultivating resilience,
and making space for “seeking refuge” to become “at home”
physically and mentally.
I will do so by focusing specifically on the Lao American
community experience of resettlement and intergenerational trauma.



Because space is limitless
but oh it is precious
As it is the space between you and me
that can feel like an ocean or
It can feel like a warm golden light,
Basking you in
safety.
A refuge.
A space for you to be you.
And for me to be me.
And for us to be.
At home with empathy.

fig. 2: collage and poem on empathy



refuge noun

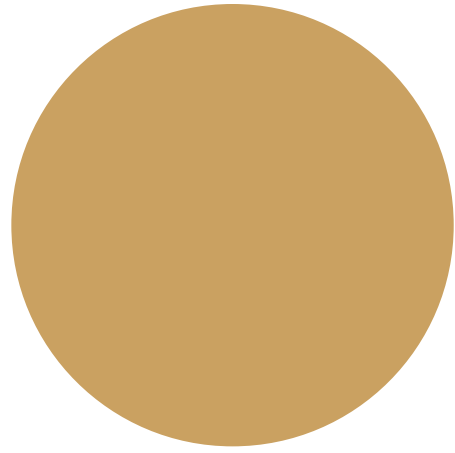
\ re-()fyüj \

1. : shelter or protection from danger or distress
2. : a place that provides shelter or protection
3. : something to which one has recourse in difficulty
4. : finding refuge
the re- in refuge means “back” or “backward” rather than “again;” thus, a refugee is someone who is “fleeing backward”.
refuge tends to appear with certain other words: you generally “seek refuge”, “take refuge”, or “find refuge”.

source: merriam-webster dictionary

“I think the refugee camp, to the rest of the outside world, was a place of refuge. But for those of us who were living in the camp, what we experienced was starvation and persecution, camp guards’ brutalities and death... Coming to America wasn’t something we thought of or had planned. We came here not because the grass feels greener. We came here because fire was burning on our feet.”

Jeff Thungc | Lao refugee resettled in the United States, digital strategist, to NPR’s StoryCorps team



home noun

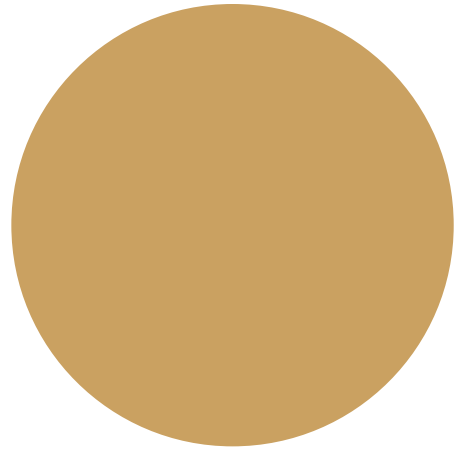
/hōm/

1. : the place (such as a house or apartment) where a person lives
: a family living together in one building, house, etc.
: a place where something normally or naturally lives or is located
2. : a familiar or usual setting, congenial environment
: the focus of one's domestic attention
3. : a place of origin
4. : at home
 - relaxed and comfortable, at ease
 - in harmony with the surroundings
 - on familiar ground, knowledgeable

source: merriam-webster dictionary

“But I know we are all here for the same reason. We’re all searching for a piece of home, or a piece of ourselves. We look for a taste of it in the food we order and the ingredients we buy.”

Michelle Zauner | *Crying in H Mart*



trauma noun

\ trô-m

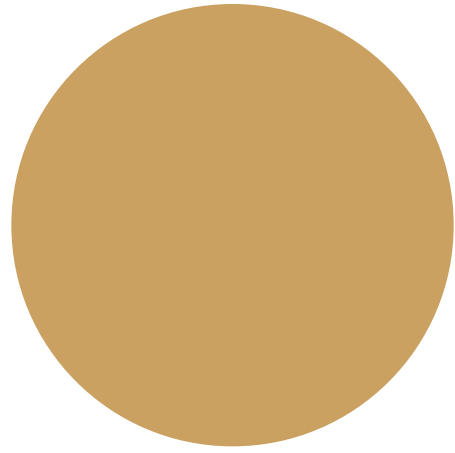
1. : an injury (such as a wound) to living tissue caused by an extrinsic agent
2. : a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury
3. : an emotional upset
4. : an agent, force, or mechanism that causes trauma

source: merriam-webster dictionary



*the emotions and physical sensations that occur during trauma
physically wounds and fundamentally reorganizes the way the
mind and brain manages
perception and relates to its
environment.*

Bessel Van der Kolk | *The Body Keeps the Score*



heal_{verb}

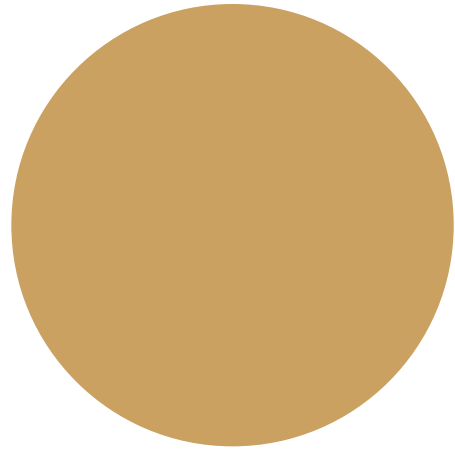
\ hēl \

1. : to make free from injury or disease : to make sound or whole:
2. : to make well again : to restore to health
3. : to cause (an undesirable condition) to be overcome
4. : to restore to original purity or integrity

source: merriam-webster dictionary

“healing is thought of as a sense of wholeness”

Ann Berger | Head of Pain and Palliative Care
at National Institute of Health in *Healing Spaces: The
Science of Place and Well-Being*



intergenerational trauma noun

i only recently learned of this term in the last year or so but when i read about it, it went straight for my heart and unleashed a flood of emotions that for years i've struggled to keep a lid on because i didn't understand how or why i felt the deep pain that i felt. the American Psychological Association recognizes this as a phenomenon where the descendants of a generation that experienced immense trauma feel adverse reactions similar to the generation that lived the traumatic event. continually emerging studies recognize that trauma experienced in one generation impacts the mental health and well-being of descendants in future generations by causing epigenetic changes to how the body reads DNA causing long-term impacts on generations of mental health and well-being.

intergenerational healing

this thesis begins with an understanding of intergenerational trauma, but moreover, it seeks to understand what it looks like for there to be intergenerational healing.

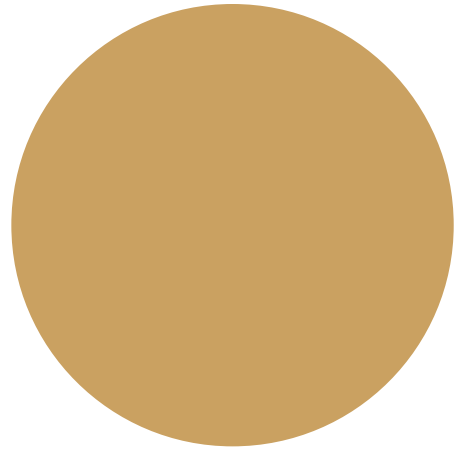
if trauma can be passed down through generations, then in the same way, so can healing. how do we make space that opens the door for healing? how do we make space for healing that can heal future generations? how do we make space for healing that feels like we are no longer in fight or flight, seeking refuge, but coming home?

He took one last fleeting look over his
shoulder at the shore of the Mekong River
at his home
at the guns of border control pointed at his
13 year old back,
and he put his head down in the muddy brown
waters, and swam.

Paul Sodisongdao. 1973. LAOS.



LUANG PRABANG
LAOS
An Image of memory



LAOS

name: Lao People's Democratic Republic

area: 91,875 mi² (slightly larger than Kansas)

population: 7, 12,706 (July 2017 est.)

languages: Lao (official), French, English

one of the poorest countries in the world - the GDP is equal to 3% of Thailand, and less than 1% of the US. 1/3 of Laos's population live below the poverty line.

Source: Legacies of War / About Laos / Facts about Laos



LAOS

the most bombed country per capita in history

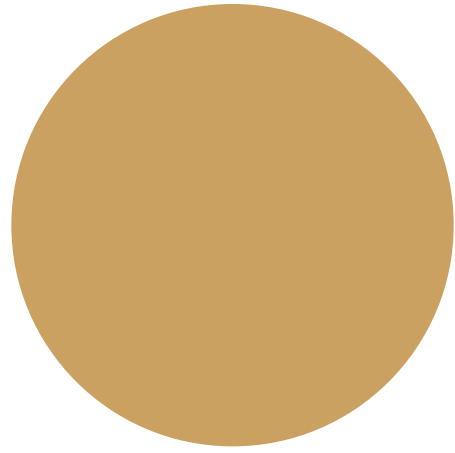


270 million tons of cluster bombs.
equal to a planeload of bombs
every 8 minutes,
24-hours a day,
for 9 years.

my dad recalled how he and his cousin as young boys
would pull out lawn chairs
and watch the mountainside
as planes rained down bombs
on the luang prabang airport
in his village.



fig. 6: memory collage



from 1964-1973, the U.S. dropped over 270 million tons of cluster bombs

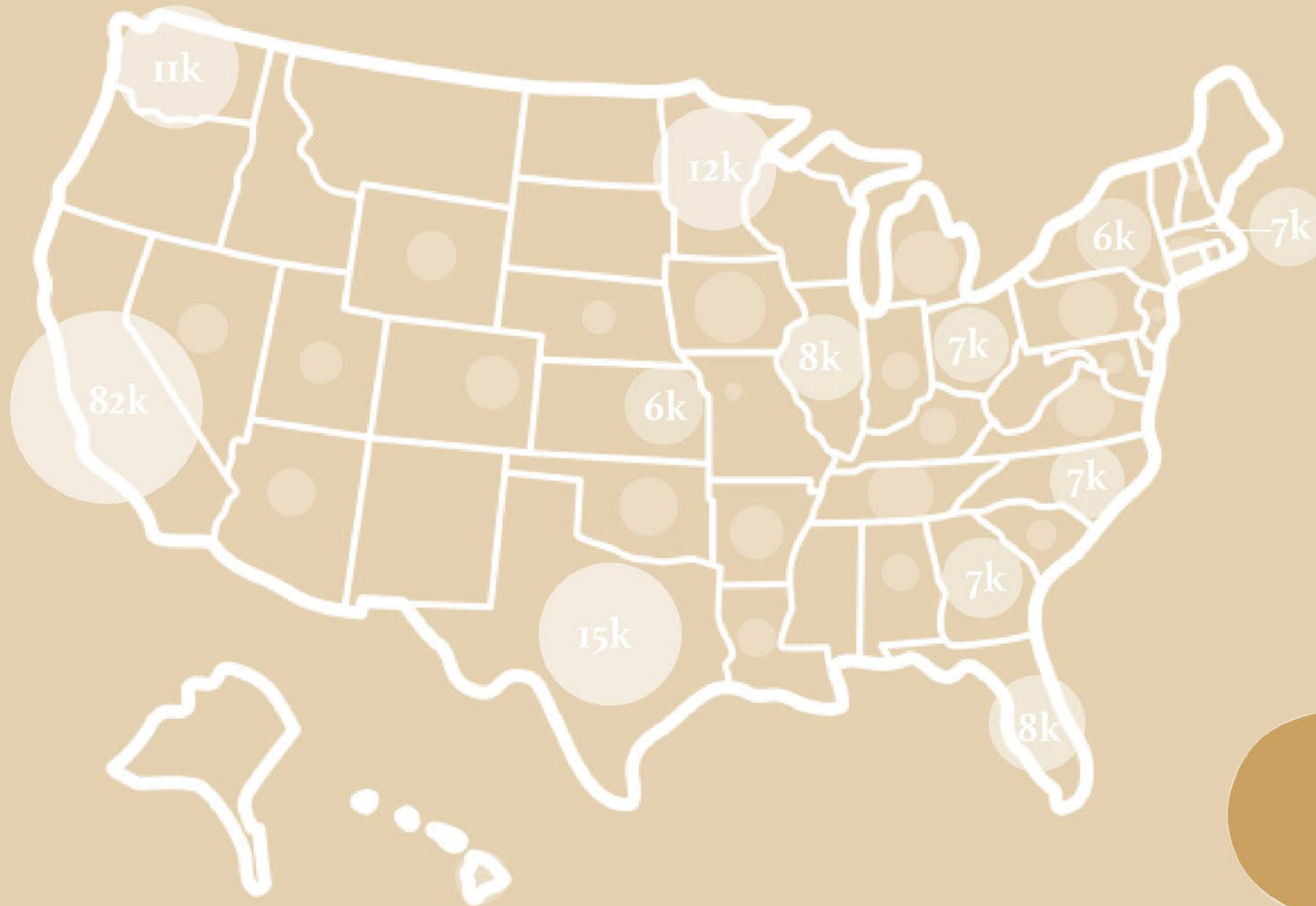
1/3 of the bombs dropped did not explode - leaving Laos littered with unexploded ordnance (UXO) that have killed or injured over 20,000 people. Less than 1% of the UXO have been destroyed.

in 1975 when SE Asian countries fell to communist powers, the first wave of over 100,000 Lao refugees arrived primarily after the Refugee Act of 1980.

Source: Legacies of War / About Laos / Facts about Laos



LAO AMERICANS TODAY



265k total Lao Americans

41% in poverty/low-income

14% with a bachelor degree

50% Asian Americans with bachelor degree

30% total Americans with bachelor degree

Laotian Americans have the lowest rate of higher education

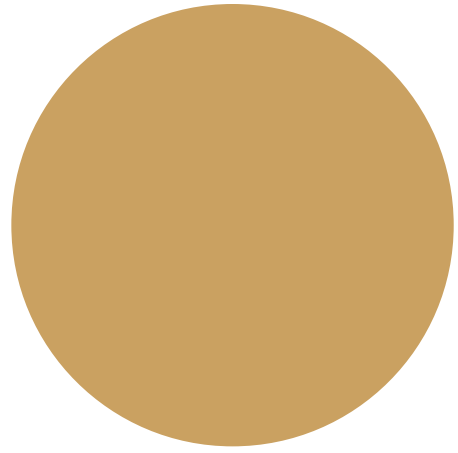


70% of Southeast Asian refugees diagnosed with PTSD*

*of those that sought mental health treatment. many SEAA with physical and mental health conditions often go untreated. Due to cultural stigma, lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate care, and the unavailability of disaggregated data on the health of the SEAA community, their struggles have largely been hidden

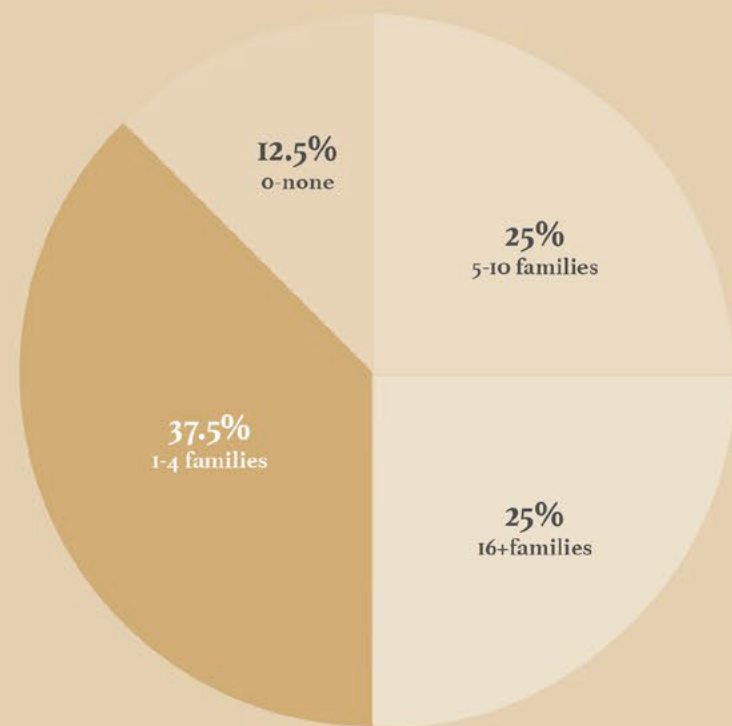
Sources: Pew Research Center / Laotians in the U.S. Fact Sheet ; U.S. Census Bureau / 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; The Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) with Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southeast American Journeys Report; Mental and Behavioral Health - Asian Americans <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlid=54>

fig. 7: map of Lao Americans in the US today

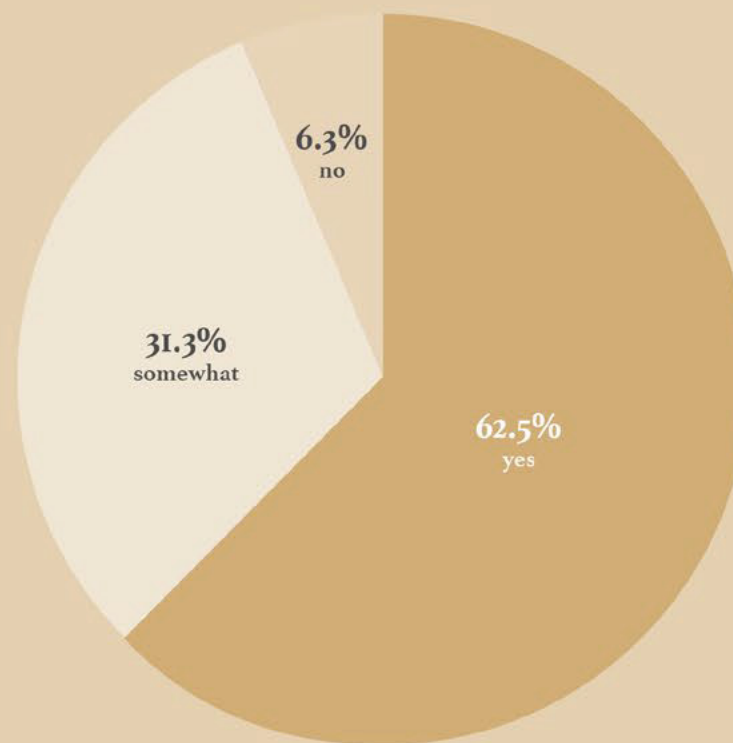


the Lao people have found refuge,
but how do they come home?

How many other Lao families do you currently have/know around you now?



Do you feel connected to your Lao family?



Do you feel connected to the broader Lao community?

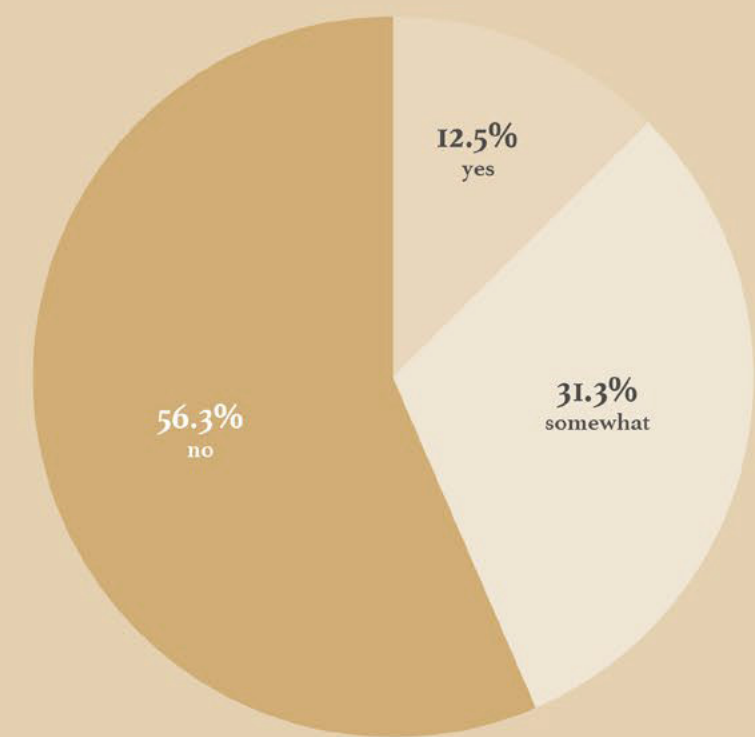
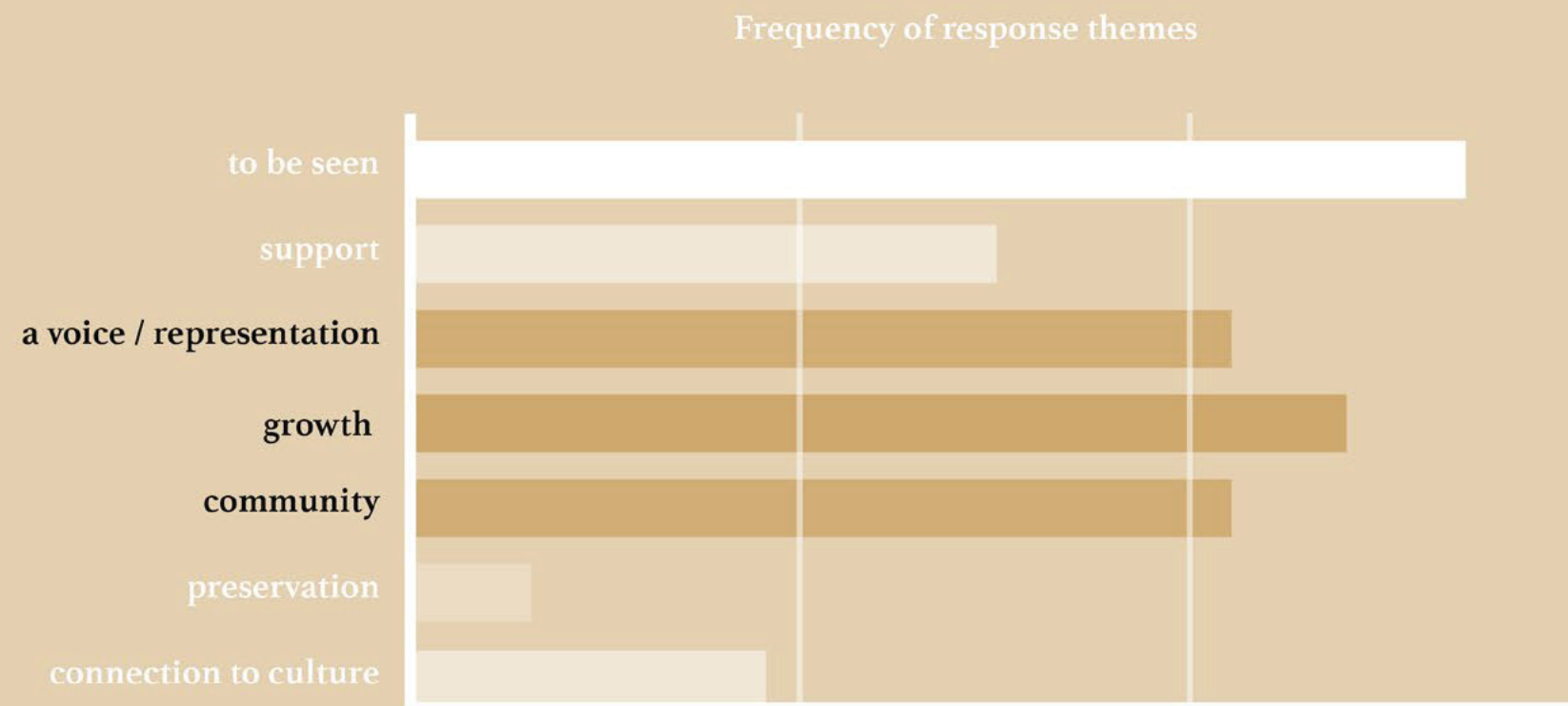


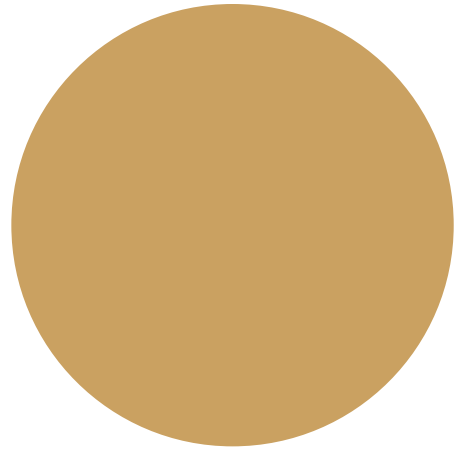
fig. 8: author conducted survey distributed to the Lao American Community (65 participants), results - connection to Lao community

what Lao people need most is...

“to make space for our people and our voices in a way that our previous generations would not feel as empowered to do but we deserve to take up space and to share our culture”

- first generation Lao American, survey respondent





a national highly visible space for the entire community

illustrated in the map from Lao Americans today - the Lao diaspora is widely dispersed across the US but in varying pocket sizes. however, as shown in the previous charts, although there is a strong Lao connection to family (likely as a result of refugee resettlement sponsorship patterns) there is a dramatic lack of perceived connection to a national identity, community, and representation as a whole.

there are a host of disparate Lao community organizational groups working to give voice to, represent, and support the empowerment of the Lao community but the groups are disparate. more than anything through survey responses that will be explored further in this thesis, what Lao people identified they need most is to be seen.

what does a HOME BASE look like for these groups and for the Lao American community to come home to nationally?

when you spend time with family/lao community - where do you usually spend it?

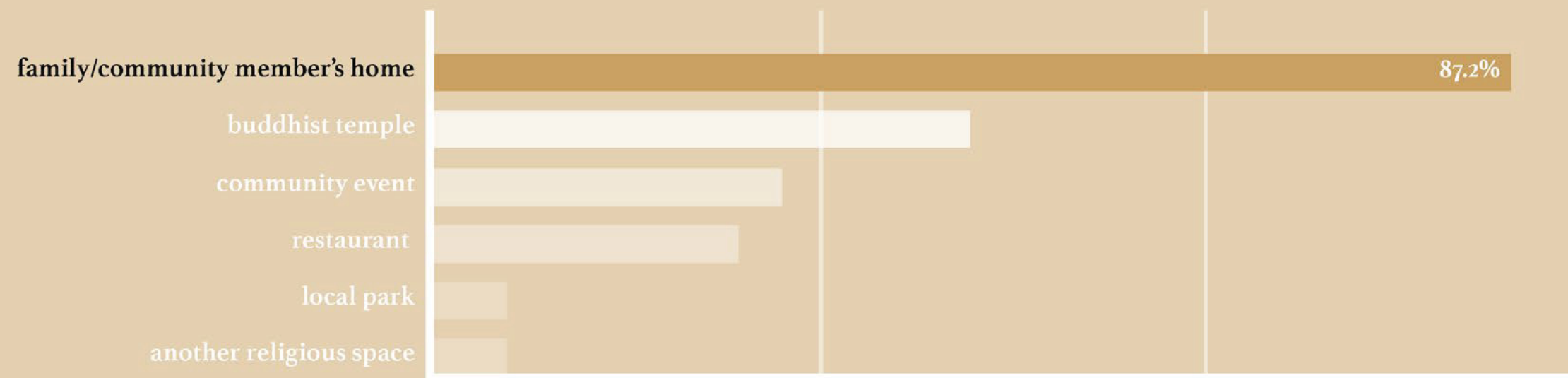
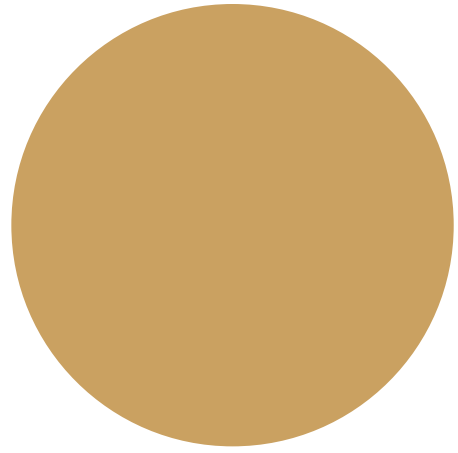


fig. 10: author conducted survey distributed to the Lao American Community (65 participants), results - where do you spend time



it looks like home | baan Lao = Lao home

objectives

- 1 to develop a design methodology process that focuses on an informed and empathic client relationship to drive intentional design choices based on desired psycho-social outcomes.
- 2 to establish a model of how to navigate the complexities of place, home, safety and identity through a case study of a refugee and first generation community.
- 3 to outline a design approach that creates a psychological sense of safety, healing, and physiological well-being: home.

trauma | the mind + the body

1. the emotions and physical sensations that occur during trauma physically wounds and fundamentally reorganizes the way the mind and brain manages perception - the wound of trauma becomes imprinted in the most primal parts of our brain changing how the body sees its environment
2. the nature of trauma is that you keep reacting emotionally and physically as if you are still experiencing the trauma which erodes on your body and brains overall health with the constant trigger of the HPA Axis stress cascade
3. the amygdala - “the smoke detector” + the medial prefrontal cortex “the watchtower” relationship is strained. the amygdala of the brain is over-activated to detect danger and trigger the stress cascade when there is often not proportionate danger in comparison to the alarm.
4. trauma destroys the capacity for imagination
5. trauma disrupts a sense of ownership over the body and the mind and erodes a sense of physical synchrony interpersonally and relationally to others

Source: Van Der Kolk, B. (2014), *The Body Keeps the Score*, Penguin House

healing | the mind + the body x design

1. ground breaking studies like the 2004 study by Roger Ulrich, Craiz Zimring and colleagues demonstrated an overwhelming relationship with patient healing outcomes and the built environment
2. the expectation, belief or hope for healing is shown to release the brain's own morphine and dopamine triggering a reward cascade. therefore, merely learning to associate a place with a positive feeling or hope for healing will create a greater benefit of healing
3. light has proven to affect mood, behaviors, length of hospital stays (Ulrich, 2004), and immune system regulation
4. psychoacoustics speak to how sound is perceived and what sound is perceived can impact attention, focus, productivity, as well as relaxation
5. touch + haptic senses stimulate the vagus nerve which counters adrenalin like responses activated in a stress response
6. slow, steady breathing also activates the vagus nerve to counter stress responses and can be promoted through physical space by the creation of an intentional path with a clear destination
7. social support - friendship and community is one of the greatest markers for longevity and physiological health. whereas loneliness or isolation is proven to be as great of a risk factor for mortality as being an avid smoker.

Sources: Denworth, L. (2020) *Friendship: the Evolution, Biology, and Extraordinary Power of Life's Fundamental Bond*, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. ; Sternberg, E. M. (2010). *Healing spaces: The science of place and well-being*. Harvard University Press. ; Van Der Kolk, B. (2014), *The Body Keeps the Score*, Penguin House.

design framework

story-telling participatory design

- collects first-hand narratives, reflections, and experiences to inform a genuine understanding of needs
- fosters empathy through necessitating a deeper relationship between designer and client
- hinges on the designer creating space for voices to be heard and people to be seen
- empowers the client to make choices, share, and participate autonomously in identifying one's needs

literary framework: ArtPlace America. (2017, June 06). *Introduction - Creative Placemaking*; Zitcer, A. & Almanzar, S.M. (2019): *Public art, cultural representation, and the just city*

physiological + psycho-social outcomes identification

- drives design first and foremost on the needs of the client as identified by the client
- underpinned by a basic understanding of how the body and the mind is impacted by the built physical environment
- hones the understanding of client needs into desired psychological, physiological, and sociological outcomes
- strategizes achieving those outcomes through empirically researched methods in psychology, sociology, biology, and neuroscience

literary framework: Sternberg, E. M. (2010). *Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-being*; Browning, W.D., Ryan, C.O., Clancy, J.O. (2014). *14 Patterns of Biophilic Design*.

empathic imagination + story mapping

- allows the creative imagination processes to explore freely but informed through an empathic and knowledgeable understanding of the client's needs
- crafts the opportunity for new stories and outcomes
- focuses on the user experience and narrative to drive design rather than aesthetic desires

literary framework: Pallasmaa, J. (2005). *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*.

- I** *gather input:* conduct interviews of Lao American community leaders, create and distribute a survey distributed to the Lao American community through the Lao American National Association network and other community groups, process survey responses, collect first-hand narratives, stories, and writing to determine needs
- 2** *identify psycho-social outcomes desired to address needs outlined:* determine psychological/physiological strategies to utilize
- 3** *empathic imagination:* craft an imagined, informed, and grounded in healing user-experience narrative for each space

baan Lao : home

history

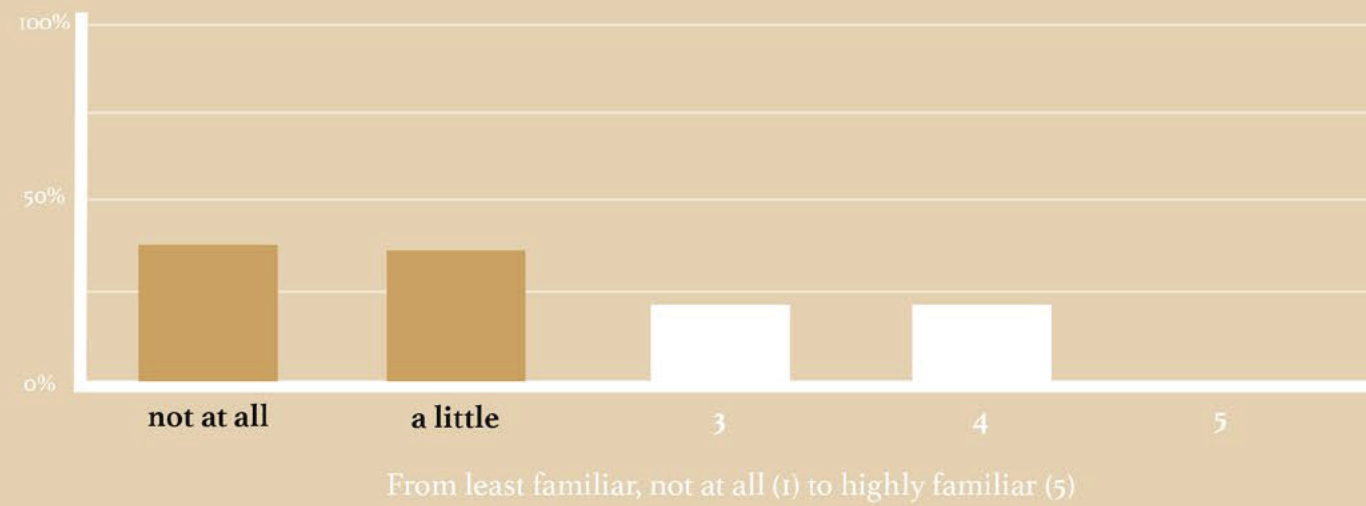
hustle

healing

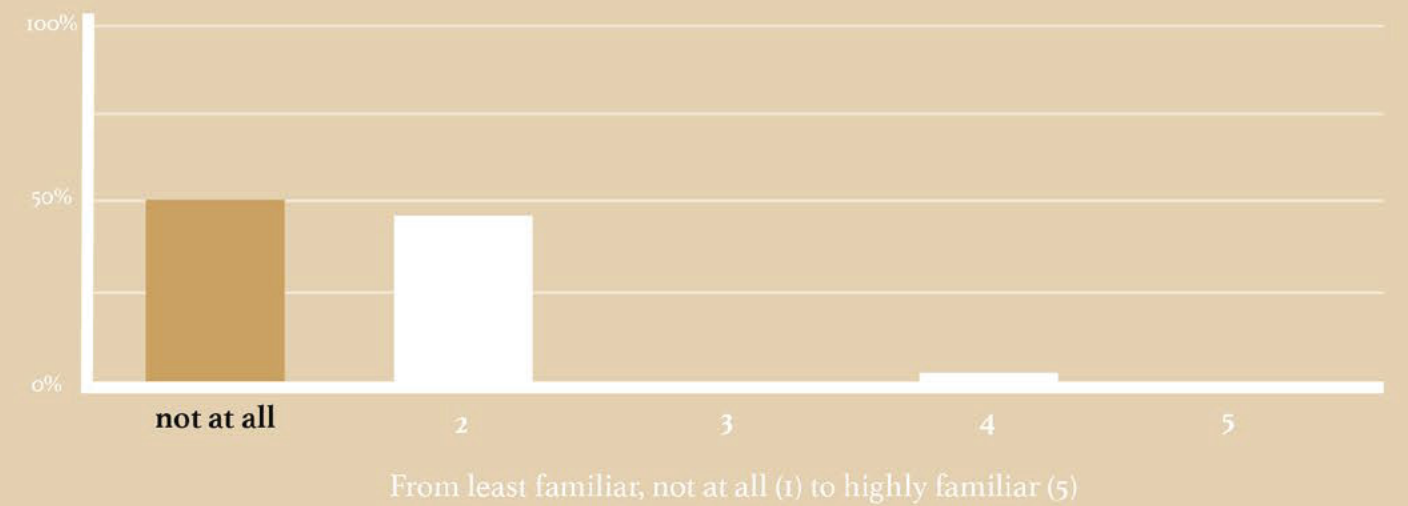
honor

heart

How much do you feel like you know Lao History and about the Secret War on Laos?



Do you feel like other non-Lao people in the US know much about Laos/Lao history?



history: outcomes + strategies

desired psycho-social outcomes:

- to promote contemplation and reflection
- to feel enlightened on the truth
- to feel known by others and each other
- to feel recognized
- to feel moved

design strategies:

- create somber space to convey the pain and trauma of the true history of Lao people and the war
- exhibit narratives and story-telling from Lao people to foster empathic connection and recognition
- include space for contribution from users
- visibility to media and public
- balance heaviness of history with intentional spaces to breath and reset so as not to feel overcome



270 million tons of cluster bombs
a payload of bombs
every 8 minutes
24-hours a day
for 9 years.



my dad recalled how he and his cousin as
young boys would pull out lawn chairs
and watch the moonrise
as planes roared down towards
the hangar parking airport
in his village.

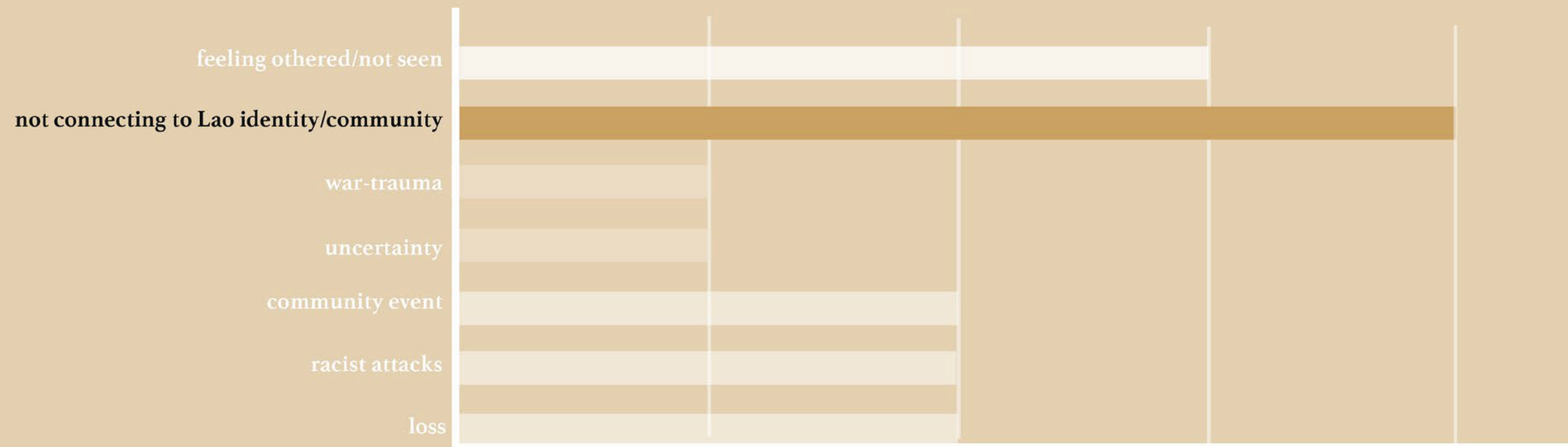
“it takes enormous trust and courage to allow yourself to remember”
- Bessel Van Der Kolk

I feel seen when: I am acknowledged and valued for my whole identity

- Lao American first generation survey respondent

“i feel most scared of...”

frequency of response theme



healing: outcomes + strategies

desired psycho-social outcomes:

- to feel safe
- to reduce over-activation of fight or flight survival mentality
- to promote full connection to a sense of self that is whole

design strategies:

- create space for story-telling, listening, and sharing in a grounded private setting
- dedicate space for movement with others - yoga, meditation, dance, martial arts to support connection to the body
- prioritize refuge but maintain prospect to foster connection to nature and healing
- utilize biophilic patterns - dappled light, bird-sounds, and water to reduce activation of the stress cascade and promote presence
- provide a maker space for expression via artwork and structures therapy

“everything was tied to trauma...
i never thought that healing or
resilience or thriving could be
an option”

- Rita Phetmixay, Founder of Healing Out Lao'd Podcast



“everything is so disconnected and scattered for the
Lao community..we need a space to all come together and be connected”

- Phensy Pane | Lao-American Association of Iowa

hustle: outcomes + strategies

desired psycho-social outcomes:

- to feel supported
- to enable productivity and focus
- to foster a sense of connection to others and collaboration
- to empower individuals to engage in community work

design strategies:

- prioritize daylighting to support circadian rhythms and a healthy work environment
- create dynamic work spaces to flex to a variety of needs, empower choice and accommodate all abilities
- utilize views towards nature for attention-restoration
- maintain connection to cultural specificity to foster inspiration and purpose
- offer opportunities for visual and physical connection to others to promote collaboration

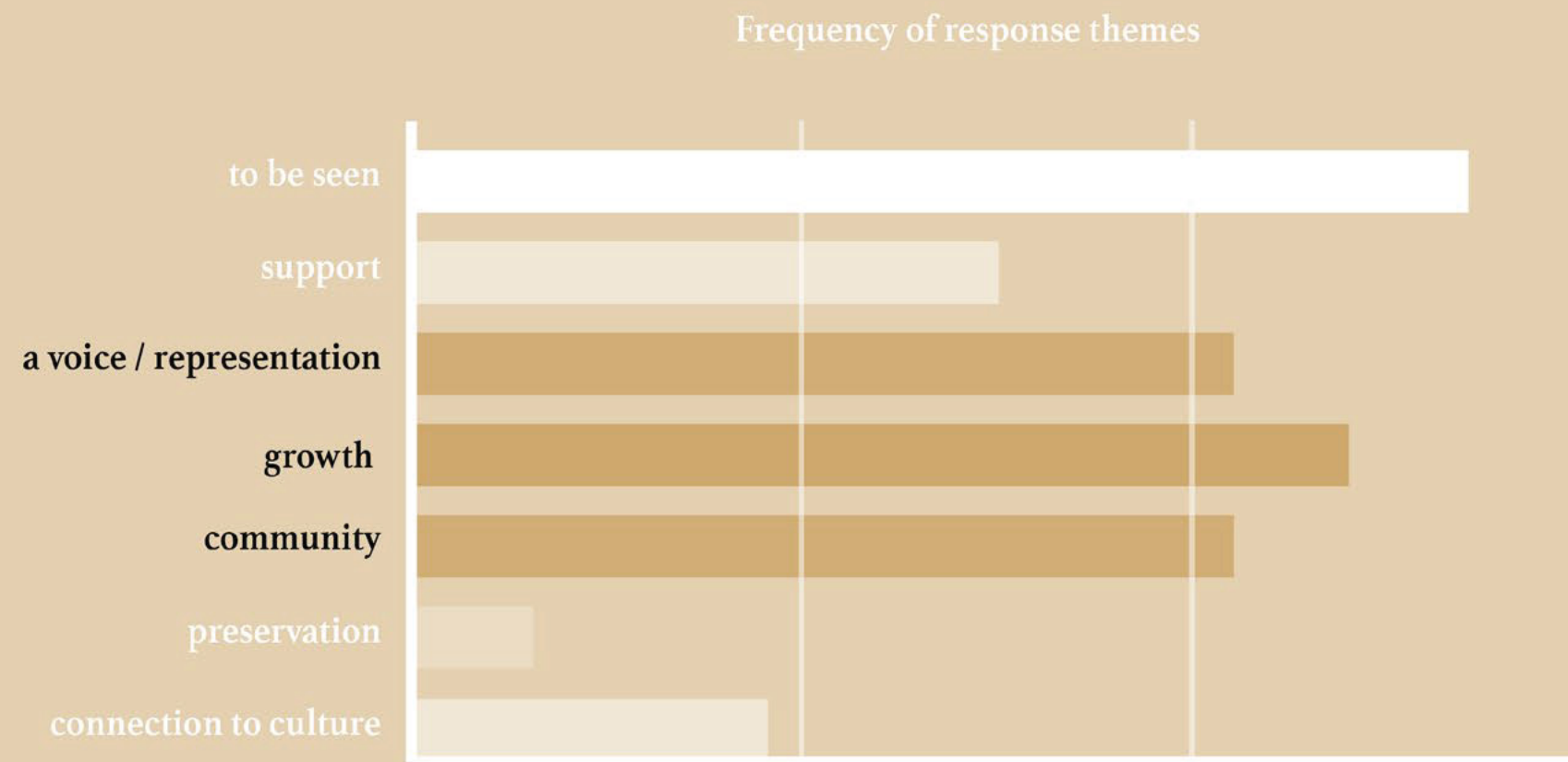
“somehow the very event
that caused
them so much pain
had also become their sole
source of meaning”

- Bessel Van der Kolk, M.D.



what Lao people need most is...

“representation” and “recognition”
“confidence to know that they also can continually do more”



honor: outcomes + strategies

desired psycho-social outcomes:

- to be able to imagine possibilities
- to feel capable and empowered
- to be inspired and uplifted
- to feel pride

design strategies:

- utilize digital media to highlight news, features, and spotlight
- create feature lighting moment that inspires awe
- stage for uplifting and guest features
- lay out a “hall of fame” to celebrate Lao people/culture/achievements

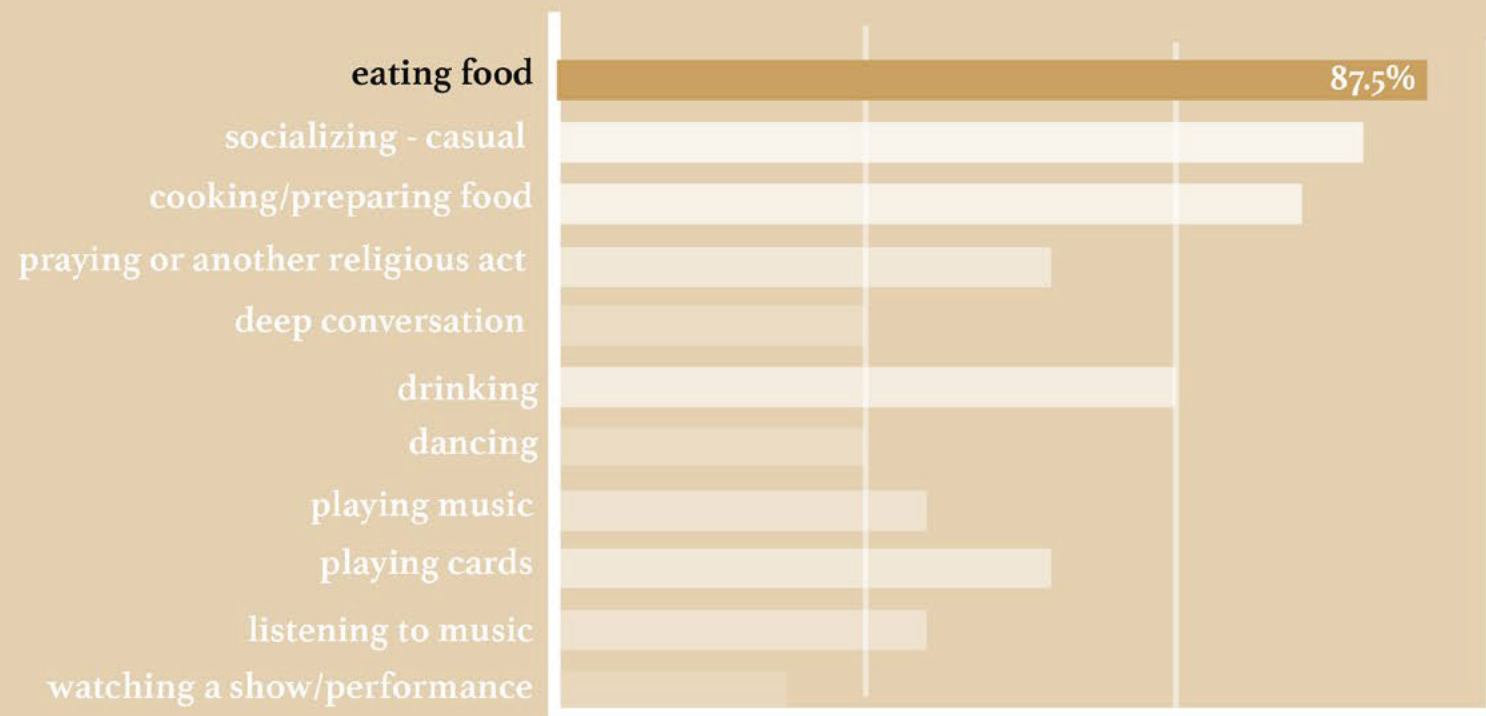
“without imagination there is no hope,
no chance to envision a better future,
no place to go, no goal to reach”

- Bessel Van der Kolk, M.D.



what activity would you describe as “central” when you gather with Lao community members?

frequency of response theme



what would be the most authentic way to introduce non-Lao friends and folks to authentic Lao culture to you?

frequency of response theme



fig. 18: author conducted survey results - heart

heart: outcomes + strategies

desired psycho-social outcomes:

- to foster a sense of connection to others
- to feel part of a greater community
- to feel safe in one's full, whole, and true identity
- to feel at ease, comfortable, and present

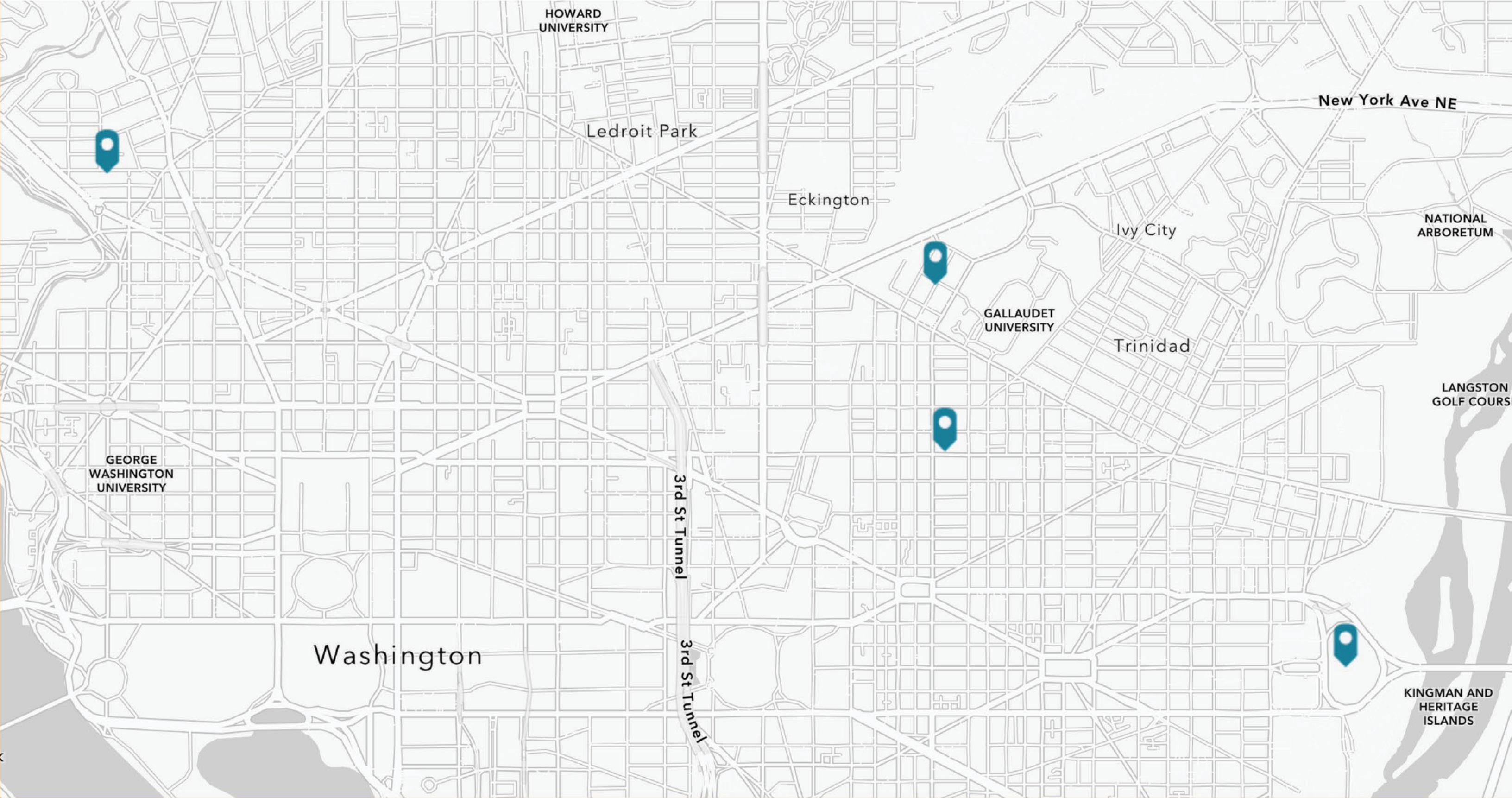
design strategies:

- utilize allethesia and food to facilitate comfort and healing
- create flexible space for casual lounging floor-seating and gathering
- highlight prospect to foster awe and connection to nature and something larger

“bring them home to experience our
food and our family.
food makes people feel happy,
welcome, and invited”

- Saengthong Duongdara, #counselingchef

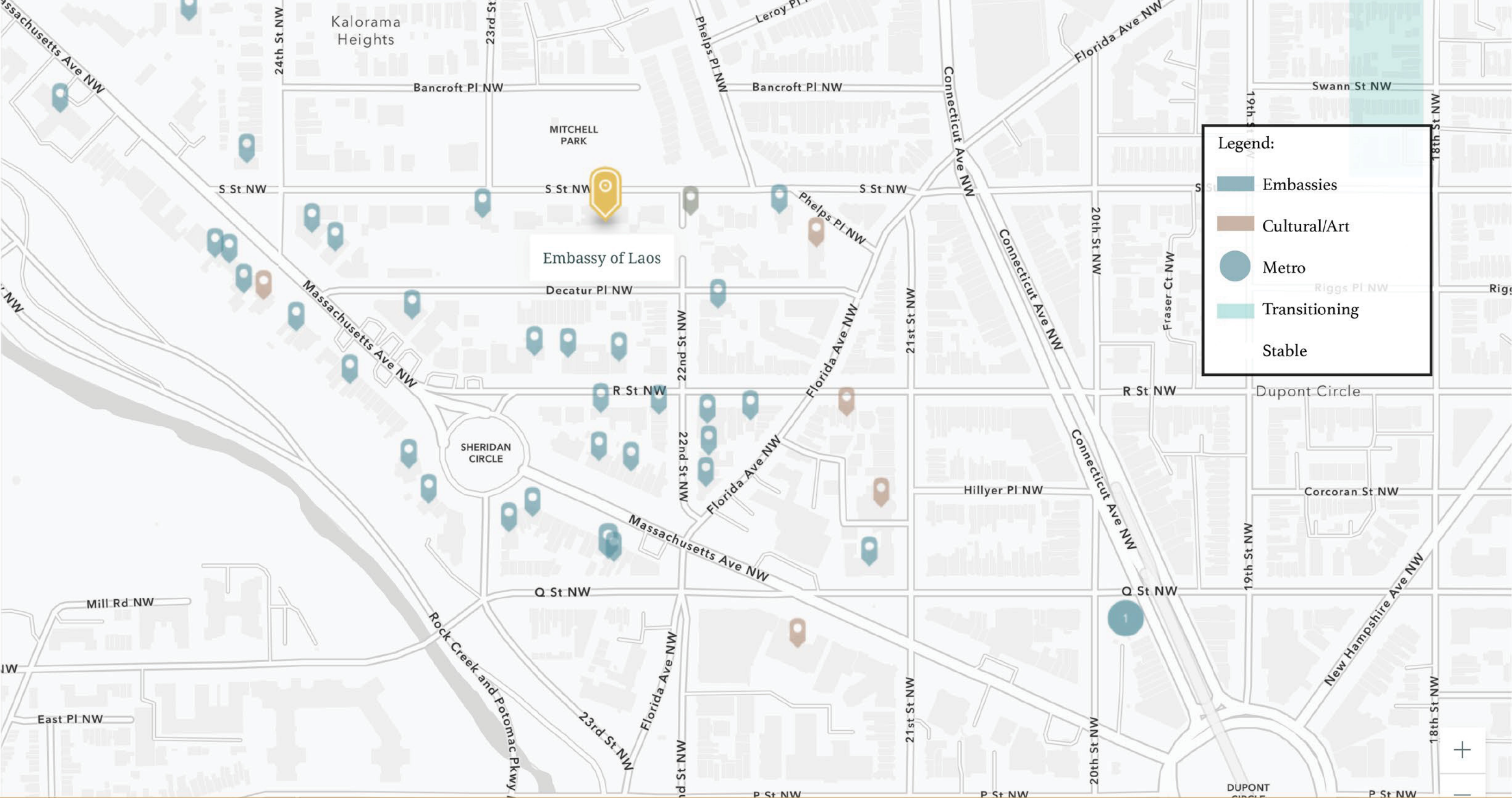




a national home base: washington, dc capitol

applying the psycho-social needs identified in programming, the site study focuses on selecting a site in the nation's capitol as a way of establishing a national symbolic home

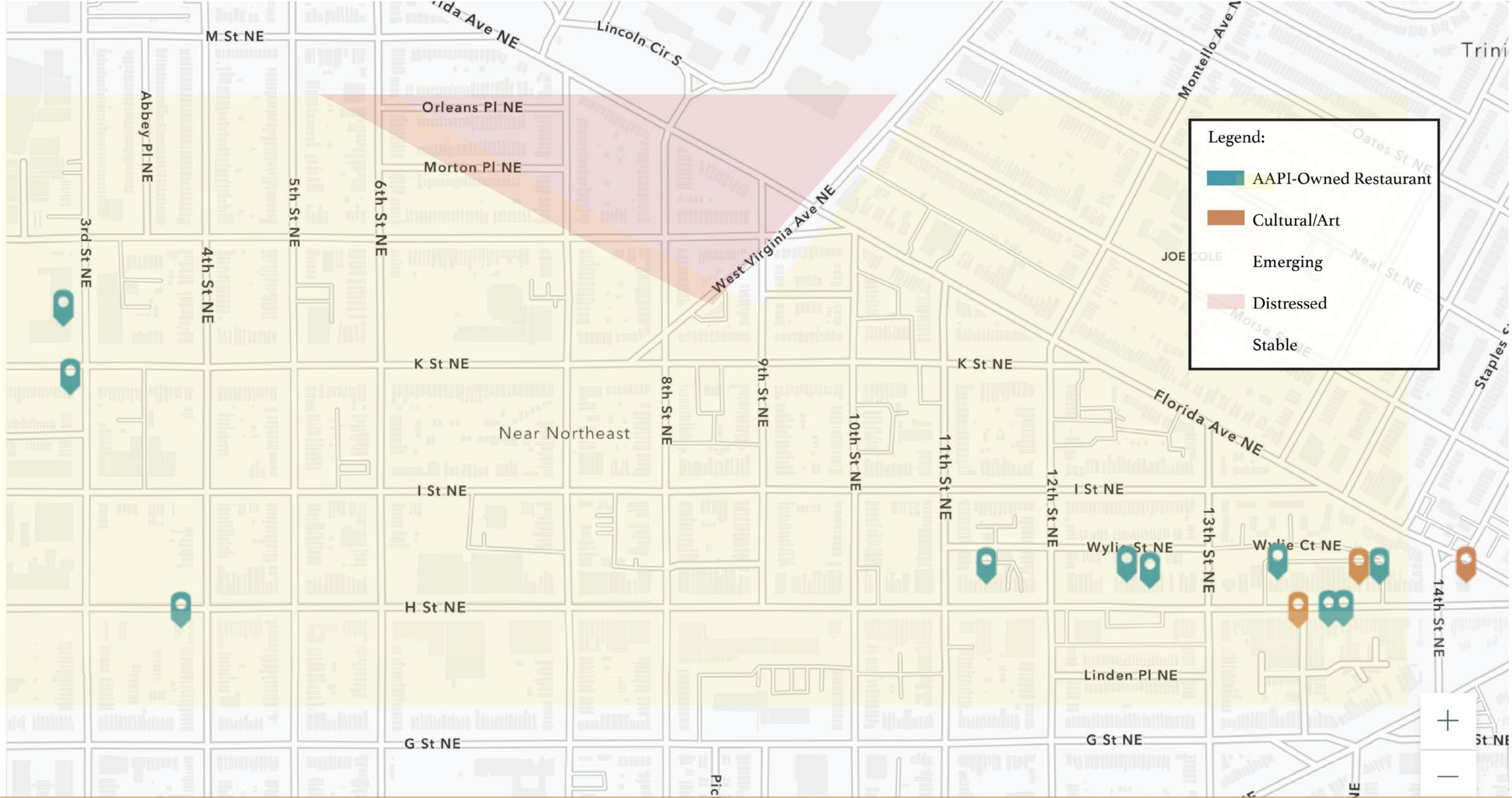
fig. 20: map - washington, dc highlighting 4 examined neighborhoods for site study



safety noun
 \ 'sāf-tē \

the condition of being safe from undergoing or causing hurt, injury, or loss; freedom from harm or danger source: merriam-webster

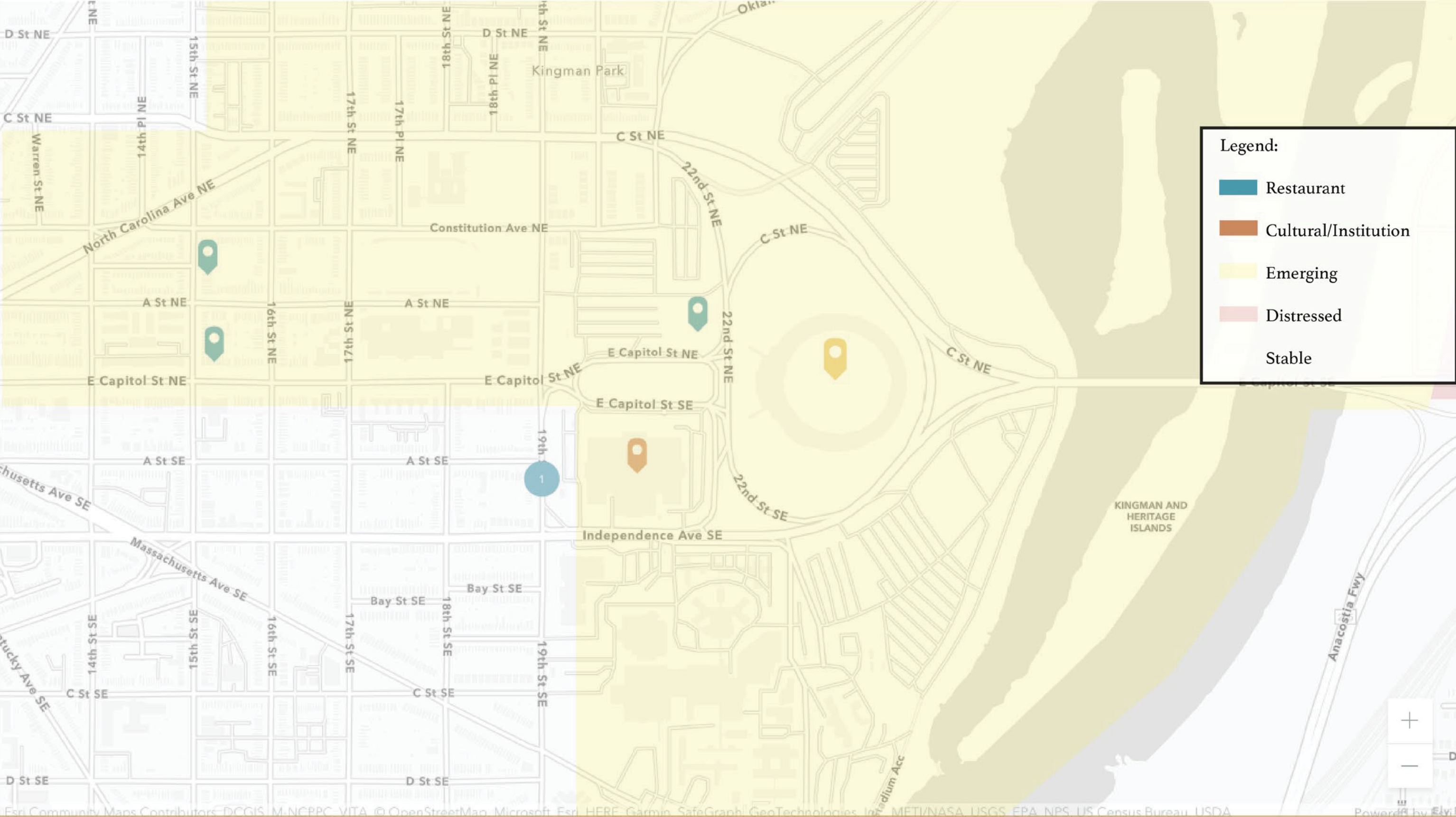
fig. 21: map - safety



community noun
 \ ke-'myü-ne-tē \

a unified body of individuals of common history or sommon social, economic and political interests
 source: merriam-webster

fig. 22: map - community



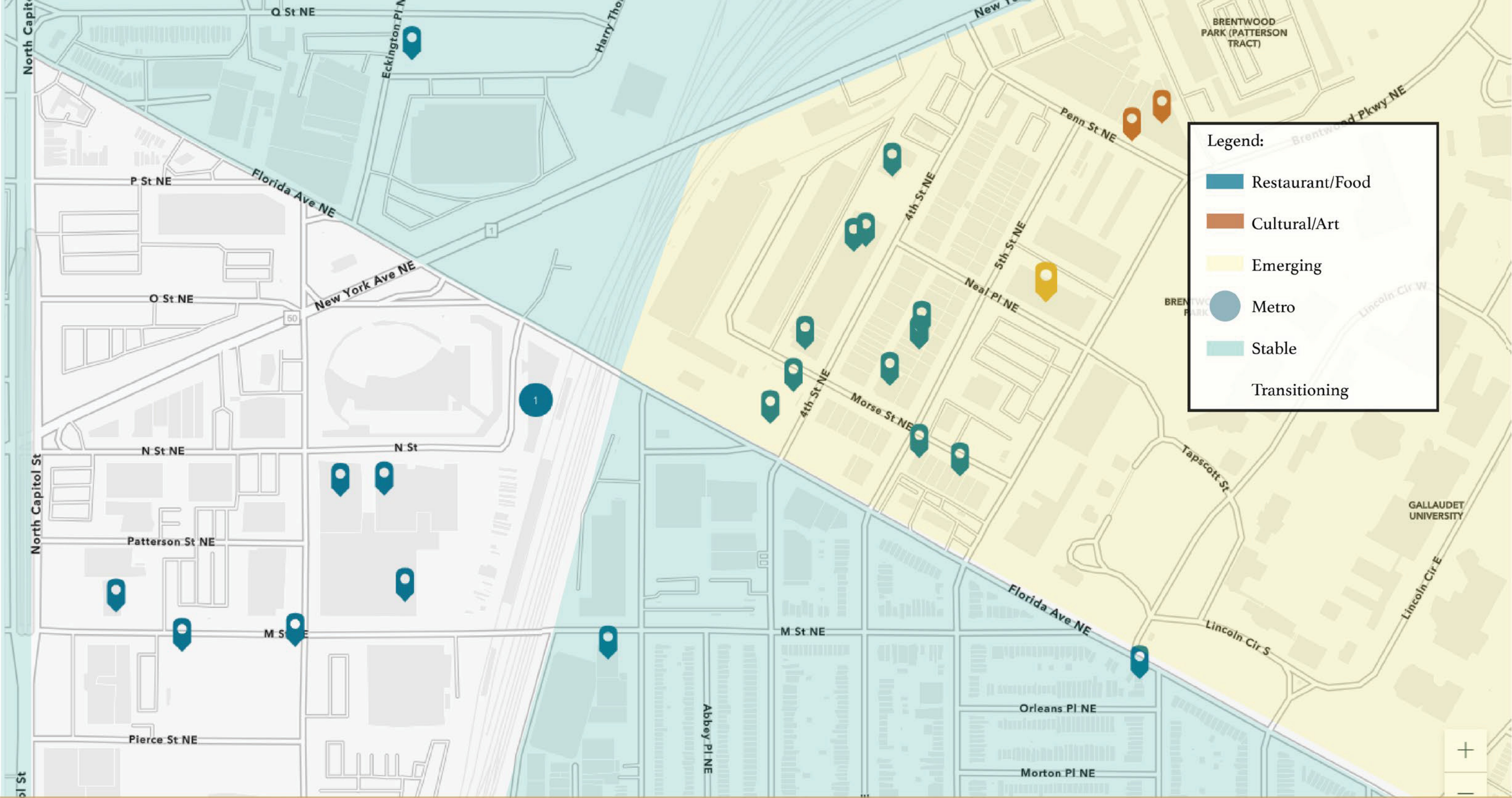
visibility noun

\ vi-ze-'bi-le-tē \

the quality or state of being visible - the degree of clearness : capability of being readily noticed, capability of affording an unobstructed view

source: merriam-webster

fig. 23: map - visibility



Legend:

- Restaurant/Food
- Cultural/Art
- Emerging
- Metro
- Stable
- Transitioning

Community Growth Indicators, DC GIS, M-NCPPC, VITA, © OpenStreetMap, Microsoft, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc., METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, US Census Bureau, USDA

growth noun
 \ˈgrōth \

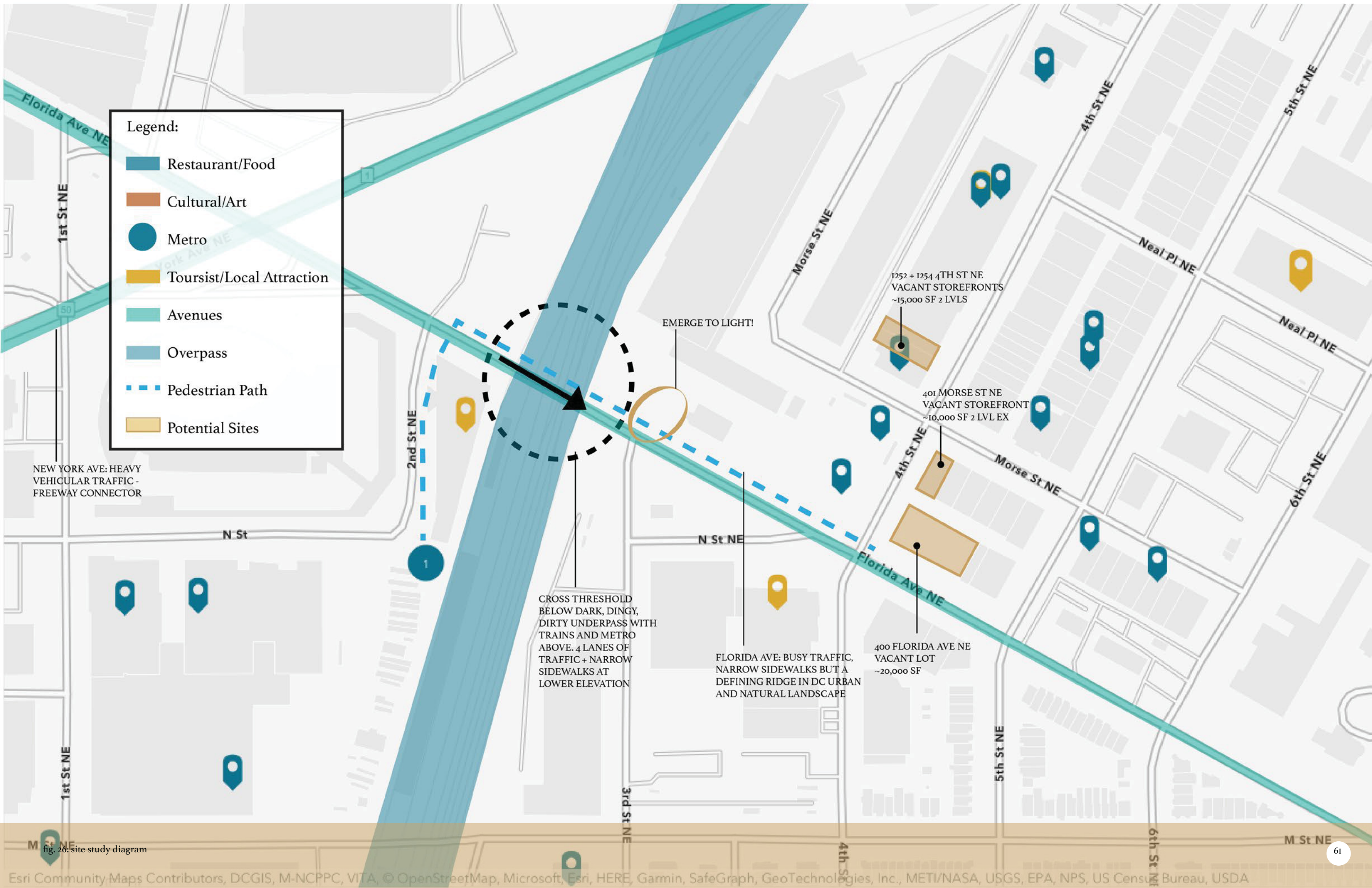
the process of growing, progressive development, evolution : increase, expansion
 source: merriam-webster

fig. 24: map - growth



growth x community x visibility

fig. 25: map - growth x community x visibility



Legend:

- Restaurant/Food
- Cultural/Art
- Metro
- Tourist/Local Attraction
- Avenues
- Overpass
- Pedestrian Path
- Potential Sites

NEW YORK AVE: HEAVY VEHICULAR TRAFFIC - FREEWAY CONNECTOR

EMERGE TO LIGHT!

CROSS THRESHOLD BELOW DARK, DINGY, DIRTY UNDERPASS WITH TRAINS AND METRO ABOVE. 4 LANES OF TRAFFIC + NARROW SIDEWALKS AT LOWER ELEVATION

FLORIDA AVE: BUSY TRAFFIC, NARROW SIDEWALKS BUT A DEFINING RIDGE IN DC URBAN AND NATURAL LANDSCAPE

1252 + 1254 4TH ST NE VACANT STOREFRONTS ~15,000 SF 2 LVLS

401 MORSE ST NE VACANT STOREFRONT ~10,000 SF 2 LVL EX

400 FLORIDA AVE NE VACANT LOT ~20,000 SF

fig. 26: site study diagram

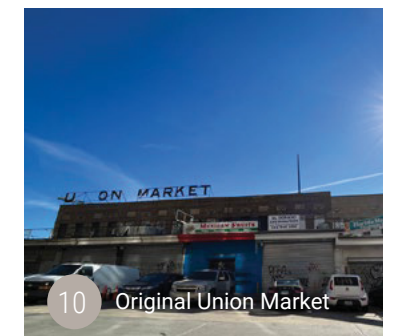
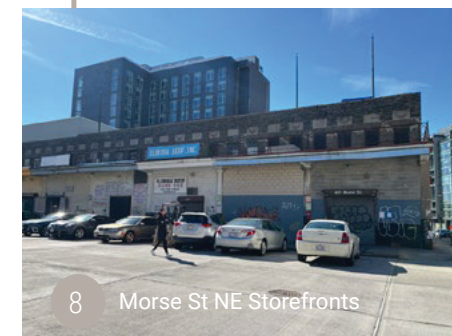
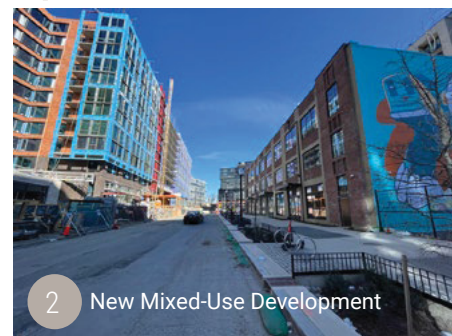
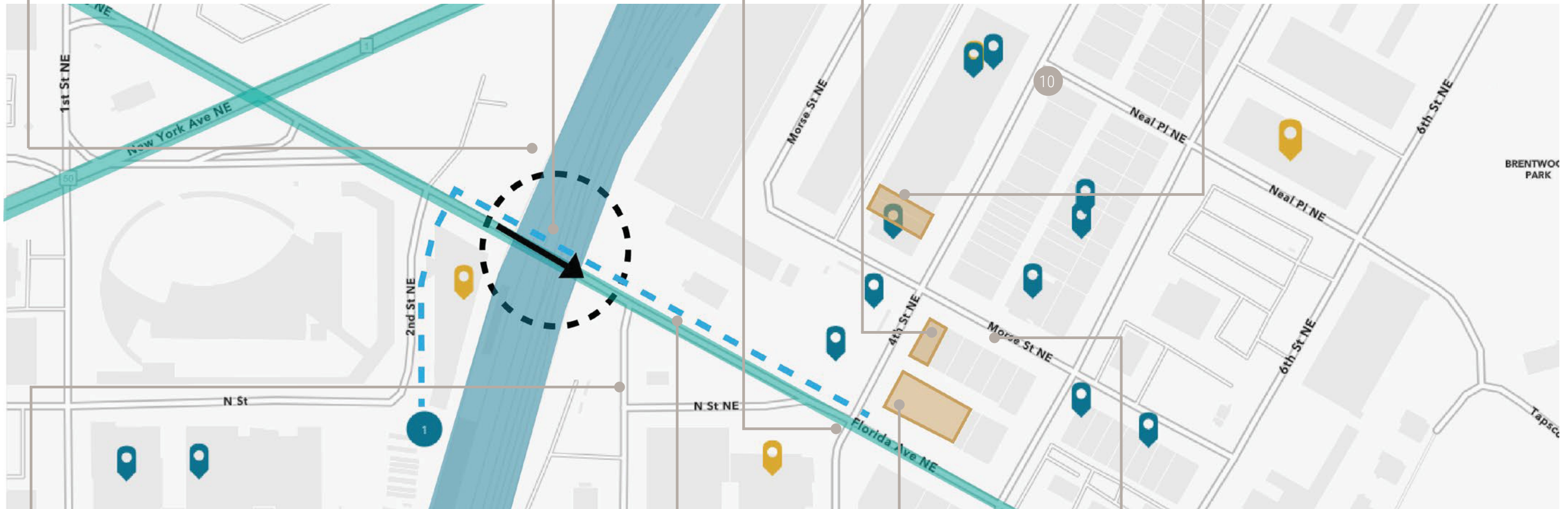


fig. 27: map - site study with neighborhood photographs



fig. 28: photograph from SW corner of Florida Ave NE & 4th St NE



fig. 29: photograph at 4th St NE and Morse Street NE - 401 Morse St NE

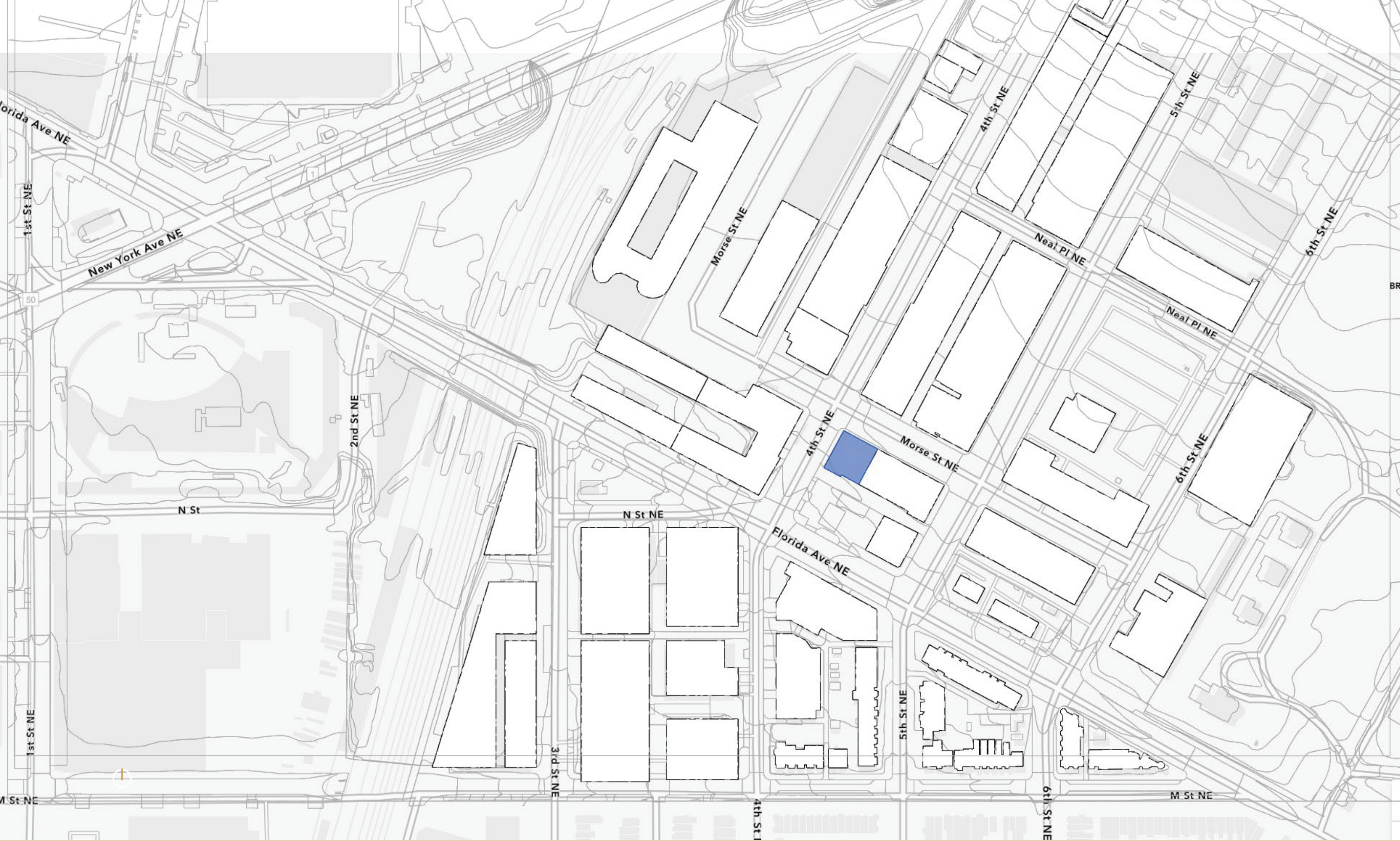


fig. 30: site map

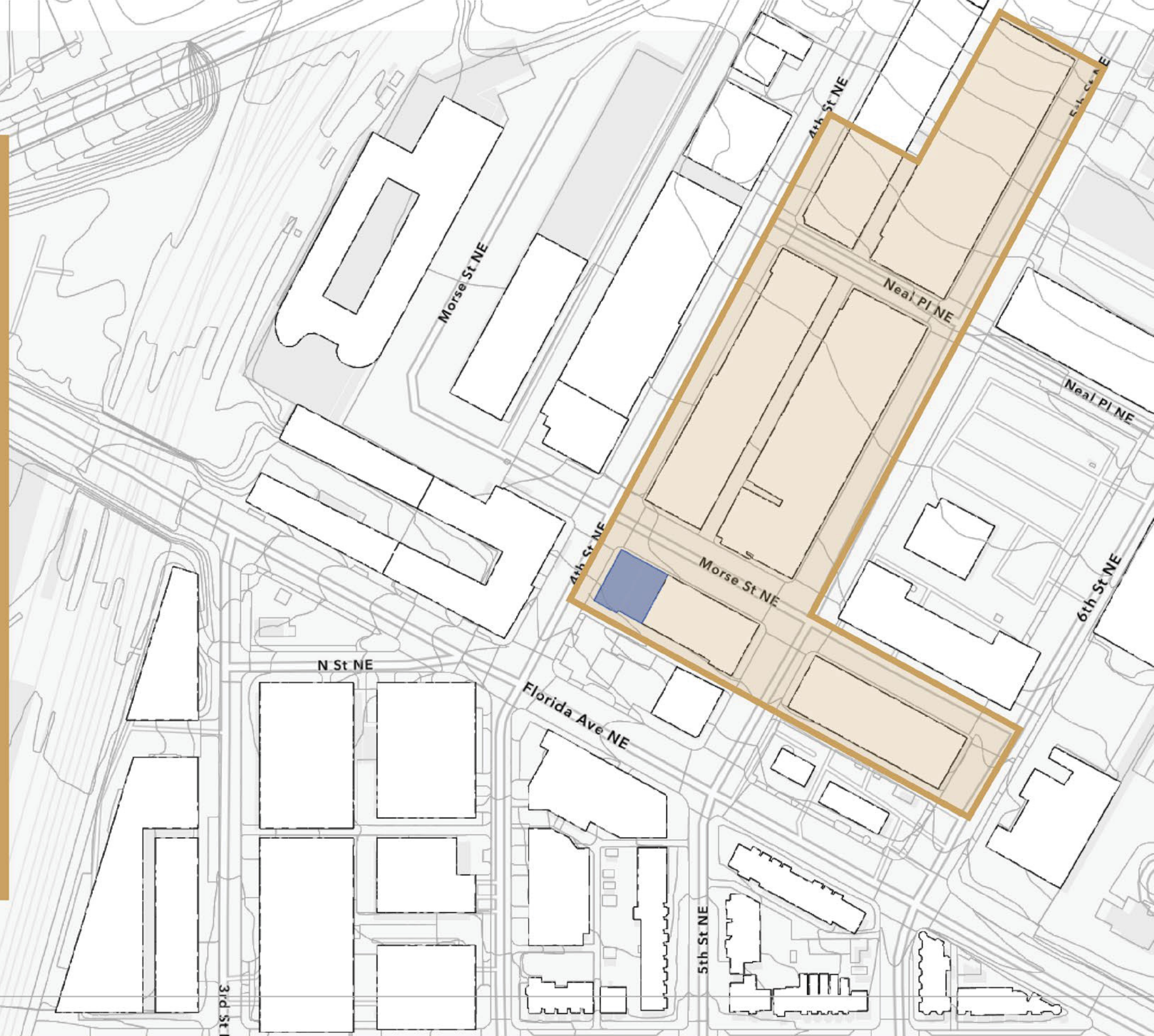
union market terminal historic district

date of construction | 1929-1939
architect | charles j. bullock jr.
architectural styles | 20th century revival industrial
original use | commerce/ wholesale warehouse/market
dc historic district designation | 2016

history + significance

- 1817 the tract of land was home to an 1817 Greek Revival style estate belonging to Eleanor Brent, daughter of Washington mayor Robert Brent
- 1900s estate abandoned and used by neighborhood children as a playground and athletic fields
- 1915 estate burned down
- 1917 government leased land to establish Camp Mięgs-a military mobilization point
- 1928 land acquired by National Capital Park and Planning Commission for a public park
- 1928 land bought by federation of wholesalers called the Union Terminal Market Association to establish both a wholesale and farmers' market
- 1931 completion and opening with 100 merchants
- 1958 home to nearly all major wholesalers in DC
- 1980s primarily home to Chinese and Korean immigrant food suppliers. The influx of new diverse wholesalers has since kept the market fully functioning, despite the flight of several large businesses.
- 2016 early stages of redevelopment begin - D.C. Office of Planning prepared the Florida Avenue Market Study Small Area Plan. Historic designation.

source: government of district of columbia historic preservation office/historic preservation review board application for historic district designation



union market terminal historic district

date of construction | 1929-1939

architect | charles j. bullock jr.

architectural styles | 20th century revival industrial

original use | commerce/ wholesale warehouse/market

dc historic district designation | 2016

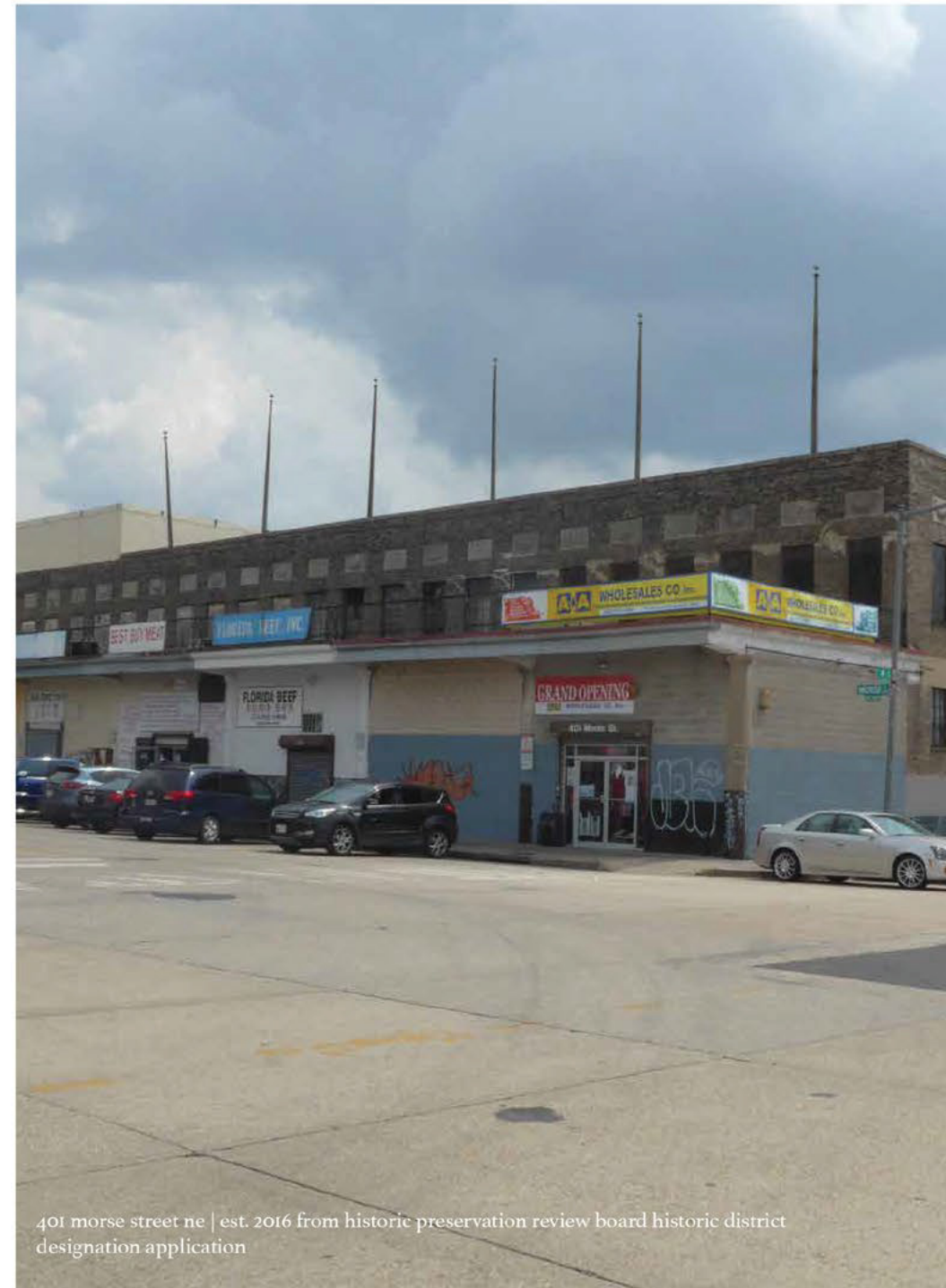
architectural summary:

- 2-story cement frame, buff brick industrial buildings
- 1-story open front loading docks project in front of main building with flat roof supported by metal Doric columns
- highly symmetric and repetitive Classical Revival-style
- concrete panels with decorative garland bas reliefs
- original metal railings line loading dock roof
- single rectangular window openings
- original structure, character, and integrity has been primarily maintained with modifications consisting of filled in loading docks, filled in windows, and some additions atop loading docks

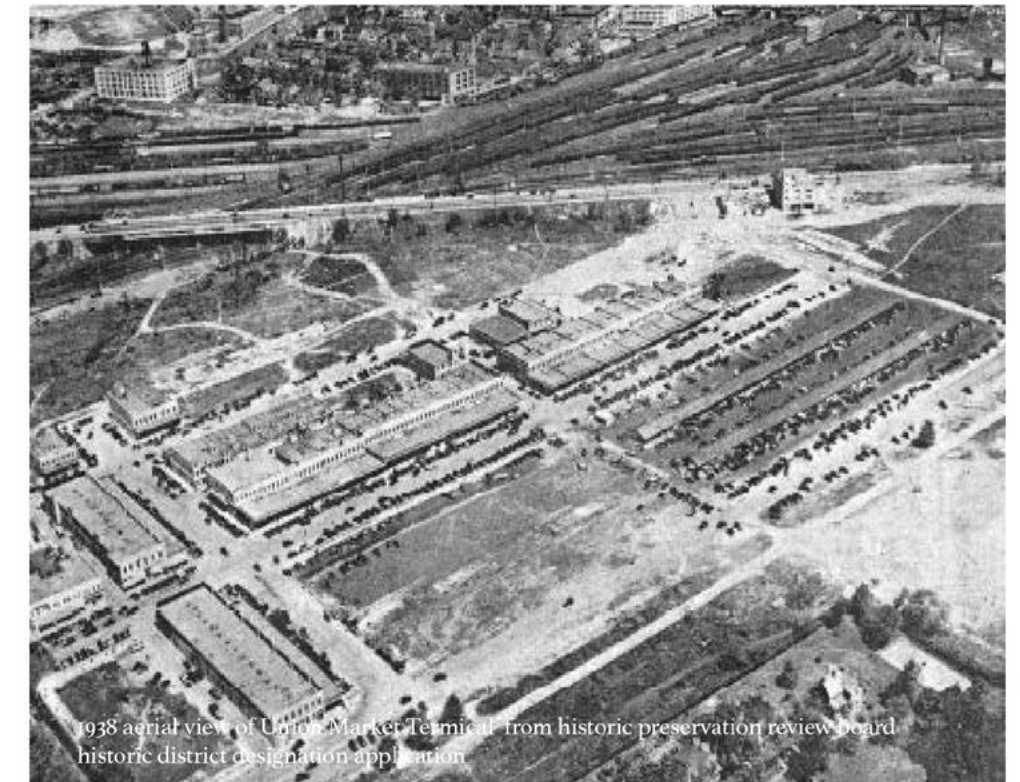
403-421 Morse Street (Square 3588)

- built in 1929, phase one
- 12 loading bays long with metal columns supporting and defining each bay
- previously open loading docks filled in with concrete block, brick, and other materials
- symmetrical second story rectangular windows with decorative garland bas relief at frieze line at every other window

source: government of district of columbia historic preservation office/historic preservation review board application for historic district designation



401 morse street ne | est. 2016 from historic preservation review board historic district designation application



1938 aerial view of Union Market Terminal from historic preservation review board historic district designation application



from historic preservation review board historic district designation application

site context | retail storefront precedents



maintained existing datum of single story loading dock with flat roof line supported by metal / concrete doric columns

opened up infilled brick loading dock bay with bays of glass windows and mullions framing centered double door entry

maintained a primarily infilled/closed loading dock bay with brick and modified only the storefront opening from previous garage door roll up profile.

cased window framing with offset single entry door. full mural across brick infilled storefront tying into surrounding arts + mural revival across neighborhood and DC

existing second level of main building with decorative garland bas relief

site context | retail storefront precedents



existing rectangular window penetrations with garland bas reliefs but updated glass mullions

painted aluminum siding facade material in a change up from the more typically seen brick or cement block infill

updated single story flat roof metal railing

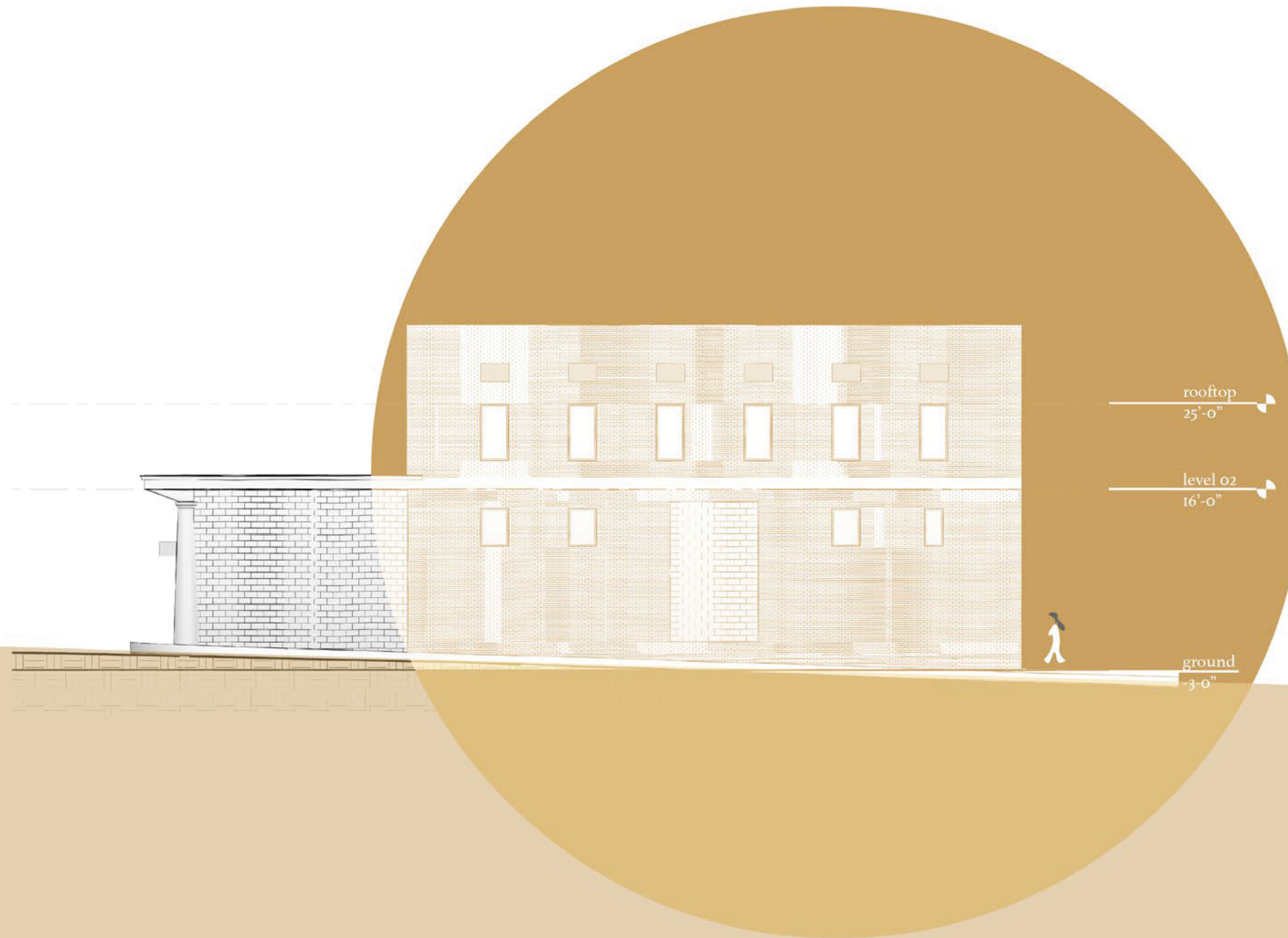
pulled back infill of single story loading dock and exposed corner doric column. pulled back facade to create raised patio from sidewalk

fig. 34: surrounding context facade study 3 - Morse St NE (North)

existing north elevation



existing west elevation



existing building axon

existing conditions:

type IA construction

exterior bearing walls: 3hr rated

interior bearing walls: 3hr rated

non-bearing exterior: 1hr rated

non-bearing interior: 1hr rated

20 foot column bays, steel beam with wood joist construction

brick bearing original walls

post & lintel extension to storefront with cmu infill

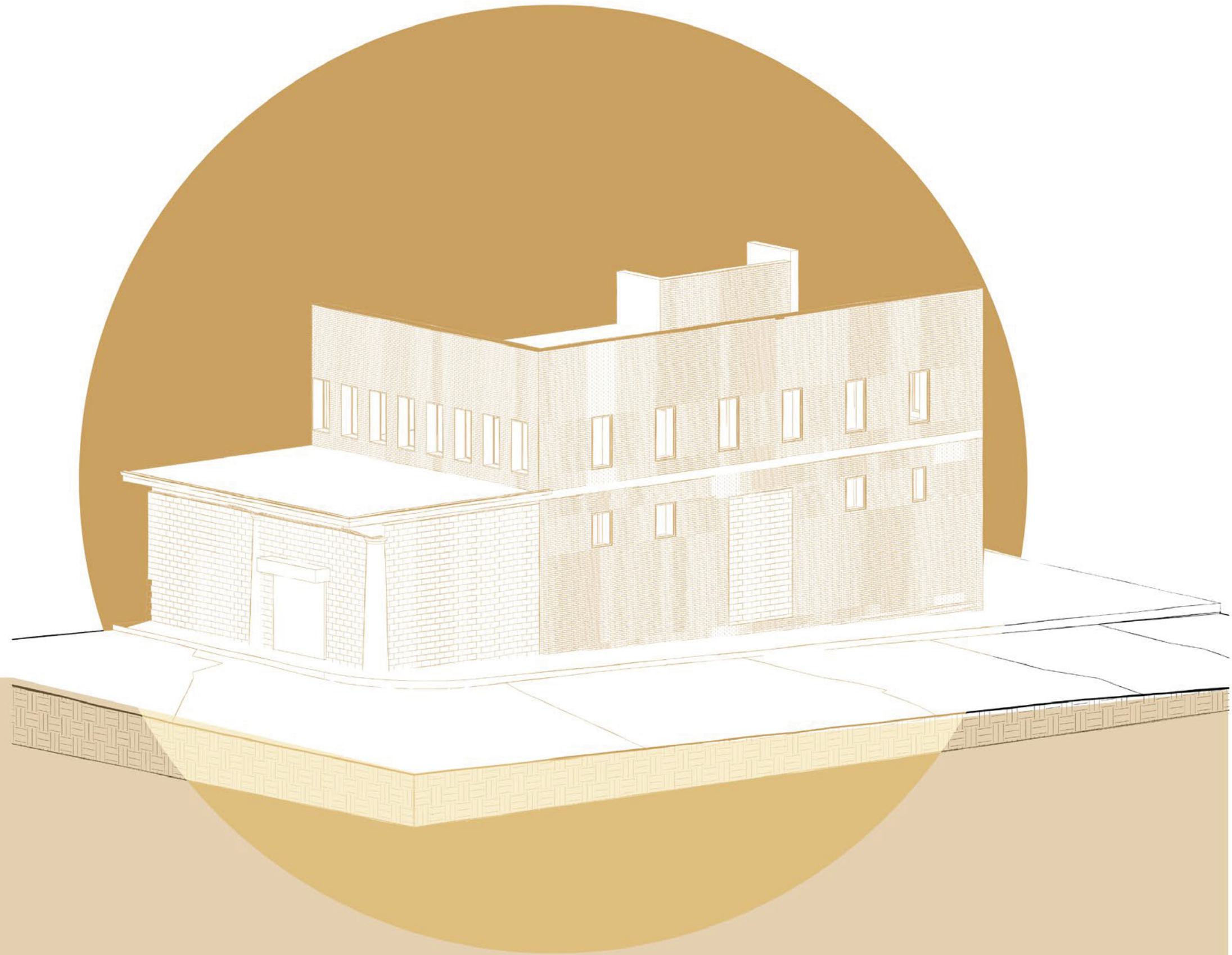
ground floor - 6,000 sf

second floor - 5,040 sf

rooftop 1 - 960 sf

rooftop 2 - 4,300 sf

gross total sf - 16,300 sf

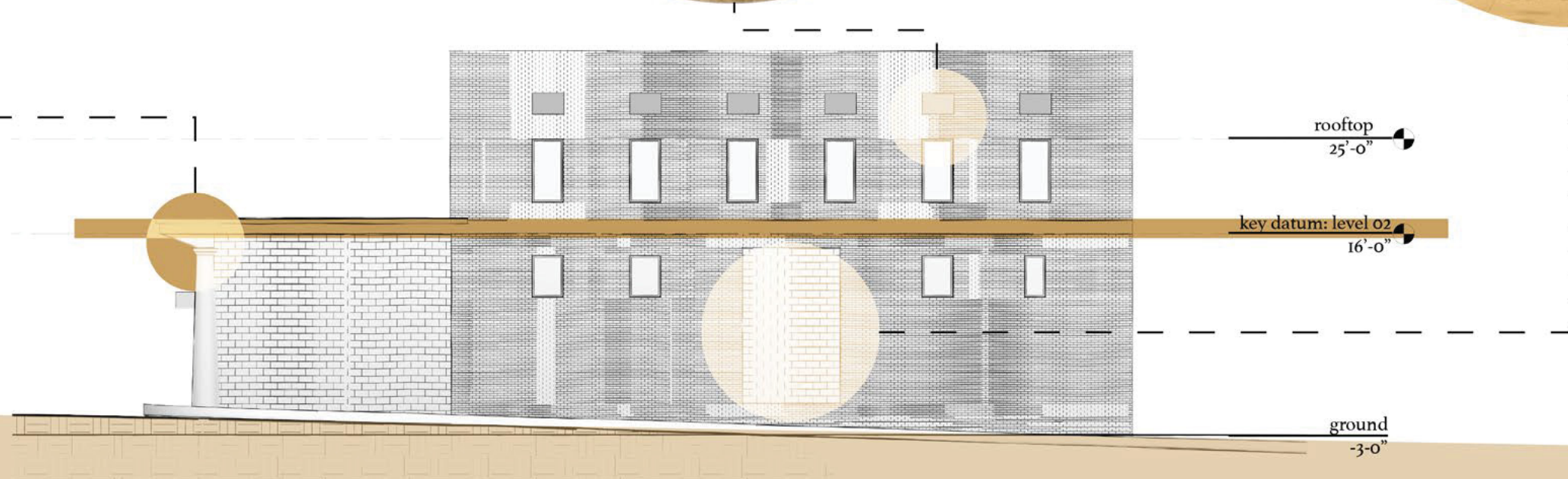


existing north facade key historic features



fig. 35 A, B, C (left to right): photographs of existing conditions 401 Morse St NE

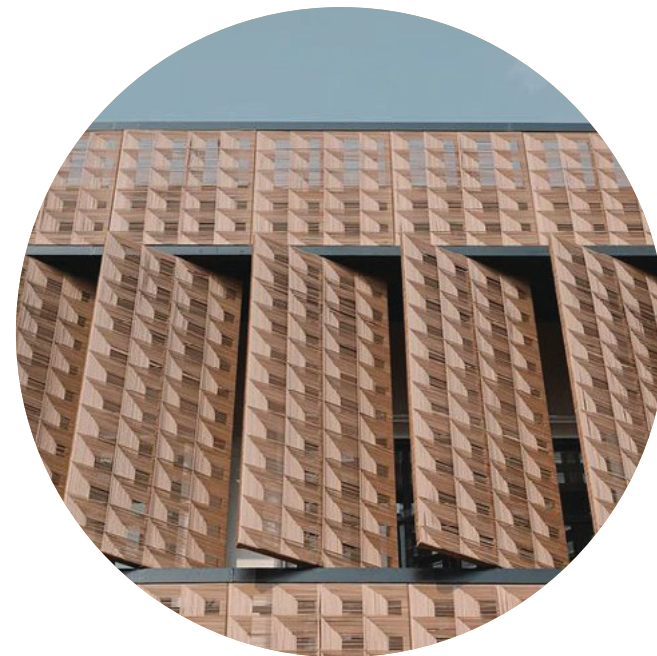
existing west elevation key features



0 25'

fig. 36 A, B, C (left to right): photographs of existing conditions 401 Morse St NE

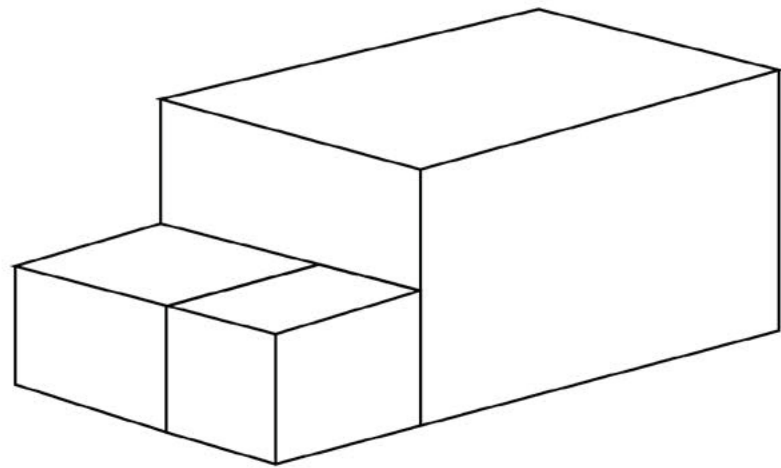
material visioning



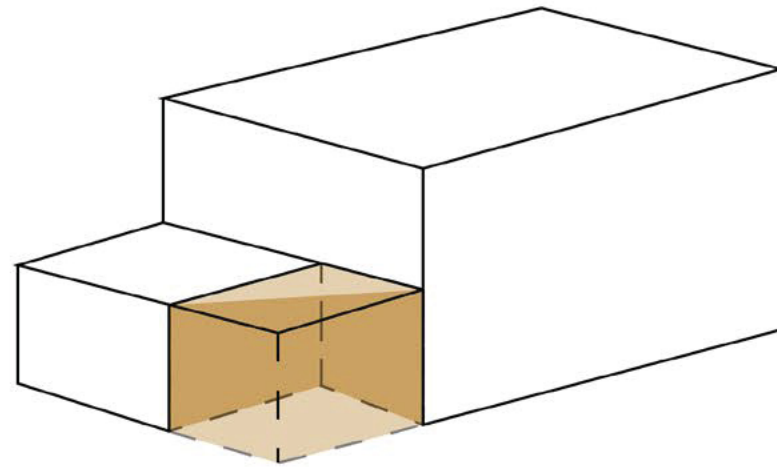
Lao imagery



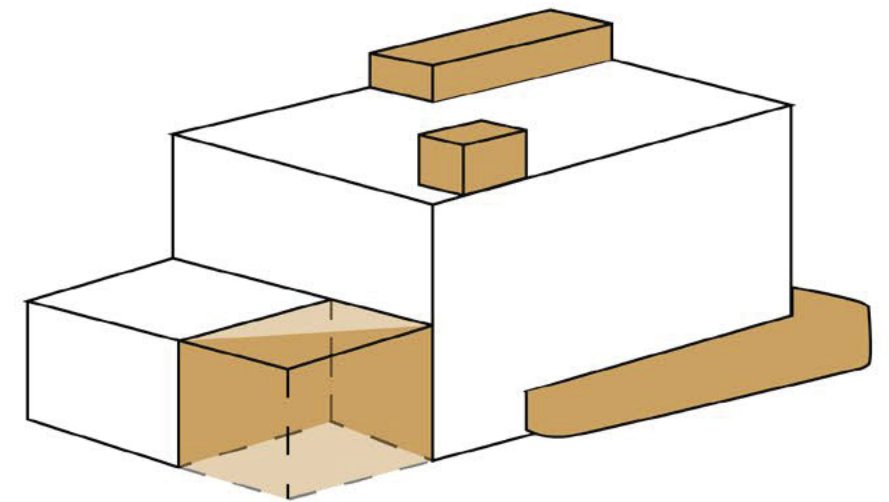
massing concept diagram



1 existing

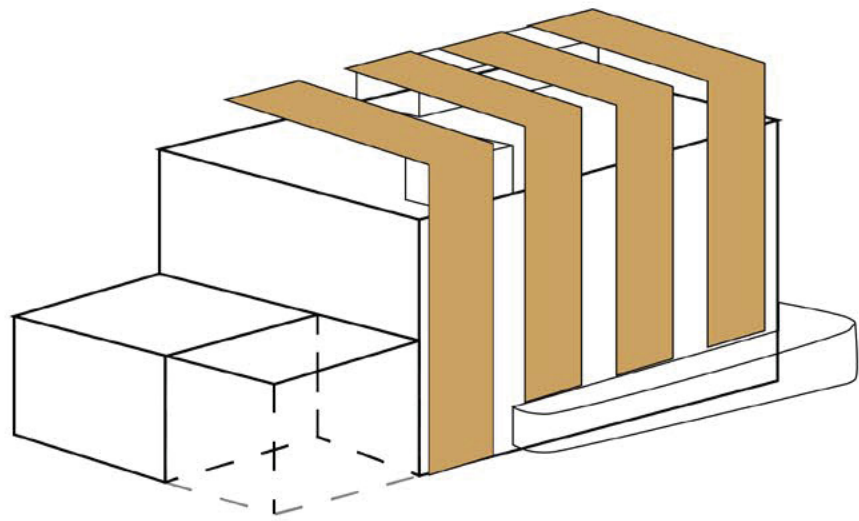


2 open corner

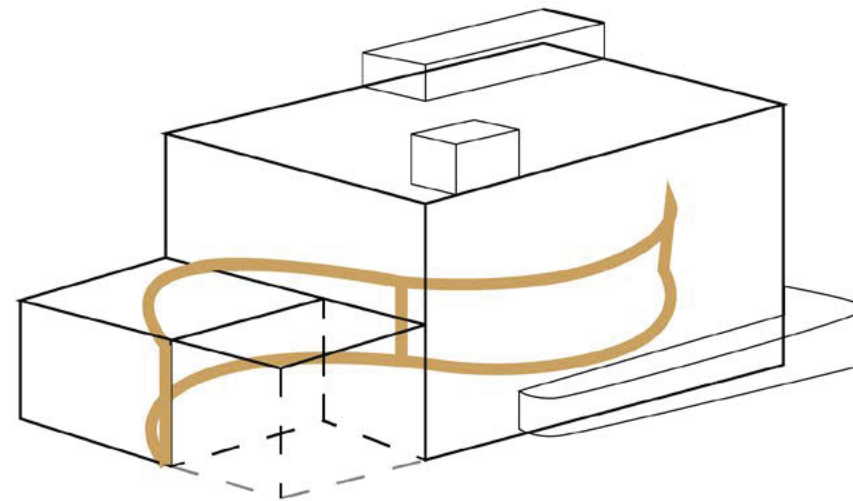


3 push out to site bounds + rooftop

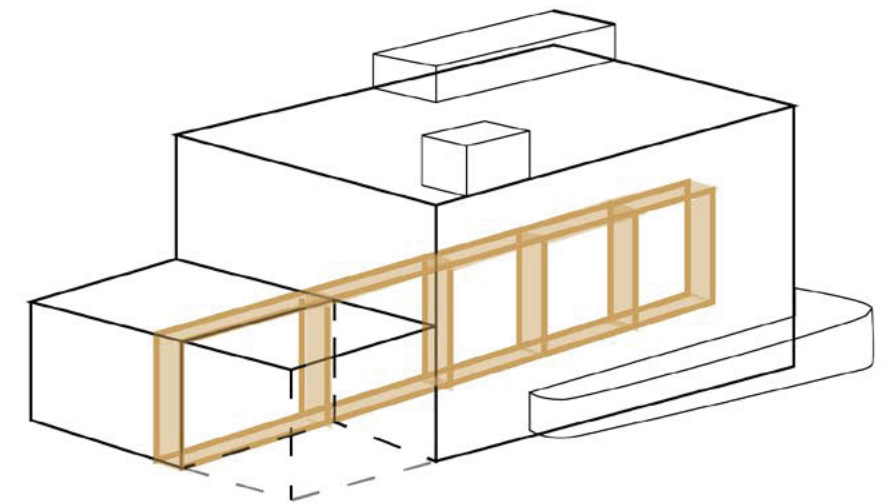
weaving concept diagram



1 exterior wrapping weave

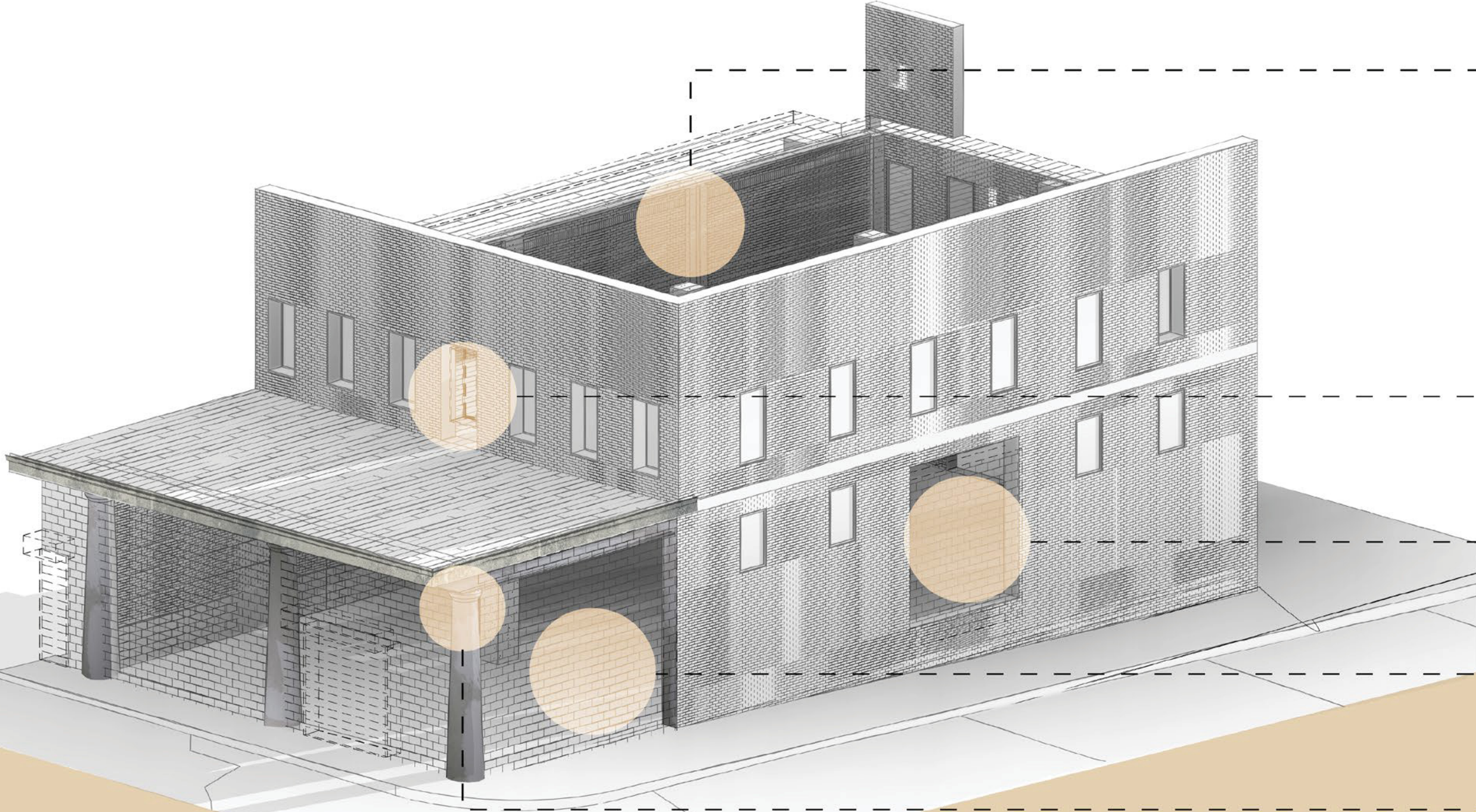


2 interior guiding weave



3 framing threshold weave

building axon - existing + demolition



existing rooftop modified to create openings for elevator access and new stairwell access for a new occupiable rooftop

existing window removed to create new door opening for new patio space

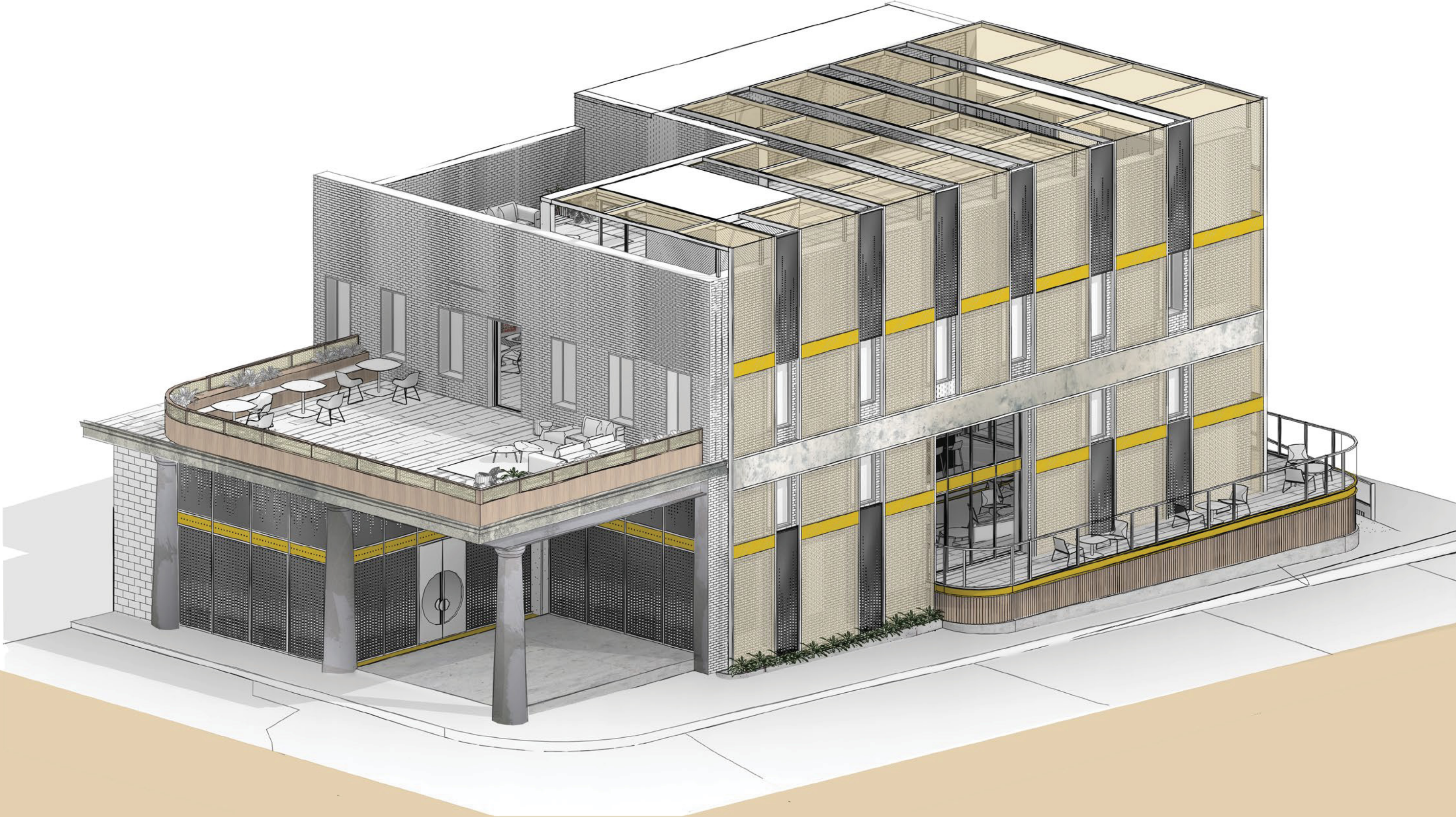
existing cmu infill removed to create new penetrations while maintaining existing exterior elevation

existing cmu infill removed to reveal historically open loading dock

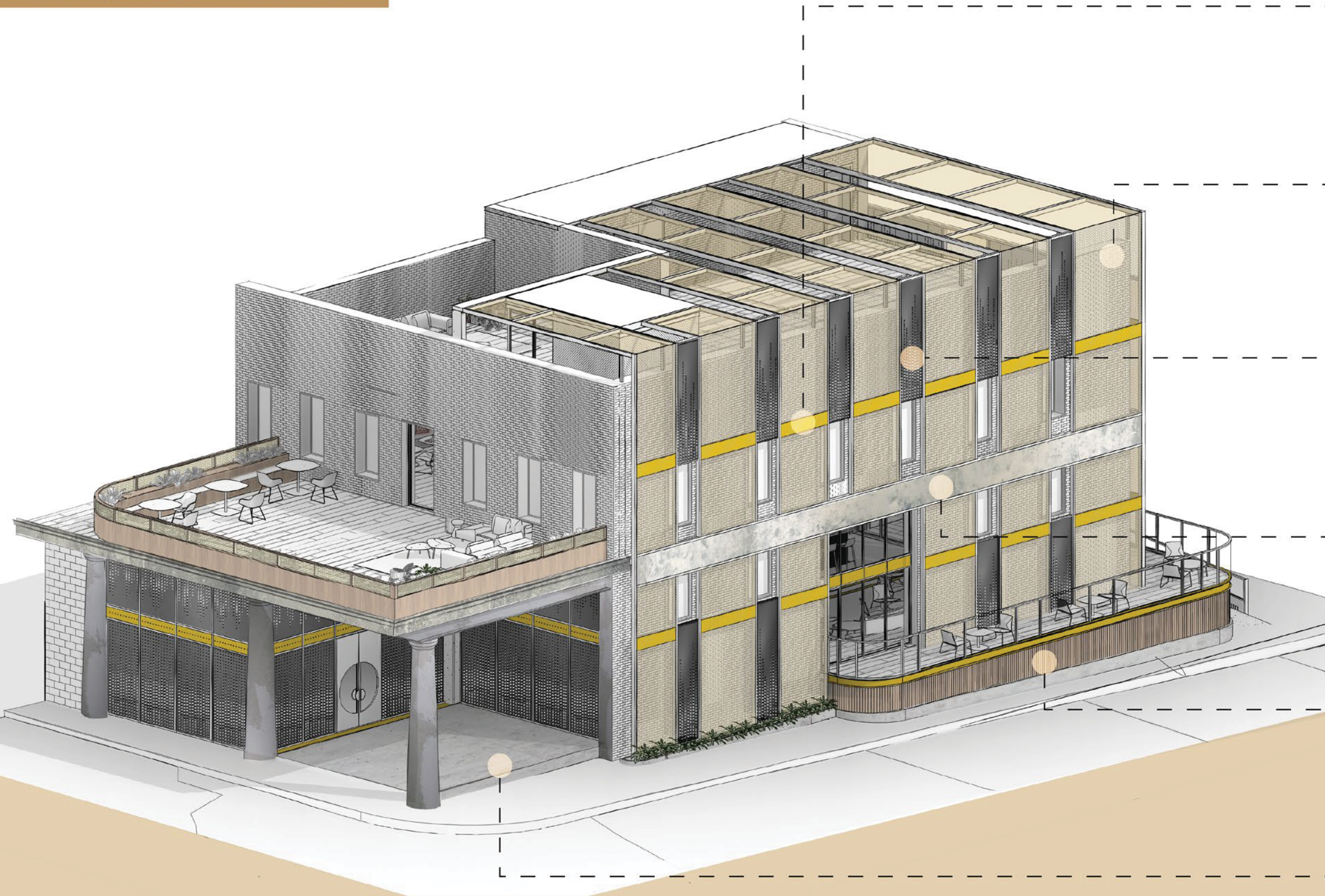
existing structure stripped and exposed



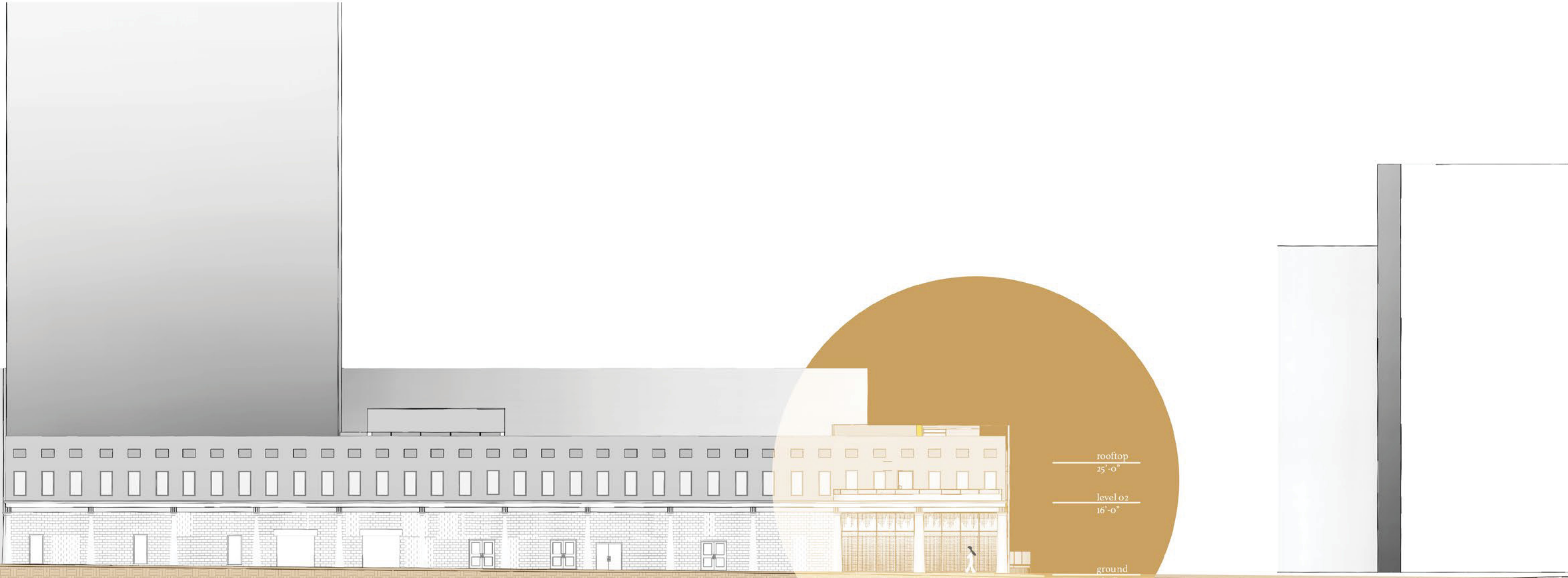
building axon - new



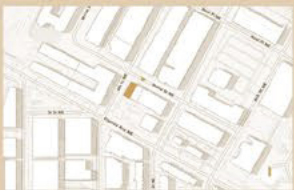
building axon - materials



elevation - front context



0 25'



elevation - front



rooftop
25'-0"

level 02
16'-0"

ground
0'-0"



elevation - side



rooftop
25'-0"

level 02
16'-0"

ground
0'-0"



elevation - back



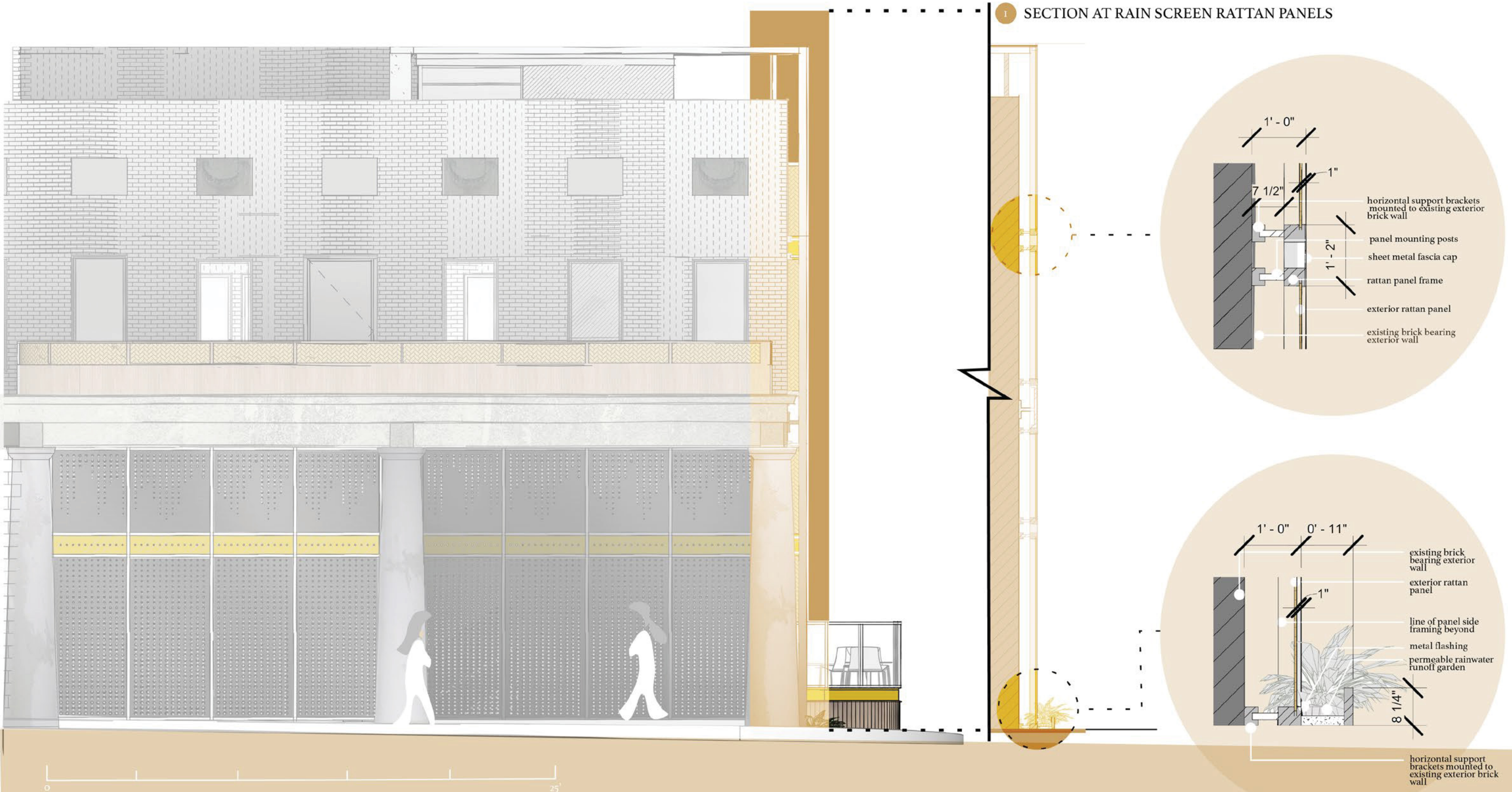
elevation - side



0 25'



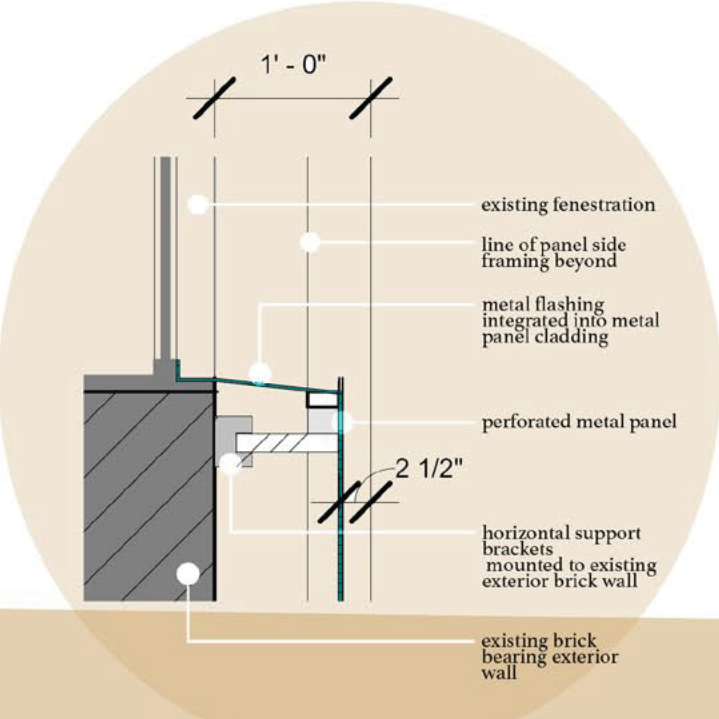
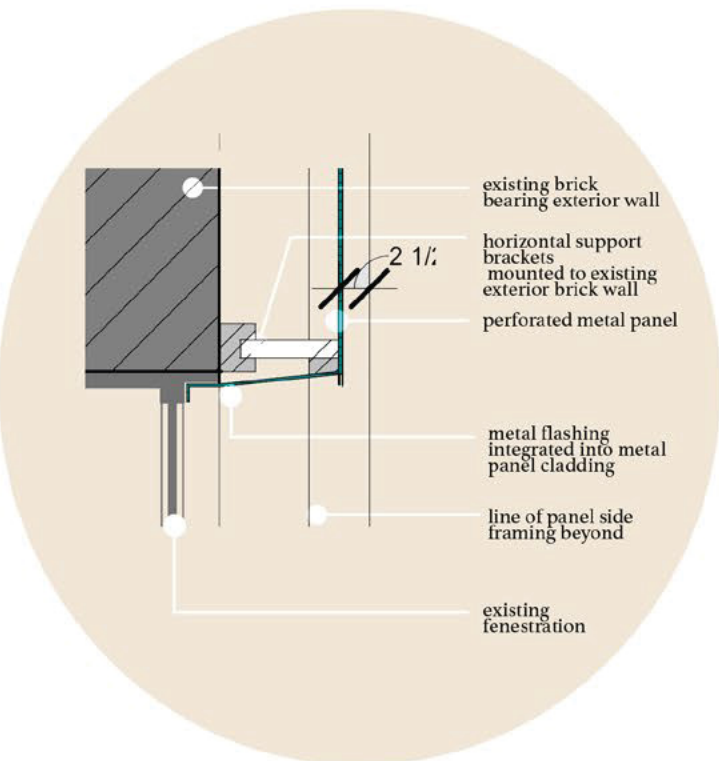
elevation - front | facade section details



elevation - front | facade section details



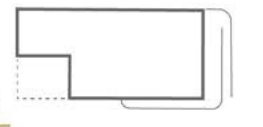
2 SECTION AT RAIN SCREEN METAL PANELS



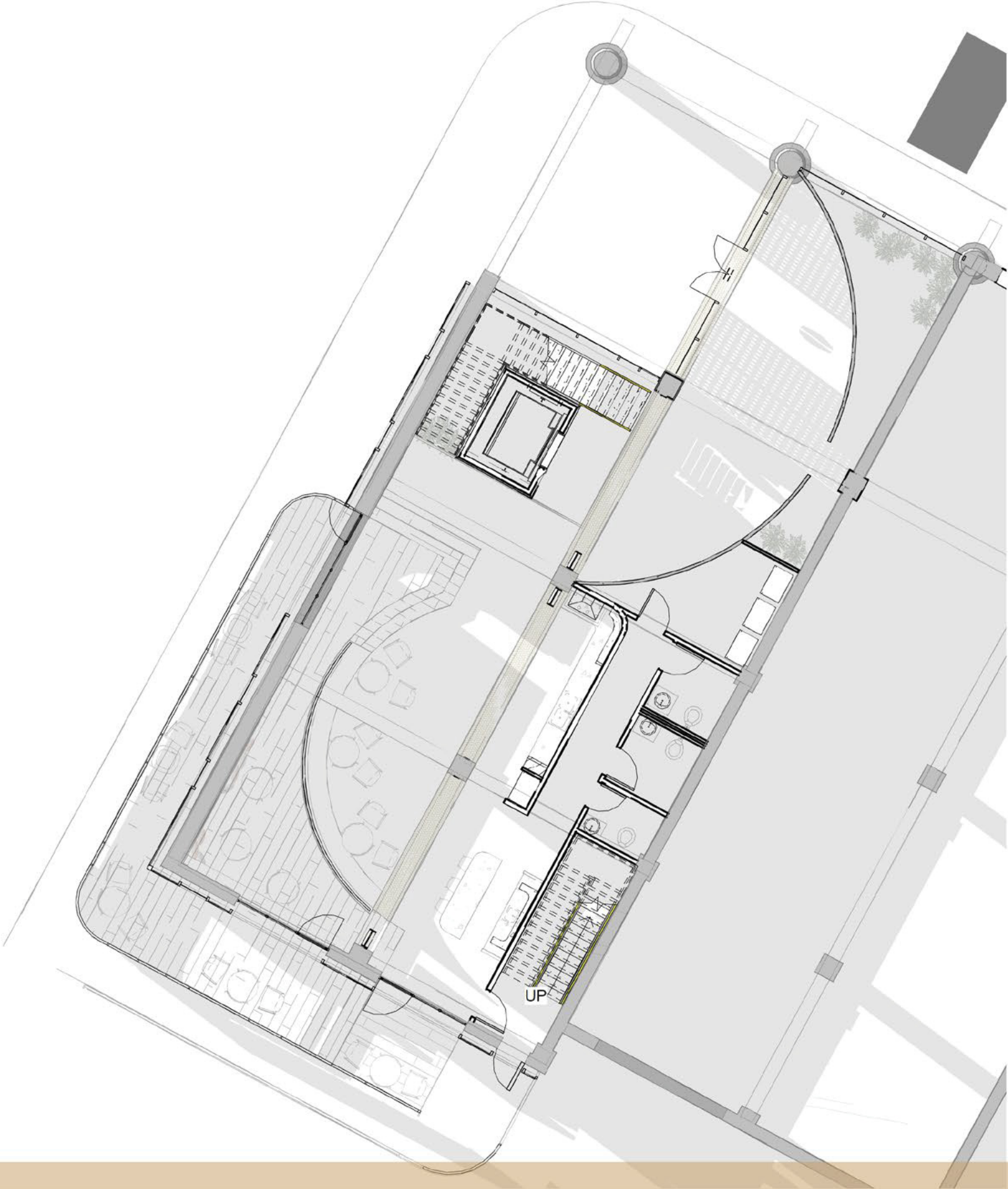
TYP

0 25'

view - entry corner

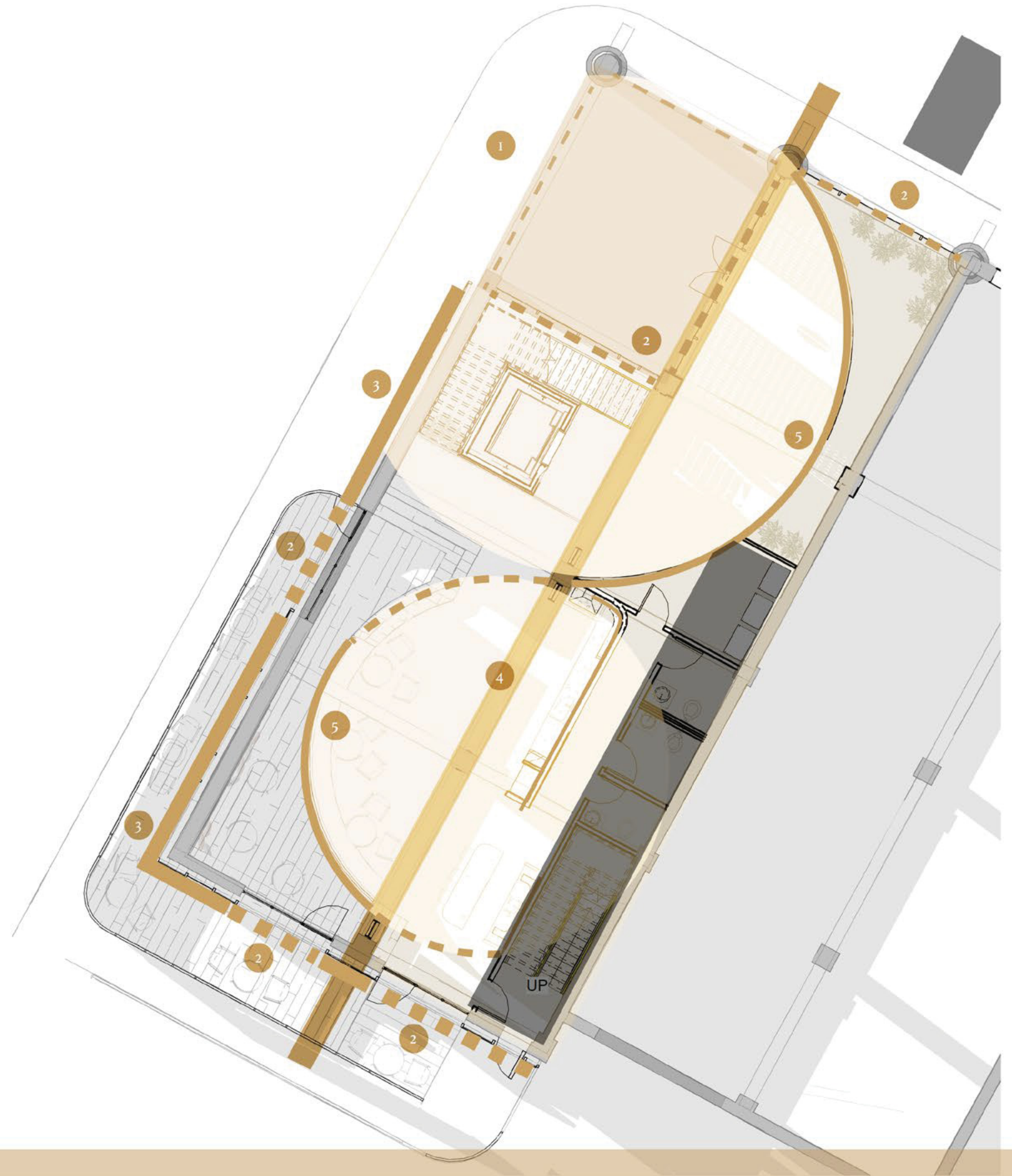


level 01 - floor plan



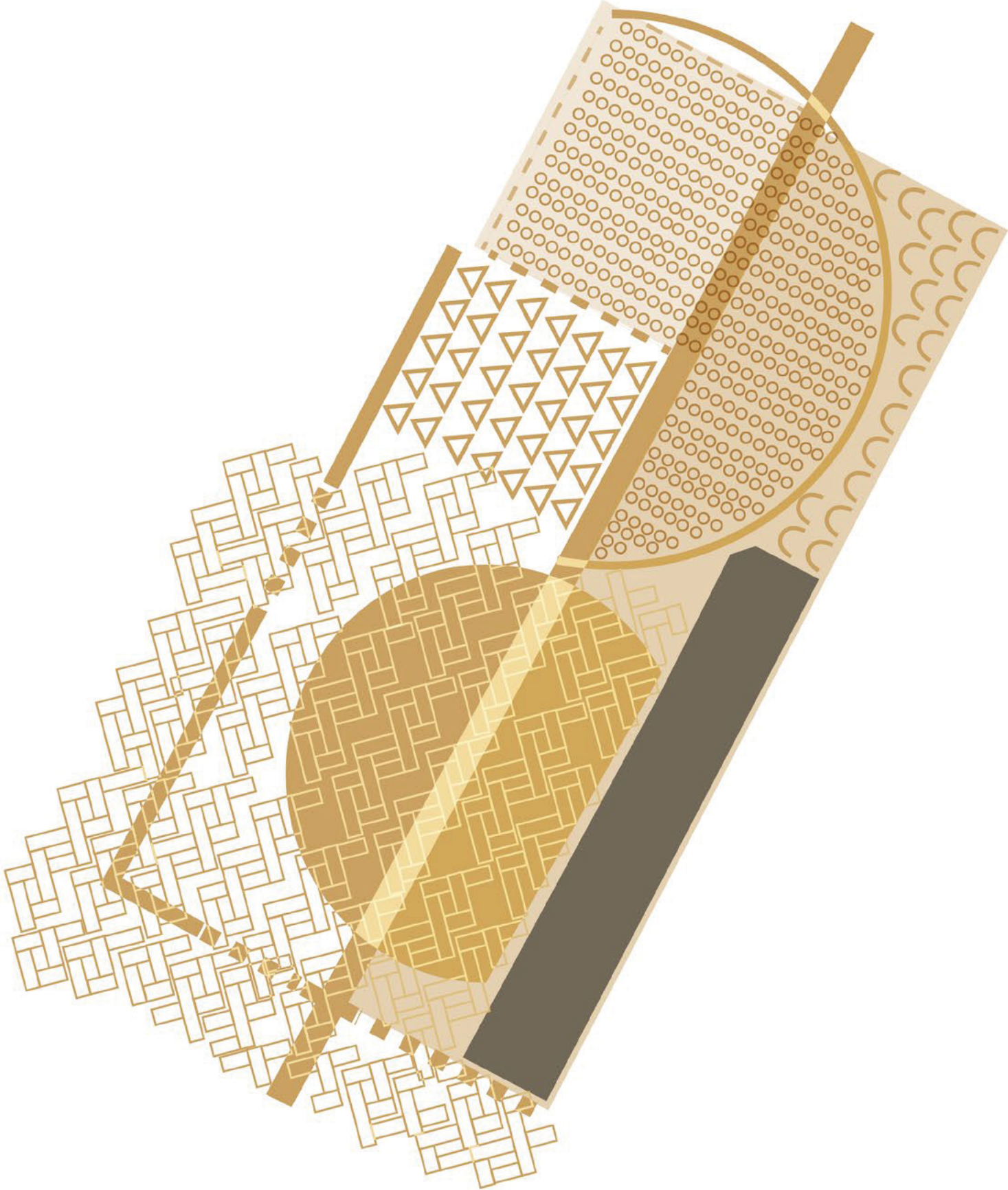
level 01 - parti diagram

- 1 remove infill cmu, reveal structure, open entry corner
- 2 semi-open, perforated screen
- 3 woven rainscreen facade
- 4 portal threshold, reframing the existing structure
- 5 a new form built from but unbound by existing structure

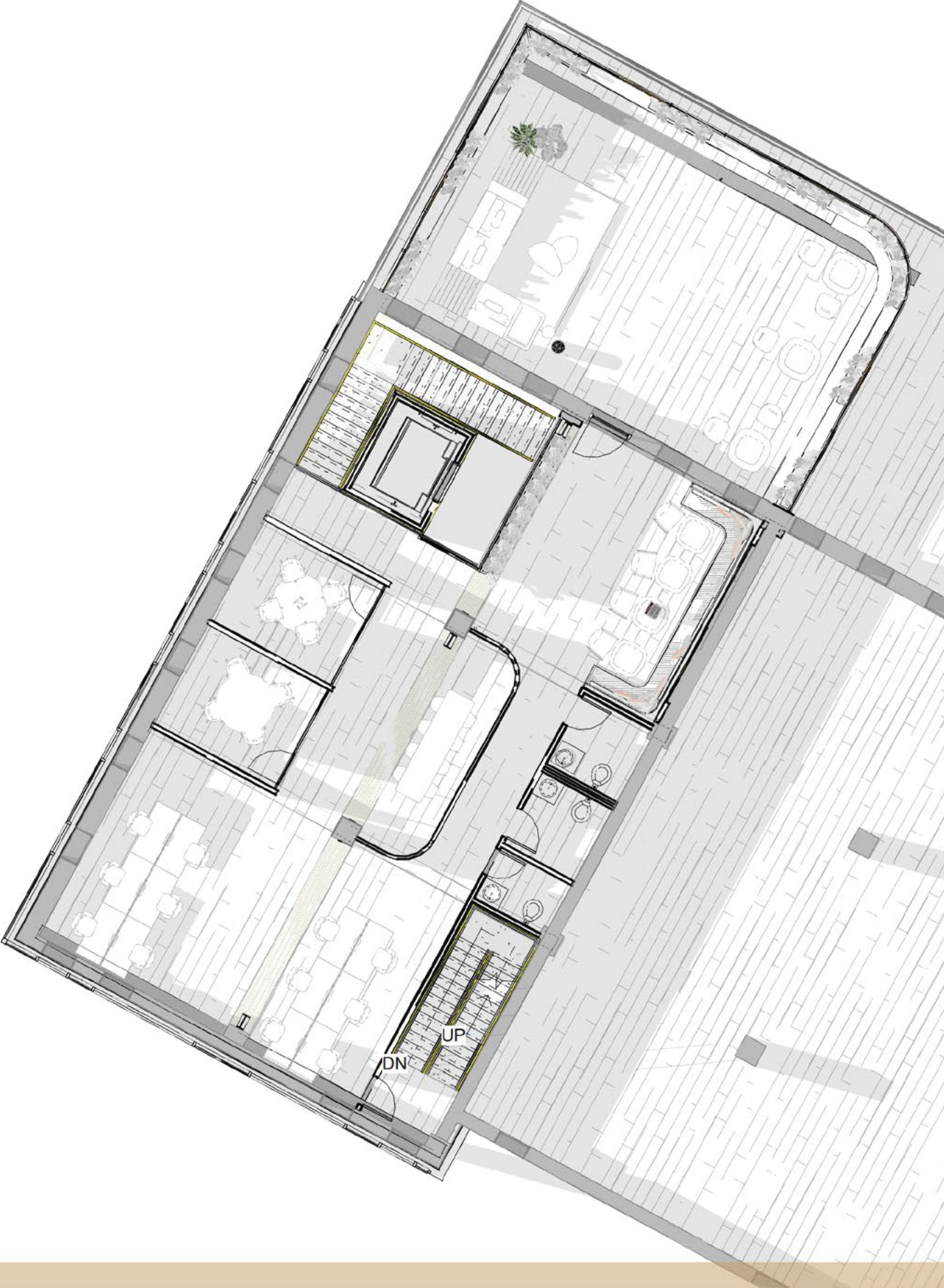


level 01 - program motif diagram

- 1 history ○○○○○○○○○○○○
○○○○○○○○○○○○
- 2 healing 〰〰〰〰〰〰
- 3 honor ▲▲▲▲▲▲
- 4 hustle ▽▽▽▽▽▽
- 5 heart ㊦㊦㊦㊦㊦



level 02 - floor plan

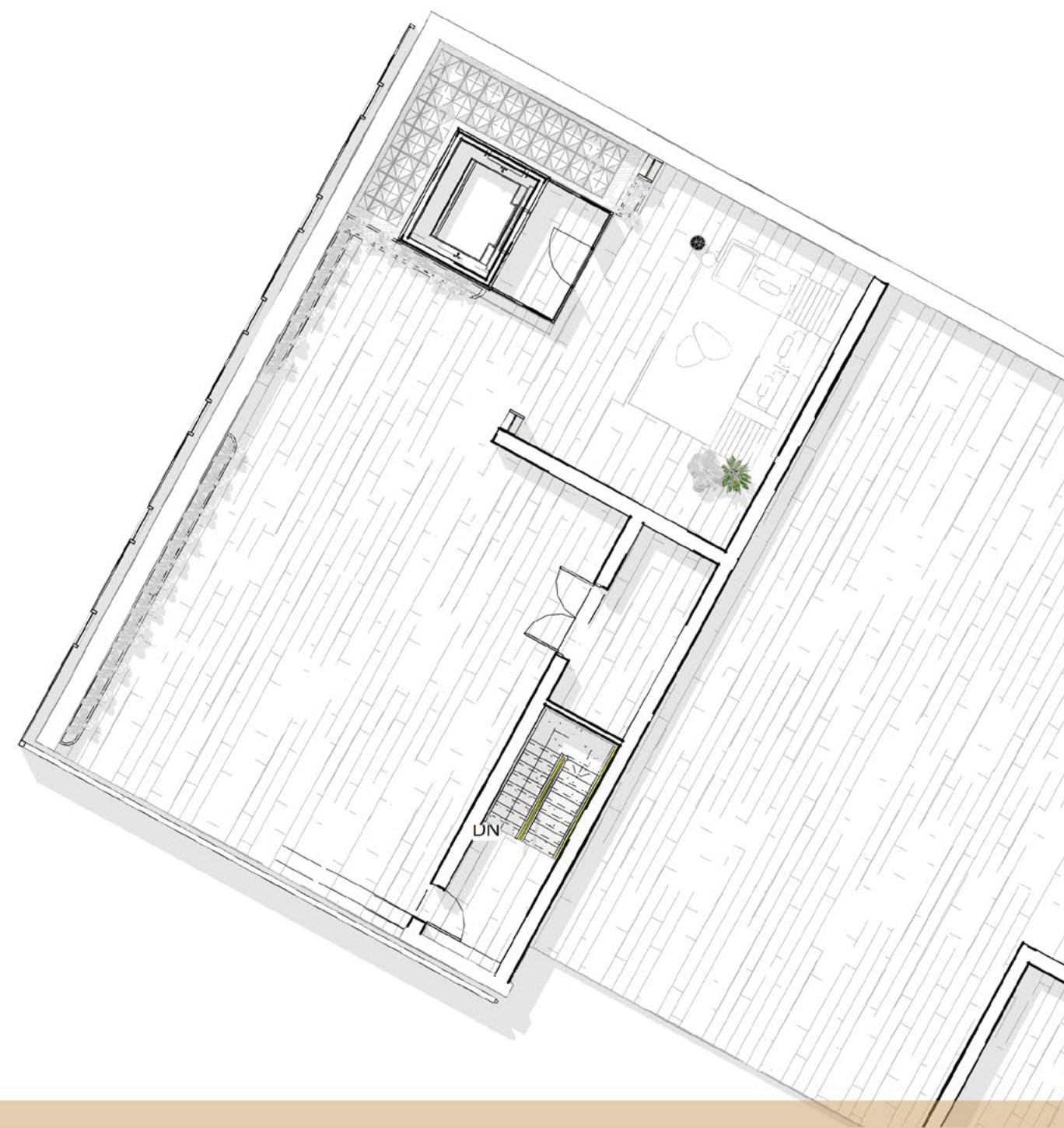


level 02 - parti diagram

- 1 cut opening in existing slab to create interconnecting double-height space
- 2 framed open collaboration space
- 3 closed meeting space
- 4 portal threshold, reframing the existing structure
- 5 occupy new extents beyond the existing boundaries
- 6 woven rainscreen facade

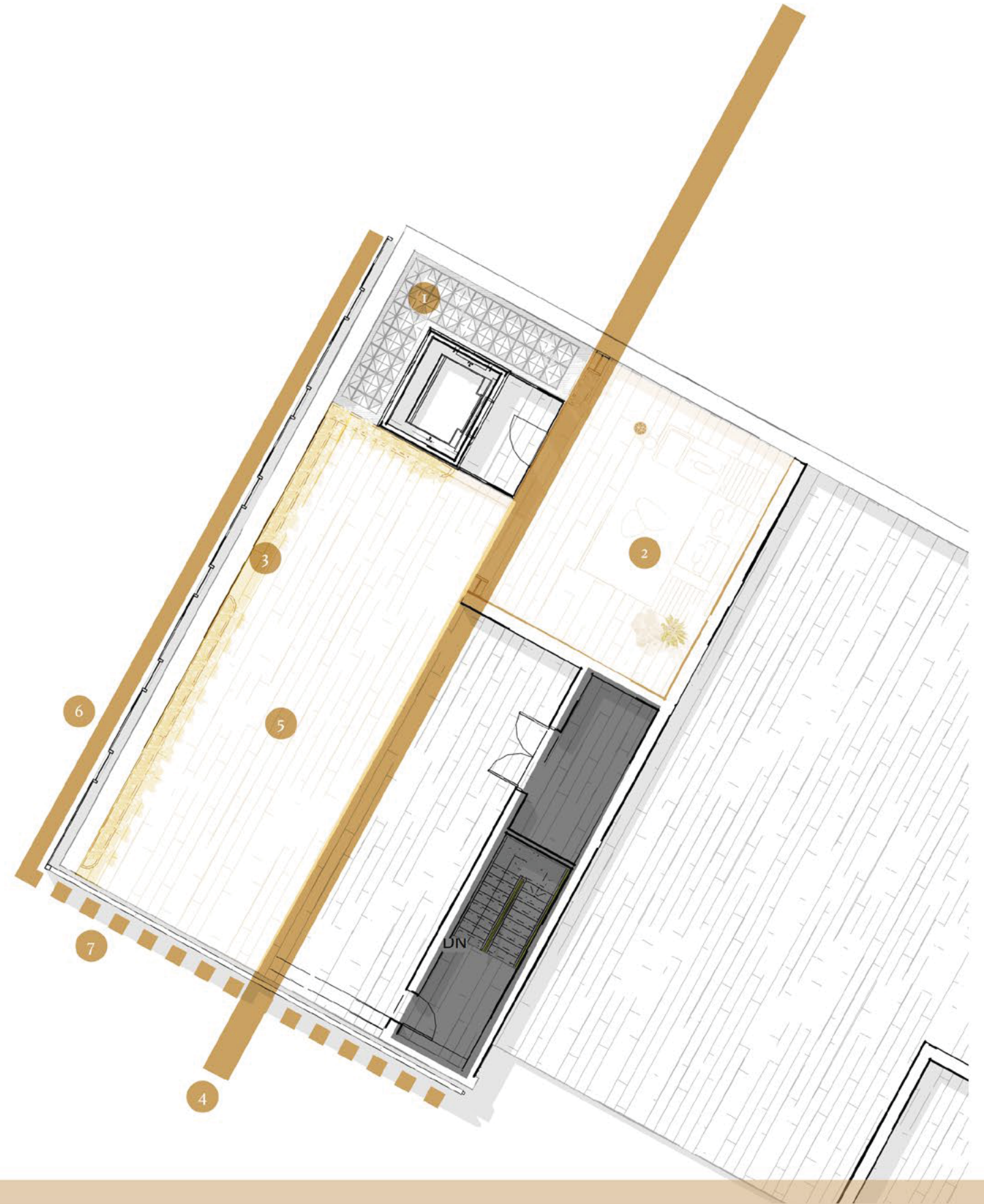


level 03 - floor plan



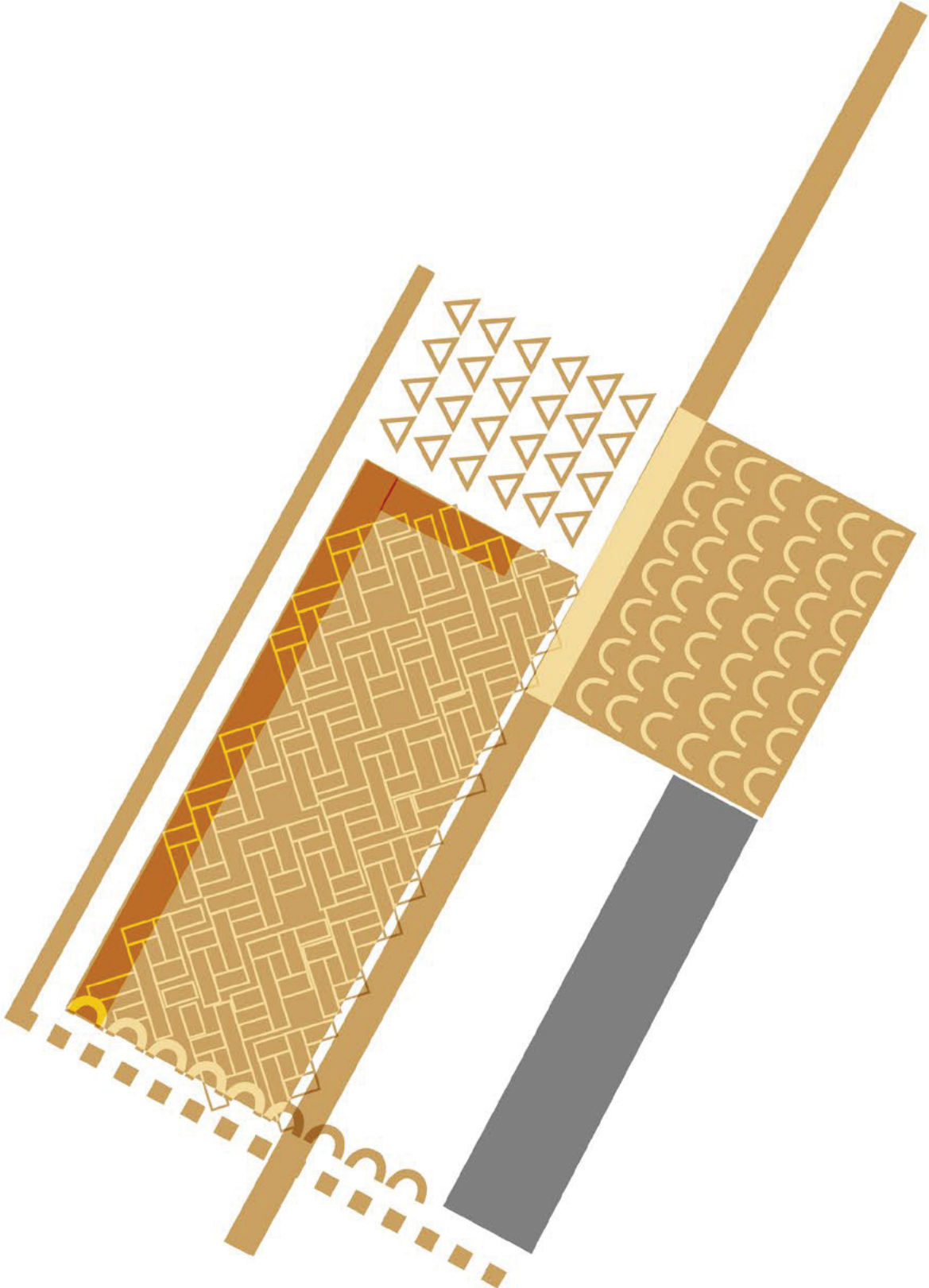
level 03 - parti diagram

- 1 patterned skylight frame above stairs
- 2 open rooftop lounge corner
- 3 herb garden lined existing wall
- 4 portal threshold, reframing the existing structure
- 5 semi-covered event space occupying new extents
- 6 woven rainscreen facade wraps overhead as canopy
- 7 woven rainscreen facade at railing height to create prospect



level 03 - parti diagram

- 1 history ○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○
- 2 healing ⤿⤿⤿⤿⤿⤿
- 3 honor ▲▲▲▲▲
- 4 hustle ▽▽▽▽▽
- 5 heart [interlocking geometric pattern]



level 01 - reflected ceiling plan

- 1 exposed raw, unfinished existing structure with cove lighting
- 2 backlit blackened metal aluminum perforated panels
- 3 open to above
- 4 wood panelized rattan ceiling with linear cove lights
- 5 white finish wood baffle grid open clouds with globe pendants
- 6 gyp finish ceiling with recessed downlights and linear wall-washers



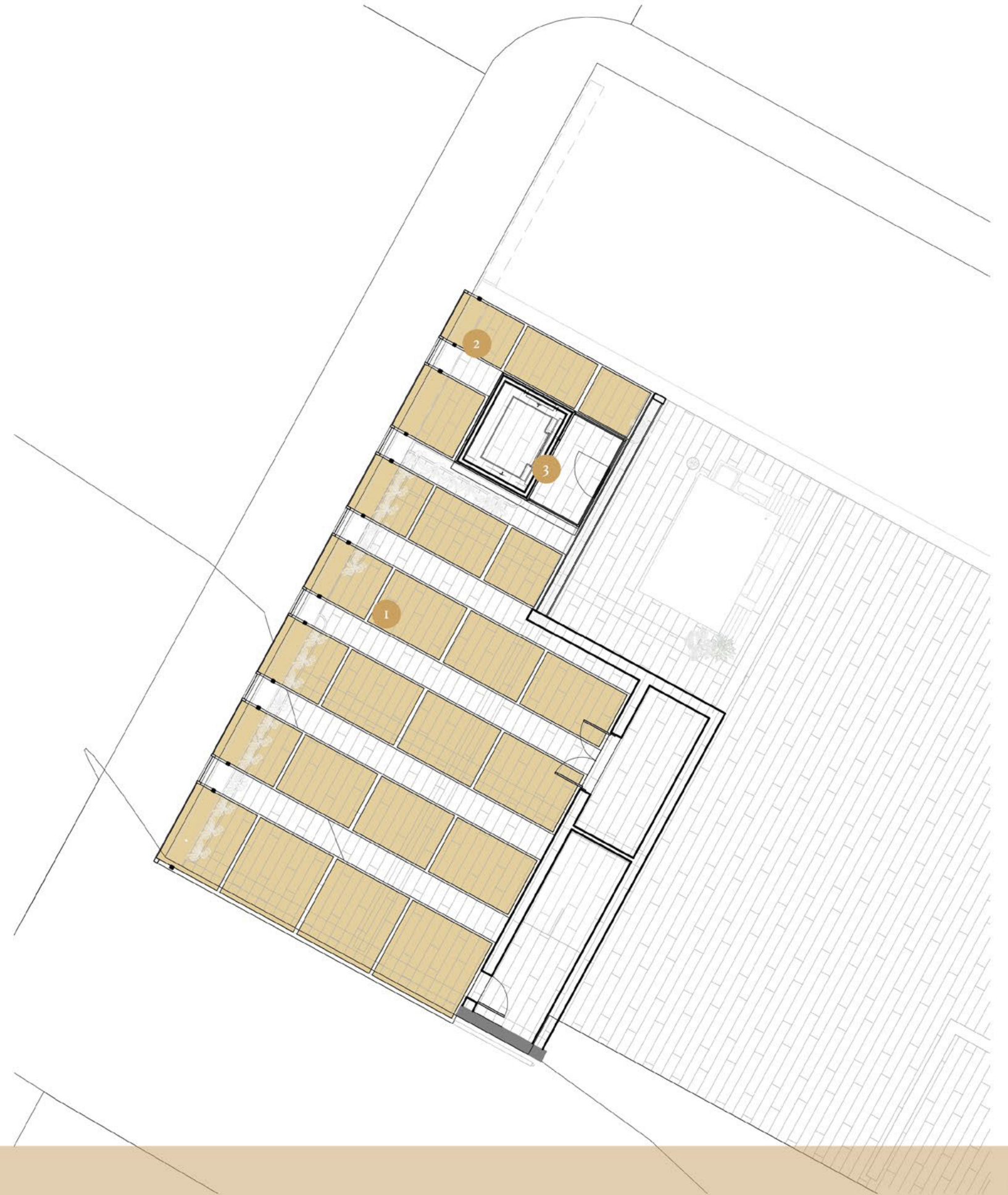
level 02 - reflected ceiling plan

- 1 open finished existing wood joist ceiling
- 2 wood panel skylight to rooftop above
- 3 gyp border ceiling with linear wall washer + globe pendants
- 4 panelized rattan ceiling panels with linear fixture
- 5 white finish wood baffle grid open clouds with globe pendants
- 6 gyp finish ceiling with recessed downlights and linear wall-washers



level 03 - reflected ceiling plan

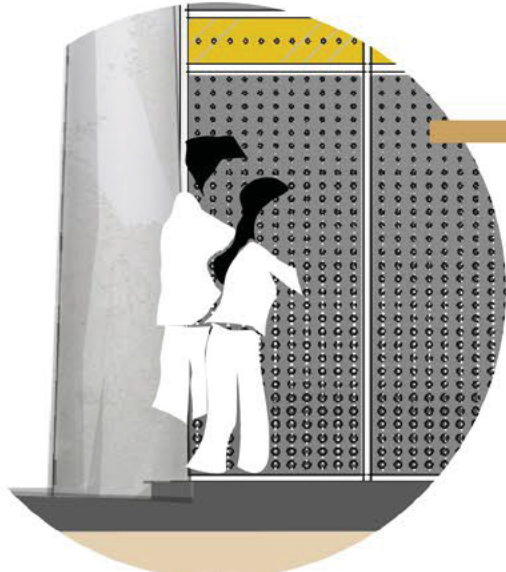
- 1 exterior rattan panel screen covering
- 2 wood panel skylight below
- 3 gyp border ceiling with downlights



section - east



section - east | empathic imagination



history

jackson and lily | local DC residents | non-lao
out on a rare mild spring friday evening in DC - jackson and lily had just picked up their iced lattes at blue bottle coffee across the street and were drawn to the shimmering golden speckles of lights of coming through the darkened industrial and stripped entry to the new place caddy corner from them. out of curiosity, they decide to go check it out.



rooftop
25'-0"

level o2
16'-0"

ground
0'-0"



section - east | empathic imagination

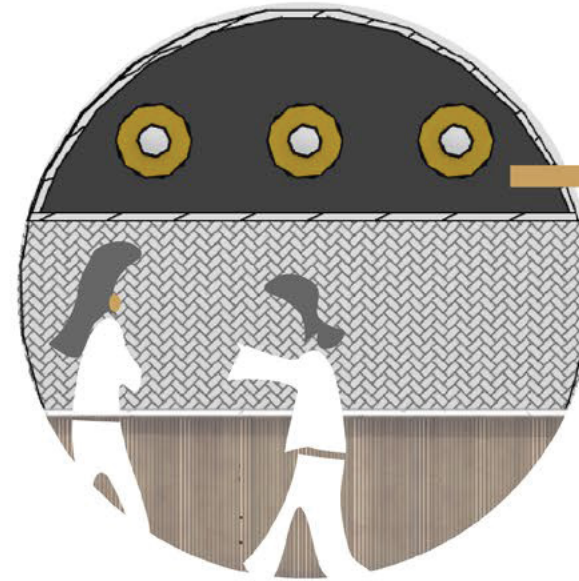


history

pon and sammy | local virginia residents | first-generation vietnamese came to union market after getting off work because they saw a post from the southeast asian resource action center about the new baan lao. they felt moved to visit and eager to support the place. upon arriving, they were met with a collection of drawings and memories wrapping the length of the wall before them - memories from lao-american refugees recounting life during the secret war. they embraced as the tug of grief for the suffering of their parents was illustrated in the stories before them.



section - east | empathic imagination



heart

lina and molly | DC resident + visiting non-local | lao american aunt and niece
lina visits her niece molly in DC while she is passing through the area for the weekend. molly tells her they should meet up at baan lao for dinner to catch up. lina and molly embrace as they revel in the joy of being together and looking over the food counter at the familiar steam of sticky rice on the stove and funk of fish sauce and padaek wafts over them from the fresh papaya salad.



section - east | empathic imagination

healing

jae | DC resident | lao american

jae uses the shared working space at baan lao for her work for legacies of war. she steps outside for a moment on the patio to breathe and get some space after submitting a memo capturing the latest uxo explosion in laos injuring yet another lao farmer. she sits on the rattan screened planter banquette and lets her gaze rest of the bustle the market district beyond while taking in the smells of the flora behind her.



section - east | empathic imagination



hustle

ali + vanna | non-local | lao americans

ali and vanna are in town for a board retreat for the lao american national association and working from the shared space at baan lao. they just passed a striking mural along alethia tanner park on their way to baan lao and immediately went upstairs to step into the open meeting room and ideate on the collaboration wall for a new community initiative focused on lao art and story-telling.



rooftop
25'-0"

level 02
16'-0"

ground
0'-0"



section - east | empathic imagination



honor
heidi + ari | local residents | lao american
 heidi follows her half american/half lao daughter with a sense of pride as she sees her curious and adventurous daughter run to the edge of the rooftop to look out from the rattan and metal perforated railing. ari takes in the view full of youthful wonder and heidi looks out from behind her daughter with feeling full of love and awe for where she is in this moment overlooking her neighborhood where she has lived since she was an adult.



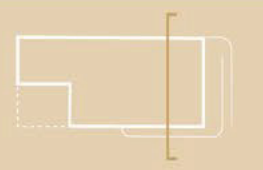
rooftop
25'-0"

level 02
16'-0"

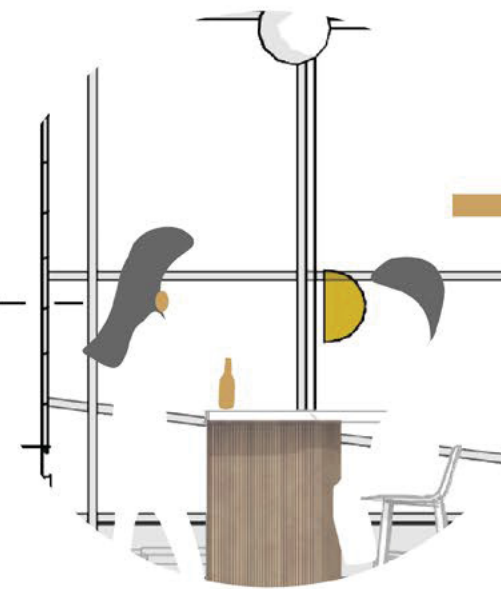
ground
0'-0"



section - south



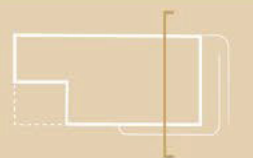
section - south | empathic imagination



heart

mason + kylie | local residents | lao american + non-lao

kylie works as a bartender at baan lao. mason wandered in on out of curiosity while waiting to meet a friend for a show at songbyrd music house down the street. after learning about the lao american history for the first time, he pulls up to the bar and looking to try a lao drink. kylie proudly introduces him to beerlao gold - a national brand crafted in the lao capital of vientiane. mason enjoys his beerlao reflecting on his discoveries and texts his friend to meet him there for a drink before the show, eager to introduce him to the new place and ask whether his friend knew about the secret war on laos.

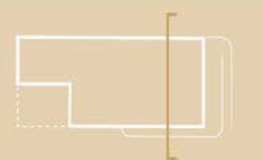


section - south | empathic imagination



heart + healing

min + steph | local residents | lao american + non-lao
min feels her heart flutter with pleasure and her blood pressure eases after a long work day as she settles in to sit on the floor cushions lining the exposed brick wall on the raised platform seating. she's had a challenging week and her friend steph asked what she could do to support her. min longed for comfort and suggested baan lao even though steph had never had lao food before. steph was eager to try something new and something close to her friend's heart. as they both settled into the nook and the first round of thip khao full of sticky rice arrived, min could already feel tension release from her neck and enjoyed her evening in the comfort of a place that felt like home with her friend



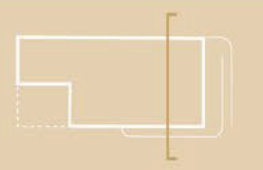
section - south | empathic imagination



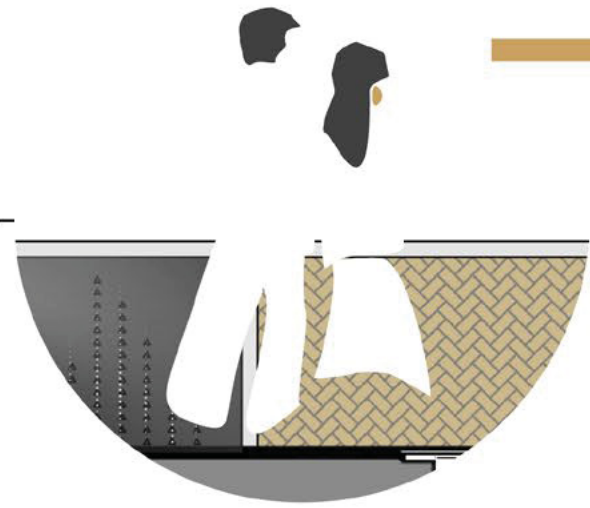
heart + healing

paula | local resident | hmong american

lives nearby baan lao in the eckington neighborhood with her non-lao american husband. most of her family remains in minnesota but her job took her to washington dc and she always finds herself longing for fresh herbs that she can never find at the nearest trader joe's or whole foods - makrut, mint, thai basil, thai chili's, lemongrass. hearing about the extensive herb garden at baan lao, she began making baan lao a weekly stop on her grocery runs for the week. ascending the stairs to the rooftop, she pauses to take in the view of her new neighborhood and then she drops into a deep squat and begins picking fresh herbs for this week's haul. taking the time to smell and touch each herb, she loses herself briefly in the distinct smell of makrut and recalls the simple herbal soup her mother used to make and she's instantly at home.

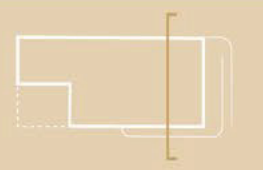


section - south | empathic imagination

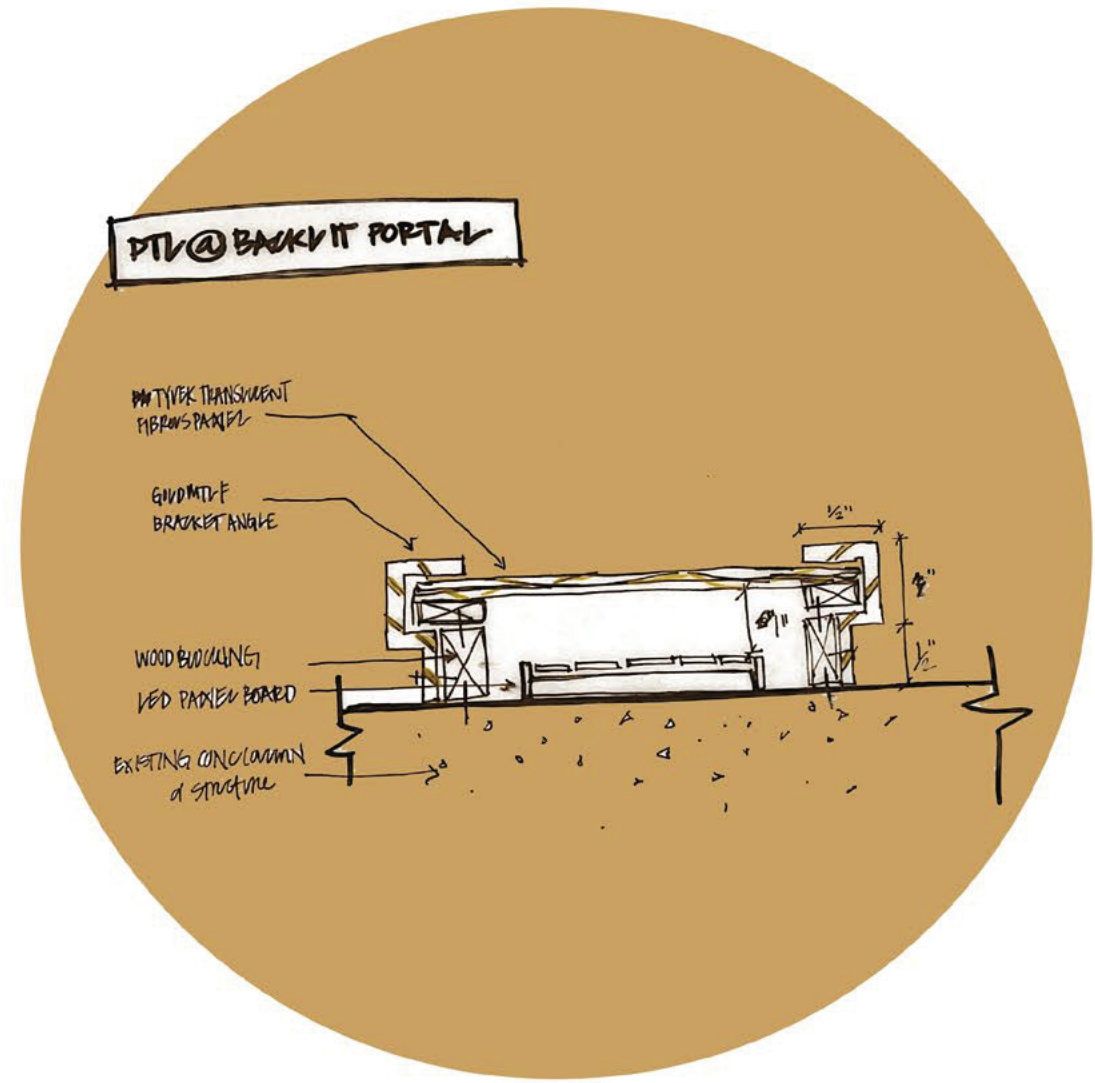
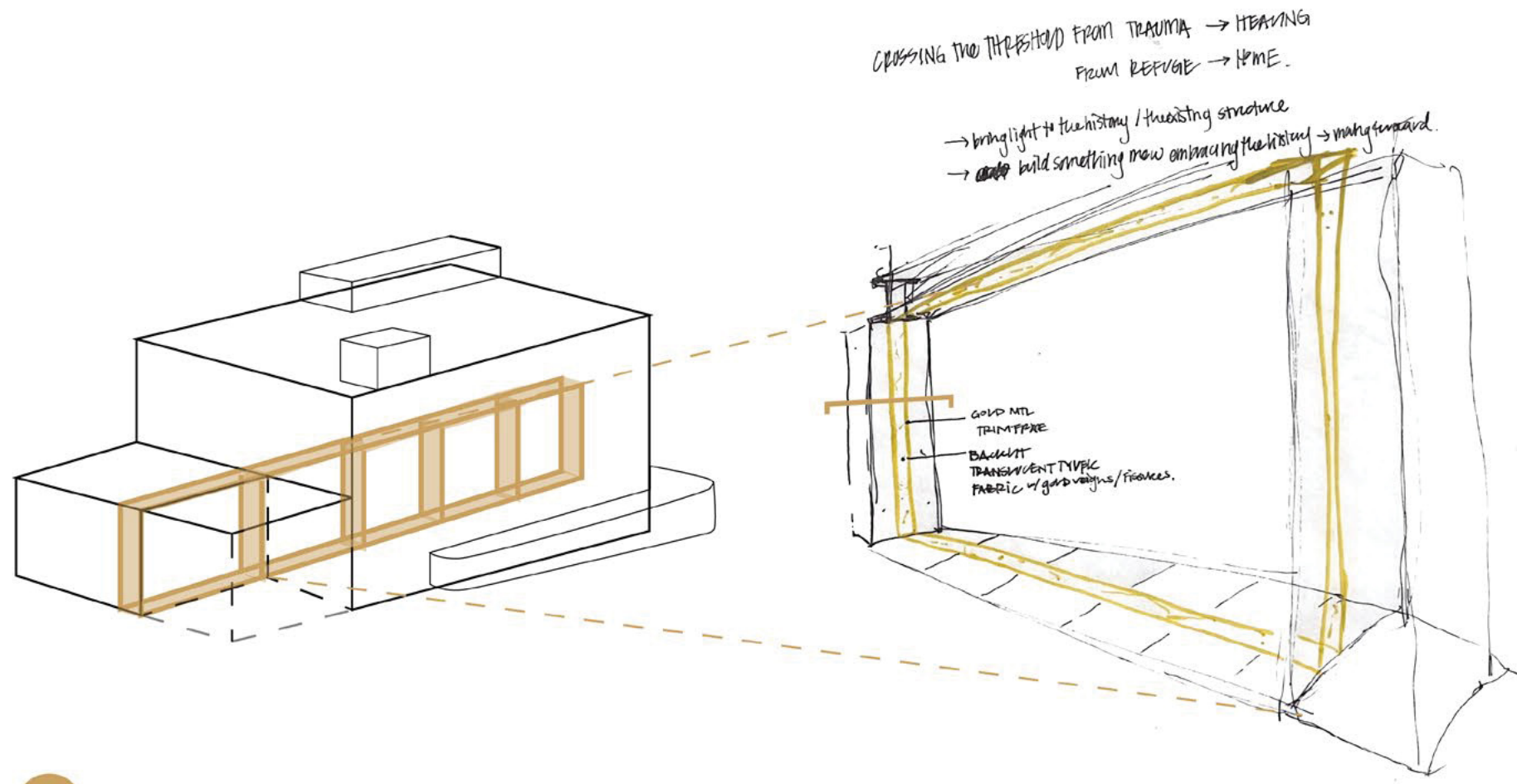


honor

bea + pat | non-local visitors | lao american + non-lao
bea was invited to the white house to receive an award for her work as a journalist and be acknowledged for her advocacy work on behalf of vietnam war era refugees. there was a reception held for her at baan lao afterwards where she was the guest of honor. taking a moment to step away from the party, she and her partner gaze over the rattan and metal perforated railing out towards the pink setting skyline of the nation's capital and are silent for a moment as they bask in her recognition, and her journey



framing threshold weave



3 framing threshold weave

view - history entry



view - heart



view - hustle



view - rooftop honor + healing



An architectural rendering of a modern interior space. The ceiling is a prominent feature, with a curved, vaulted design featuring exposed wooden beams and a grid of circular light fixtures. The walls are a mix of light-colored panels and dark wood accents. In the foreground, there are several people sitting at a curved bar or counter. The overall atmosphere is warm and contemporary.

conclusion | coming home

Threads of this thesis in many ways began as soon as my dad felt he had no choice but to swim across the Mekong river nearly 50 years ago. This moment changed the trajectory of my father's life and my own. And we are just one small thread in the larger tapestry of the Lao and Southeast Asians that were forced to seek refuge and become the largest resettlement group in the United States.

As the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes soared in horrific ways beginning in 2020, the complexity of Asian Americans as a non-monolithic model minority block came to a critical light. It opened up the complexity of understanding a multiplicity of narratives and lived realities. On the personal narrative - I was in trenches of intergenerational trauma and other lived experiences focusing on healing my own mental health. On the professional narrative - I had successful 5 years of experience and had recently begun to explore wellness in relation to design. On the academic narrative - I saw a gap in education that did not center the emotional and lived experience of people as critical to an empathic design process. From each of these threads I began weaving together *Making Space: Refuge to Home*.

Making Space: Refuge to Home is an intentional act of healing and coming home. This thesis chooses to focus on the psychology of refugees who are no longer refugees but citizens with descendants trying to find home. Understanding this meaning of home, *Making Space* chooses not to lean on cultural tropes and physical iconography to replicate the physical attributes of another country that was previously home. It is no longer home. Rather, this land that a generation of refugees have resettled to is home now. It is at this tenuous spot that this thesis pushes architecture to navigate how to design for an identity that straddles multiple cultures at once. It pushes on the tender cross-section of a traumatic history, given and existing conditions, and making space for healing and home. The act of working through that complexity itself is the work of healing trauma. The act of navigating that complexity is the critical work of architecture if architecture is the arbiter of how we relate to others and our surroundings.

When I began *Making Space: Refuge to Home*, the United States had just left Afghanistan and we were in the midst of an Afghan refugee crisis. As I complete *Making Space*, the world faces a current Ukrainian refugee crisis. This question of refuge and home will always be pertinent whether in the context of war and refugees, or within the context of self-identity and healing. Architecture is not only the space but it is the act of making space. And in making space, architecture can make space to be whole and to be home.

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figures list

- Fig 1. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Video features watercolor painting by author. Narration author. Poem by Rupi Kaur, read by author.
- Fig 2. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Photoshop collage reflecting on empathy by author.
- Fig 3. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Watercolor painting by author.
- Fig 4. Holmes, Dolly. (2021) Laos Outline Icon downloaded from Noun Project
- Fig 5. Holmes, Dolly. (2021). China, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos icons created by author from Noun Project. Compiled and annotated by Brittney Sooksengdao
- Fig 6. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Memory collage drawn by author.
- Fig 7. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Base outline of United States from Noun Project. Overlay mapping of Lao American groups and statistics by author utilizing data from the Pew Research Center and the Southeast Asian Resource Action Center
- Fig 8. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Survey conducted by author. Results and data formatted by author - “connection to Lao community”
- Fig 9. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Survey conducted by author. Results and data formatted by author – “what Lao people need most”
- Fig 10. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Survey conducted by author. Results and data formatted by author – “where do you spend time”
- Fig 11. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Survey conducted by author. Results and data formatted by author – “history”
- Fig 12. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Drawn by author – history.
- Fig 13. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Survey conducted by author. Results and data formatted by author – “history”
- Fig 14. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Drawn by author – healing with base drawing for figure outlines from Sacrée Frangine.
- Fig 15. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Drawn by author – healing with base drawing for figure outlines from Sacrée Frangine.
- Fig 16. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Survey conducted by author. Results and data formatted by author – “honor”
- Fig 17. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Drawn by author – honor. Base figure outline drawn from google image search “Sun Lee, Gold”
- Fig 18. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Survey conducted by author. Results and data formatted by author – “heart”
- Fig 19. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Drawn by author – honor. Base figure outline drawn from google image search “Asian woman cooking”
- Fig 20. Sooksengdao, Brittney. (2021). Base map from Esri Community Story Maps. Annotated by author – neighborhoods for site study
- Fig 21. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Base map from Esri Community Story Maps. Annotated by author – safety.
- Fig 22. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Base map from Esri Community Story Maps. Annotated by author – community.
- Fig 23. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Base map from Esri Community Story Maps. Annotated by author – visibility.
- Fig 24. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Base map from Esri Community Story Maps. Annotated by author – growth.
- Fig 25. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Base map from Esri Community Story Maps. Annotated by author – growth x community x visibility
- Fig 26. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Site Study. Base map from Esri Community Story Maps. Annotated diagram by author. Data and information from Google Maps and DC GIS database.
- Fig 27. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Site Study with neighborhood photographs. Base map from Esri Community Story Maps. Annotated diagram by author. Photographs by author.
- Fig 28. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Photograph from SW corner of Florida Ave NE & 4th St NE by author.
- Fig 29. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Photograph from 4th St NE & Morse St NE at 401 Morse by author.
- Fig 30. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Site map created by author in Revit. Base map from Esri Community Story Maps.
- Fig 31. Page 67 figures: A – DC Historic Preservation Office (2016). Photograph of 401 Morse St. NE est 2016 as part of historic preservation review application; B – DC Historic Preservation Office (2016). 1938 aerial view of Union Market Terminal from the historic preservation review board historic district designation application; C – DC Historic Preservation Office (2016). Photograph of Union Market Terminal, date not listed from the historic preservation review board historic district designation application.
- Fig 32. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Photograph from Google Maps, street view. Surrounding context facade study 1 - 5th St NE annotations by author.
- Fig 33. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Photograph from Google Maps, street view. Surrounding context facade study 2 - 5th St NE & Morse St NE
- Fig 34. Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Photograph from Google Maps, street view. Surrounding context facade study 3 - Morse St NE (North) annotations by author.
- Fig 35. Page 75 figures A, B, C (left – right): Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Photographs by author of existing conditions at 401 Morse St NE.
- Fig 36. Page 76 figures A, B, C (left – right): Sooksengdao, Brittney (2022). Photographs by author of existing conditions at 401 Morse St NE.

figures list

- Fig 37. Tafur, L. [Lauren]. (n.d.). *Brick architecture* [Pinterest post]. Pinterest. Retrieved February 10, 2022. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/647955465118577872/>
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- Fig 42. Hackwith, D. [Dustin]. (n.d.) *Gallery of Oxalis Restaurant/ Sò Studio -10*. [Pinterest post]. Pinterest. Retrieved February 10, 2022 from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/95490454588450761/>
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- Fig 49. Ock Pop Tok. (n.d.) Example of chok weaving, up close. [Pinterest post]. Pinterest. Retrieved March 28, 2022 from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/543598617497090861/>
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- Fig 51. Sihombing, Y. [Yoshvida]. (n.d.) *Laos Souvenirs: What to buy in Laos*. [Pinterest Post]. Pinterest. Retrieved March 28, 2022 from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/717831628091582624/>
- Fig 52. Pixabay.(n.d.). *Temple in Laos*. [online image] Pexels. Retrieved May 7, 2022 from Pexels.com