

# E PLURIBUS UNUM: A Study of Reconnecting a Broken Urban Fabric

## National Museum of the American People

Krystyn M. Haecker



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# ABSTRACT

## E PLURIBUS UNUM: A Study of Reconnecting a Broken Urban Fabric

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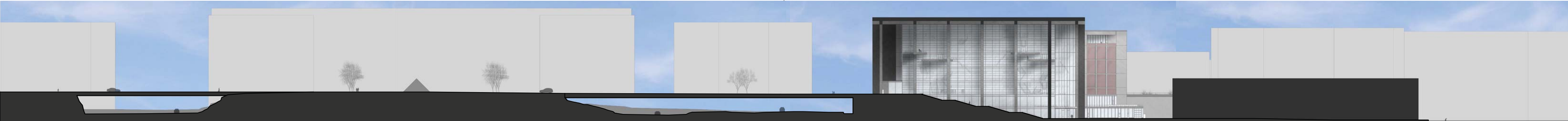
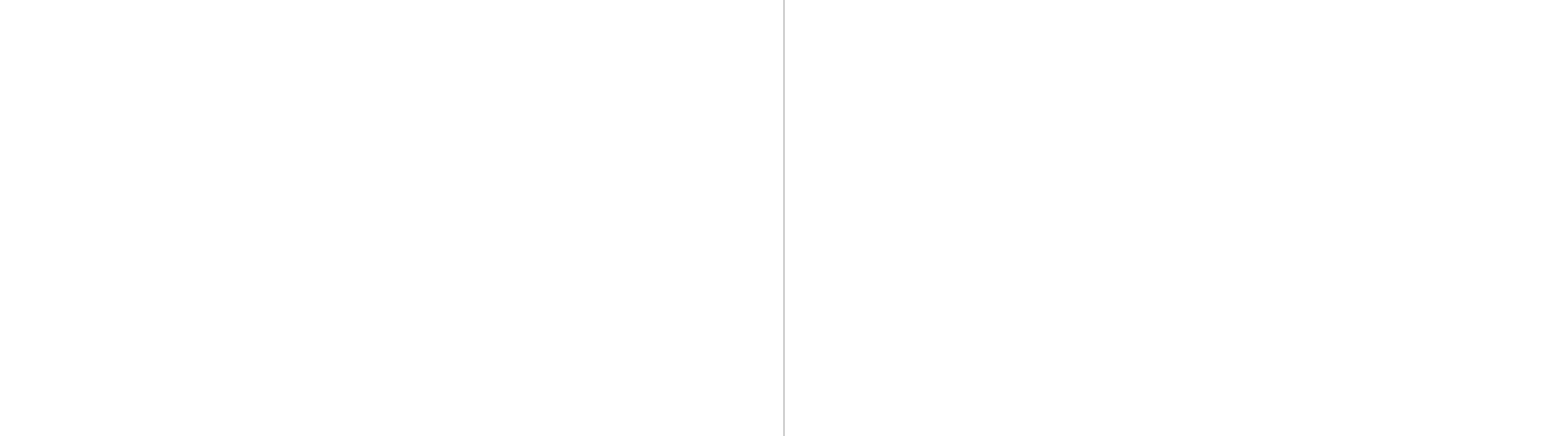
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A city requires the architecture that comprises it to stitch together its urban fabric, creating connections between various, potentially disconnected, parts. Architecture mediates its surrounding public and open spaces, including plazas, streets, and parks. To fully understand a site of a future development, it is first important to understand the current and future conditions of the area within which the site is located, and in some cases its historical context as well. Only then can designers produce architecture that responds to and provides for its urban context for current and future generations.

By studying the current, historic, and future contexts of Banneker Overlook, this thesis was developed by a thorough understanding of its site as a means of influencing the program and future architectural design. Banneker Overlook in its current state is a disconnected urban park in Southwest Washington, DC, originally intended as a connection point between two parts of the city. The purpose of this thesis is to reconnect the higher L'enfant Promenade with the lower Maine Avenue and Southwest Waterfront by means of the architecture and exterior public spaces.

The program chosen for the site is a large public museum called the National Museum of the American People. It will “tell the story of ALL of the American People from prehistoric times to the present” (National Museum of the American People). A large cultural building was used because of its capability to pull Washington residents and visitors to a single location coming from various, possibly disconnected, parts of the city.

As a product of the site conditions, this thesis along with its site and building program became a study of creating connections of places, spaces, ideas, and people over time and space in an attempt to understand how architecture could represent this idea at both an urban and building scale. All of these ideas can be represented in our original national motto: E Pluribus Unum, “Out of Many, One.”





## DEDICATION

To my committee, who taught me how to approach architecture in a way I would not have expected when I started graduate school.

To Sam Eskenazi who helped me to understand and respect his concept for the National Museum of the American People.

To Elizabeth Miller and Matthew Steenhoek who took the time to help me to understand the site conditions and the future conditions that effected how I approached my research and design.

To my family who has supported me my entire life in my academic and professional endeavors. Nothing I have achieved to this point would have been possible without you.

And to Justin, who has continually encouraged me and supported me in all the things I have been working to accomplish over the last two years.

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## CURRENT SITE CONDITIONS



L'Enfant Promenade towards south



L'Enfant Promenade towards north and Forrester Building



Banneker Overlook from 12th Street overpass



Banneker Overlook unintentional pedestrian path



L'Enfant Plaza from L'Enfant Promenade



I-395 from L'Enfant Promenade



Maine Avenue and 9th Street intersection toward Banneker Overlook



Banneker Overlook from Maine Avenue



Banneker Overlook from L'Enfant Promenade



Banneker Overlook



Maine Avenue from 12th Street overpass



Maine Avenue towards east

When determining a specific project site, the surrounding context was a very influential part of the process for this project's development. Because the thesis was intended to focus on creating connections in an urban fabric by means of a single piece of architecture, the area in which it was located was just as important as the site and building program itself.

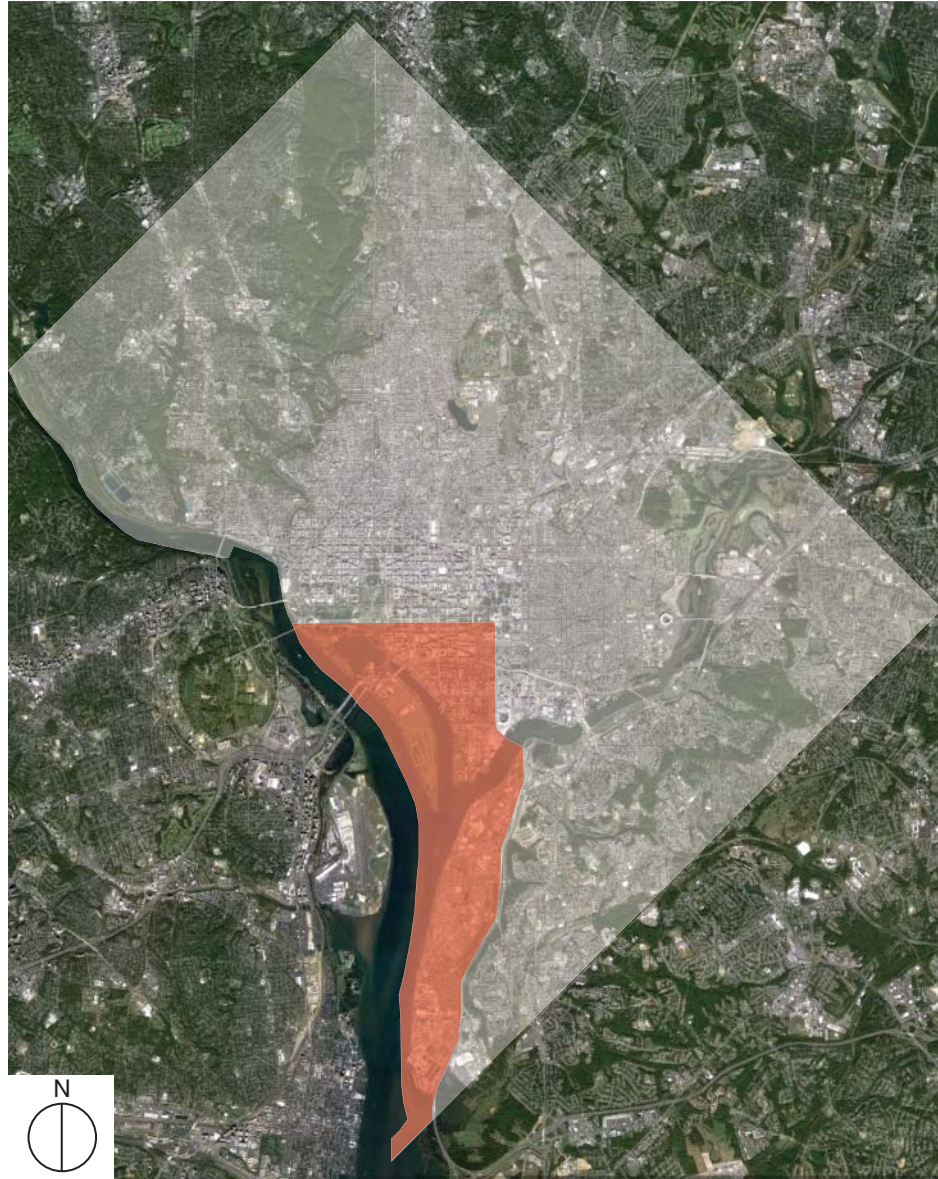
Southwest Washington, DC is a very diverse neighborhood that is a product of the urban environment established by architects and planners. In the Southwest Quadrant of Washington, DC, there is a large highway barrier dividing its two major sections, a primarily residential southern section and primarily office northern section. The Southwest Freeway (I-395) bi-sects the quadrant and further emphasizes the division of the single-use character of these two areas.

The northern section of the quadrant, the Southwest Federal Center area, is a commercial section of the city in which a significant percentage of the offices are owned or housed by government agencies. This area is bound to the south by the Southwest Freeway, to the north by Independence Avenue, to the West by 14th Street SW, and to the east by South Capitol Street. There are no residential developments in this area, although there are a few hotels located here including L'Enfant Plaza Hotel. The buildings are primarily large government office buildings that take up an entire city block, often brutalist modern in character with minimal or no retail street amenity. Because of these characteristics, the area is almost always empty on nights and weekends, when the office workers have gone home or elsewhere after work.

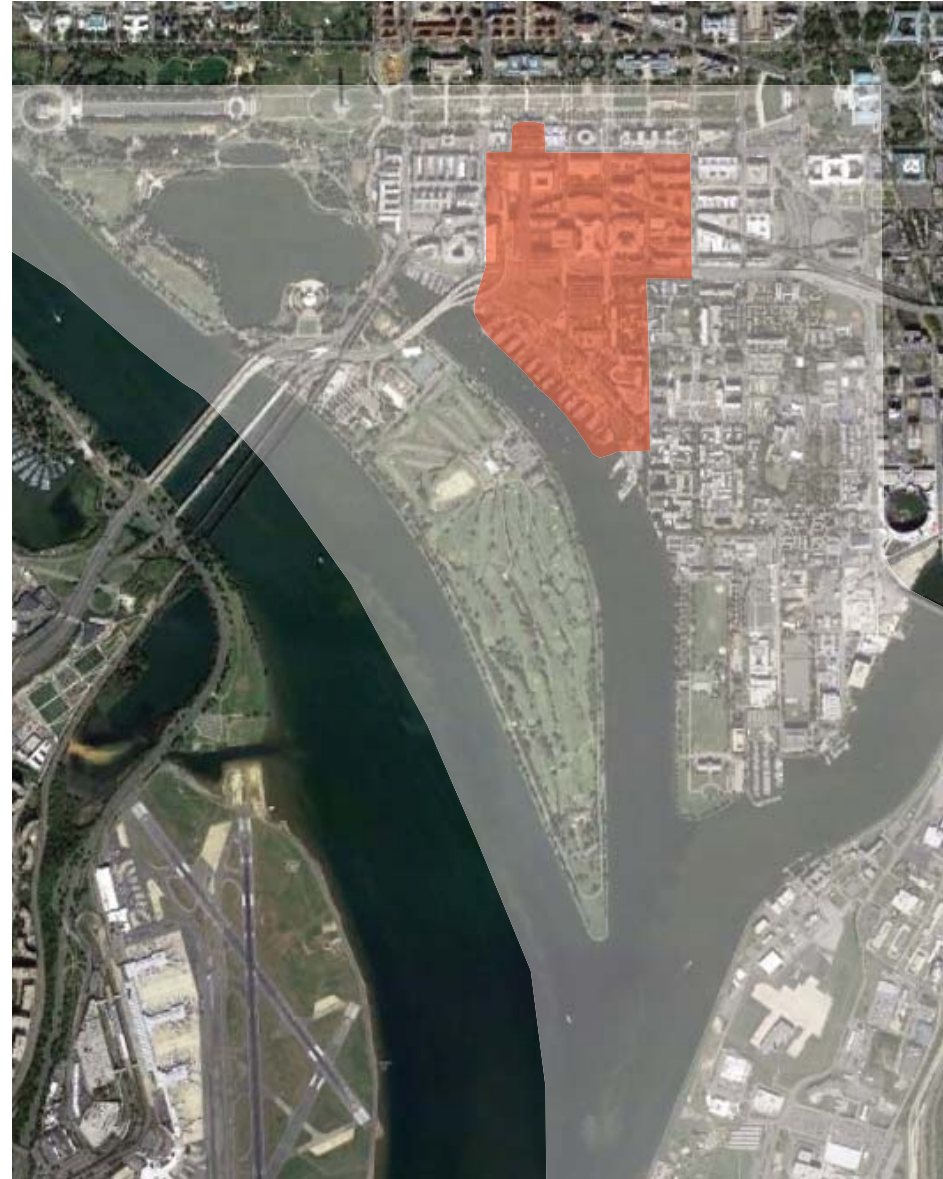
Of this Southwest Federal Center area, the majority of the study was focused on 10th Street SW. The section of 10th Street between Independence Avenue and Maine Avenue is also known as L'Enfant Promenade. At the northern boundary of L'Enfant Promenade, the Forrester Building (1965) spans across the road, creating a visual barrier between the promenade and the Smithsonian Castle. On the Southern boundary of L'Enfant Promenade is Banneker Overlook (also referred to as 10th Street Overlook), which is the specific site for this thesis project. Along the promenade is L'Enfant Plaza which is surrounded by the four L'Enfant Plaza buildings. To the east of 10th Street the grassy tree-lined L'Enfant Plaza is surrounded by the North, East, and South Buildings. The East Building is L'Enfant Plaza Hotel and the North and South Buildings are leasehold office buildings housed in large part by government agencies. Underneath the plaza and buildings is the L'Enfant Promenade Shopping Mall, housing various retail shops, many of which are vacant. To the west of L'Enfant Plaza is the West Building which houses the United State Postal Service. Below the entire L'Enfant Plaza complex is the city's second largest parking garage, housing 16,000 parking spaces.

There is a gradual rise in elevation along L'Enfant Promenade of 30 feet from Independence Avenue to the midpoint of L'Enfant Plaza. At this point the road slopes slightly down to Banneker Overlook, which stands as the great terminus of 10th Street SW, although it was originally intended as the connection point to the Southwest Waterfront neighborhood. The entire length of L'Enfant Promenade is approximately half a mile and the width varies from 100 to 250 feet. The pedestrian space of the street is divided with small walkways and parking on either side of the street and a wider pedestrian walkway down the center of the street.





Washington, DC



Southwest Quadrant

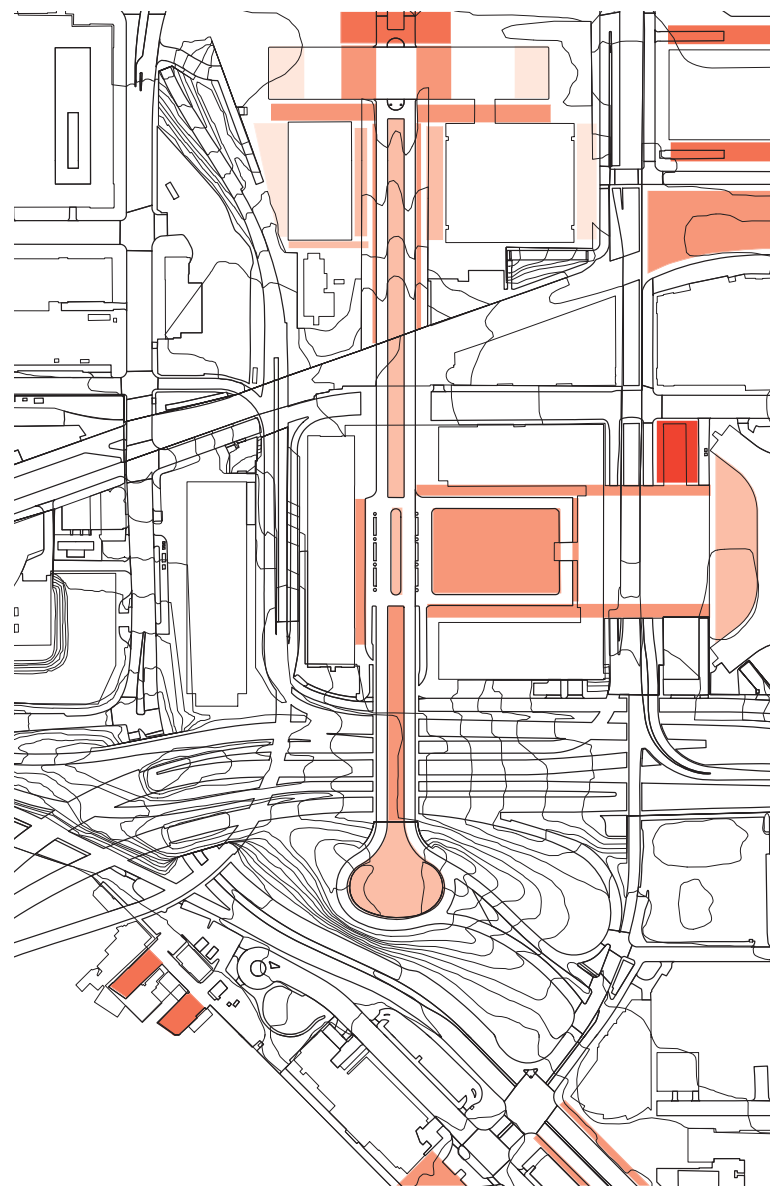


Study Area

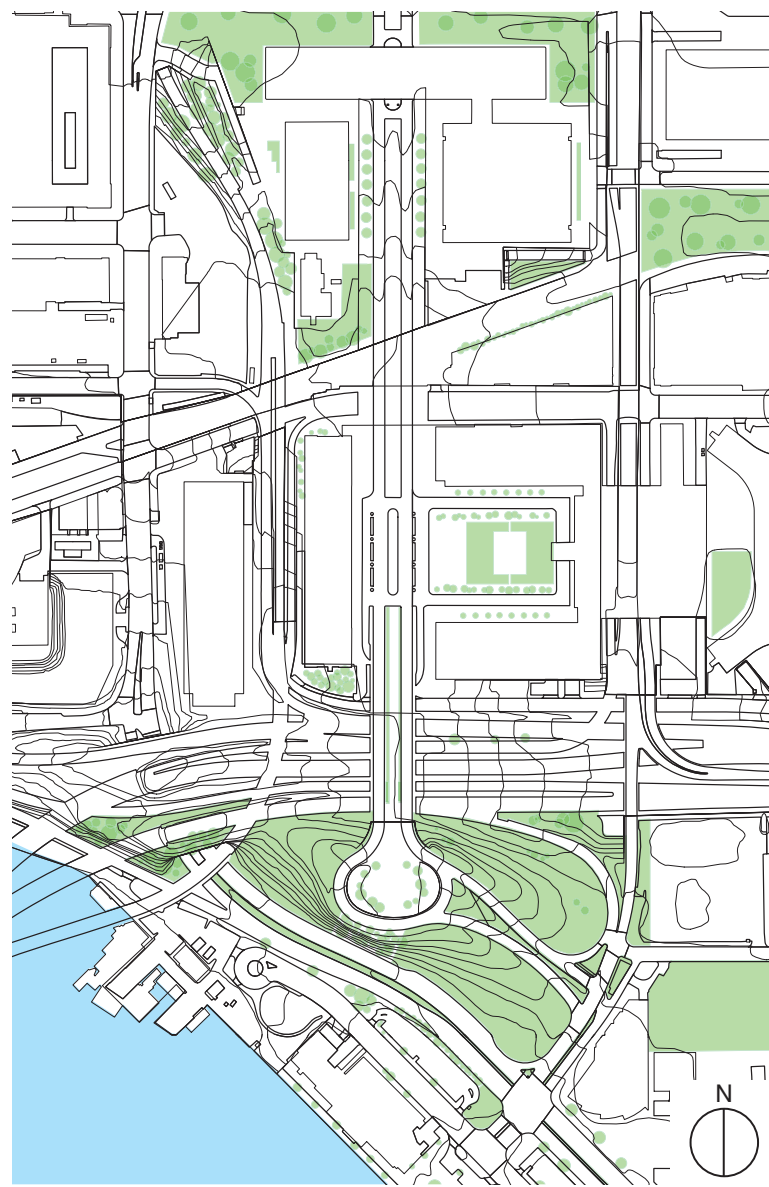


Project Site (Banneker Overlook)

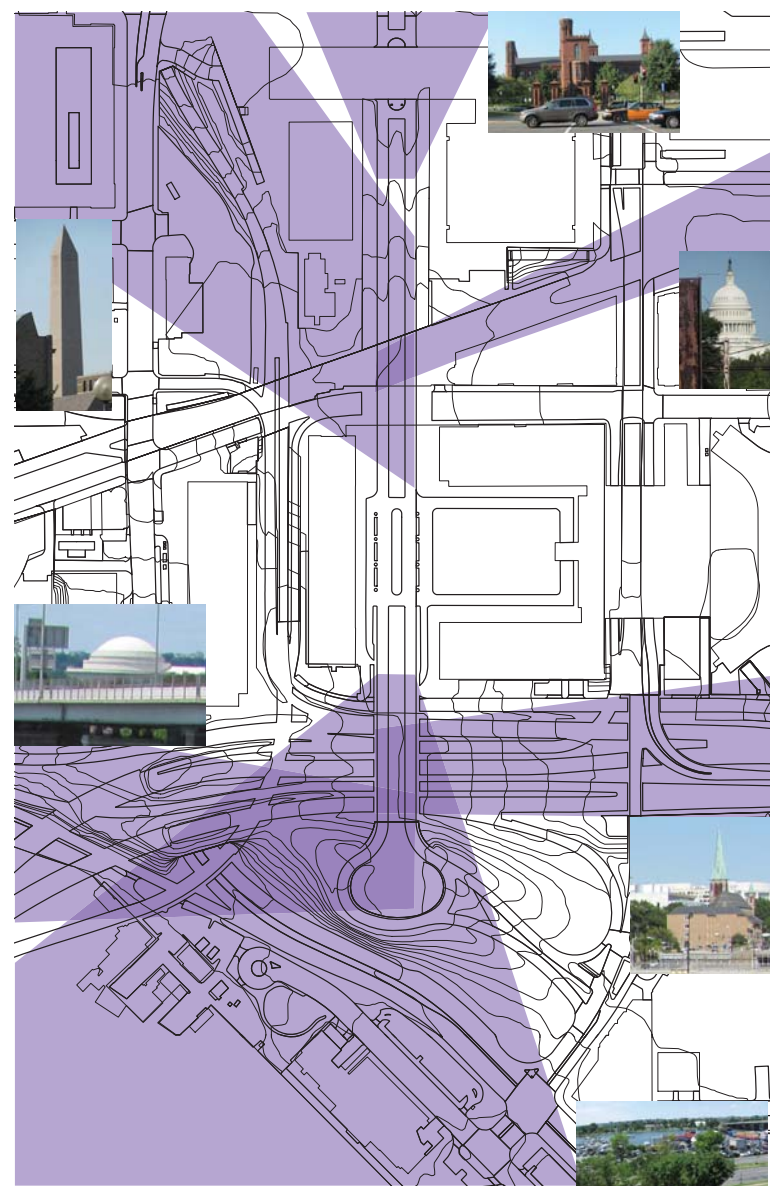




Public Space



Green Space

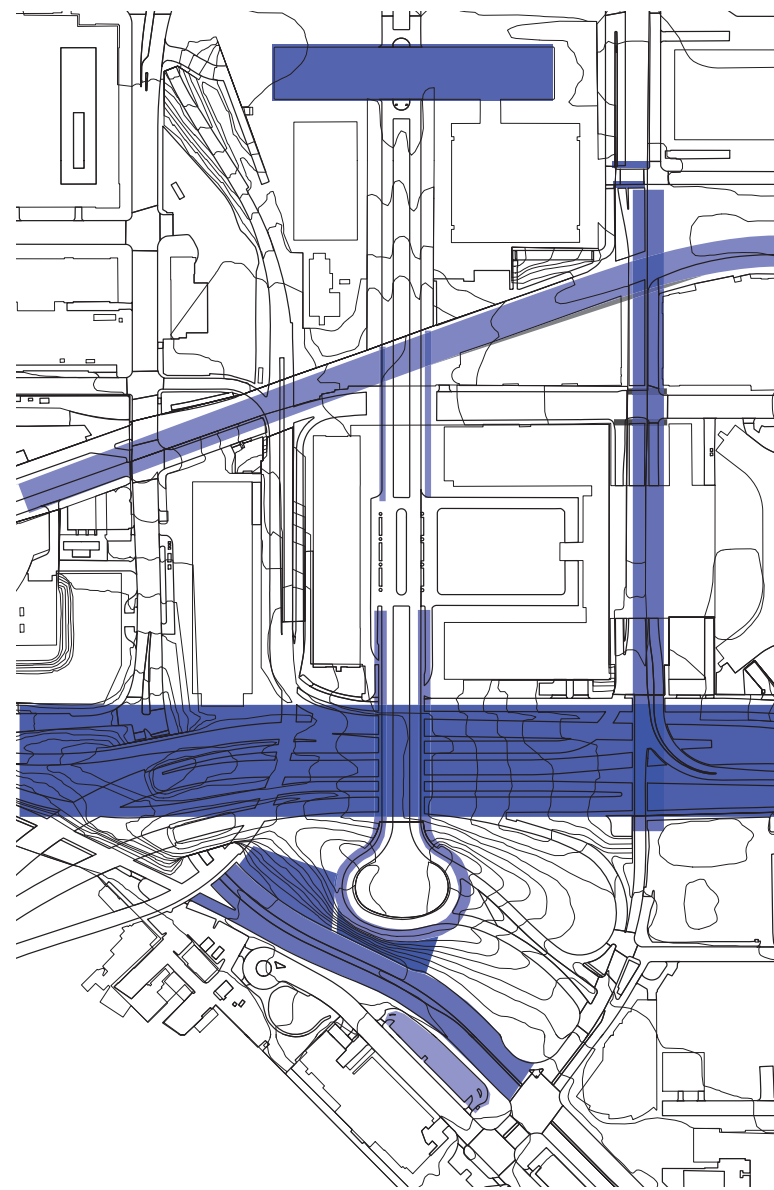


View Sheds

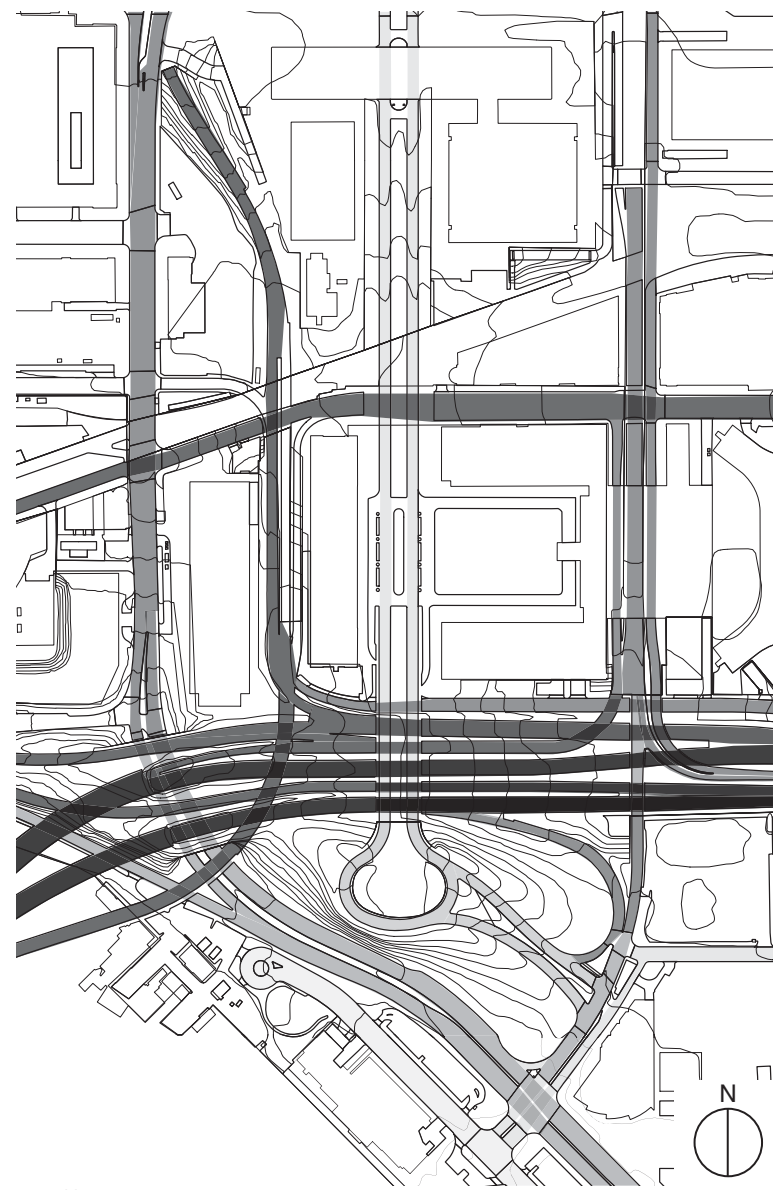
The majority of public space around the L'Enfant Promenade corridor exists on the promenade itself, although it is sparsely used for anything other than moving through the area. There is a large public space at L'Enfant Plaza that serves as an area for waiting or gathering, primarily during lunch or before and after the work day. There is also public space around and underneath the Forrestal Building, but this space is minimally used as well because of the uninviting nature of the building. The final major public space is the project site. Banneker Overlook is an under-utilized public space at the termination of 10th Street SW intended as a contemplative space within the urban fabric. There is a substantial amount of available public space in this area although it is seriously under-utilized.

Green space of the promenade itself is minimal. There is some green space at the north termination point in front of the Forrestal Building, attempting to create a relationship with the green space of the Smithsonian Castle. There is green space and tree canopy as well in L'Enfant Plaza. The largest green space in this study area is at Banneker Overlook, although it is primarily in the form of sloping turf grass lawns that are minimally used by pedestrians.

With its proximity to the mall, many view sheds can be found at various points along this corridor. The Smithsonian Castle is directly on axis with 10th Street SW, although visually it is blocked by the Forrestal Building. The Washington Monument can be seen at various points along this corridor. The Capitol building is on axis with the train tracks along Maryland Avenue. At the Southwest Freeway there is a view to St. Dominic Catholic Church to the east and the Jefferson Memorial to the west. From Banneker Overlook there is a sweeping view of the Washington Channel, East Potomac Park, the Potomac River, and Virginia.



Barriers



Traffic

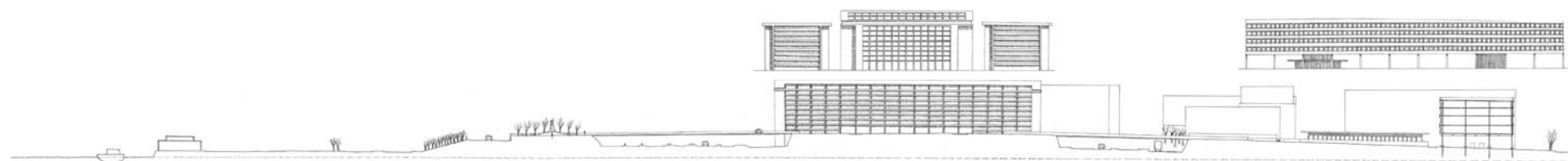
Several barriers are present in this area, including physical, visual, and psychological barriers. The Southwest Freeway serves as a significant physical and psychological barrier, dividing the Southwest Federal Center from the Southwest Waterfront neighborhood. The Forrester Building is a significant visual barrier to and from the promenade, as well as a psychological barrier because of the dark cold space created for pedestrians to pass through along 10th Street SW. The great topographic change of Banneker Overlook, coupled with the quick moving traffic along Maine Avenue create a barrier from the top of the park to the waterfront and fish market.

This area is at the entry and exit point into the city from Virginia and is a great collector and distributor of traffic. Four metro lines come through L'Enfant Plaza metro which is accessible directly from L'Enfant Plaza. The Southwest Freeway serves as the largest traffic corridor in the study area with 10 lanes of traffic including various outlets to adjoining streets. There is also the fast moving traffic of the 6 lanes of Maine Avenue, in particular between 9th Street and 12th Street. Additionally there is the somewhat light and slow moving traffic of 10th Street SW and Banneker Overlook Circle that divides the pedestrian spaces along this corridor.

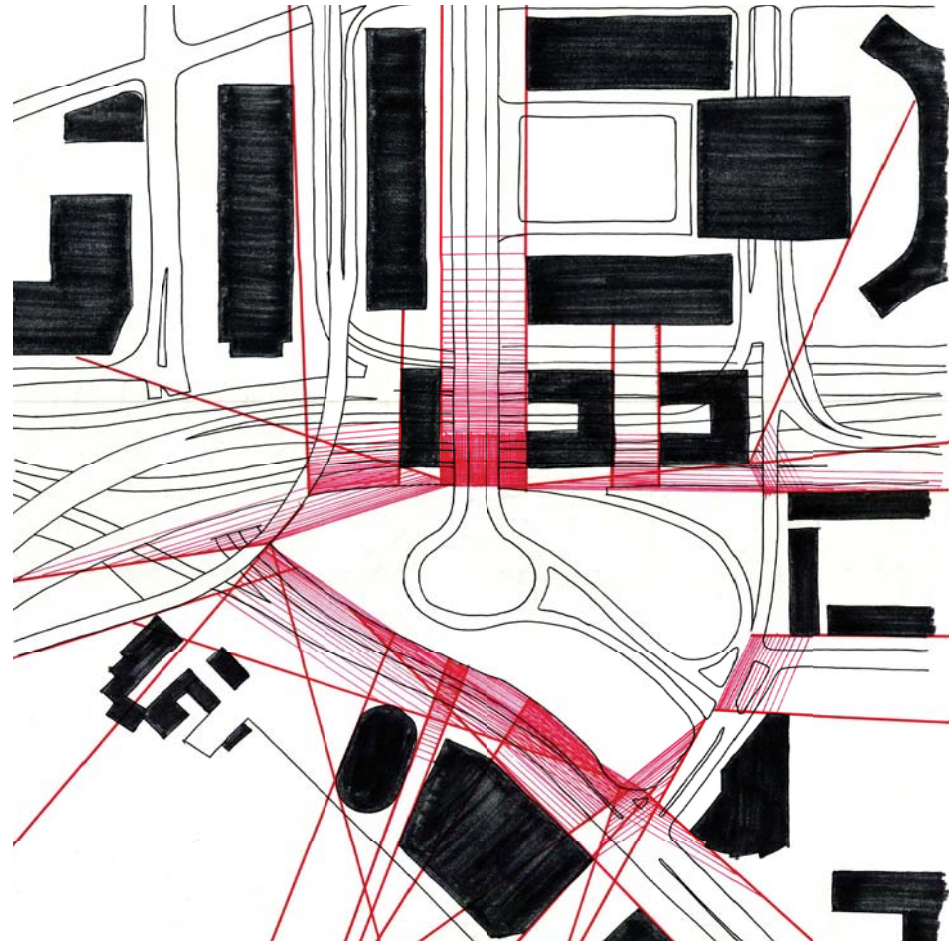
L'Enfant Promenade was intended to connect to the Southwest Waterfront by means of an urban park. Banneker Overlook is a 6.5 acre park just south of the Southwest Freeway along 10th Street SW. The park is an elliptical shaped hardscape with a fountain at the center and benches surrounding it. There is a concrete retaining wall that surrounds this hardscaped portion dividing the park from the traffic circle that is below it, directing traffic to and from 10th Street down to 9th Street and Maine Avenue. The remaining portion of the site is sloping turf grass. There is a steep portion planted with shrubs, bushes, trees and rocks, on the southern portion of the site directly in line with 10th Street. The hardscape portion of the site is at the same level as L'Enfant Promenade, and the lower portion of the park is 35 feet lower in elevation at the same level as Maine Avenue.

Pedestrians can move in between the upper portion of Banneker Overlook and Maine Avenue east of the ellipse by way of a single pedestrian path that must pass across the traffic that comes and goes from the traffic circle. This path leads to the intersection of Maine Avenue and 9th Street SW. An additional unintentional path has been carved into the turf grass in the steeper west portion of the site. Access between the upper portion of the site and the lower is currently not designed with pedestrian travel in mind, but primarily for vehicular traffic that enters and exists 10th Street SW.





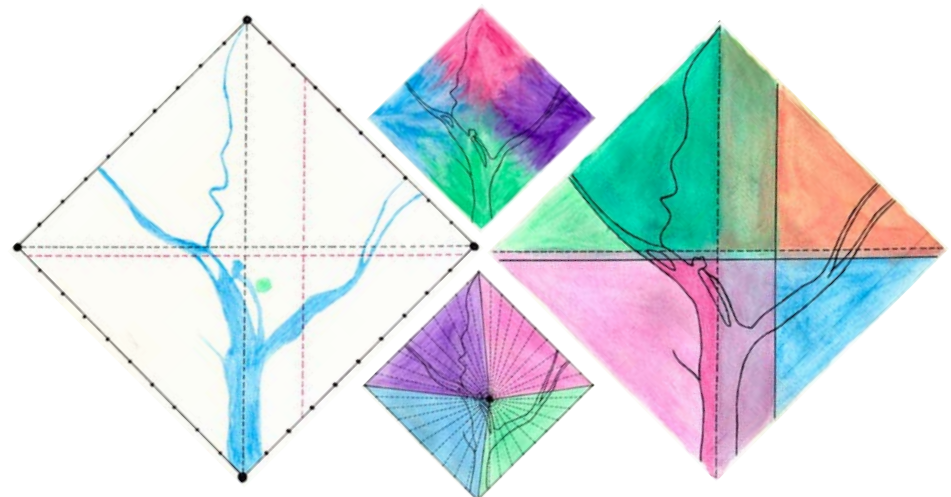
Images above clockwise: L'Enfant Plaza east facade, Forrestal Building south facade, and L'Enfant Promenade Site Section toward West



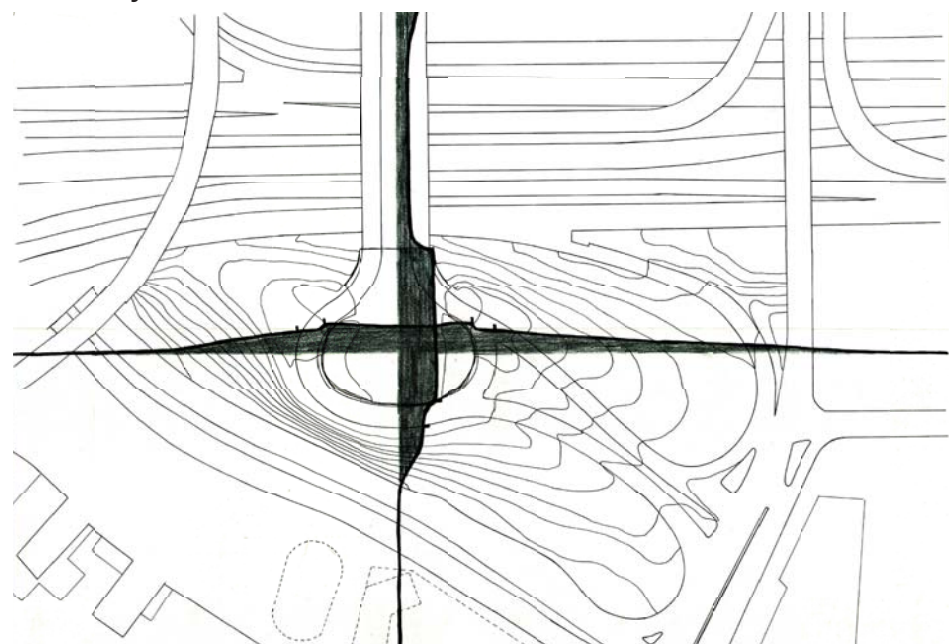
Views To and From Banneker Overlook



Banneker Overlook Site Axes



Boundary Stone and Quadrant Studies



Intersecting Site Sections

The overlook at the termination of 10th Street is named after Benjamin Banneker and was the first public space in Washington named after an African American. He is often referred to as Americas first African American scientists due to his work in astrology. His significance in Washington is in the work that he did in reading the stars to assist L'Enfant in laying out the corner and boundary stones of the city. It is said that he read the stars at Jones Point in Alexandria and there laid the first corner stone. (Bedini)

His association with the park today is purely in name. There is signage explaining his contributions, but there is no significance of this park in this particular location being named for him. There have been proposals for a monument to Banneker being located in this spot or elsewhere, but currently none exist in Washington.

Benjamin Banneker (Pg. 65)







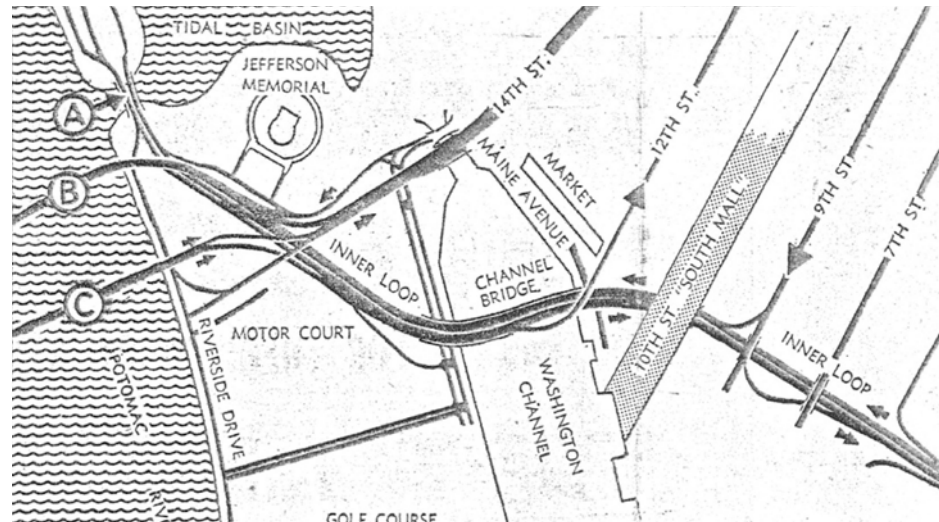
Southwest Waterfront Prior to East Potomac Park, 1888 (Pg. 65)



Southwest DC Prior to Urban Renewal, 1939 (Pg. 65)



Southwest DC After Urban Renewal Demolition, 1959 (Pg. 65)



Southwest DC Proposed Traffic Map, 1955 (Pg. 65)

In order to fully understand the current conditions of the project site and its surrounding context, it was important to understand the history of the area and how it came to be as it is today.

The current conditions of the study area are a product of Urban Renewal of Southwest DC in the 1950s and 1960s. Prior to Urban Renewal, the area had a primarily residential character made of a vibrant, though not wealthy, neighborhood of traditional brick row houses. Due to its proximity to the mall, Southwest DC was seen as a blemish on the image of Washington as the Capital city and Urban Renewal was believed to be the way to not only alleviate this, but establish the city as a significant place for innovative urban design and architecture.

With the “Towers in the Park” approach used for the housing of Southwest, a primarily single use residential character was established in the majority of the Southwest Quadrant. The area north of the proposed highway established along F Street SW was developed as an office and government center. There were some buildings in this area that remained, such as the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Printing and Engraving and the GSA Office and Warehouse Building, but the majority of the structures in this area were demolished and the land redeveloped. (National Parks Service)

Primarily these office developments were governmental in nature, but there were other commercial developments that were built. The primary Urban Renewal commercial development of this federal area was L’Enfant Plaza. This commercial development was the work of New York Developer William Zeckendorf of Webb & Knapp.

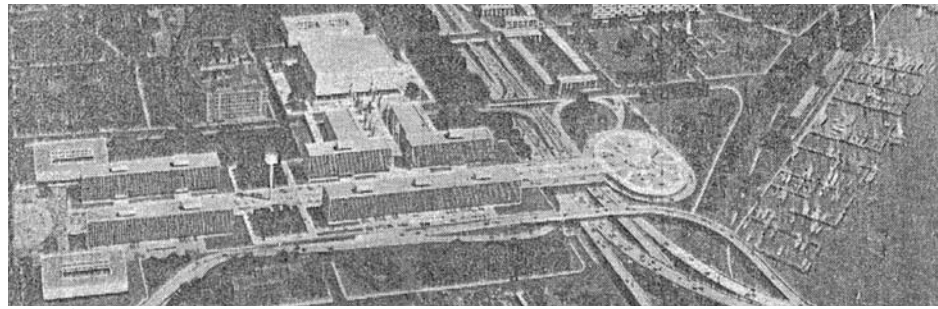
## HISTORIC SITE CONDITIONS

Originally, Zeckendorf worked to present this area for the city’s new cultural events center location. He wanted to lead visitors into Southwest and tap into the tourist potential available. He saw this area as a “grand new center of culture, recreation, business, and residence” with several cultural elements of the proposed plaza including theater, symphony, opera, and convention facilities (“Bold Plan”). Ultimately Zeckendorf fought a losing battle as this National Cultural Center was unanimously decided to be located at Foggy Bottom instead, the current location of the Kennedy Center. What eventually materialized was much different than these initial aspirations and Southwest DC never found a substitute to fulfill L’Enfant Plaza’s intended cultural role. The final plan for the L’Enfant Plaza complex was designed by I. M. Pei.

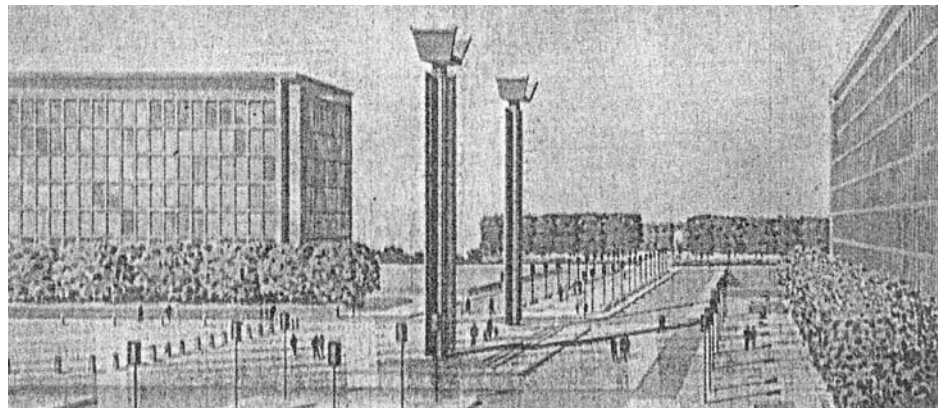
After over 10 years of planning the L’Enfant Plaza development broke ground. Its delay was due to disagreements over the placement of the promenade on 10th Street, disagreements over the design of a federal building at Independence Avenue, and the unsuccessful attempt to make the area the cultural center (Lewis, “Mall-Plaza...”). The building of the L’Enfant Plaza development required the demolition of approximately 18 squares of business and residential property (Eisen, “Hotel”).

Life at L’Enfant Plaza and Promenade is different now than it was when it was first built. L’Enfant Plaza was expected to become a major center of night life according to an article from 1963 (Clopton). What actually happened was that business and life ran in cycles at L’Enfant Plaza. Most of the office workers left after work and did not stay or come back for the evening. The underground mall was so well concealed that shoppers could not find it and employees did not like being constantly isolated from the outside with no view of the street or sky from the mall stores. (Hoffman)

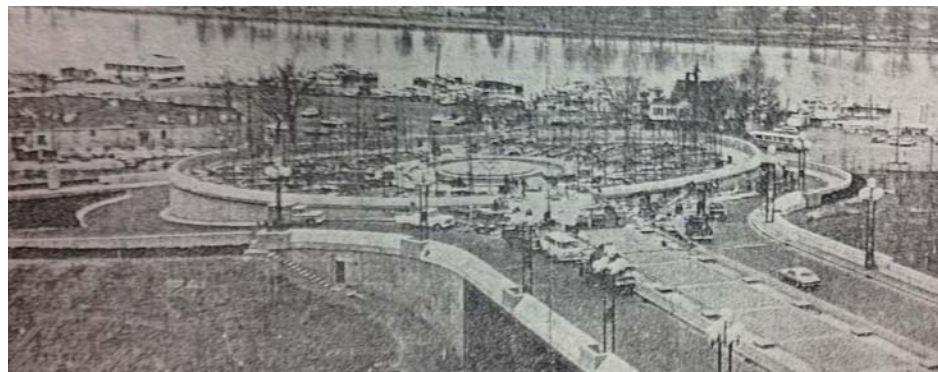




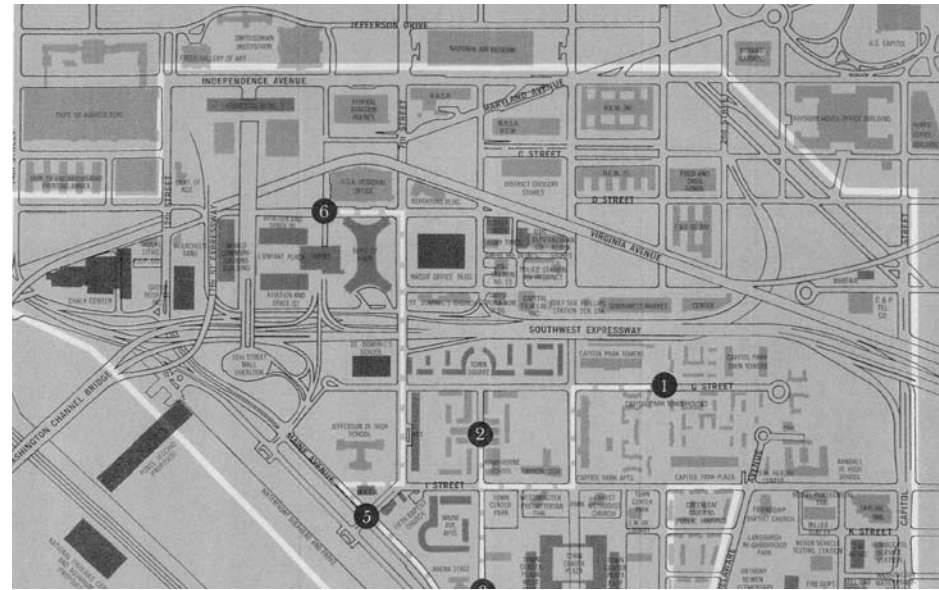
L'Enfant Promenade Rendering, 1958 (Pg. 65)



L'Enfant Plaza Rendering from L'Enfant Promenade, 1961 (Pg. 65)



10th Street Overlook under Construction, 1969 (Pg. 65)



Proposed Southwest DC Walking Guide Map, 1966 (Pg. 65)



Southwest Freeway under Construction (Pg. 65)



Banneker Overlook after Construction Completion, 1973 (Pg. 65)

L'Enfant Promenade was intended as the primary entryway into Southwest. (Albrook, "Zeckendorf") Initially the objective was for 10th Street to physically connect all the way to the waterfront, but due to topographical constraints presented by elevating the promenade above the railway along Maryland Avenue, 10th Street could not connect directly. Instead it had to terminate with the 10th Street Overlook. This park is the terminus of 10th Street as opposed to a direct connection to the Waterfront. It was originally supposed to house parking facilities for an aquarium on East Potomac Park, but neither came to fruition when a proposed shop-lined pedestrian bridge over the Washington Channel was not developed (Lewis, "Southwest 'Marvelous Mile'").

Banneker Overlook was designed by landscape architect Dan Kiley in 1967. As one of his earlier works, it was intended to be a contemplative response to the surrounding urban fabric that accepted its form based on traffic circulation. (Kiley, 68-69) As can be seen from earlier representations of L'Enfant Promenade, the shape of the park was dictated to the landscape architect and he worked within these confines. This park is not currently a Nationally Registered Historic Place.

The entire Federal Corridor is an extreme juxtaposition of two different eras of city planning, L'Enfant's Plan and Modernist city planning. These superblocks and their modernist style federal buildings have come to dominate over the original street grid of the city in this quadrant. This area is defined by the Southwest Freeway to the south that divides it from the rest of the quadrant. It was believed that the Southwest Freeway would serve as a visual barrier between the commercial and residential areas of the neighborhood, without acting as an impenetrable obstacle to further isolate the quadrant as previous transportation routes had done. What has happened is it has moved past barriers of the canal and the railroad further south, giving the two portions of Southwest very different characters.



The Wharf Plan (Pg. 66)



Waterfront Boardwalk and Piers (Pg. 66)



Aerial Rendering from Potomac (Pg. 66)



Waterfront and Public Piers (Pg. 66)



Aerial View of Maine Avenue and 9th Street Intersection (Pg. 66)



## FUTURE SITE CONDITIONS

This area could not be understood or studied without acknowledging its future conditions. There are two significant urban planning efforts in the area surrounding Banneker Overlook that will influence the site in the future. The entire design process for this thesis was established in the future context of the area, accepting the majority of the proposed conditions of these two plans as the context this project would exist within.

The Wharf (Southwest Waterfront) development is a private development by PN Hoffman of the land south of Maine Avenue and north of the Washington Channel between 6th Street SW and 12th Street SW. This development of 23 acres is planned as a mixed-use vibrant urban area with office, residential, hotel, and market buildings, all with retail and street level amenity, roof gardens and terraces, incorporated parking structures, and sustainable building designs. The development is intended to bring life to the currently lifeless and under-utilized Southwest Waterfront.

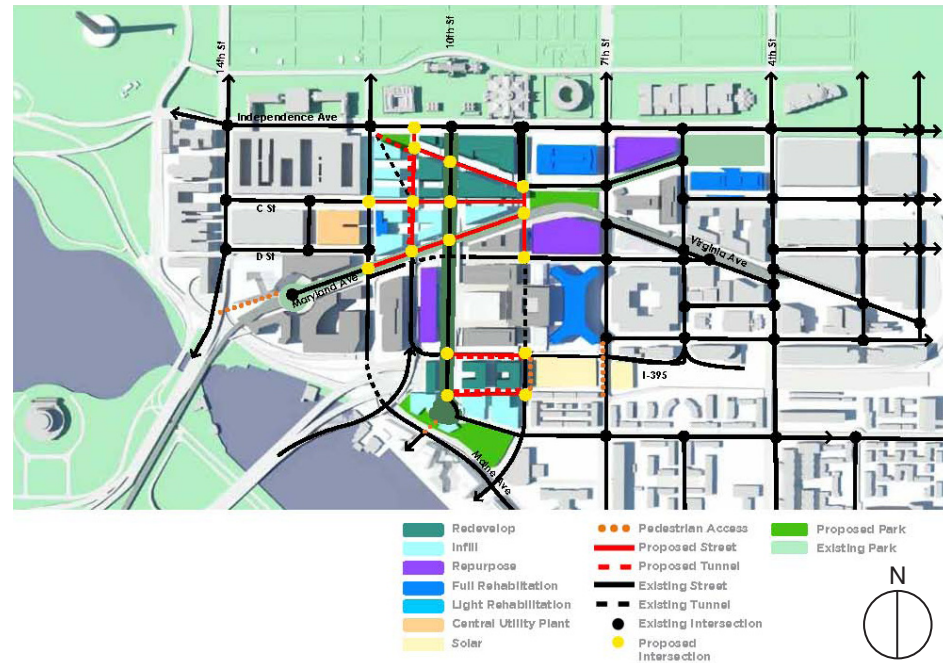
There is an emphasis in this area on the public realm, with creation of public plazas and walkways both along the street and waterfront edges. There are also accessible roofs and terraces for both private and public purposes throughout the development, providing an increased diversity of spaces. The Wharf does not end at the water's edge, but extends its life out into the Washington Channel by means of various docks and piers, some of which are public and others of which are private. There is a long pedestrian boardwalk along the waterfront as well.

The development team has attempted to focus this project at a local scale in spite of the 130-foot height of the buildings. All of the building footprints only take up a portion of a building block, in strong contrast to the massive single building block buildings north of the Southwest Freeway. The buildings themselves are then broken down into smaller elements, creating retail podiums that provide variation from the tall residential and office towers above. There is an emphasis on local businesses as retail clients and local events have the opportunity to be located in a number of locations. There is cultural programming, including various event centers, built into this development as well.

The existing Fish Market will for the most part be maintained as the only part of this development area not demolished. The current conditions of the site are small and under-utilized buildings, many of which are restaurants. Due to this area being left as the final part of the Southwest Urban Renewal to be developed, much of the commercial character it was originally intended to have does not exist today. Currently the waterfront is lifeless and not very pedestrian friendly. The goal of the design and development team was to create a mixed-use environment with the potential for a 24-hour character due to its variety of activities, people, and places. The construction of this development is currently underway with a scheduled completion of 2020. (The Wharf)



Southwest Ecodistrict Plan (Pg. 66)



Maine Avenue and 9th Street (Pg. 66)



10th Street (Pg. 66)



Images provided courtesy of the National Capital Planning Commission

Aerial of Southwest Ecodistrict (Pg. 66)



The Southwest Ecodistrict plan is an initiative plan created by the Southwest Ecodistrict Taskforce at the National Capitol Planning Commission (NCPC). This is a 20 to 25 year plan that involves rehabilitating existing buildings, redeveloping and in-filling some under-utilized or poorly utilized lots, and creating green pedestrian-friendly streets and open spaces. The plan promotes a mix of uses in the area as well as creating what NCPC is calling an “Ecodistrict” that focuses developments based on sustainability goals to create an environmental showcase for DC in an area with very little public street amenity.

The area is 110 acres and encompasses the L’Enfant Plaza development, Forrestal building complex, and Maryland Avenue rail line, as well as other surrounding federal and office buildings. The plan takes root in the federal government re-examining its properties to meet sustainability targets and desire to create more efficient work places for their employees. Approximately 56% of the land in this study area is federally owned, 26% is privately owned, and the remaining 18% is streets and rail lines.

The Ecodistrict Summary Plan is intended as a road-map to prioritize and phase these projects, focusing development and redevelopment based on the depth of work necessary for individual buildings and lots. Some buildings call for light or full rehabilitation, which focuses on maintaining the use of buildings, while modernizing them to meet current and future sustainability goals. For other buildings, NCPC is recommending re-purposing and updating them to meet sustainability goals. Others are proposed to be completely redeveloped. This includes redeveloping the Forrestal complex along Independence Avenue so that it no longer spans 10th street as well as developing over the air rights of the Southwest Freeway in areas surrounding 10th street

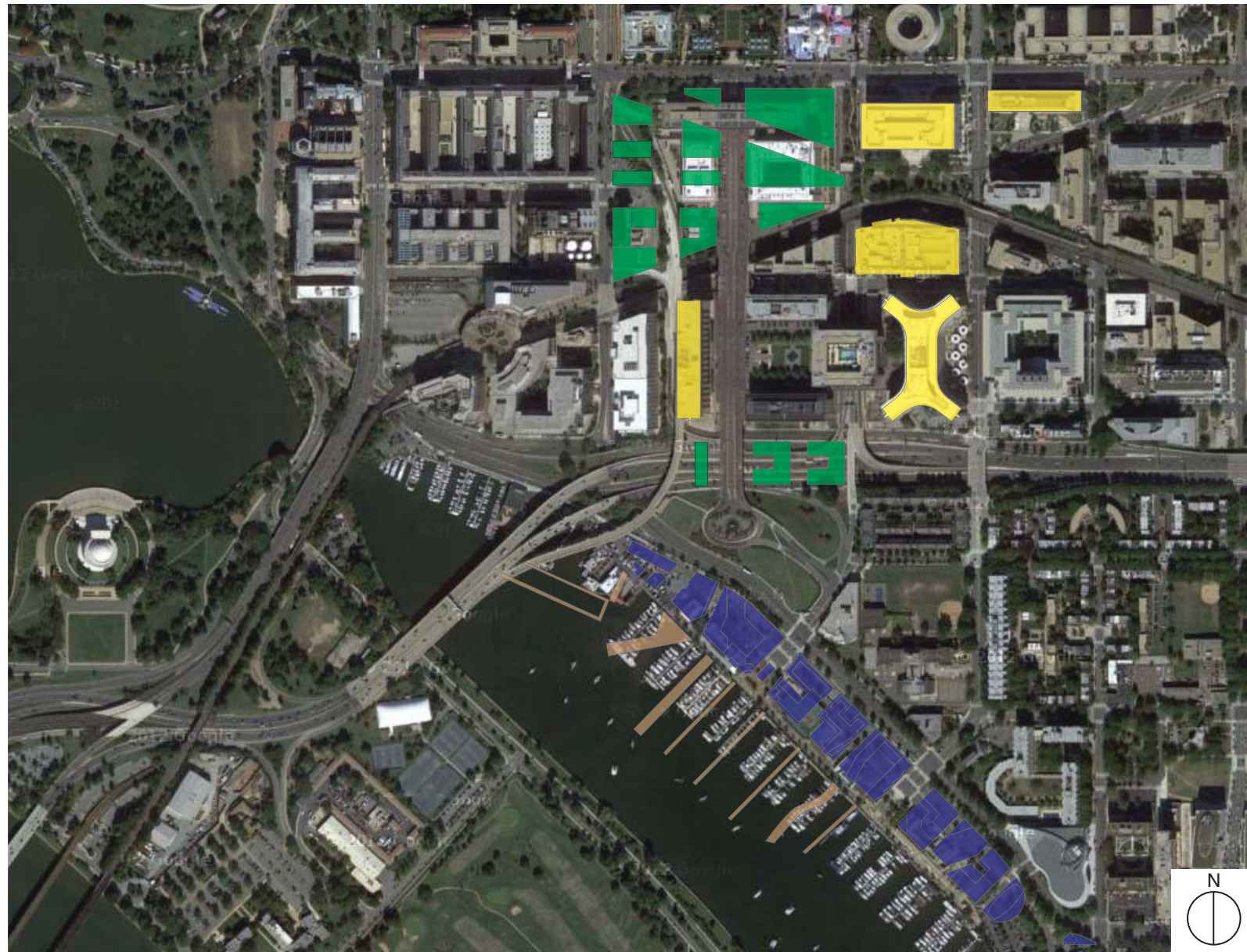
attempting to reconnect this federal area across I-395 to the rest of Southwest. Some lots are infill, reusing under-utilized lots for future development, increasing the square footage of building in this area. This is done primarily through re-establishing some street connections from L’Enfant’s original plan that were lost in Urban Renewal, creating smaller lots and breaking up some of the Federal superblocks that define the area currently. The plan looks at minimizing these large single use buildings that currently exist.

There is a desire by NCPC to extend the civic and park-like qualities of the National Mall into this area, creating sites for future memorials and museums for Washington, DC. The Ecodistrict also focuses on re-establishing important view corridors originally present in this area of the Washington Monument, Capitol Building, and the Smithsonian Castle. There is a plan to incorporate residential developments into this area, which currently do not exist, promoting a better live-work situation in Southwest. NCPC would like to develop the area as a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood, with an interconnected open space network of multi-purpose parks.

NCPC is attempting in many facets to reduce barriers that have existed previously, separating Southwest from the rest of DC. This plan increases the amount of office development, both private and public, as well as creating residential developments to re-establish the area as a living and working neighborhood. It promotes a connection to the Southwest waterfront via the 10th street promenade, creating connections to the future Wharf waterfront development. NCPC feels this type of development will reduce the perceived distance from the Mall to the Waterfront. The plan works to develop streets for a range of functions for local and federal needs. The focus is on providing for federal requirements without displacing them, as well as re-injecting a cultural and residential environment into its mix of uses. (Southwest Ecodistrict Public Review Draft)



- Southwest Ecodistrict-Existing Building Rehabilitation
- Southwest Ecodistrict-New Building Development
- The Wharf-New Building Development



By way of studying both The Wharf (Southwest Waterfront) and the Southwest Ecodistrict plans and proposals, the context for this project was established as a future condition that a future building would exist within. Both developments will have a strong influence on the conditions and future development of Banneker Overlook. The project site is located at the connection or hinge point between the private development by PN Hoffman and the public development by NCPC. Both plans somewhat timidly address Banneker Overlook and acknowledge that whatever could potentially be built on the site would influence both developments. Through the coordination of these two entities, this site should be developed in a way that responds to the topographic conditions and circulation problems that exist today.

As a response to the goals of NCPC in establishing view corridors, some of The Wharf development has been modified to respect these. From Banneker Overlook there are two axes that have been established. There is a view corridor directly in line with 10th Street SW that has forced the building along its path to respond, with the towers of the building being maintained at a minimum of 80 feet apart directly in line with the road. This view corridor is also elevated, as the base of this building is 60 feet above Maine Avenue and the top level of Banneker Overlook is only 35 feet above it. This is done under the assumption that there would be a future museum or monument on Banneker Overlook to reestablish this view corridor. A secondary view corridor is established angling toward the southwest on axis with a proposed future channel through East Potomac Park. (The Wharf)

The Wharf development will also be establishing an additional intersection along Maine Avenue between 9th Street and 12th Street as an attempt to slow down traffic and provide safe street crossing between Banneker Overlook and the Southwest Waterfront. (The Wharf)

With these two entities acknowledging the importance of the other, there is clearly a need for a bold connection to foster the two parts of the city working together to create a unified urban fabric. By choosing this hinge point between The Wharf and The Southwest Ecodistrict, this project has attempted to establish itself as the piece to hold the two together.

By way of treating this site in a realistic manner of understanding its conditions, it seemed only proper that a real project should be chosen as a means of developing the site and creating the connection that Urban Renewal claimed it would make. Despite the good intentions of both plans, because they continue to fracture at the point that is most in need of connection, they fail to address the fundamental issue of linkage.

## BUILDING PROGRAM

The National Museum of the American People (NMAP) is a proposed DC museum with a projected completion of 2020 if it receives the proper government approval and funding. There are several potential sites being studied for its location, including Banneker Overlook.

This museum is intended to “tell the story of every American ethnic and cultural group coming to this land and nation from every corner of the world from the first people through today” (National Museum of the American People). As a nation, America has been created through immigration and migration and its national identity comes from the fact that it is made up of diverse peoples from such different cultures. This building will not just tell the story of one culture or ethnic group as other DC heritage museums do, but instead it will tell the story of each group in relation to all the others. Each story will thus be told in the greater context of the story of the United States.

The permanent exhibition of the museum is divided chronologically into four different exhibits called “chapters.” Each chapter tells a portion of the story in an effort to divide the entire story into manageable chunks for visitors to view, visit, and understand. By doing so, each chapter can be visited individually or all four chapters can be visited in succession on one or multiple museum visits.

The first chapter is “The First Peoples Come” and will tell the story of people in North America from pre-historic times to 1607 when the first colonial settlements occurred.

The second chapter is “The Nation Takes Form” and spans from 1607 to 1820. This chapter tells of the establishment of the United States and the Revolutionary War that gave the country its freedom, as well as those who helped to establish and grow this land.

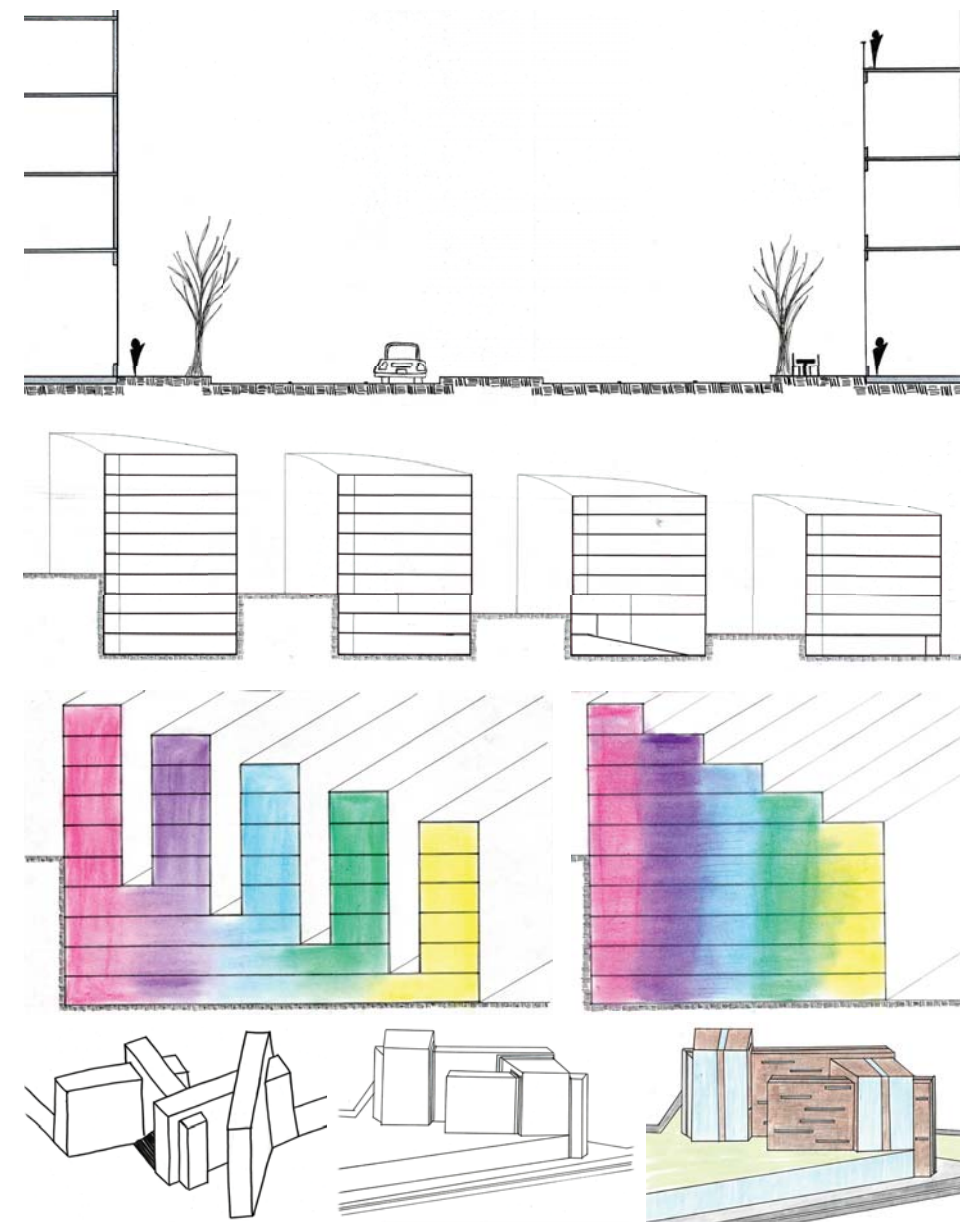
The third chapter is “The Great In-Gathering” which tells the story from 1820 to 1924 and will cover the period of major immigration in which peoples from all across the globe traveled and established themselves in America.

The fourth chapter is “And Still They Come” which tells the story from 1924 to present time. This chapter is the chapter in which visitors stories and those of their recent ancestors will be told.

Additionally there will be 2 to 3 spaces for special exhibitions, allowing flexibility for the curators to tell more specific stories or present different collections.

Programmatically a museum serves various other functions as well, many of which can be found in museums across the globe. In the National Museum of the American People there will be a cafe for inexpensive dining options and a restaurant for more expensive dining options, both of which feature food from various cultures that influence America today. A theater will tell a range of stories of American people through film. This space can also be used for other events as well. A conference center will provide opportunities for events to be held within the museum, many of which will relate to the stories being told in the exhibitions. Children’s areas and education centers will be used to educate the youth as they visit with their families or various school groups. A gift and book shop will serve as a source of income for the museum. A genealogical center will provide the opportunity for visitors to research into their ancestors’ history as well as providing a potential DNA contribution to the center, allowing further research into lineage. The Center for the Study of American Peoples will be a place for academia and curators to study and research various stories of American peoples and cultures. Additionally there will be office administration and exhibition/collections storage. (National Museum of the American People)



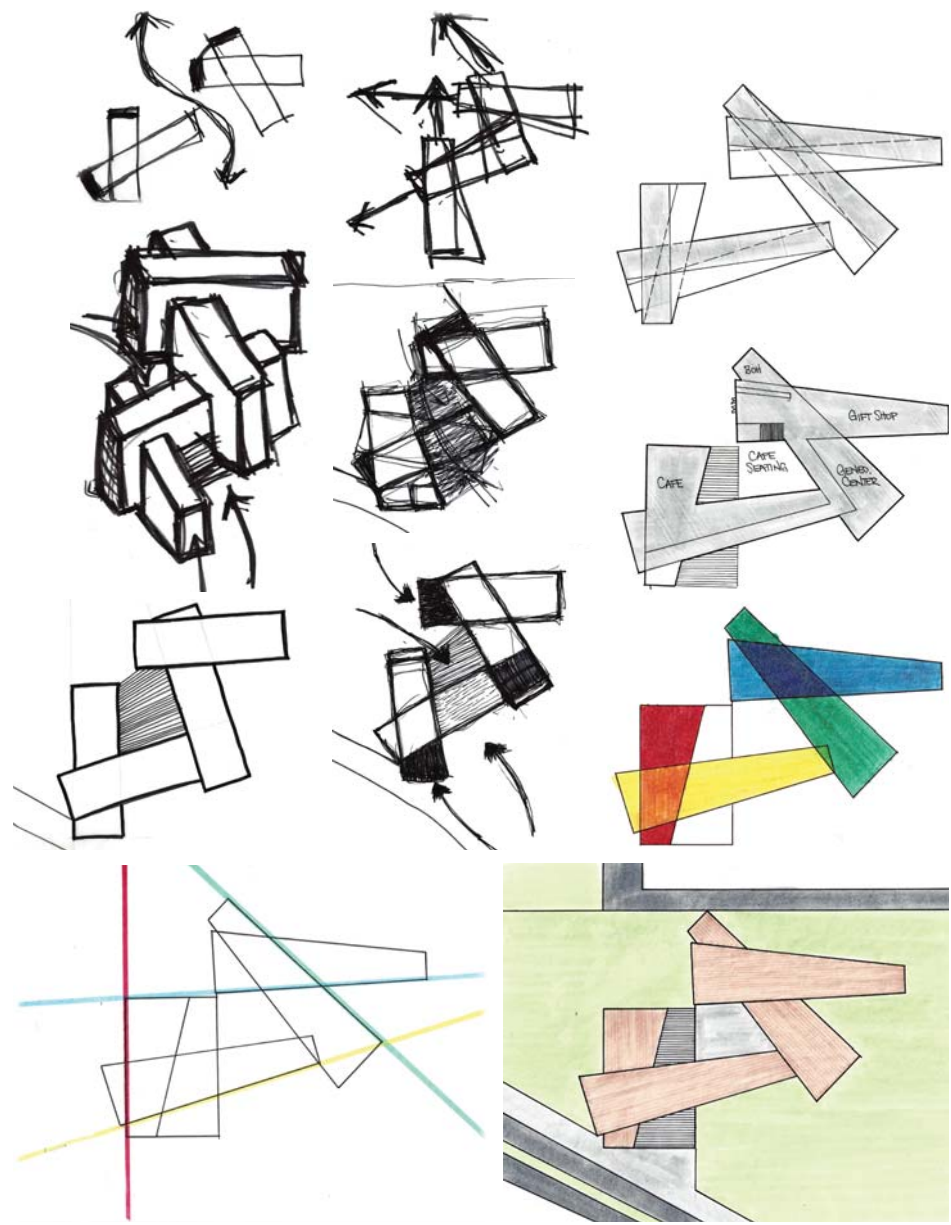


## DESIGN PROGRESSION

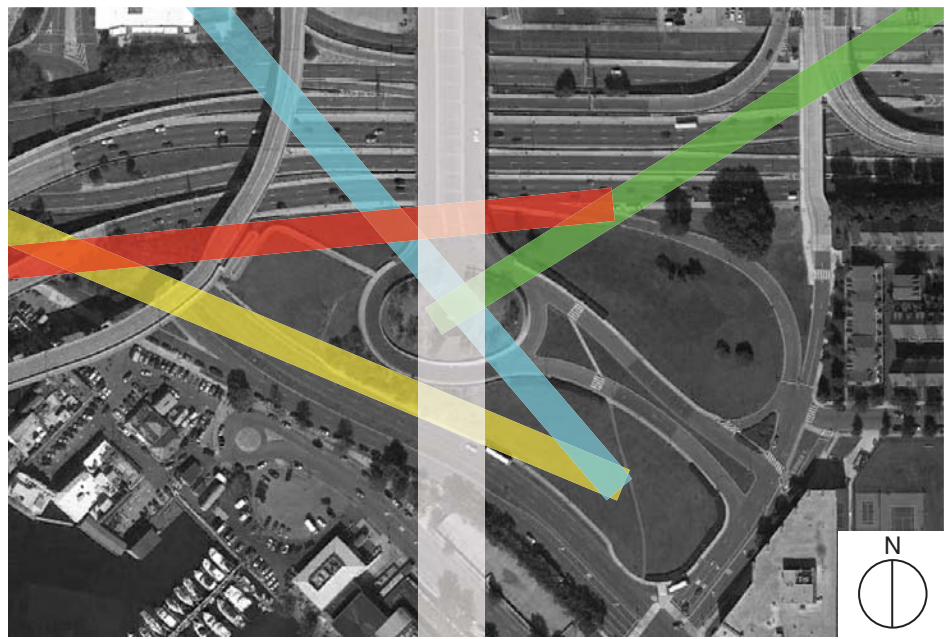
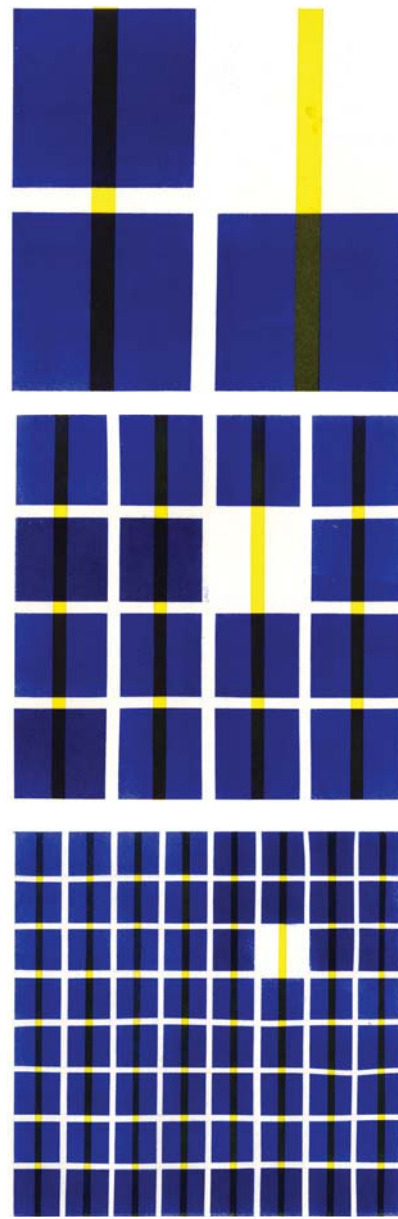
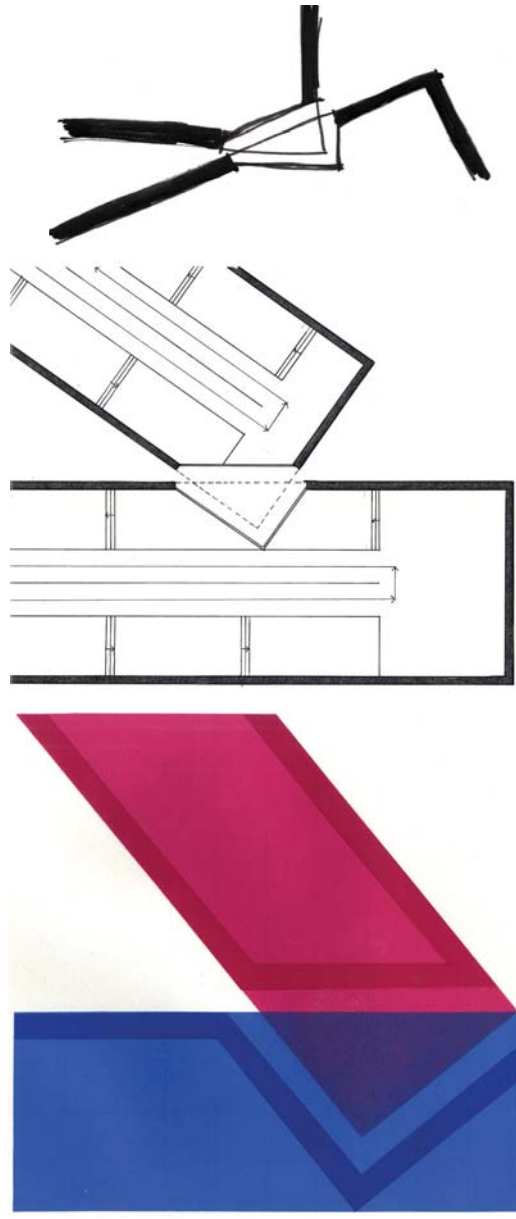
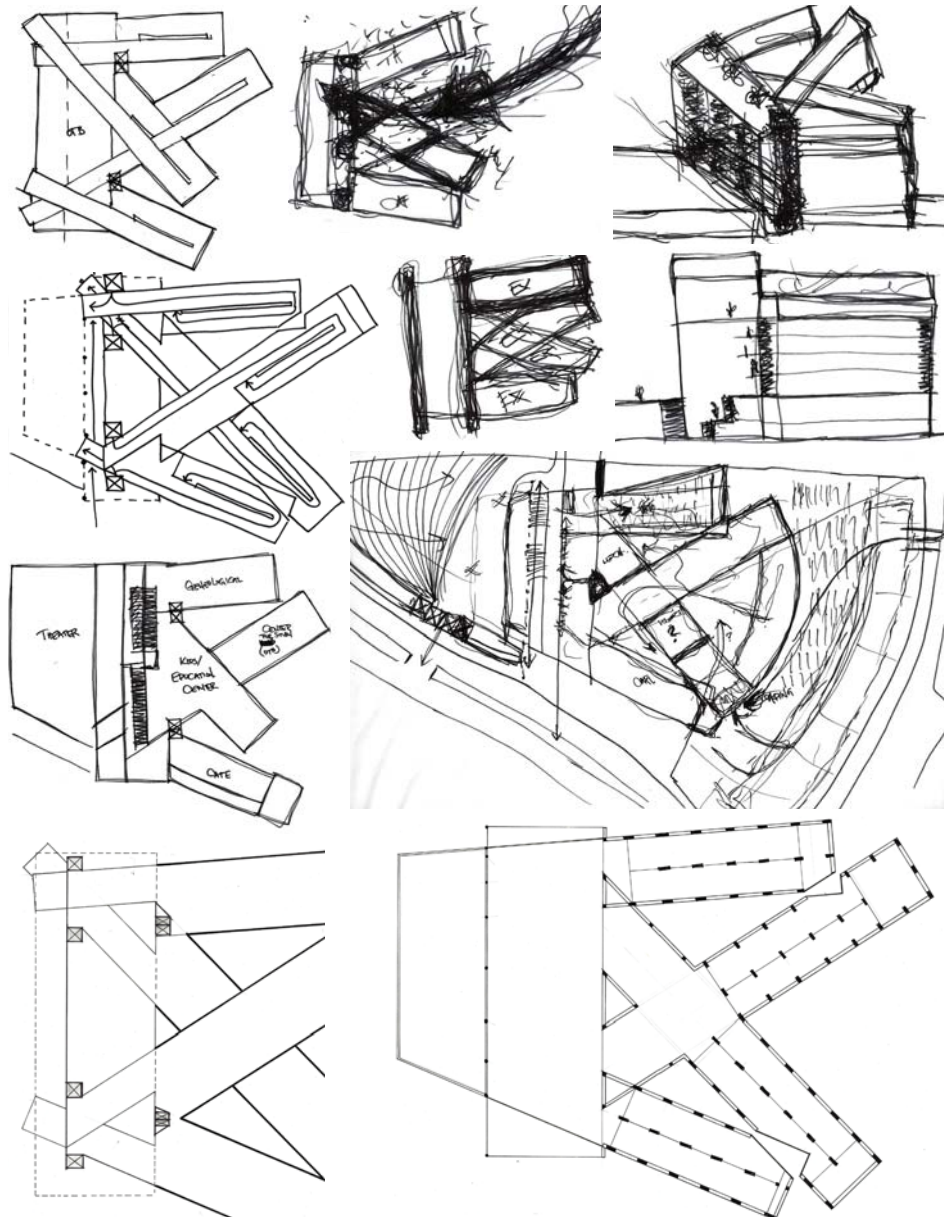
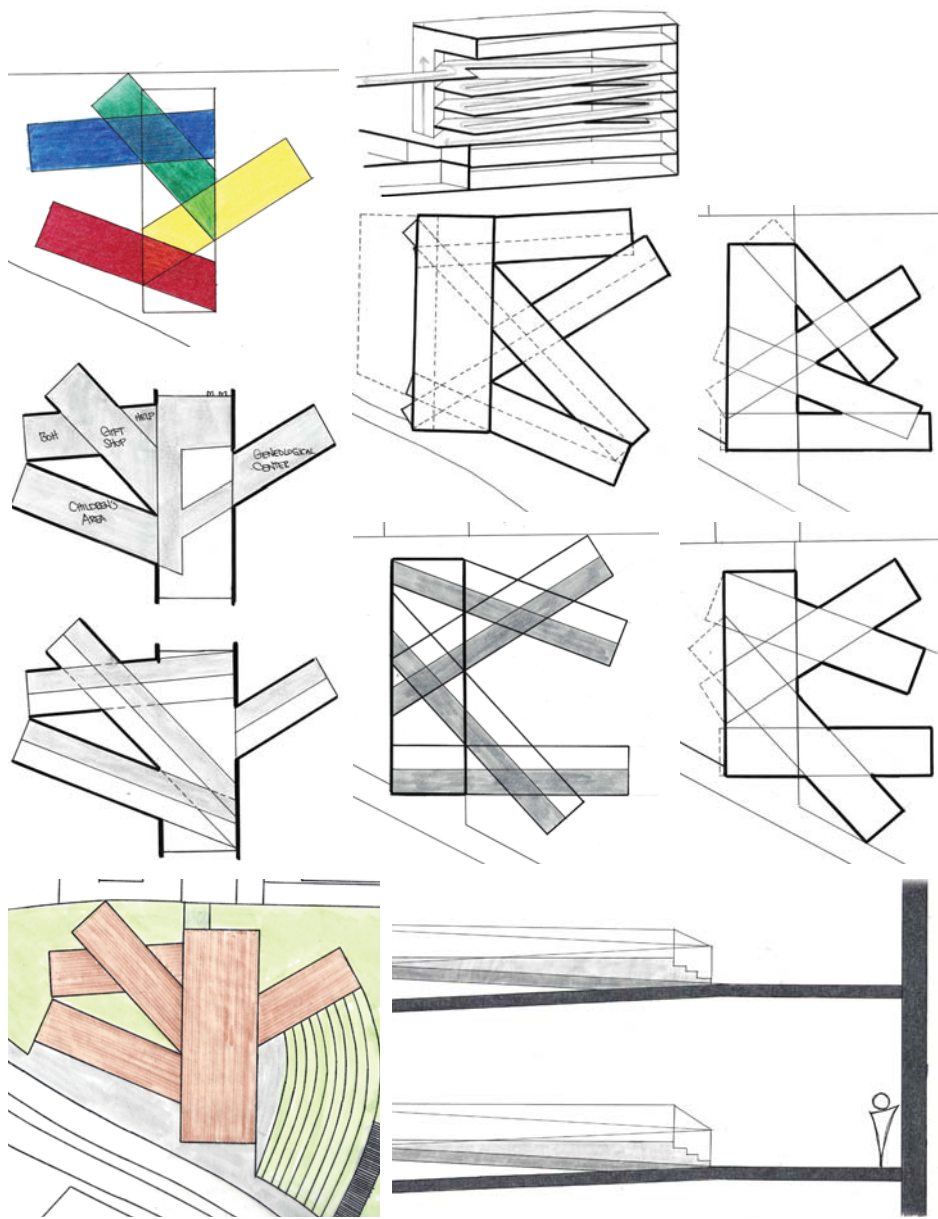
The design process for this project focused primarily on the programmatic element of the permanent exhibition and the understanding of site conditions.

From its onset, there was a consideration that the idea of four chapters of exhibition should be represented in the architectural language. This was to be done in such a way that each chapter could be visited individually, but also that they could all be visited in succession. There was careful consideration when it came to the exhibitions that the architecture not dictate too strictly how they should function. This project was not intended to be a study of exhibition design, so there needed to be a delineation between architecture and exhibit. While the design attempted to represent the idea of these four pieces and suggest how the space could be used, it was left flexible enough to be programed in different ways over the course of the building's lifetime. A fifth element was added to the original four chapters. It was to be a great collector and mover of people, representing a piece of the American story which had not yet been told: the future.

Extreme consideration was given to how to negotiate the topographic conditions of the site. With the top of the site at 10th Street SW being 35 feet above the bottom of the site at Maine Avenue, the entire site needed to be reconsidered even though the building was only to take up a portion of it. Ultimately the entire site was redeveloped with the building at its center point, directly on axis with 10th Street. The building was manipulated in a way that it became the circulation path from the upper part of the sit to the lower. By doing so the building could become the piece of architecture that brought together the urban fabric as the thesis intended.









After all the research into the site conditions, what ultimately was designed was a bold approach in which the entire site of Banneker Overlook was redesigned. This site was originally thought to be a great connector from The Mall to the Southwest Waterfront, but what exists now is a park that functions more as an island than an urban link. Because of the topographic constraints of 10th Street produced by the necessity to elevate it above the railroad tracks, L'Enfant Parking garage, and the Southwest Freeway, the road terminates in a point rather than extending down to the waterfront as originally intended. At first, the barrier of the I-395 appeared to be where a connection was weak, but upon further study of the site the true disconnect was found to be from Banneker Overlook down to the waterfront. The pedestrian was able, although many did not find the need to, access Banneker Overlook from 10th Street, but going from there down the sloping grade proved to be much more deterrent. The focus thus became on moving vertically through the site.

Originally there was also a desire to maintain the ellipse of Banneker Overlook because of its significance as a representation of Benjamin Banneker as well as its importance as a landscape of Dan Kiley. Because of the site's lack of connection with Benjamin Banneker, except for in its name, his importance on this specific site is weakened. By removing his attachment to the site, there is then opportunity to relocate a monument or public space in his name elsewhere in the city that may be more significant or even to reincorporate him back into the site in a more meaningfully designed way. As to the fact that the work of landscape architecture belongs to Dan Kiley, upon further research it can be determined that the shape of the park was not his original idea, but dictated to him based on traffic circulation. Also, in his drawings for the site, he calls for a large amount of trees surrounding the park which indicates that the park does not exist how he originally designed it.

The final museum building design produced is divided into five significant pieces. Four of these pieces are similar and represent the four chapters of the exhibition. The fifth piece is distinct and represents the idea of the chapter of the story that does not yet exist. Whereas the four similar pieces house the exhibitions and other programmatic functions of the building, the fifth piece is used almost entirely for building and site circulation.

Each one of these five pieces has directionality due to an axis it takes from outside the site. The four exhibitions are in the form of bars, each taking an angle from the axis produced by the center point of a Washington, DC landmark visible from the site at the upper levels of the building. Each bar then provides a view in the direction of its axis, allowing the building to reach out from the confines of its site to the greater DC urban fabric. The four axis are as follows in order of their entry from north to south:

Chapter 1- Jefferson Memorial

Chapter 2- Washington Monument

Chapter 3- Capitol Building

Chapter 4- Lincoln Memorial

The atrium is then distinct from the four bar buildings in its form and its axis. Although rectangular in plan, it does not come in the same bar form as the exhibitions. It is an enclosed atrium with glass on three sides. The fourth side is a thick wall that is penetrated to produce access to the exhibitions on the east portion of the site. The atrium does not take its axis from the center point of a landmark either, but instead falls directly on the axis of a line that exists. The atrium is on the axis of 10th Street, working to emphasize the importance of this former street on the site itself. This provides direct views to the Smithsonian Castle (with this re-established view corridor that will be produced with the Southwest Ecodistrict Plan) and the Washington Channel.

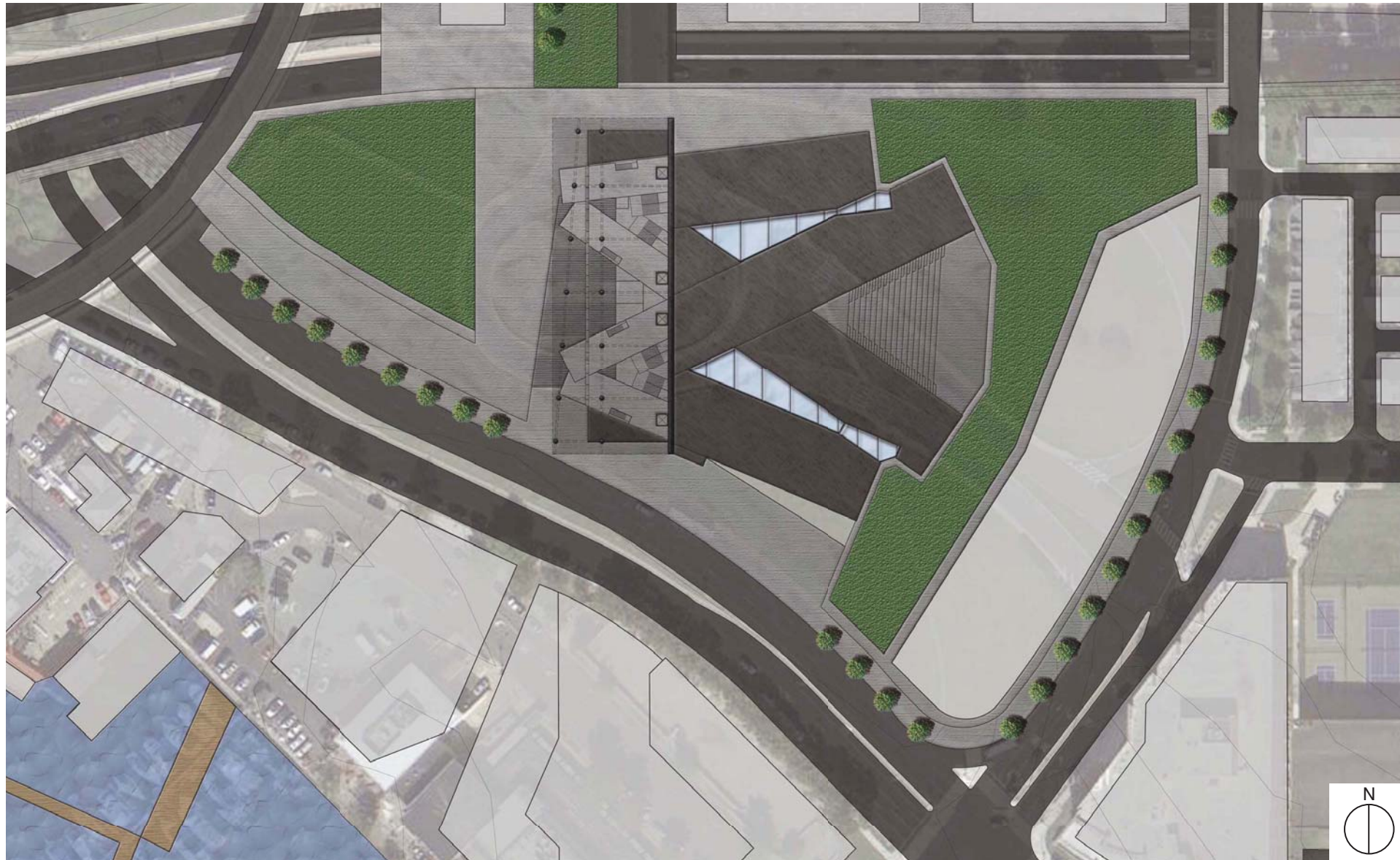
The program is divided into to three sections vertically. The bottom section encompasses the three ground floors including all entry levels into the museum. On Level 1 and 2 there is the Maine Avenue museum entry, cafe along the Maine Avenue street edge, theater buried underneath the ground, and a dividable multi-purpose room underneath the grand stair. Additionally there is the loading for the cafe and general purposes, a secure loading for the collections, secure storage for the collections, additional storage, and mechanical space. On Level 3 there is the 10th Street entry (which functions as the primary museum entry), the gift shop which opens both to the atrium and to 10th Street, a children's area and education center with classrooms, the genealogical center, and two flexible spaces for special exhibitions.

The middle section of the building vertically is reserved for the permanent exhibitions, each of which contain three floors of the building. The different chapters start at slightly different levels as well, with Chapter 1 and 3 being half a floor above Chapters 2 and 4. As visitors move from the north to the south through the atrium, they can enter each exhibition separately in chronological order.

The upper section of the building houses additional program that is not necessary for accessibility by all museum visitors. The restaurant is to the south street edge and is accessible from both the museum and Maine Avenue by means of an elevator. The administrative offices for the museum are to the north. Between these two programs are the conference center and Center for the Study of the American People. Because of the half floor difference produced by the exhibitions below, these two programs overlap and have the ability to share spaces and have connections.

The atrium is designed as an glassy volume in which movement within is visible from the exterior, in a way, making the museum visitors the fifth chapter of the exhibit by celebrating their movement through the site. The four pieces of the building dictated by the permanent exhibition chapters are solid bar buildings that reach out in various directions from the atrium space. Openings are minimal within the middle section of the bars which house the permanent exhibitions. There are openings on the lower and upper sections of the bars in response to the various programs that occur in these spaces. Due to the angles produced by these bars, several interstitial spaces were created in the leftover spaces on the 10th Street level. There are two courtyards for gathering, directly accessible from the atrium. Additionally where the bars would have intersected each other at their east ends, a glass enclosure has been created to allow light into the building as well as provide flexible circulation between the different bars. There is also a outdoor amphitheater/classroom to the east in the leftover space created by the angles of the bars.

A grand stair provides circulation within the atrium and parallel to the atrium within the site. This stair is divided down the middle by a glass wall that encloses a portion of it and leaves the remaining part of the stair open to the exterior for pedestrians to access and move through at all hours of the day or night.



Site Plan

0 50 100 150 200 250

## SITE CIRCULATION

Circulation through the site was a very important design consideration because of the significance in the project of connecting from the upper part of the park to the lower. The entire site was reconsidered and the hardscaped ellipse with its sweeping traffic lanes as well as the sloping turf grass lawns were all removed.

The entire site was then lifted to the level of 10th Street SW. Rather than just building up the land to create an elevated site, this became a podium that sat at the Maine Avenue level allowing for retail shops to be built into the landscape. A sidewalk was added along the Maine Avenue and 9th Street edges at the lower level of the site and glass retail was built into the site. Behind this retail is the opportunity for integration of hidden parking structures.

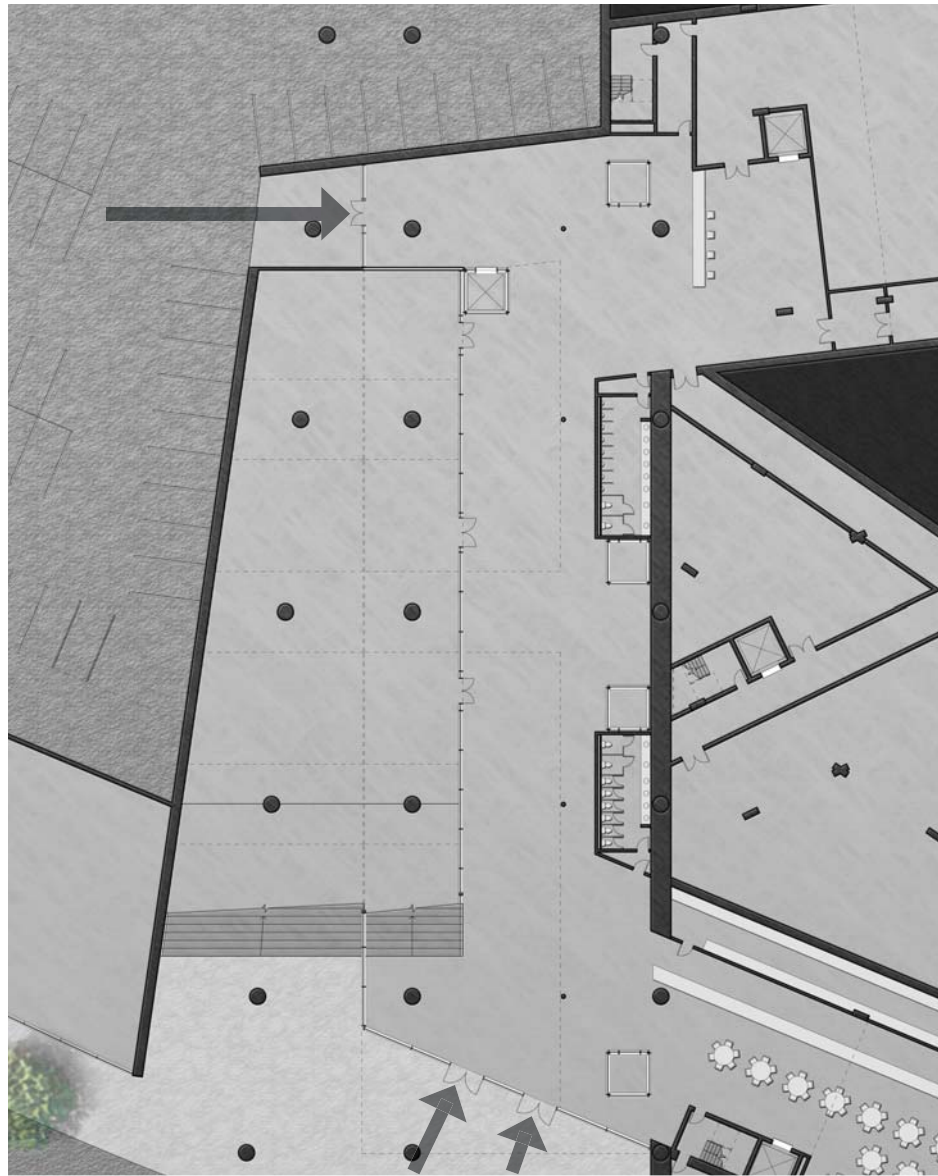
Directly in the center of the site, in line with 10th Street SW is the National Museum of the American People. At Maine Avenue the building presents itself to the street edge by way of museum entry, cafe and seating, and an open plaza. At 10th Street there is the main entry into the building as well as access around the east and west sides of the museum.

To the east, the site was left for future development of another building that would sit on top of the retail base. Outside of the museum walls to the east, this entire portion of the site has been left for development by another entity, potentially a residential or office building. To the west the site is a public space with a sloping green lawn which could be a flexible space for various events. Underneath the sloping lawn would be a cafe pavilion for these events.

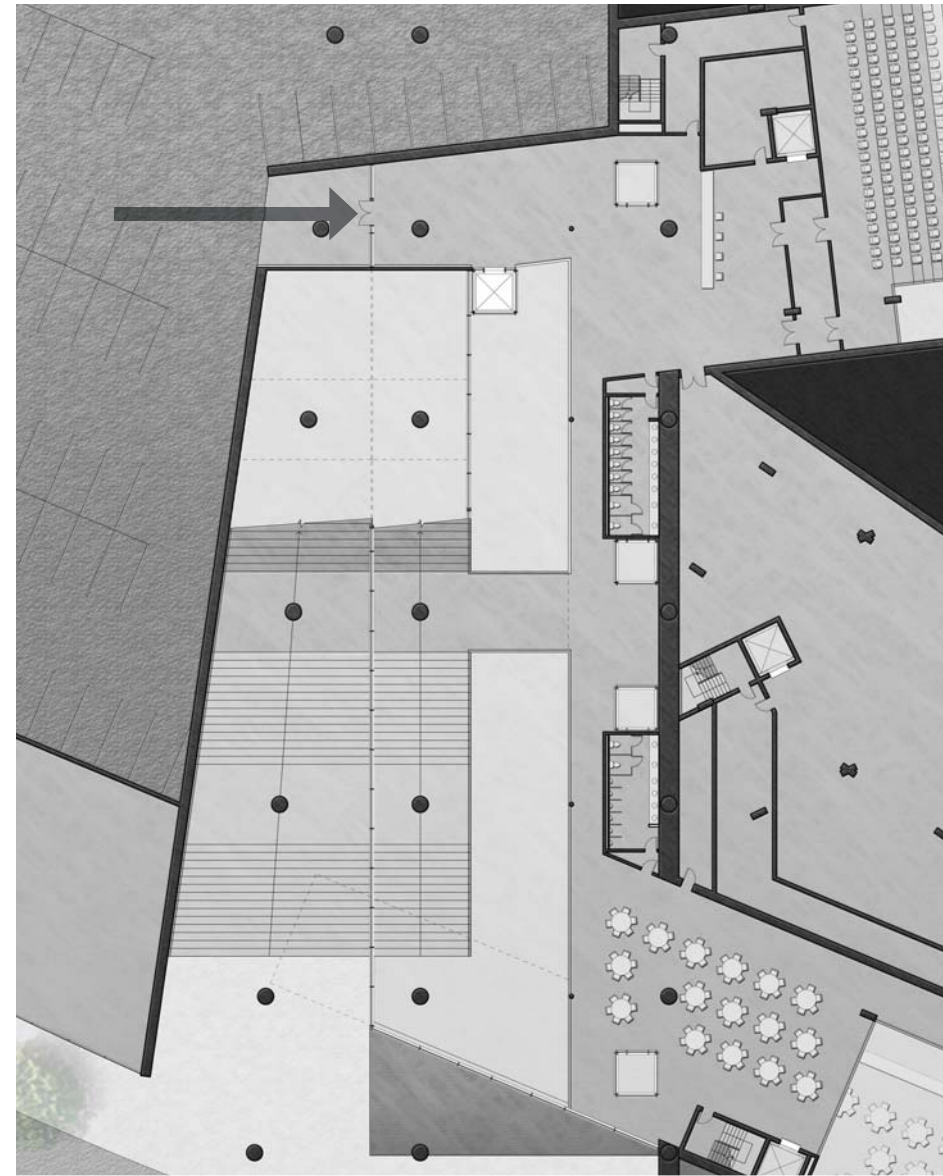
Movement from the upper part of the site to the lower part of the site is done by way of a wide stair with deep treads. The stairway is a fully integrated part of the museum design and circulation. It is both interior and exterior so it can be used by both museum visitors and pedestrians moving through the site. This stair became the greatest definition of what the thesis was ultimately attempting to achieve in connecting disparate parts of the urban fabric. It is the great link that Banneker Overlook failed to be for Southwest DC.



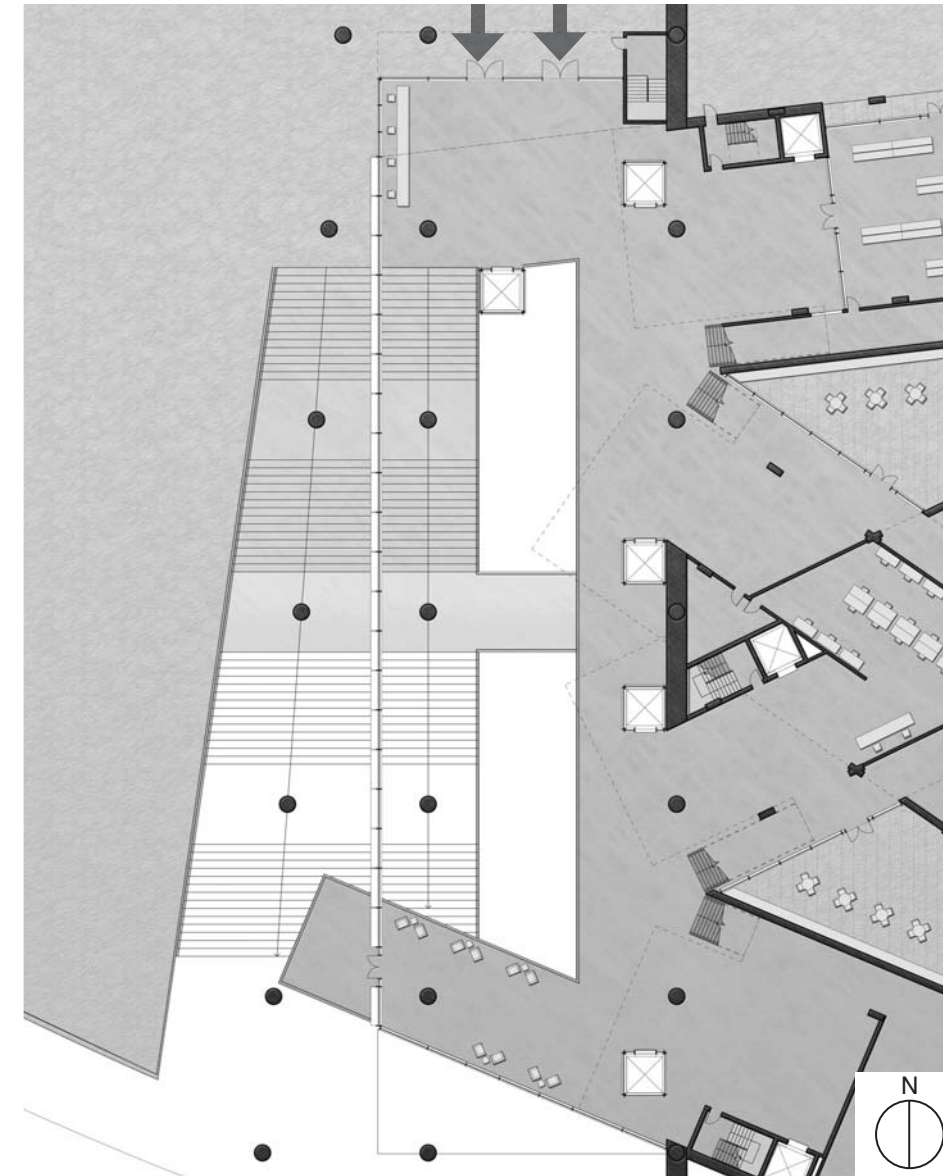
## MUSEUM ENTRY



Level 1- Maine Avenue Entry



Level 2



Level 3- 10th Street Entry

The museum has three main entry points, based upon how people would approach the building. With the exception of egress, gift shop street access, and cafe street access, all entry and exit from the building occurs within the glass atrium.

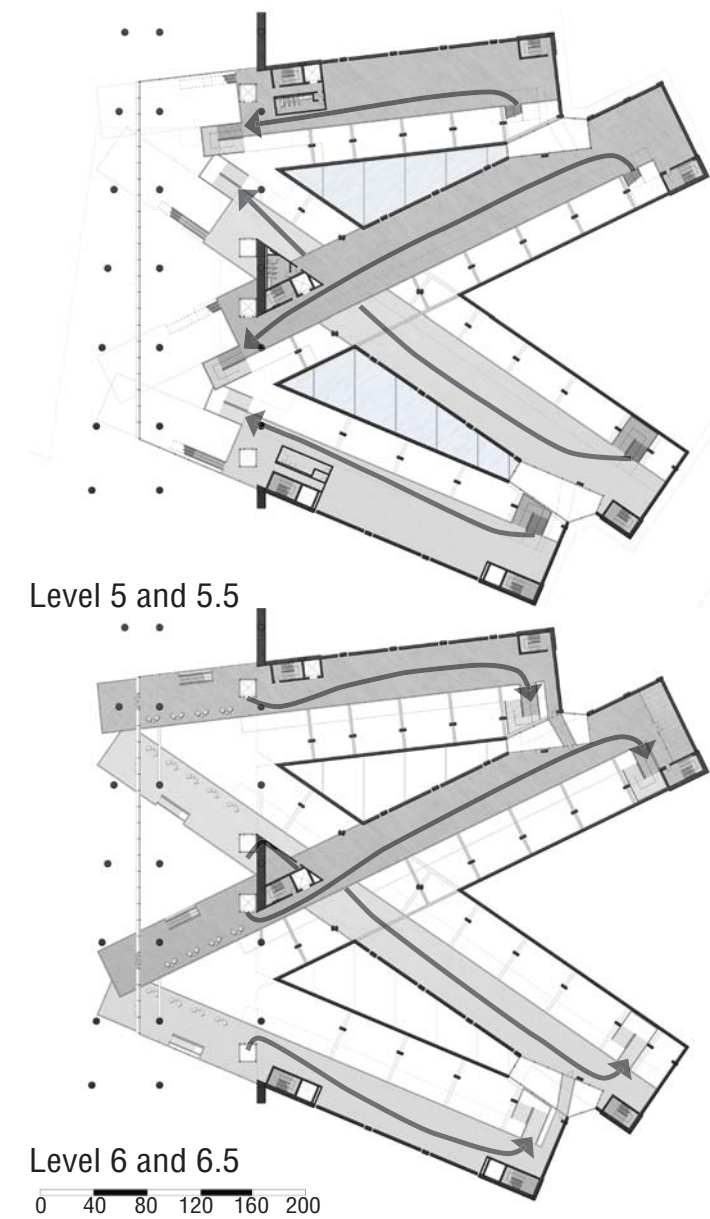
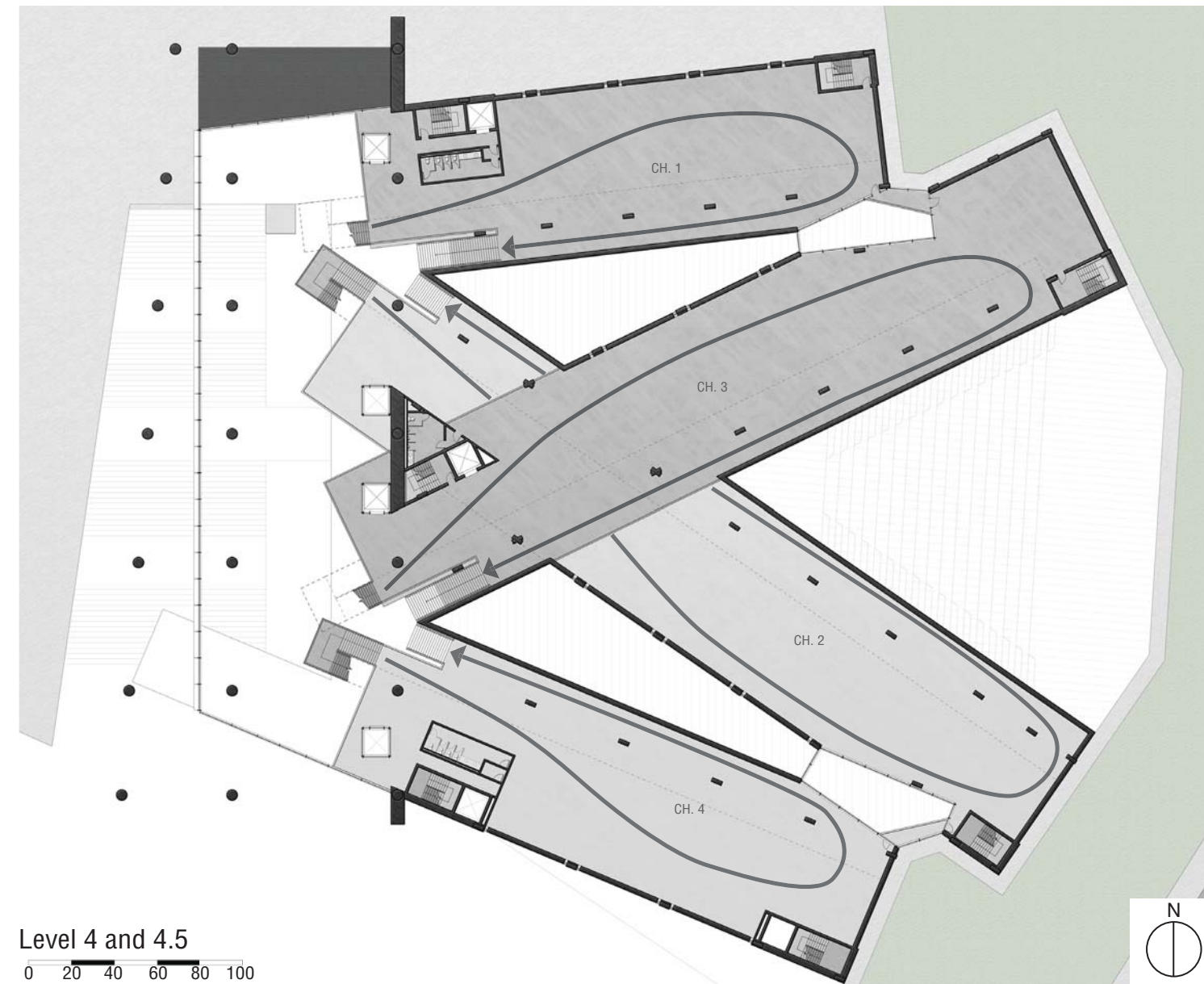
The main entry into the building is at 10th Street SW. It is believed that the majority of museum visitors would be coming from the direction of L'Enfant Promenade because of its proximity to The Mall and L'Enfant Plaza Metro Station. This is the point where the help desk and/or ticket desk would be located. All visitors to the museum wishing to enter into the exhibitions must come up to this 10th Street level to do so.

The other major entry is at Maine Avenue. This entry allows access to the cafe and theater. To enter into the remaining parts of the museum, visitors must move up the interior portion of the grand stair to access the 10th Street entry level. At this point visitors can enter into the exhibitions and other programs of the museum.

A less prominent entry exists underneath the stair to access from the parking garage at level 1 and level 2. This allows museum visitors coming by car to enter directly into the museum without having to exit the parking structure onto the street. These museum visitors must also take the grand stair up the level 3 to enter into the museum exhibitions.



## EXHIBITION CIRCULATION

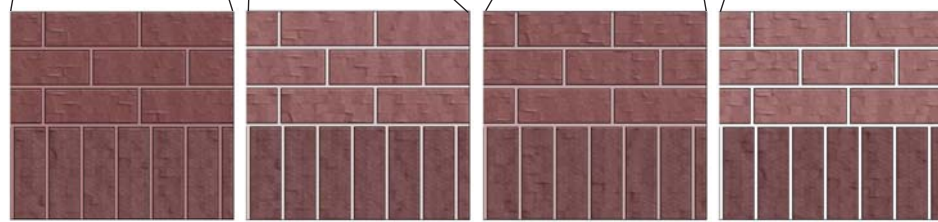


Circulation for the exhibitions was produced in a linear way with the opportunity for flexible circulation based on exhibition needs and museum changes. All four of the permanent exhibitions have the same type of circulation paths. Each exhibition is entered separately in chronological order, as visitors move from north to south along the length of the atrium. Each exhibition is intended to be viewed in a documentary type fashion telling the story chronologically.

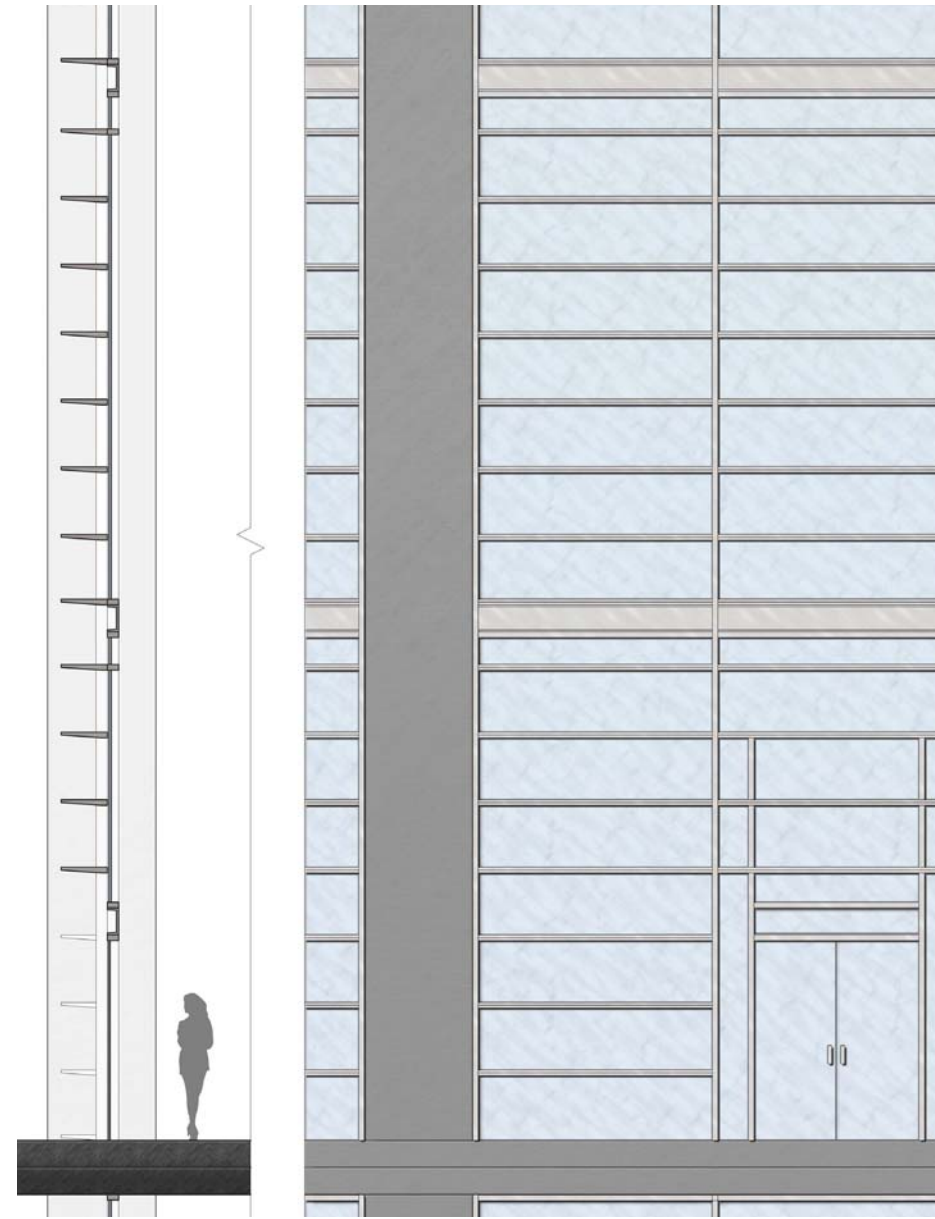
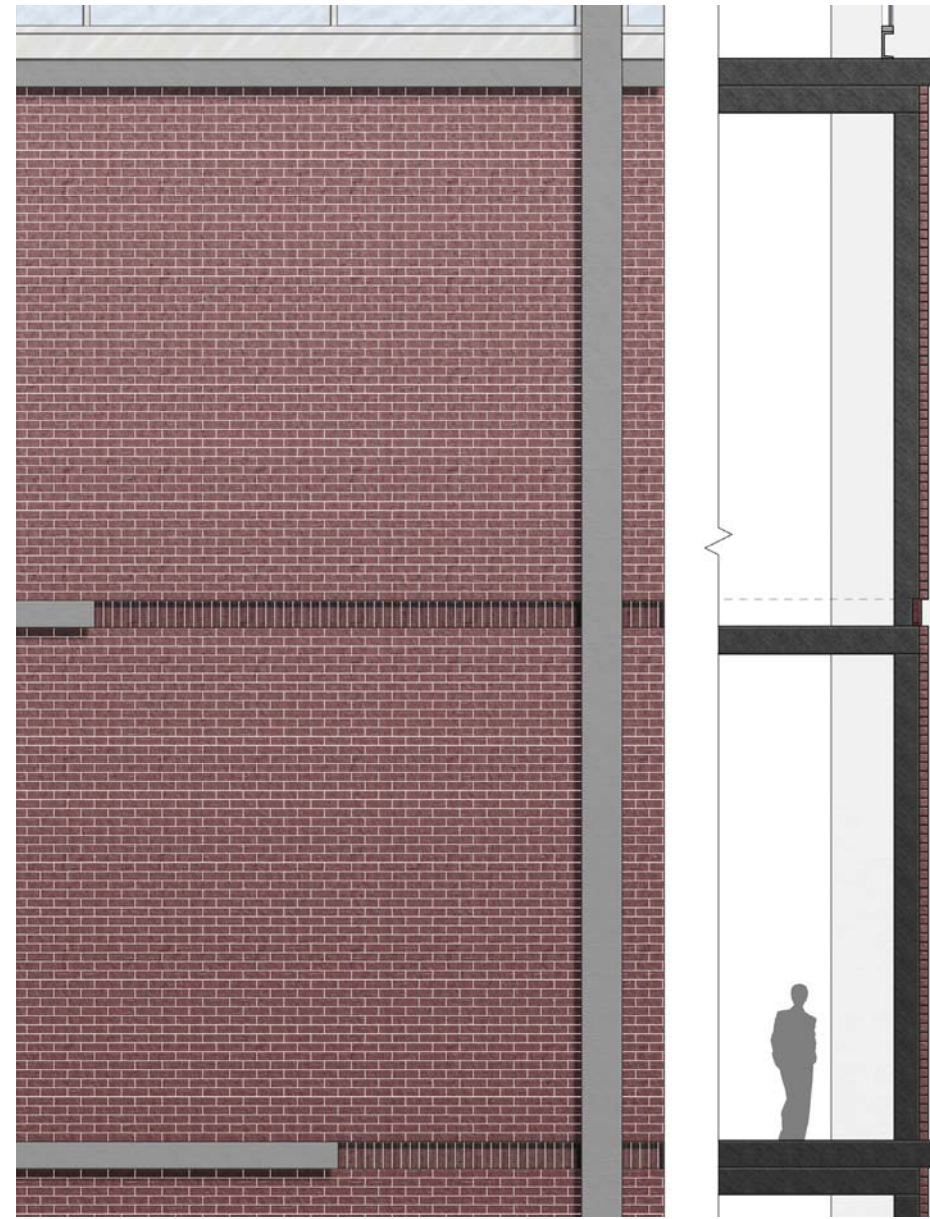
As currently designed, museum visitors must take a glass elevator up to the top level of the exhibition to enter in to the specific chapter. Each chapter has an individual elevator to minimize confusion when moving upwards to enter the exhibition. As visitors enter the top level of the particular chapter they can turn towards the west and move out onto balconies that reach into the atrium and intersect the west glass wall of the atrium. The balconies protrude past the glass wall to the exterior and provide places to view towards the particular monument it is directly on axis with.

Moving towards the east out of the elevators, visitors will enter the first level of the exhibit. This floor is the narrowest floor slab of the exhibition levels. One can move down a stair at the east end of that particular bar and as visitors move down to the middle level, the floor level gets wider. Visitors can move west on this level and by means of a stair along the atrium move down to the bottom level of the exhibition which takes up the entire floor area at that level. They will move toward the east at this level and loop back around on the other side of the columns moving west to exit by way of a stair in the atrium that accesses the 10th Street level.





Chapter 4 Chapter 2 Chapter 3 Chapter 1



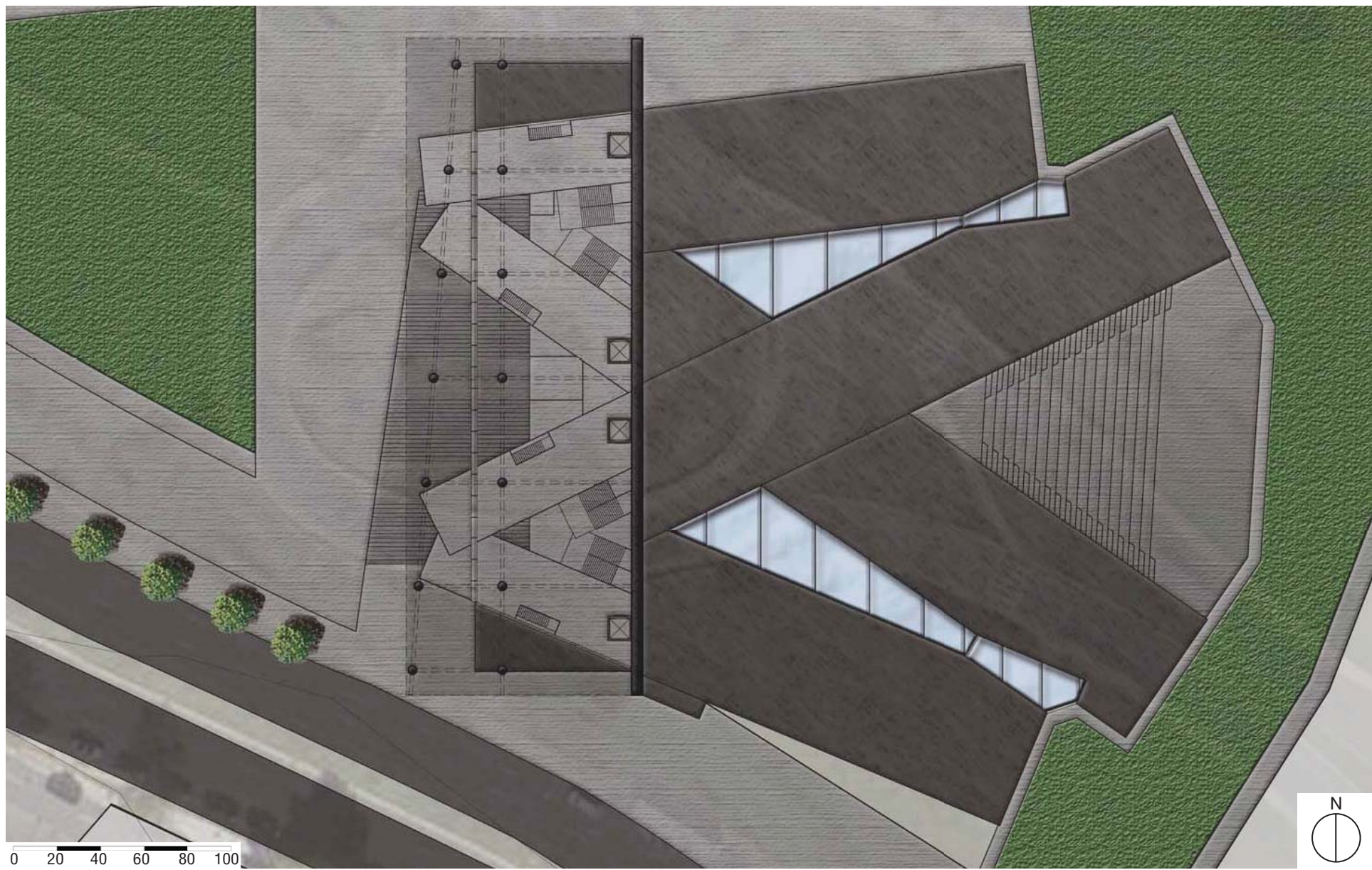
Brick was used as the primary exterior material of the bar buildings. This material was used to symbolize the idea of a nation built by individuals all coming from different backgrounds, cultures, and nationalities. The progression of the story through the chapters was then subtly designed through the grout detailing. Chapter 1 has brick with a deeper joint and more contrasting grout color from the brick. Chapter 4 has brick with a much shallower joint and more uniform grout color matching the brick. Chapter 2 and 3 have grout colors and depths gradiently in between. This progression of the brick detailing represents the idea in the museum that American people have transformed from a nation of other individual cultures to a single unified nation of Americans. This subtle brick changes can be viewed from the courtyards and outdoor classroom areas.

In order to divide the brick field, certain building elements were represented with the poured in place concrete of the building. The floor slabs, columns at exterior walls, and fire egress stairs are all expressed through concrete forms on the exterior. These divisions also represent various fields of larger cultures that exist with our nation. At floor lines where there is no floor slabs touching the wall, a soldier course subtly emphasis the horizontal element.

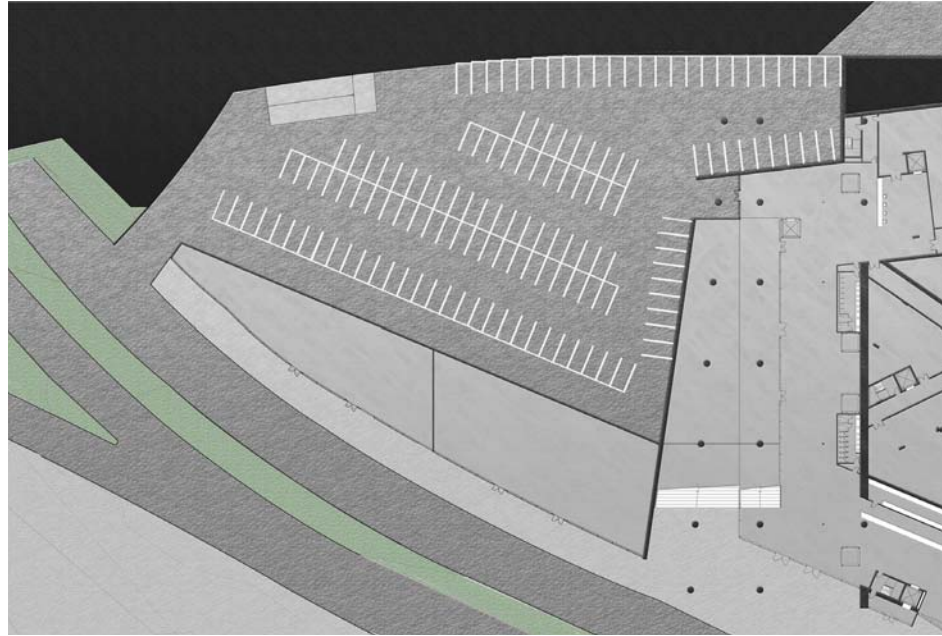
The atrium has a very different material representation. A darker concrete creates an L-shaped form that is made up of the eastern wall and roof. This element encloses the curtain wall system used for the north, south, and west atrium walls. On the north and south curtain walls, minimal mullion divisions and a clearer glass are used to emphasize and openness directly along the axis of 10th Street. This provides reciprocal views to and from the museum giving the appearance that the atrium belongs to the exterior urban fabric. The west wall of the atrium is modified because of its orientation. A louvre system wall is integrated into this wall to mitigate the impact of the suns impact on the buildings inhabitants.



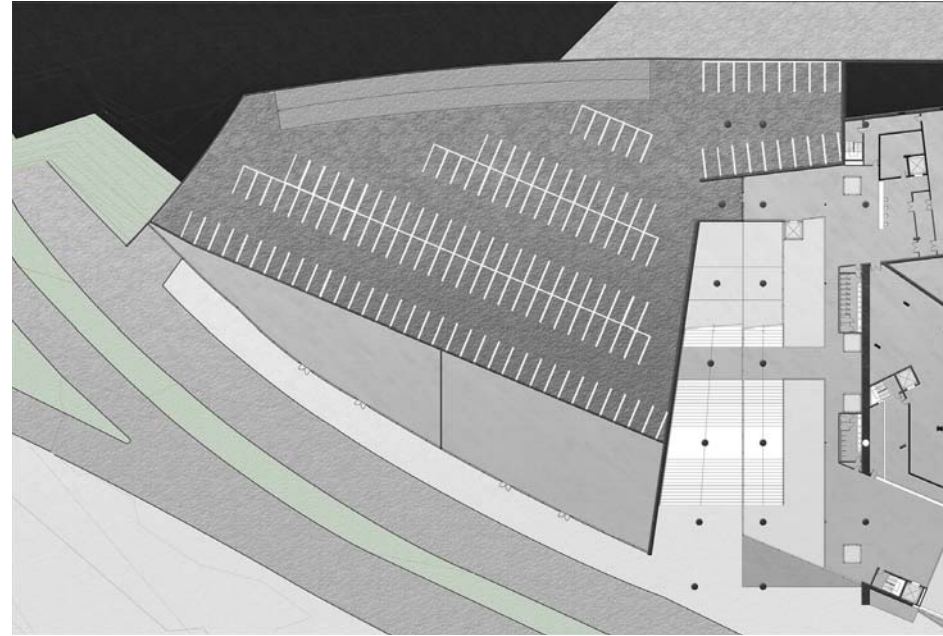






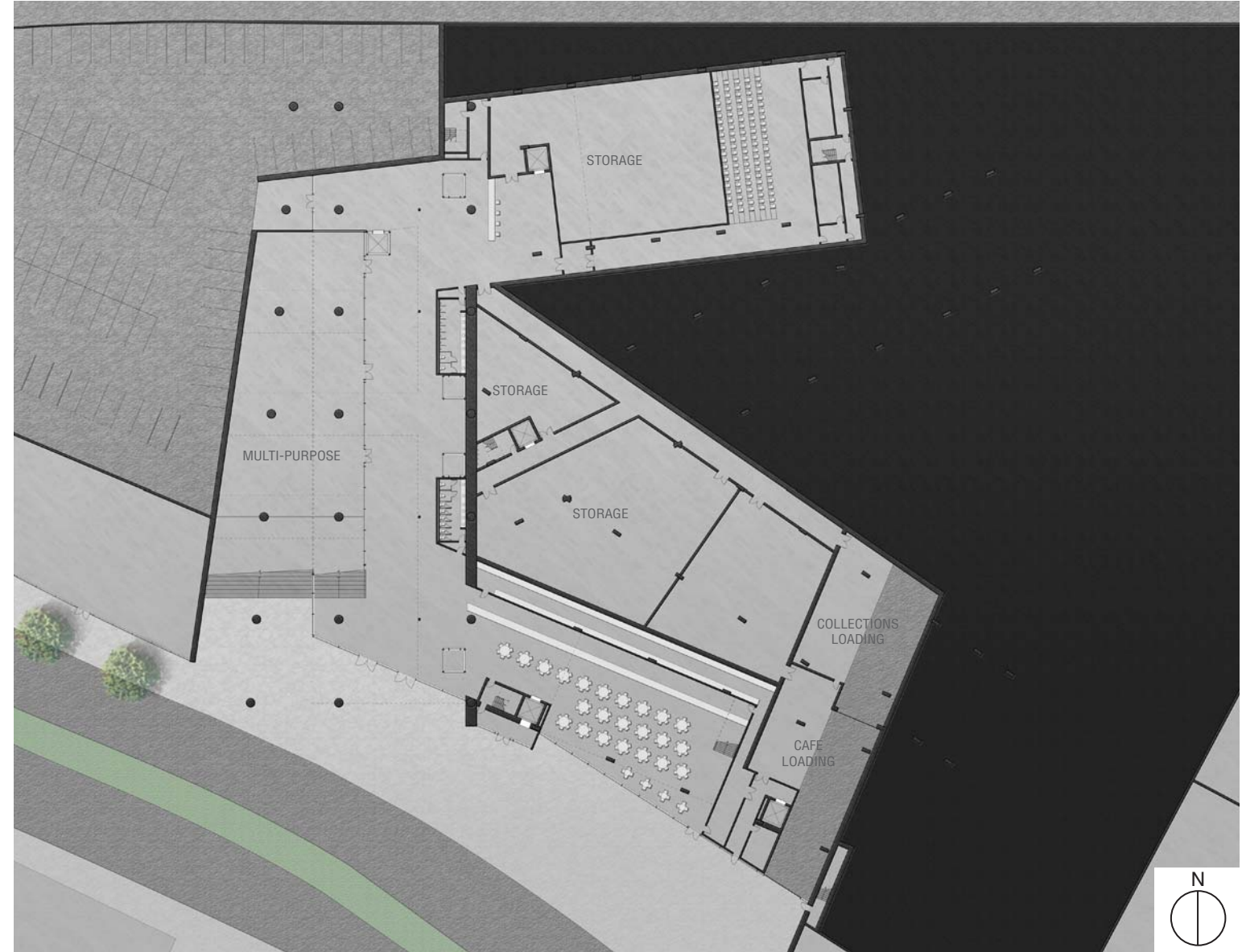


Level 1 Garage



Level 2 Garage

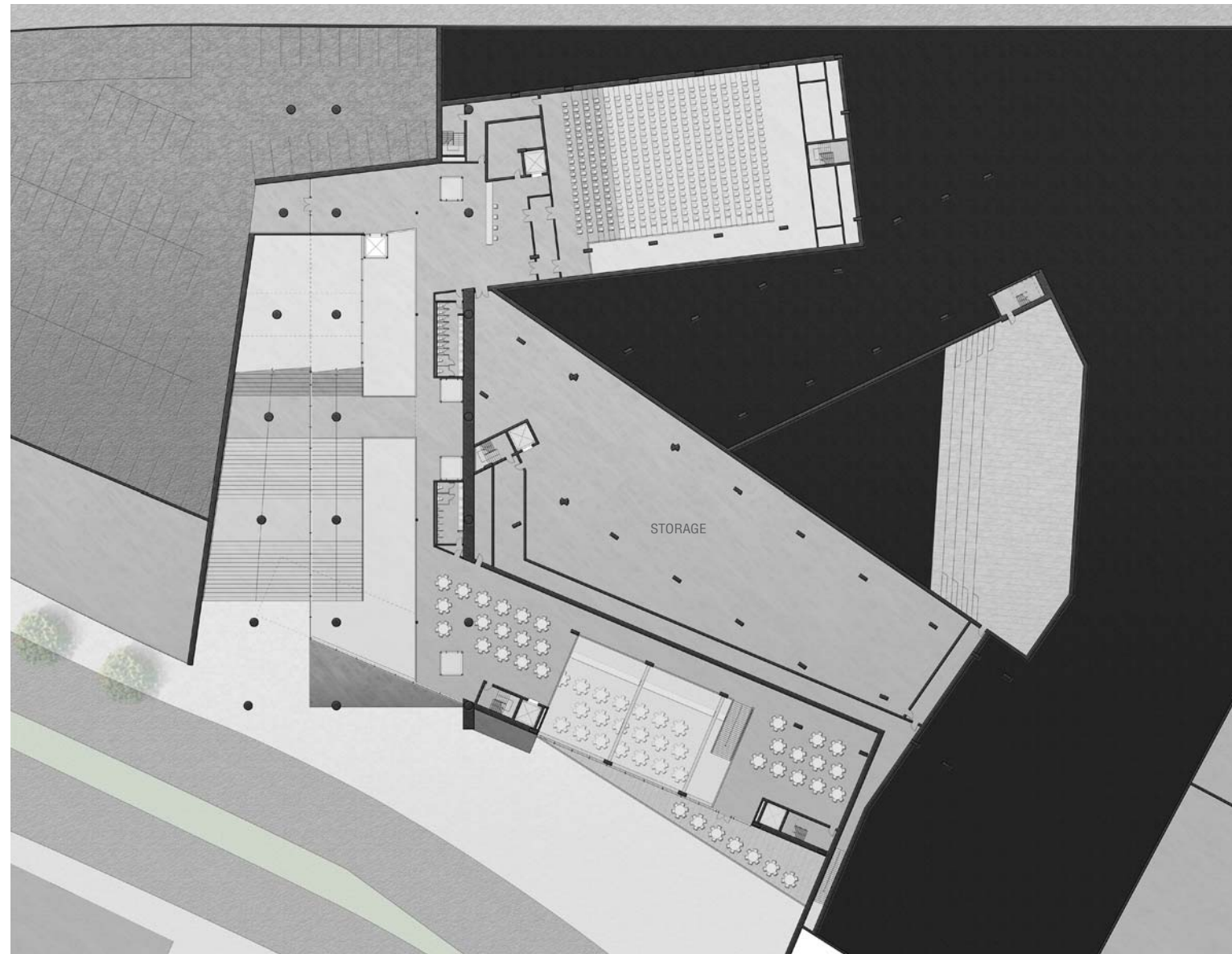
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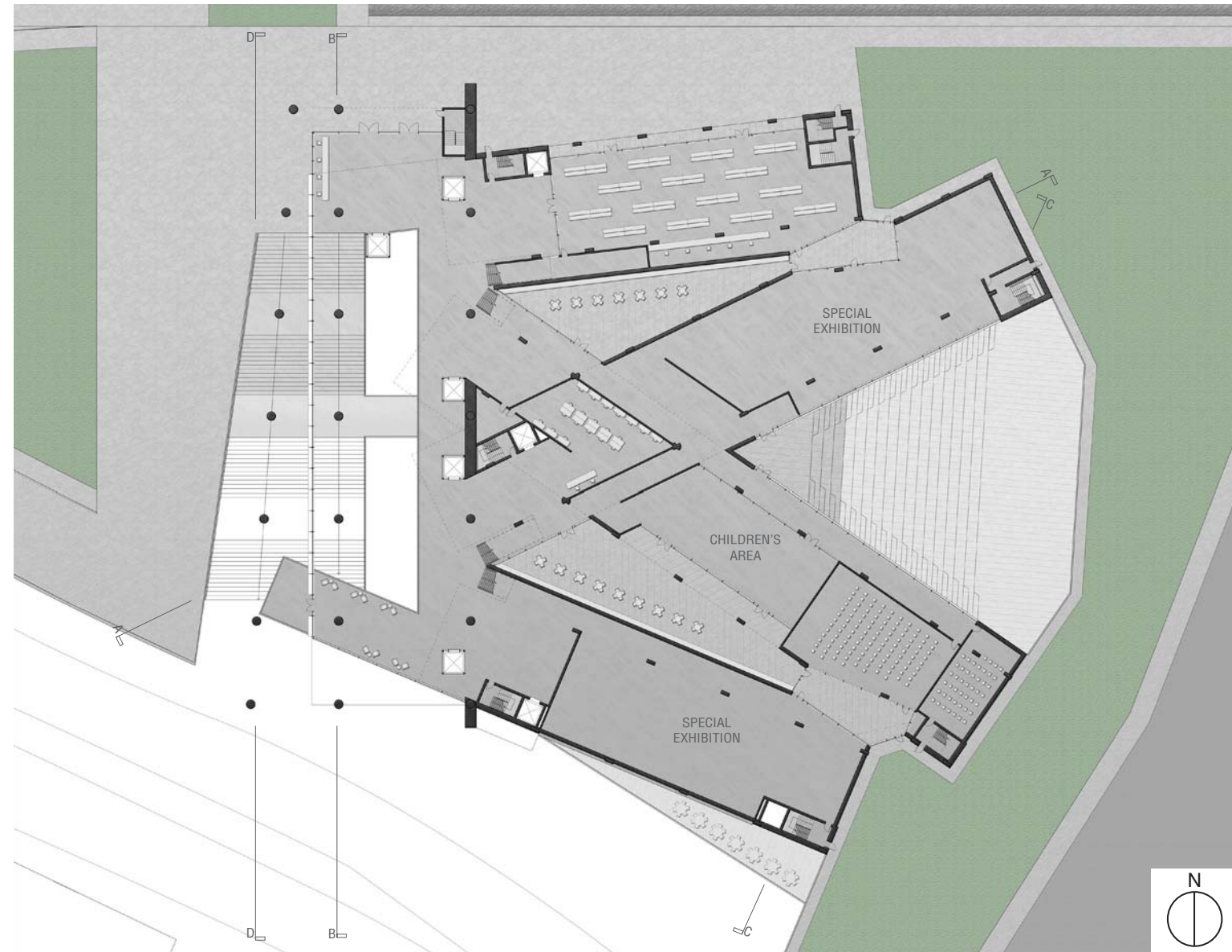
Level 1- Maine Avenue Entry

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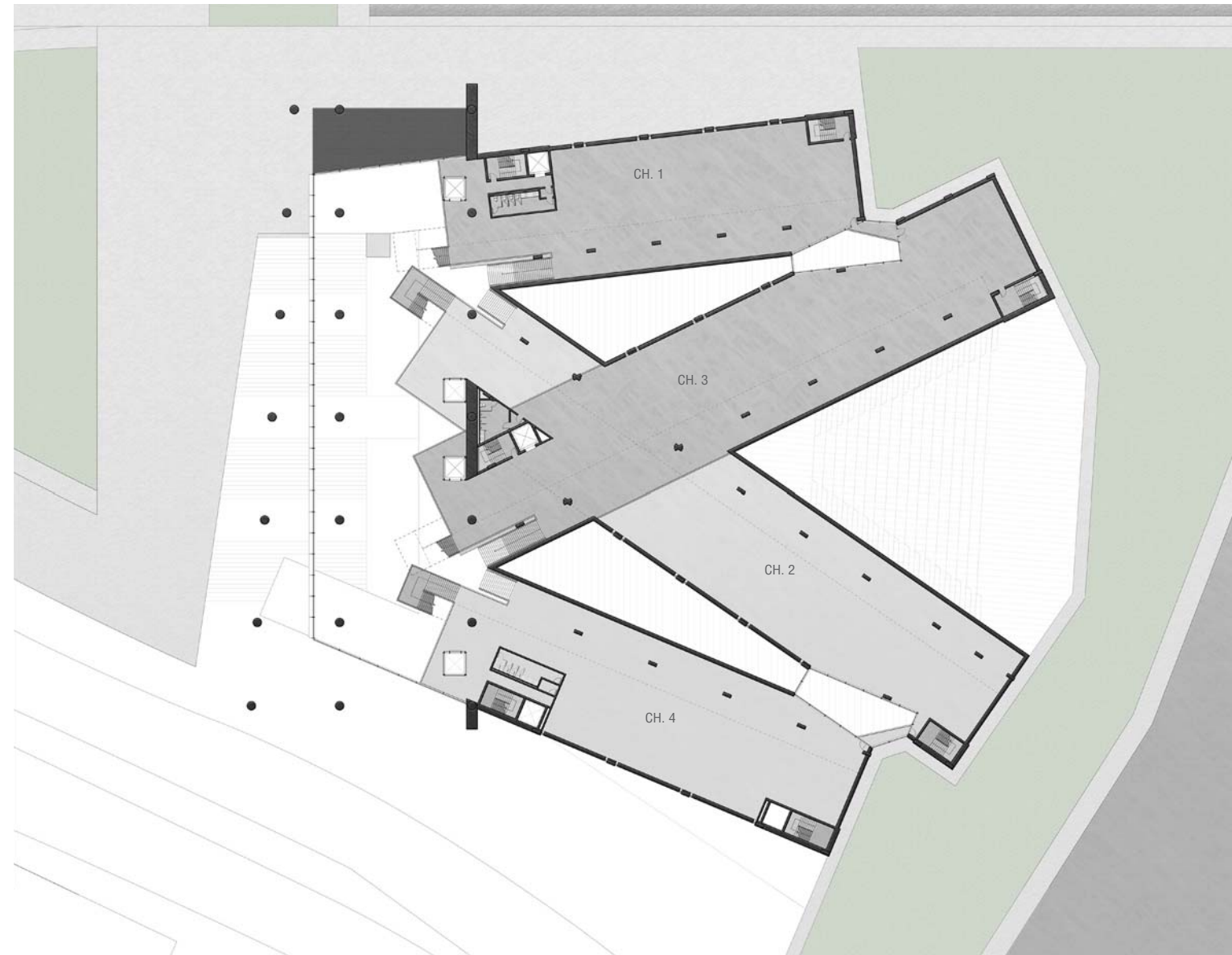


Level 2

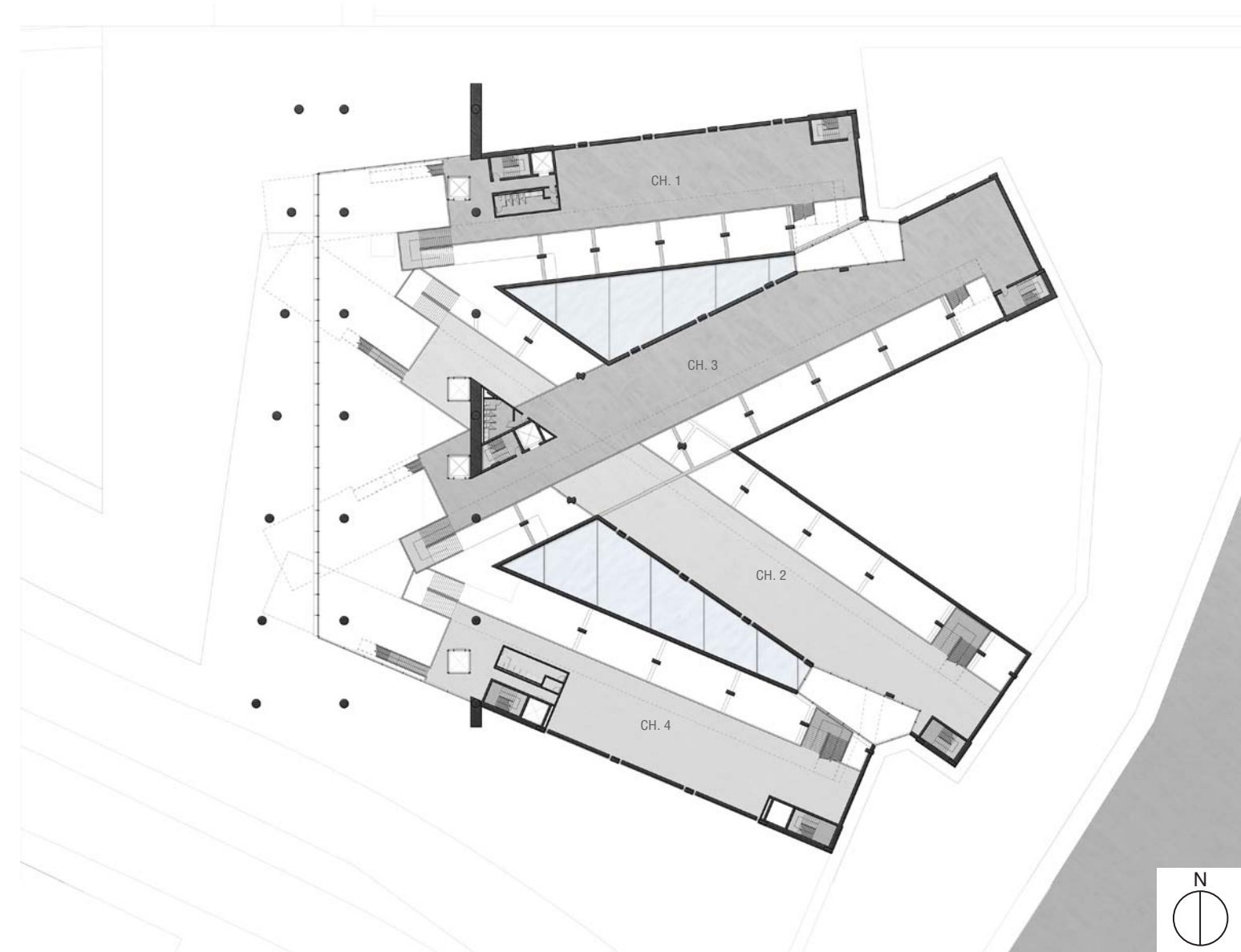


Level 3- 10th Street Entry

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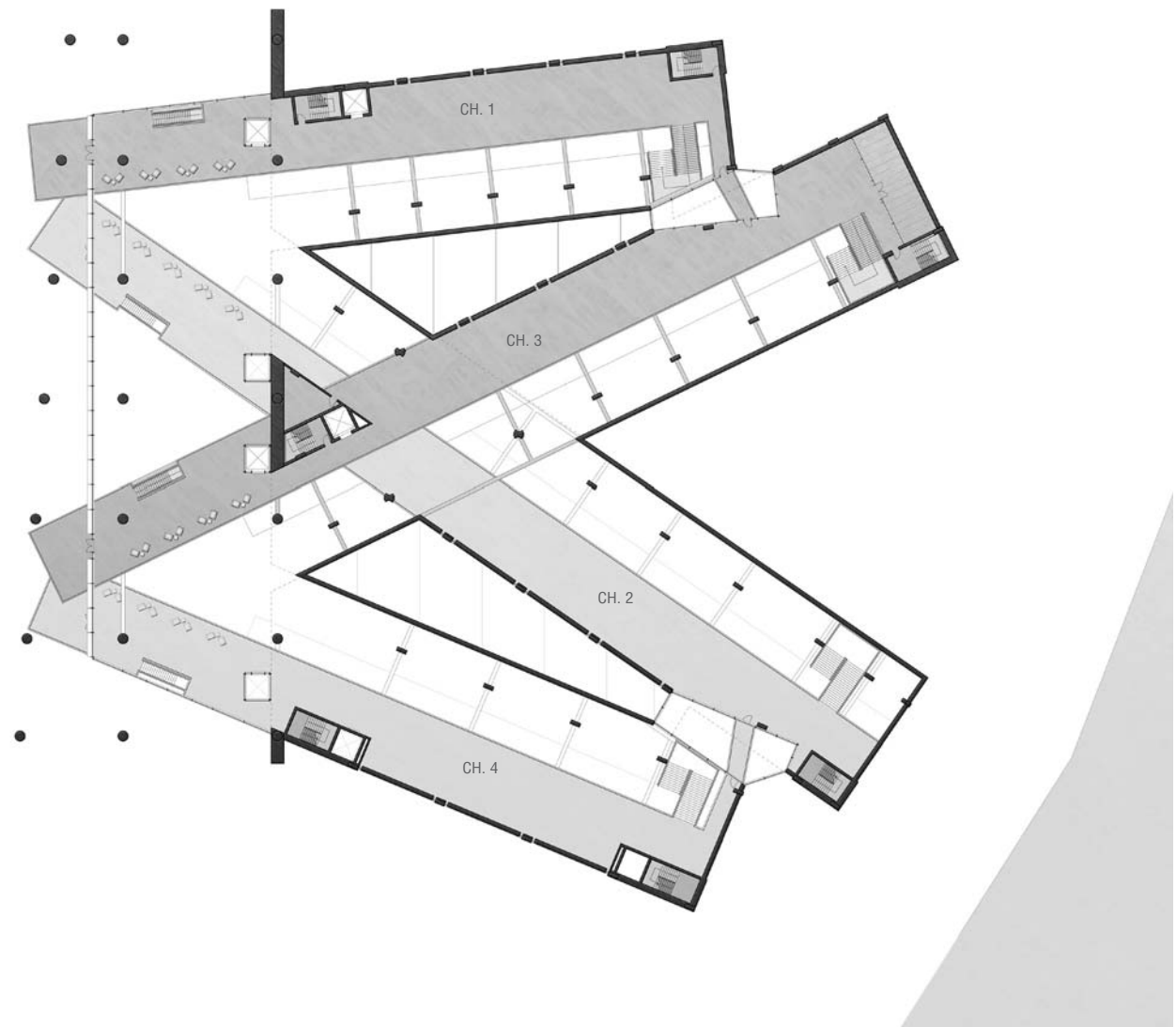


Level 4 and 4.5

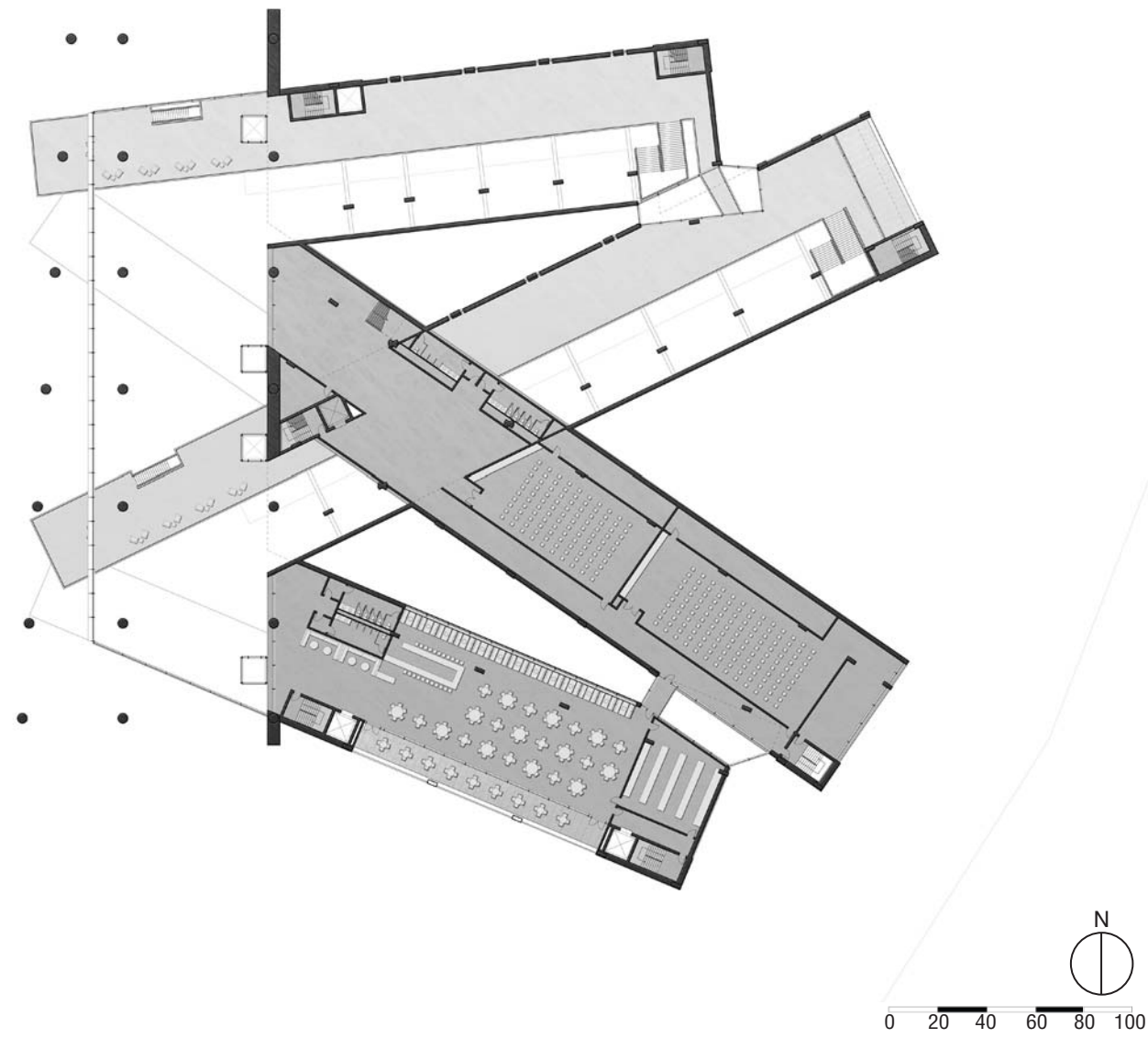


Level 5 and 5.5

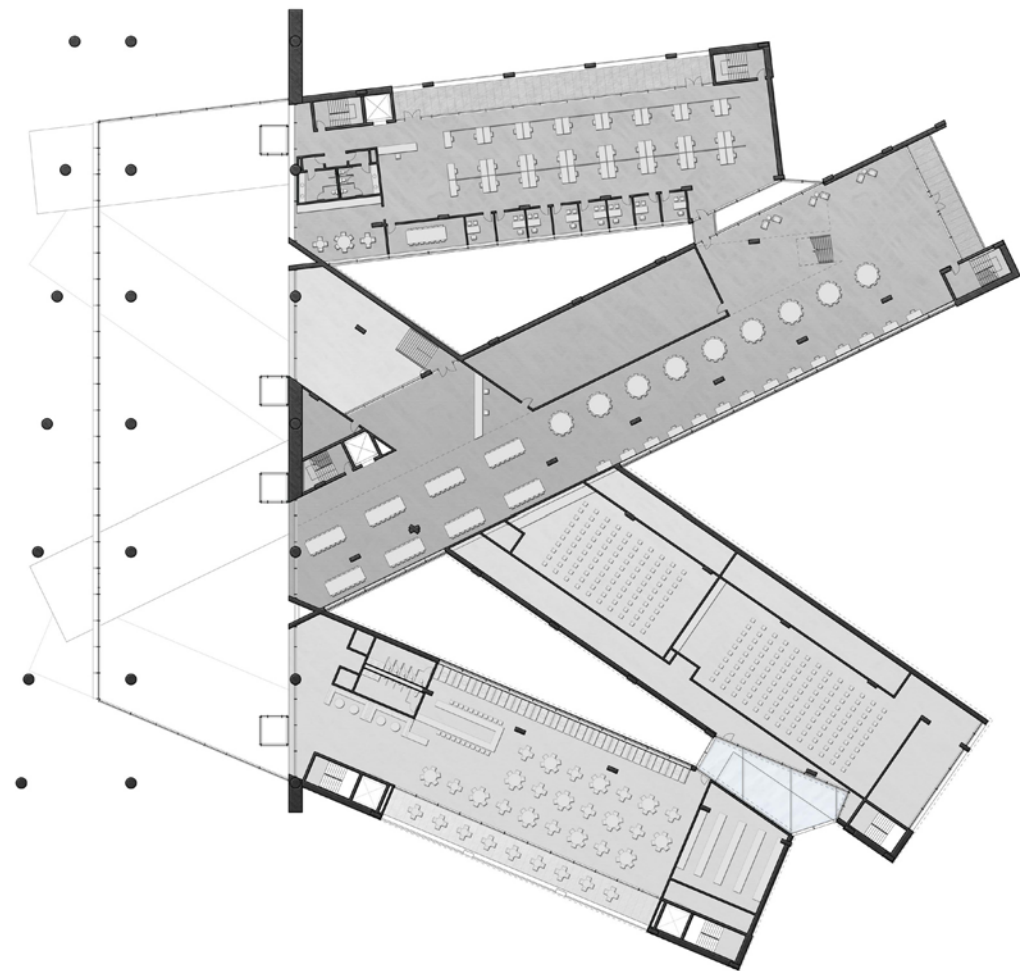




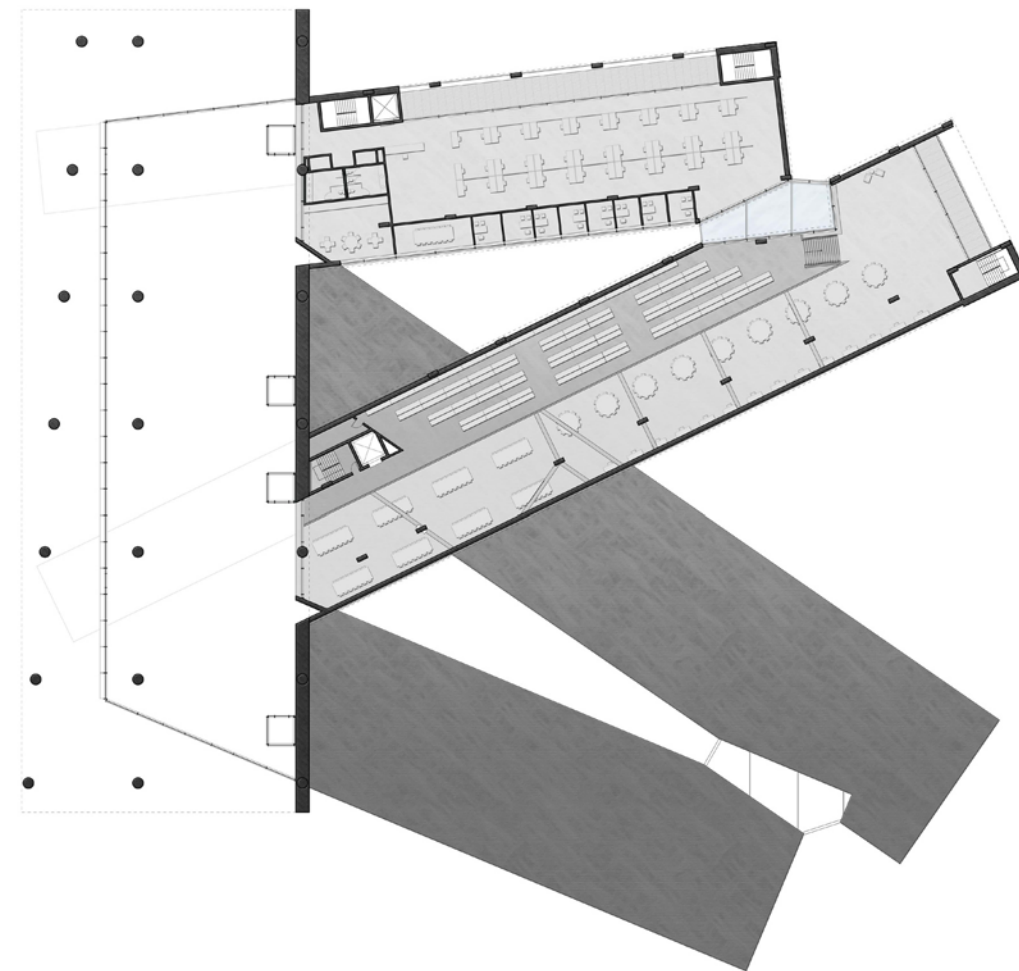
Level 6 and 6.5



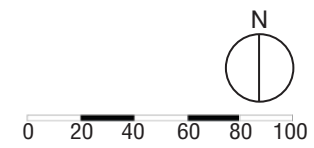
Level 7



Level 8



Level 9





North Elevation



East Elevation



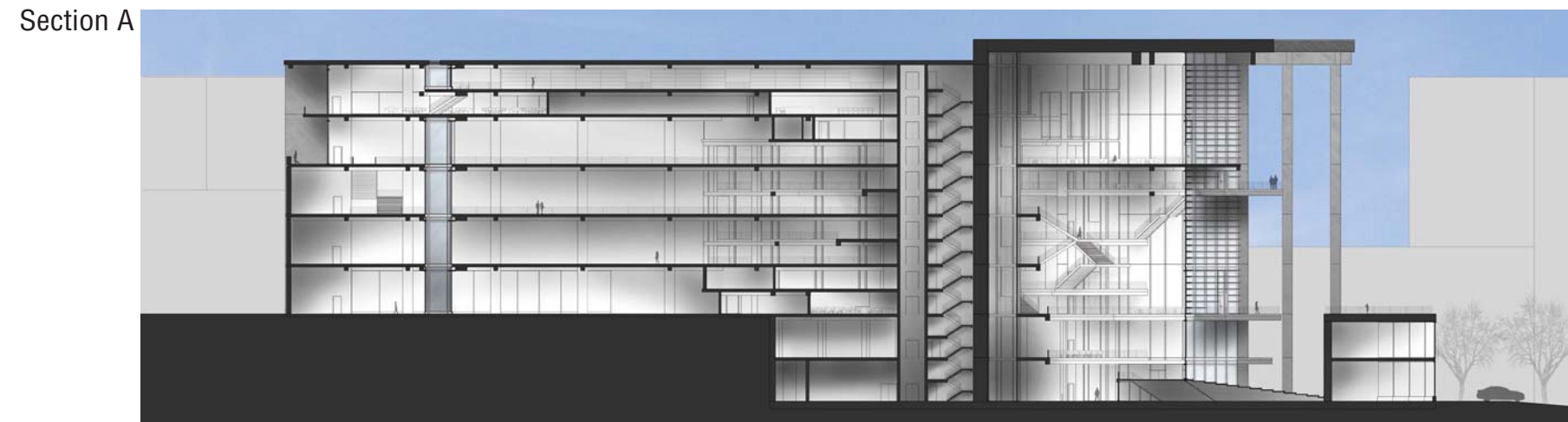
West Elevation



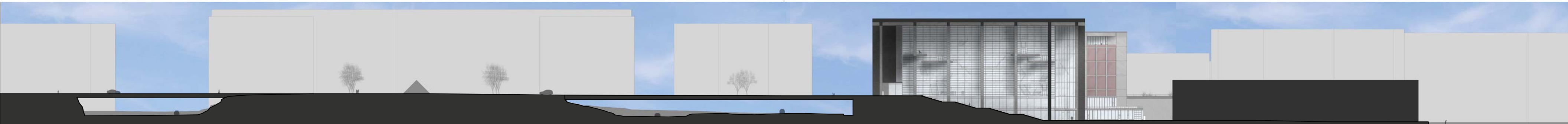
South Elevation



0 20 40 60 80 100



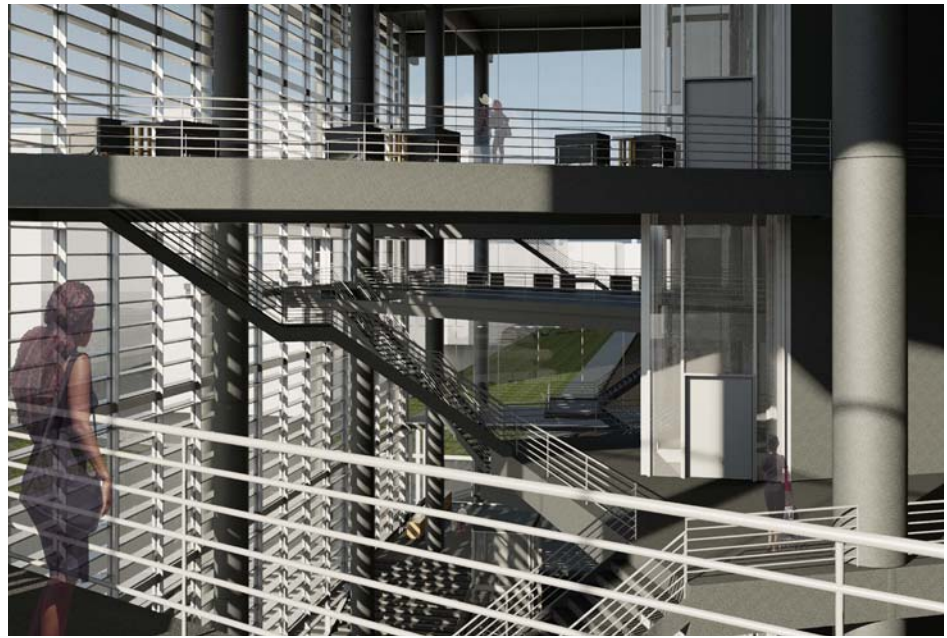
Section C







Opposite Page: 10th Street entry from L'Enfant Promenade  
Top: Maine Avenue entry from Maine Avenue and 9th Street Intersection  
Bottom Left: Bottom of site stair  
Bottom Right: Top level of Chapter 4 exhibition

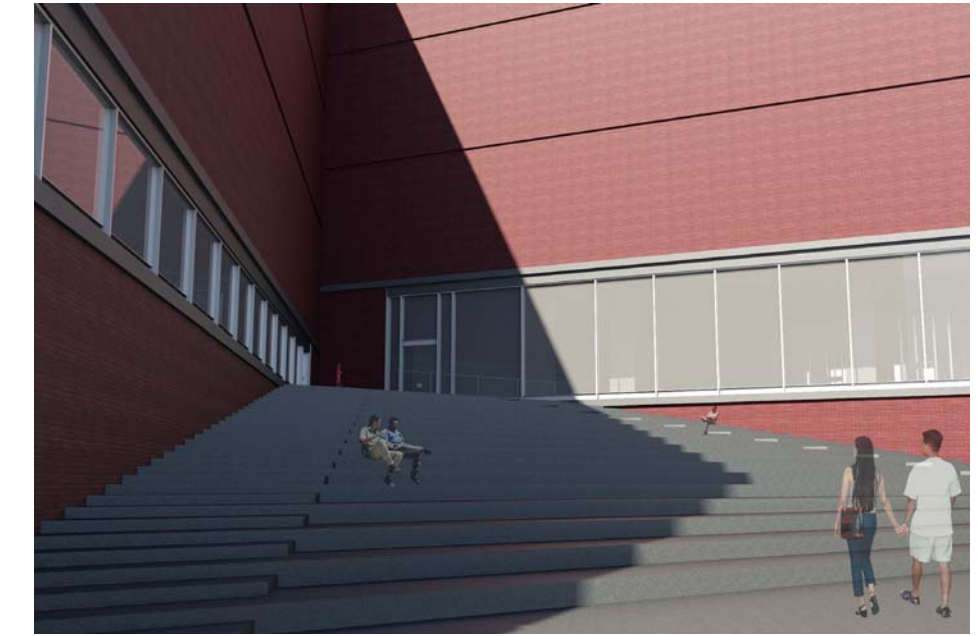




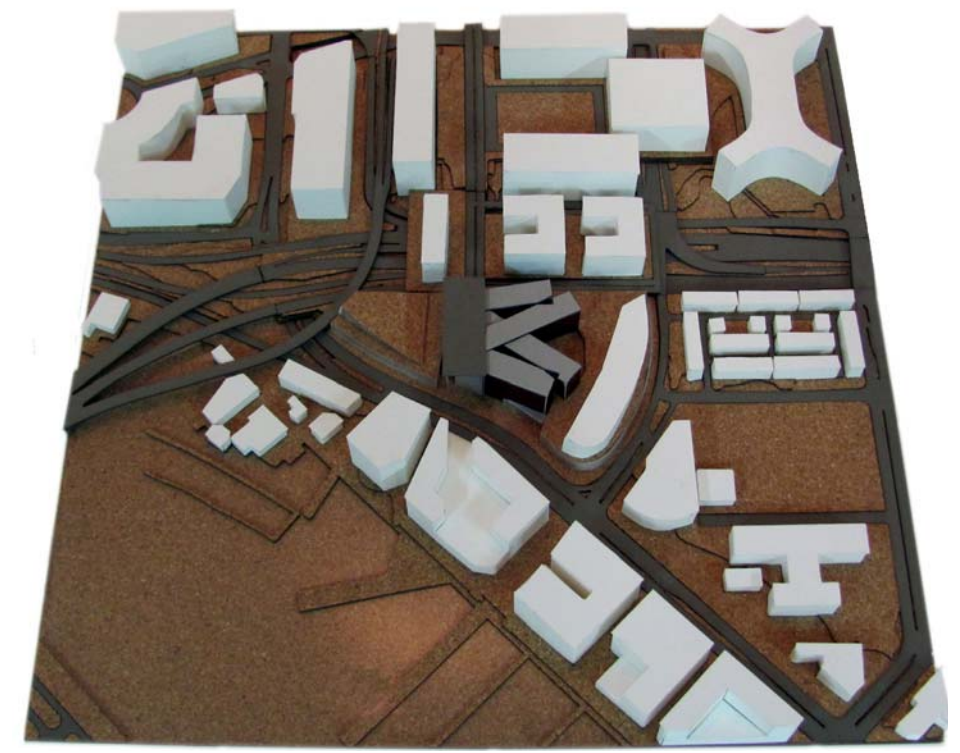
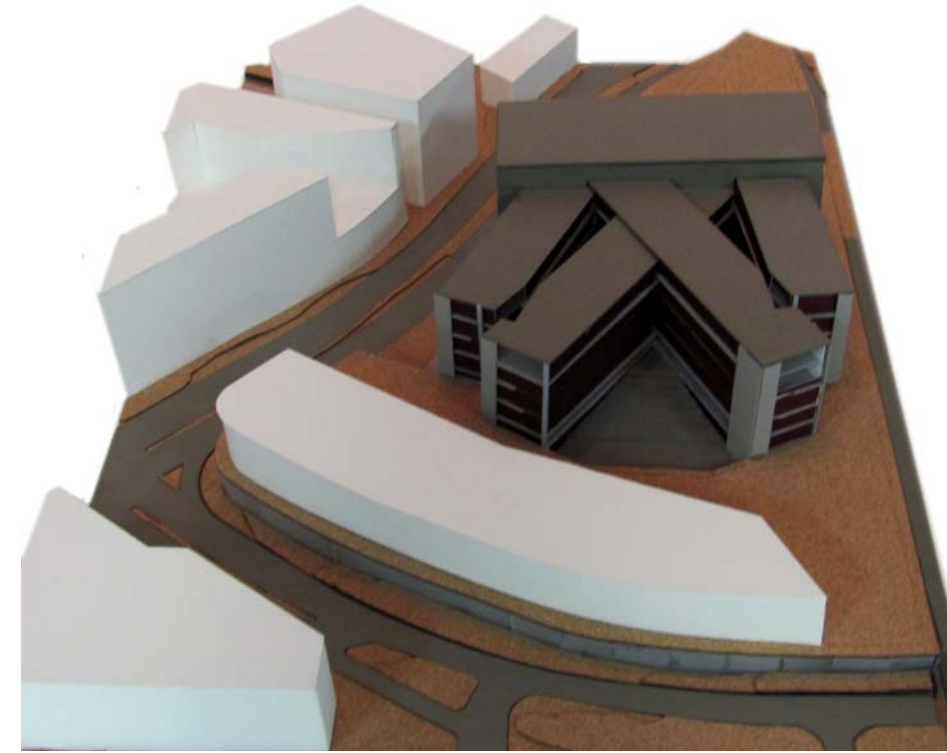
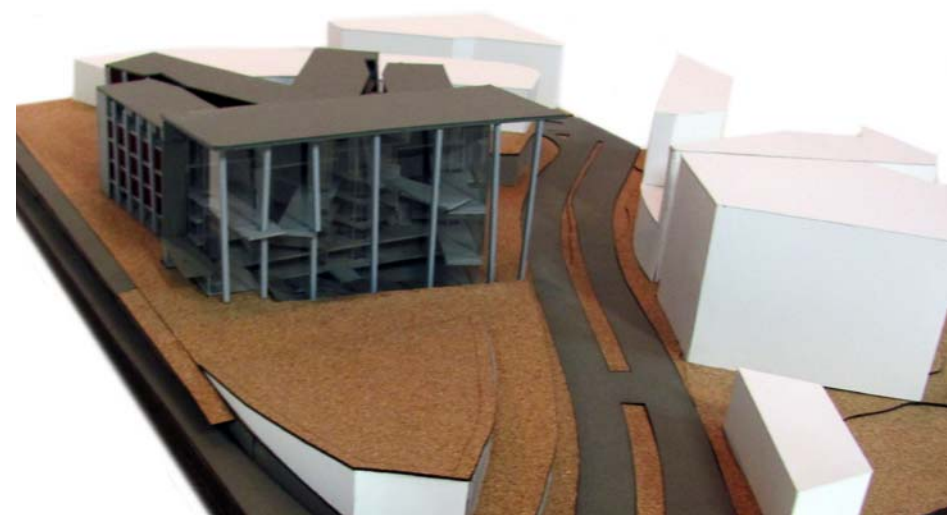
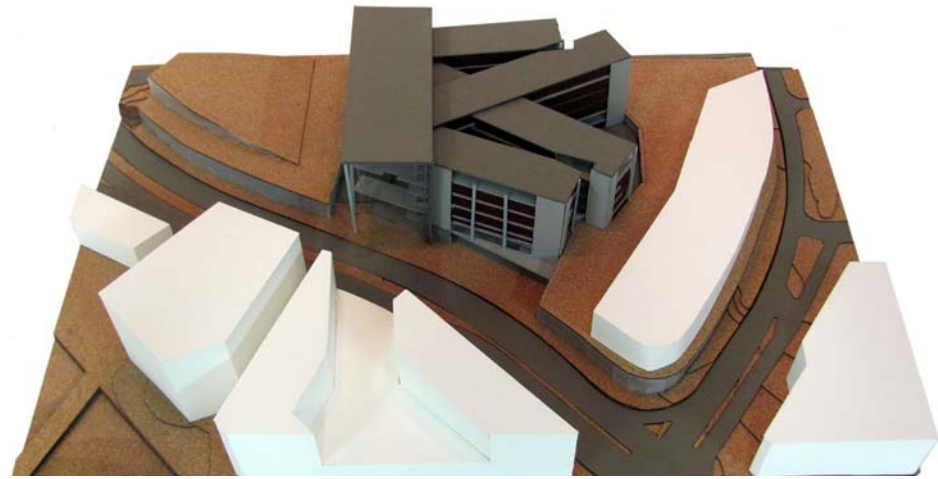
Top: Maine Avenue view towards east  
Bottom Left: South courtyard  
Bottom Right: Crossing of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 exhibitions



Top: Intersection of Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 bars  
Bottom Left: 10th Street entry  
Bottom Right: Amphitheater/outdoor classroom









## E PLURIBUS UNUM

“Out of Many, One”

By way of the site selection, site design, building program, and architectural design this thesis was a study of relating pieces to a whole and creating connections between these parts.

As a nation, America was formed by individual people from varying cultures creating a single, unified nation. A city becomes a single entity by way of the connections created by its various parts. Both of these concepts were expressed in the architectural and site design of this thesis. These two parts of the city were reconnected by means of a single piece of architecture and urban design. The concept of the museum representing connections across time and cultures was represented through the architecture of the exhibitions and the detailing of the concepts of individual people unified in one nation.

Architecture has the ability to speak to many different scales and ideas in a single building. By doing so, it can do more than just function as a building. It can speak to its surrounding urban fabric and change it as the city grows. Simultaneously it can also speak to the concept of a free nation created by people from countless backgrounds.

Out of many cultures, nations, and peoples, America is one nation. Out of many buildings, streets, and public spaces, Washington, DC is one city. E Pluribus Unum.



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