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Thesis submitted to the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of: Masters of Architecture in Architecture

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Historic Market Buildings

This thesis was inspired by the ingenuity of the inhabitants of the Florida Avenue Market, in Washington DC. Through small scale iterative design solutions and creative use of public space the residents, street vendors, and small business owners in the area have reinvented their urban condition. Using extremely limited resources, they have created a unique vibrant urban market that provides economic, social and cultural value for their neighborhood and the city.

Recent political and economic pressures are causing the market to go through a major transformation. This project will propose an urban design vision for the next evolution of the market which aims accommodate the expansion of Gallaudet University, while celebrating the unique character of the place and dignifying its current users.

## ABSTRACT



I would like to thank everyone who has taken time to help me along in the process of creating this thesis. I will forever appreciate your support and contributions to my education.

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## RECOGNITION

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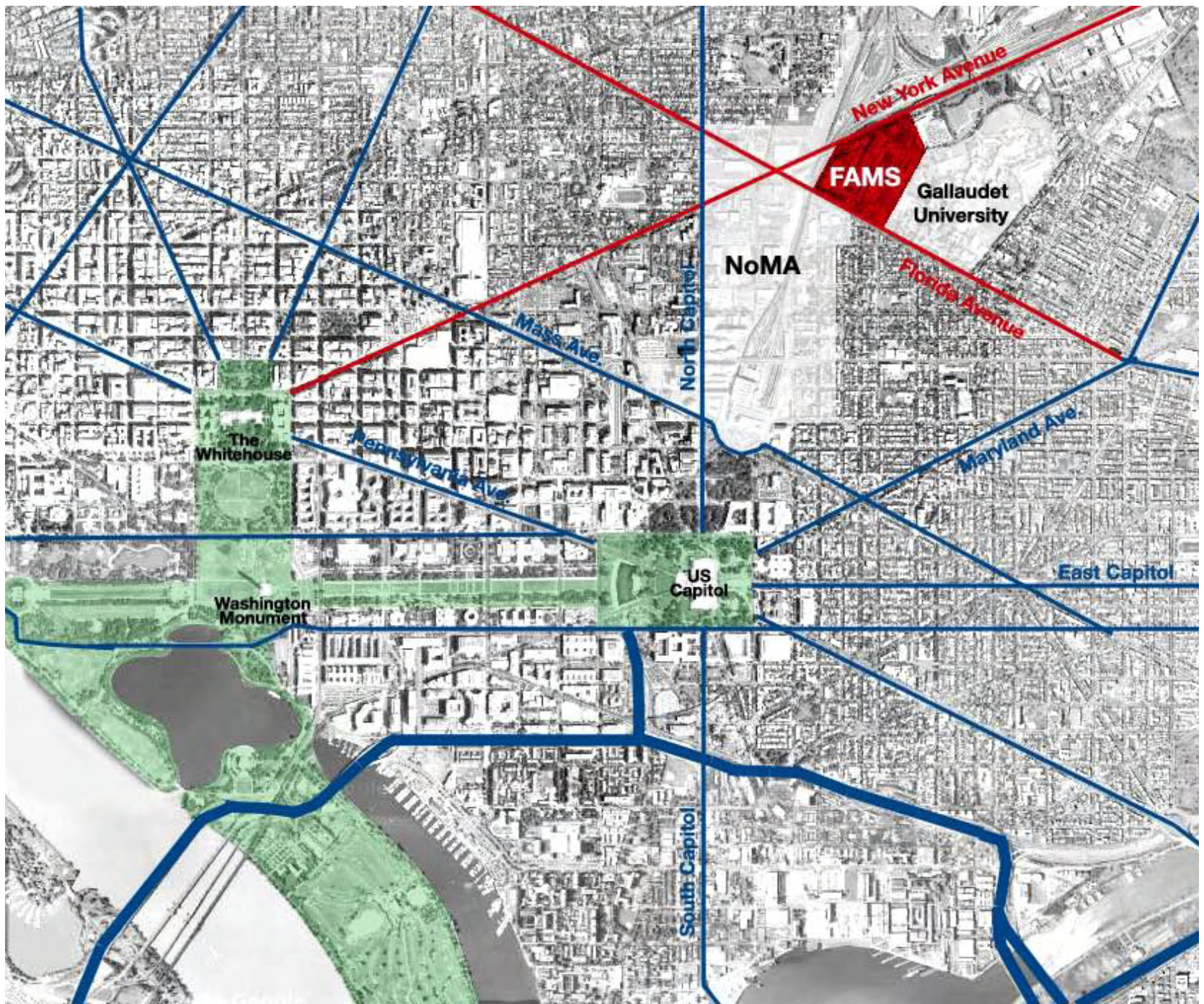


Figure 1. Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan in Context

I was originally introduced to the Florida Avenue Market as the site for my first graduate level architecture studio at Virginia Tech. For this studio we met with officials and faculty from Gallaudet University to learn about their research on DeafSpace and ideas for reconnecting the campus with the surrounding community.

For this first project I explored one of their ideas for a multi-use research and cultural center at the edge of the historic university campus adjacent to the Florida Avenue Market.

The following semester I conducted an ethnographic study of the market area for a qualitative research course in the department of Urban Affairs and Planning. For this study I observed and had conversations with people who inhabit the market including vendors, and business owners, about their perception of changes in the market and their hopes for the future. I also interviewed the Director of Campus Design + Planning for Gallaudet and a

former resident of the area who works as a planner, and writes placemaking blog which often focuses on the Florida Avenue Market. The information from these investigations provided the background for this thesis project, which involved further exploration and analysis of the site.

This project expands on ideas being considered by the university for their property within the market, which include student housing, a performing arts building and a theater. My original studio project is included in this thesis as part of a larger proposal for the market. Gallaudet University is being considered a hypothetical client for this project. The project is an attempt to address the needs and desires of the university and also serve the inhabitants and small businesses that currently use the market. However, the ideas and proposals within this book are from the author and have not been proposed or endorsed by Gallaudet University or any of the stakeholders who participated in interviews.

## Introduction



Funky Flea Market





Gallaudet University

# 1. COMMUNITY HISTORY

Gallaudet University is the only university in the United States devoted specifically to the education of the deaf and hard of hearing. Established in 1864 Gallaudet, one of the first federal land grant universities, was located at the edge of the district, along the aptly named Boundary Street (now Florida Avenue). The scenic natural campus, designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, was originally intended to be an escape from the hectic life of the city. The escape metaphor was particularly desirable for a deaf university. At the time deaf culture was not fully understood by the outside community, which often led to negative stereotypes, such as “deaf and dumb”. Many deaf young people felt that they were excluded from mainstream society. For this reason the campus was meant to be a place where talented young deaf students could come and take part in an educational community that welcomed them and truly understood their needs.

## HISTORIC GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

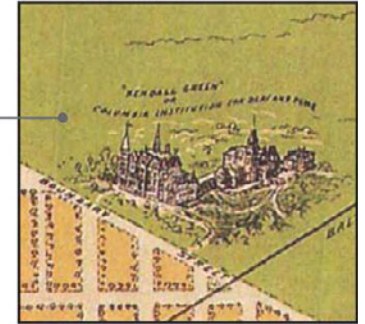
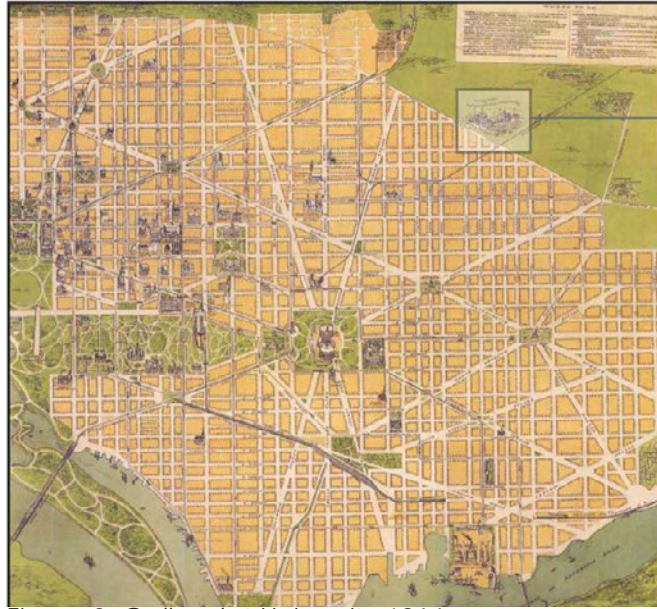


Figure 2. Gallaudet University 1864



Images of Campus



Images of Campus

Near the end of the 19th Century Washington D.C. had several large markets throughout the city where local farmers and businesses would rent spaces to sell goods and foodstuffs. The largest of these markets was Center Market located at the intersection of 7th St and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. At its completion in 1878 it was the largest market building in the country.

In 1931 the well-crafted central market building was demolished to make room for the National Archives to be built on its site. Before the demolition, Union Market was constructed in 1921 to serve as a replacement for the vibrant Center Market. Union Market was located adjacent to Gallaudet University along Florida Avenue. The site, formerly home to Fort Meigs, was chosen for its proximity to the rail lines and ease of acquisition. This market was well used but never attained the prominence of the former Center Market.<sup>1</sup>

## UNION MARKET



Figure 3. Center Market (1878-1931)

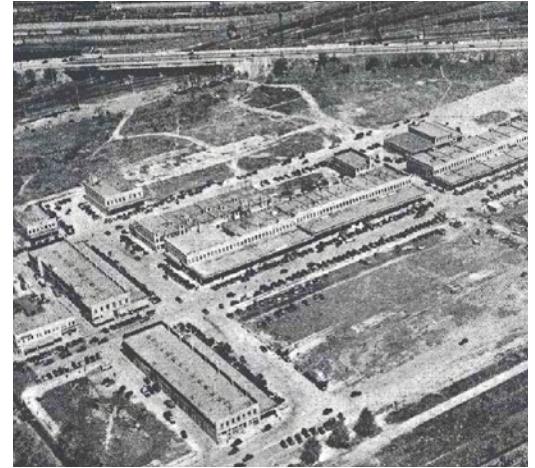
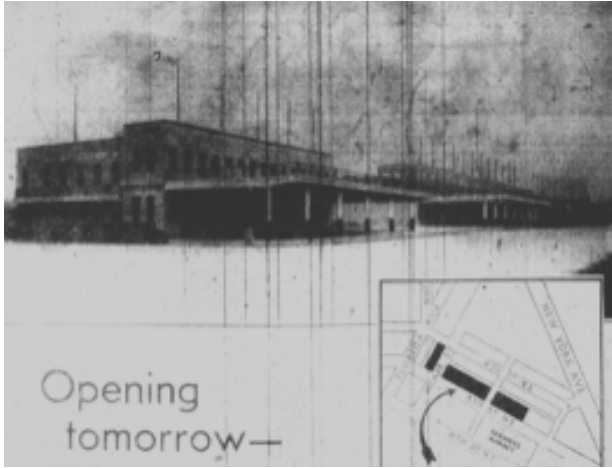


Figure 4. Union Market (1921-Present)

Union Market is now often referred to by several names such as Florida Avenue Market, Capital City Market, and 6th Street Market. The area has had several waves of development; however there are still large areas of vacant land and surface parking. The market primarily caters to a wholesale clientele, serving various small businesses who load up with truckloads of goods to resell throughout DC. Most of the original Union Market buildings are occupied by these wholesalers who often also serve retail clientele. The majority of walk-in customers typically shop at the large DC Farmers Market building constructed in 1986. This building has a wide variety of vendors selling everything from fresh produce, large cuts of meat, and raw pig knuckles to brightly colored top hats, jump suits, and look-a-like designer purses. There are also many street vendors at the market who will set up tables and tents to peddle their merchandise.

**FLORIDA AVENUE  
MARKET** AKA: UNION MARKET,  
CAPITAL CITY MARKET...



Figure 5. Florida Avenue Market & Context

One weekend in 2005 a local resident, decided to plan a flea market to raise money for the youth group which he runs. He was granted permission to hold the flea-market at a large fenced in parking lot owned by Gallaudet University that was largely unused. The market was originally only planned for one weekend but it was such a huge success that he decided hold it again the next weekend... Five years later the flea-market, which lives up to its name the Funky Flea-Market, continues to be held every Saturday and Sunday and occasionally attracts so many vendors that late arrivals need to be turned away. Vendors come from all over the region with some coming from as far as New York. The founder still manages the flea-market from a trailer that remains on site and his good friend, works out of a parking booth as a DJ to play music and give announcements. The flea-market is an important cultural institution for the community, where residents come not only to work or shop; but also to meet their neighbors and socialize with friends and family.

## FUNKY FLEAMARKET



Figure 6. Funky FleaMarket Images

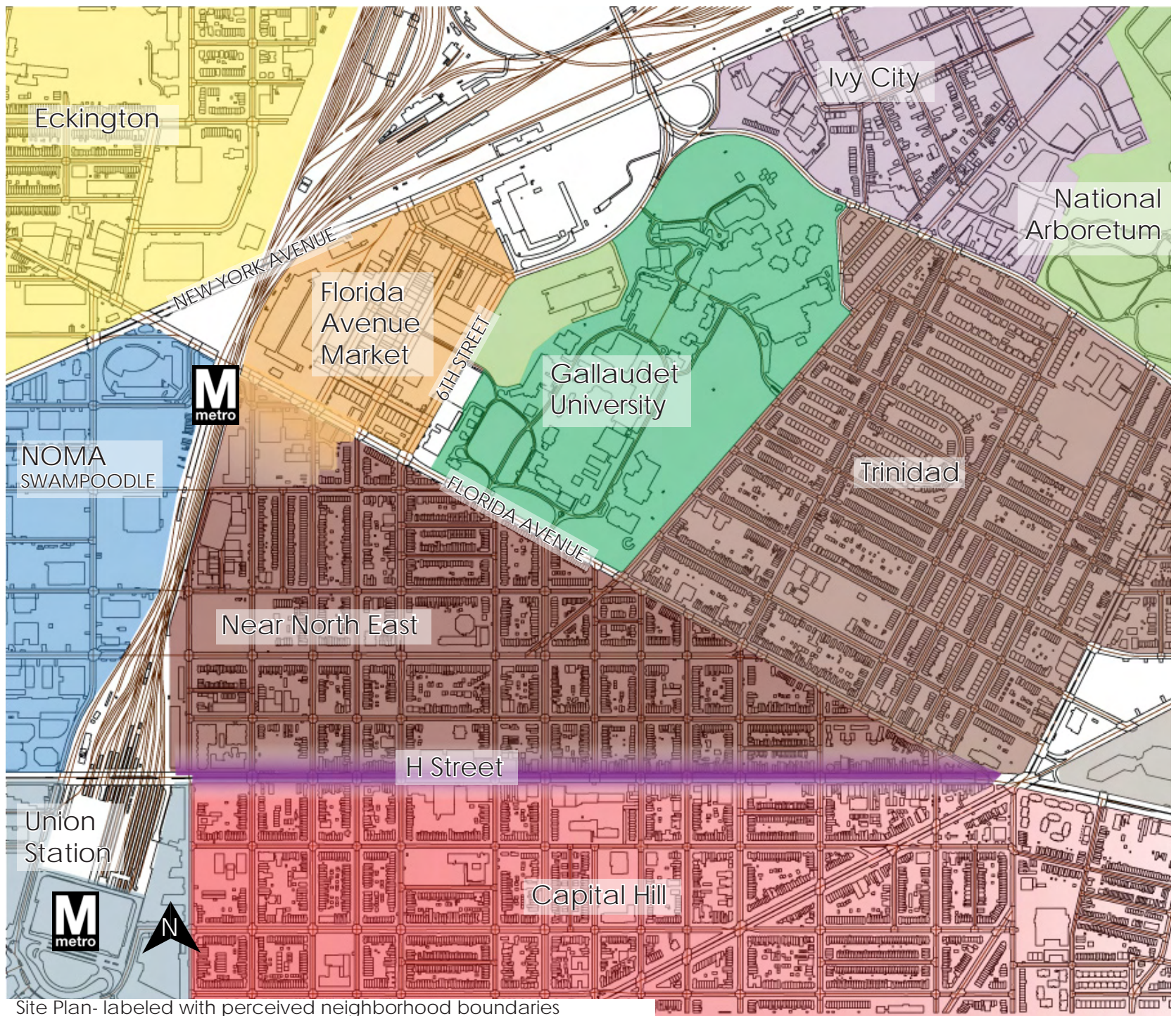




Figure 7. Funky Fleamarket from nearby rooftop

On November 20, 2004 the succinctly named New York Ave-Florida Ave-Gallaudet University Metro Station first opened for service. This was one of the first stations added to the Metro system on a segment of an existing line (The Red Line). The station was financed through a public private partnership consisting of \$35 million in private funds from businesses in the area, \$44 million from the District of Columbia and \$31 million in federal funding. The purpose of the project was to aid the revitalization and development of the area through increased transportation access. Initial estimates predicted that the project would generate 5,000 new jobs and \$1 billion in new private investment in the area. These predictions have been greatly exceeded with over 15,000 jobs being created since 1998 and an increase of over \$1.1 billion in private investment. Also the assessed valuation of a 35-block area surrounding the station has risen from \$535 million in 2001 to \$2.3 billion in 2007.<sup>2</sup>

## METRO STATION

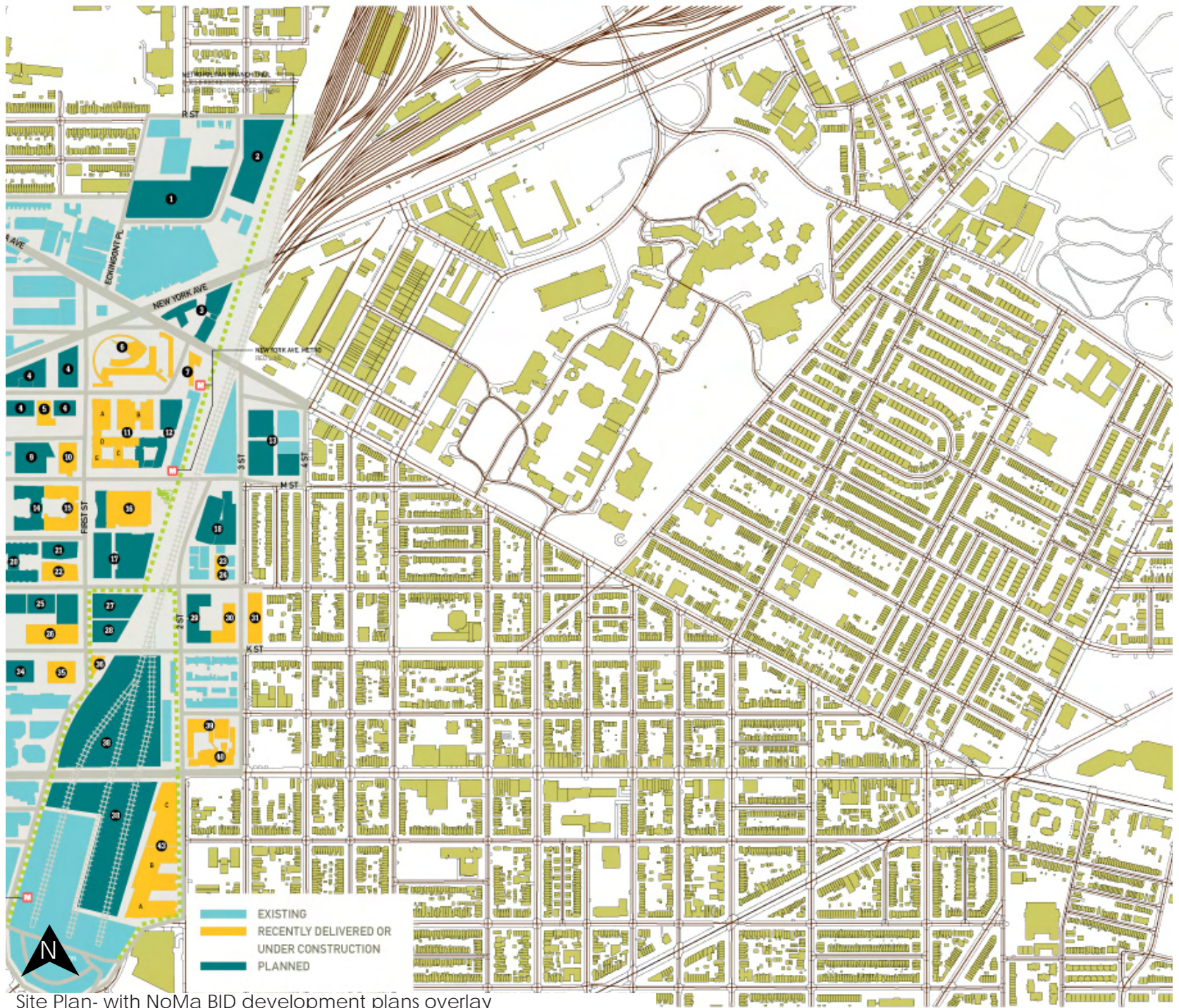


Site Plan- labeled with perceived neighborhood boundaries

In May of 2007 the city established the NoMa (North of Massachusetts Avenue) Business Improvement District. The BID is located to the south and west of the market. Though the boundaries noticeably exclude the market area, the BIDs marketing material often highlight the market as a nearby amenity. The BID's purpose is to encourage the continuation of the economic development that has resulted from the construction of the new Metro station. The BID is funded by a levy on commercial, large residential and hotel space within the area. In 2008, the BID's yearlong budget was \$1.3 million.<sup>2</sup> This money is used for services and amenities such as public cleaning services, marketing, promotional events, and small community projects. The BID has been very successful in attracting high profile tenants such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and National Public Radio. Also several other new Class-A office buildings and mixed use residential buildings have been built recently.

## **NOMA**

### **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

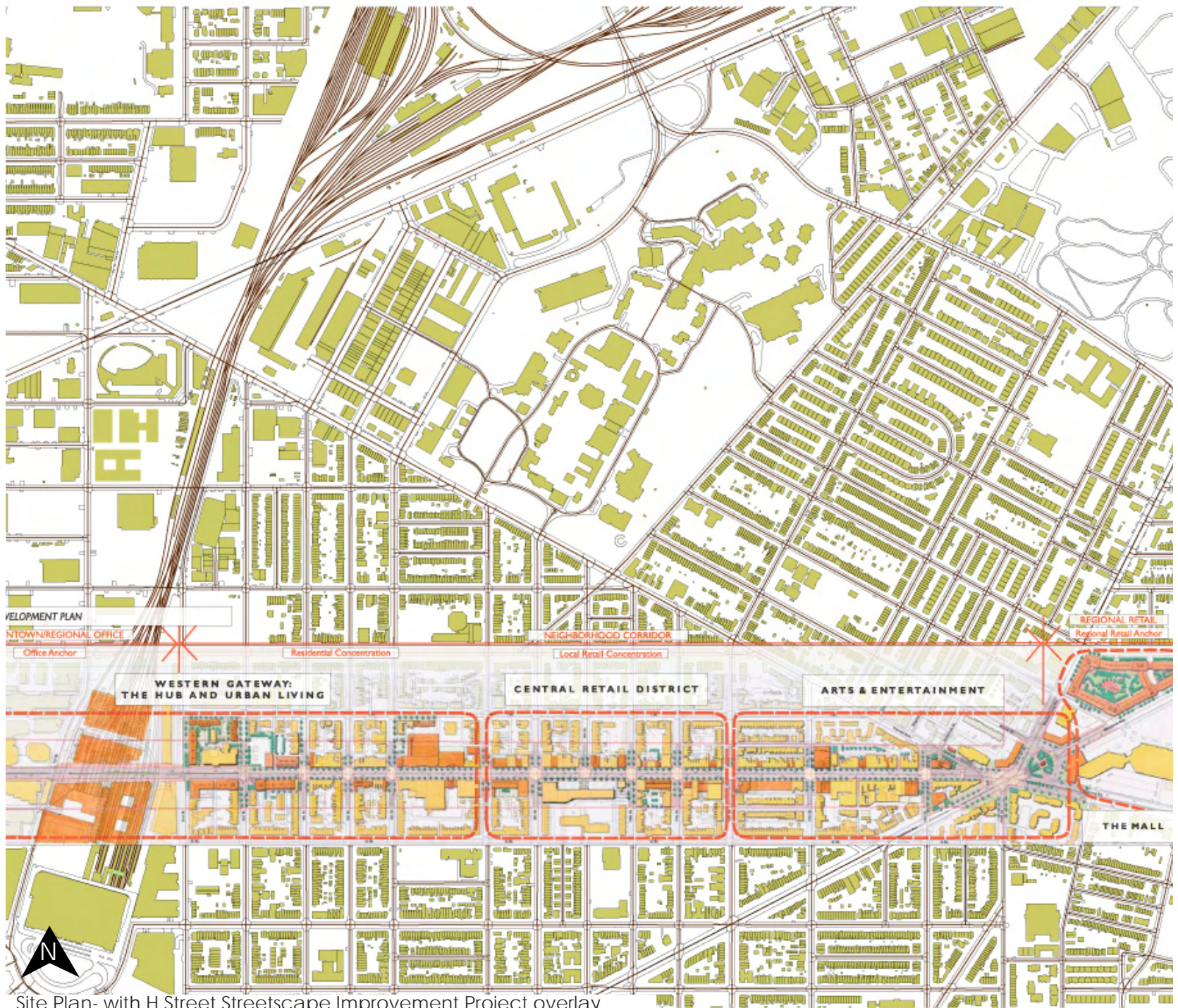


Site Plan- with NoMa BID development plans overlay

H Street is a nearby retail and entertainment corridor, located several blocks south of the market. H Street is an eclectic neighborhood with a variety of businesses such as, hair salons, wig shops, discount stores, restaurants, and nightlife establishments.

The area has attracted a great deal of attention and investment in recent years. Much of this investment has been spurred by plans for a new street car that will run directly east along H Street from downtown. Infrastructure for the streetcar is currently under construction and it is planned to open in July 2013. Along with the streetcar, major streetscape improvements are also underway that are intended to beautify the area and increase walkability.

## H STREET STREETCAR + STREETScape IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

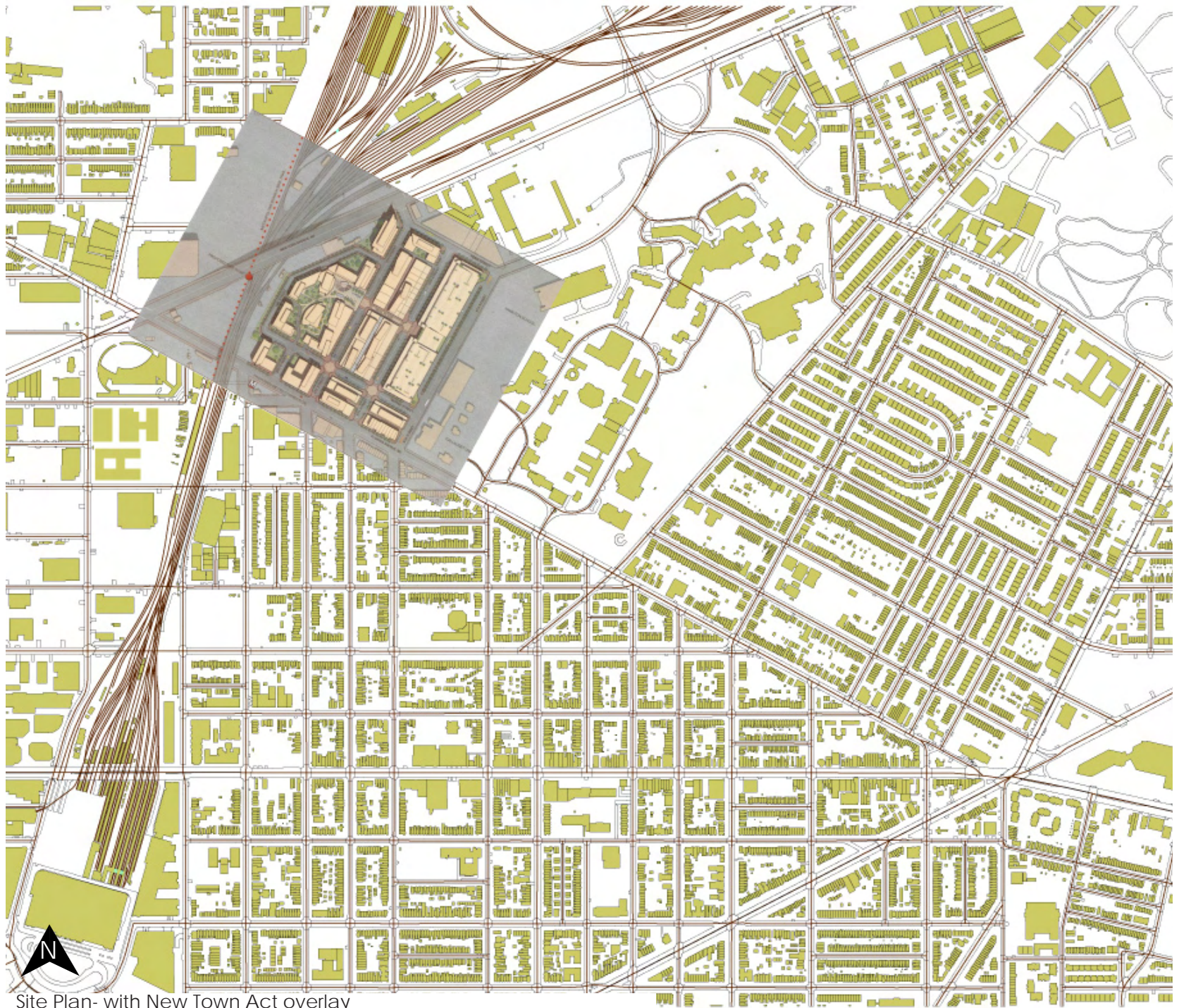


Site Plan- with H Street Streetscape Improvement Project overlay

In December of 2006 the city approved a plan for a \$1.2 billion development for the Florida Avenue Market area. These plans proposed to convert the 24-acre market into a mixed use complex consisting of condominiums, retail, restaurants, a hotel, and a smaller warehouse sector. The primary developer of the plan would have been Sang Oh Choi which owns 2.5 acres of property in the market making it the third largest landowner behind Gallaudet University (3.8 acres) and the District of Columbia (3 acres). For the project to be implemented it would have required the taking of property from 69 different landowners through eminent domain. The plan encountered strong opposition due to its lack of public inclusion. There have been accusations that corrupt political leaders pushed the plans through to benefit their donors.<sup>3</sup> Also the plan had legal trouble as it would need federal approval to take Gallaudet's land with eminent domain. As a result the plan was never fully implemented.

## NEW TOWN ACT





Site Plan- with New Town Act overlay



Funky Flea Market



Interior of Historic Market Building

## 2. CURRENT VISION

*A vision for the Florida Avenue Market that retains its industrial purpose and character, while introducing changes that are necessary for the Market to adapt and survive into the future.<sup>1</sup>*

-Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan

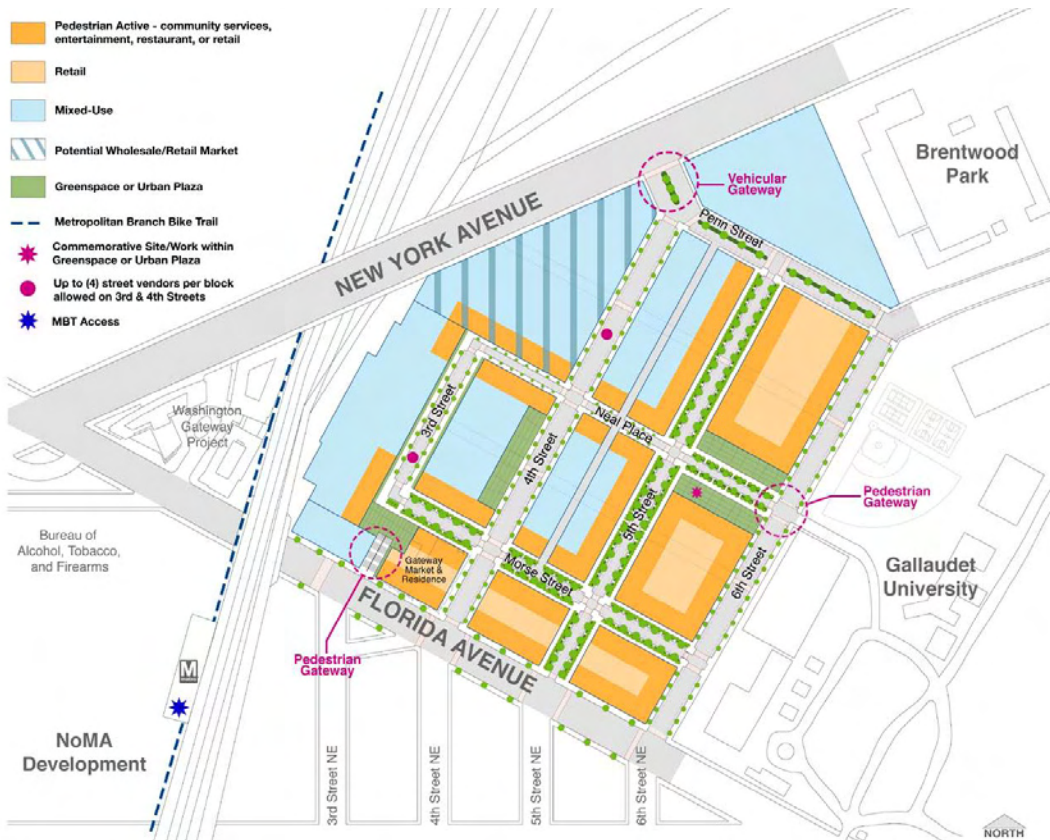


Figure 8. One of two illustrative site plans provided in the DCOP Florida Avenue Small Area Plan. The two site layouts are intended to “provide a glimpse of the development potential and opportunity to transform the market area in line with The Vision articulated in this plan”<sup>1</sup>

After the fallout of the New Town Act the D.C. Office of Planning (DCOP) commissioned a small area plan for the market site. This study, completed in 2009, was significantly more transparent seeking input from the community and various stakeholders including Gallaudet University. This plan emphasized retaining the existing character of the site as it primes for redevelopment and future growth.

Rather than proposing a definitive physical master plan for the area, the small area plan identified opportunities and provided suggestions for how the site could be redeveloped. The ideas in the plan represent well-respected contemporary urban design principles commonly associated with New Urbanism such as historic preservation, mixed use buildings, ground floor retail, transparent human-scaled facades, public seating, street trees, orienting signage and a pedestrian friendly environment. Several renderings and quotes that represent the ideas in the plan can be seen on the following pages.

## FLORIDA AVENUE MARKET SMALL AREA PLAN

# *“Why will people care about Florida Avenue Market over any other place?”<sup>1</sup>*



*“The Florida Avenue Market of the future will continue to be an exciting, bustling place, full of surprises.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“People looking for a quiet residential neighborhood, or a sterile office environment should look elsewhere.”<sup>1</sup>*



Figure 9. Renderings intended to help visualize the character of the public spaces recommended by the Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan.



*“There is a unique opportunity to cluster food retail and related uses in the (Florida Avenue Market) to highlight its unique character and history.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“Retail customers come for an experience like no other in the DC region where such a varied supply of local and international food products, merchandise, and services is available.”*



Figure 10. Renderings intended to help visualize the character of the public spaces recommended by the Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan.

The Florida Market Small Area Plan represents a major step forward compared to the New Town Act. Rather than taking land through eminent domain in an effort to accelerate gentrification, this plan focused on the unique character of the site as an asset for future development. There were also community involvement and stated goals to enhance the existing character of the market.

However, as can be seen from the graphics on the previous pages, the laudable goal of respecting the unique character of the site has not been accomplished. While it is not appropriate to judge the plan completely from these renderings, which are aspirational illustrations rather than representations of actual development plans, they do represent a shortcoming in the way of thinking that produced the plan.

While this vision may succeed in retaining a small part of the existing character (or at least a few buildings), this approach unfortunately does not truly communicate or support

## CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PLANS

the unique processes and uses of the market that make it such a vibrant cultural and functional resource for the neighborhood and the city.

Though the plan seeks to retain the existing character of the place it fails to produce an alternative vision for a new evolution of the market unique to this place and this community. Despite its lofty goals the plan seems to represent predetermined urban design standards that were only slightly altered to conform to the existing conditions of the site. Some of the original buildings were labeled as historic and proposed to be saved but there seemed to be little emphasis on the subsequent 80+ years of daily life and formation that shaped the market into what it is today.

If the current activities of the market were to remain in this new vision, as shown in the renderings, it is hard to imagine that they wouldn't appear out of place or even unwanted. It seems that a select few of the existing elements where determined to be acceptable for an upscale urban neighborhood. These few acceptable elements are suggested to be preserved in the hopes that the redeveloped market will be

somehow different than every other new mixed-use development in the region.

This type of thinking not only leads to a banal vision of the neighborhood, but also decidedly favors the higher income future residents that the city hopes to attract, rather than the existing low-income residents and small business owners that currently inhabit the area.

Ultimately none of the previous plans for the area have been able to produce a compelling vision for the market that enhances its existing character or supports the current users. Without an alternative proposal to the conventional urban development taking place throughout the city, the unique personality of the market will be lost, to make way for another reproduction of the standard development "products" which are being replicated throughout the city. As a billboard promoting one of the planned development projects at the market proclaims,

"Pretty soon you won't recognize the place. Promise."





View of entry to market from Florida Avenue, including development billboard



Product Display at Historic Market Buildings



Funky Flea Market

# 3. SITE ANALYSIS

*If we take the present city and define it as beautiful, it becomes a starting point rather than a stumbling block.<sup>4</sup>*

*-John Kaliski, Everyday Urbanism*

This thesis will investigate an alternative method of city design which aims to support and dignify the current users, to ensure that the market continues to serve them into the future, as well as allowing their identity and contributions to place to persist as the area evolves.

Rather than picking and choosing the existing elements and activities which are acceptable from an outside set of design standards, this study will evaluate the current architectural elements, processes, and daily uses that embody the market's unique genius loci or spirit of the place. This existing character will provide a foundation for new architecture and design additions to the area.

## ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Bricolage is a design and building process where users repeatedly alter their environment to address specific individual needs. Bricolage is the antithesis of the Modernist masterplan. Where the Modernist masterplan proposes a utopian end state design condition that will be achieved as the result of totalitarian development methods, bricolage is democratic fluid and adaptive. The accumulation of individual design acts over time leads to a rich diversity of Architecture that is both uniquely specific and fundamentally conducive to change.

This area is defined by bricolage which is the process through which it has evolved for almost 100 years. The process is most explicit in the way that the businesses have altered the historic market buildings. Originally the post and beam overhangs covered long open air market spaces where merchandise would be displayed and trucks would load and unload. Over time interior space where merchandise could be securely stored

became a priority over this covered open air space. For this reason, all but one of the 20 foot wide column bays on the historic buildings have been infilled to create more interior space. While the buildings are very conducive to these alterations it does not seem to have been the design intent. The geometry of the existing Doric columns provides a difficult condition for installing new walls along the column lines. This condition has forced users to be creative with their architectural treatment of the connection. It has been addressed in many different ways throughout the market contributing to the distinct character of each individual business. The post and beam design of the historic buildings also allows for a range of business types because of their ability to expand or contract across column bays. The process of bricolage has been applied a variety of other architectural conditions throughout the area, such as door and window replacement and the installation of utility infrastructure.

## BRICOLAGE



Historic Market Buildings with Infill





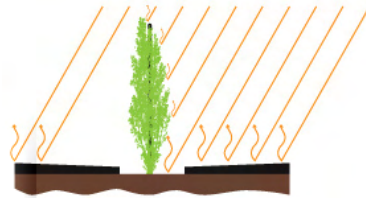




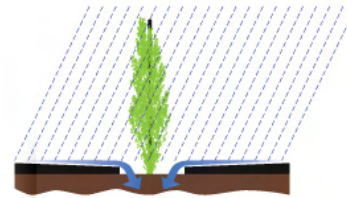
As the flea-market was closing down one Sunday, I helped a vendor pack some of his belongings on the back of his bike. After securing the goods with bungee cords, he picks up a weed from a crack in the ground and attaches it to the bike saying, 'And we always need to add something green. It's a spiritual thing... well maybe not other people would say I'm crazy.'

Overgrown vegetation is often considered a sign of blight or lack of concern for urban neighborhoods. However, this unintended vegetation can provide numerous environmental benefits to an area, such as the reduction of the urban heat island effect, improved air quality, and stormwater management. If these plants are seen not as weeds, but as spontaneous gardens, they can be appreciated for these environmental as well as aesthetic benefits. Vegetation adds to the dynamic character of a place as it changes throughout the seasons and grows in unexpected ways.

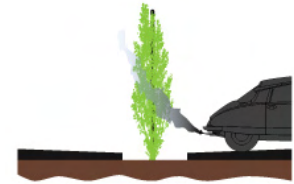
## SPONTANEOUS GARDENS



Minimize Radiant Heat



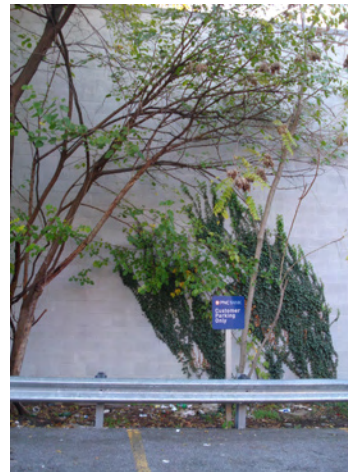
Stormwater Management



Improved Air Quality



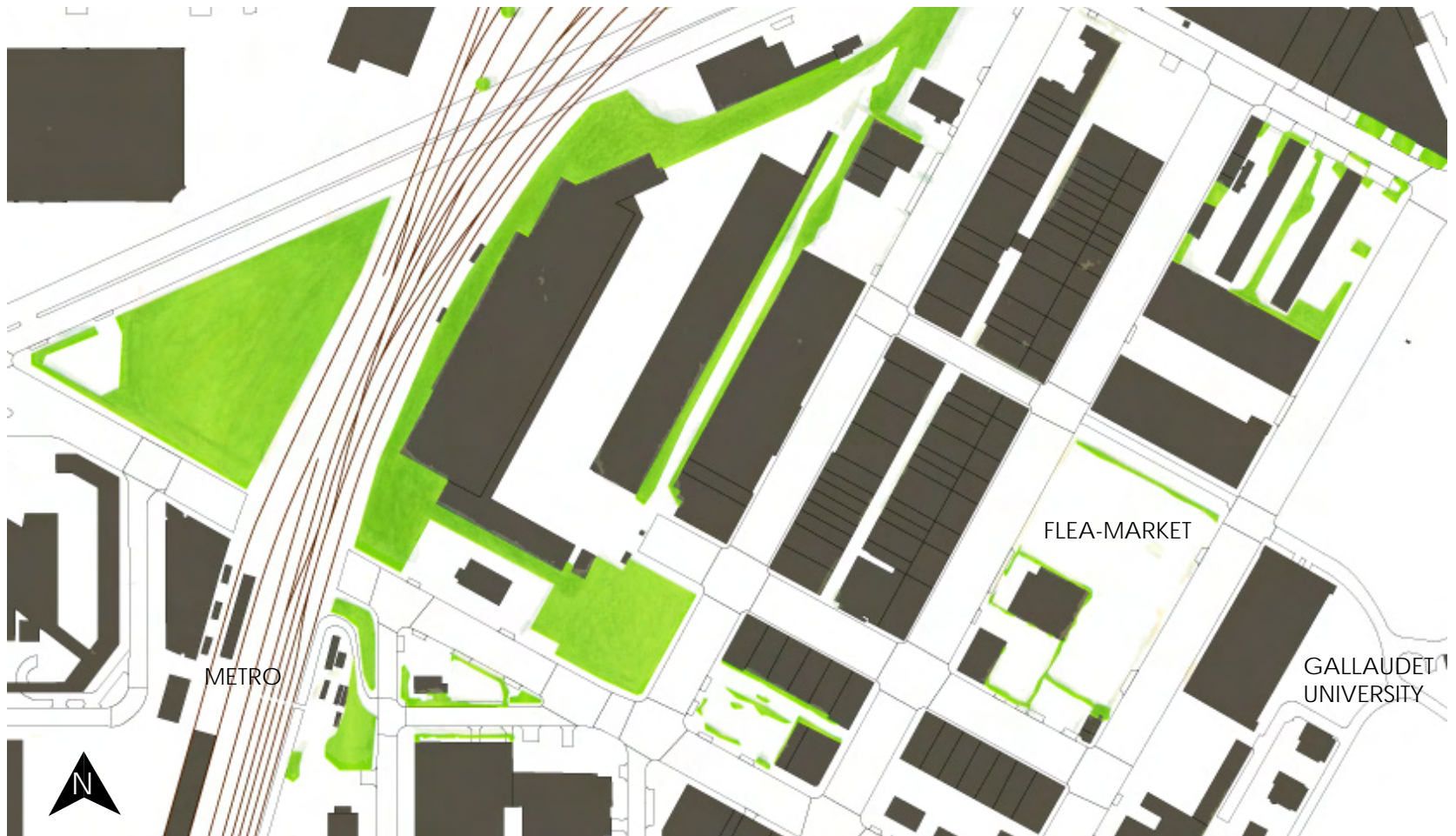
Spontaneous Gardens





Spontaneous Gardens





Spontaneous Gardens

The original Union Market buildings were sturdy structures constructed primarily of brick and reinforced concrete. The additional open air market pavilions were lighter, with steel structures and roofs. These buildings have held up through years of constant use, weathering and construction which give them a rich character that can only be achieved through experience. After years of withstanding these harsh conditions these buildings have continued to serve their users who have maintained them through the process of bricolage. The alterations to these buildings appear very eclectic and fragmented but the one consistent design decision is the use of durable materials. While the building profession in general has taken to using cheaper materials with short lifespans, the users have refit the market buildings with steel, bricks, and tiles that will be able to last in these rugged conditions. Visitors to the site can almost read the histories of the buildings through the variation in age and condition of the building materials.

## MATERIAL PATINA



Weathered Materials



The most prominent and recognizable architectural element of the market is the original Union Market sign that can be seen from the entrance at Florida Avenue. The sign is held up by visible steel trusses and is missing several letters. This iconic sign was the first of many signs which are prevalent throughout the market. This signage is another form of bricolage as signs are added and replaced over time. Often former signs leave behind traces on the brick or structures above the roofs. There is no building committee or review board to coordinate the signs, which range from names and elaborate designs painted directly on the facades to graphic images held by external structures. These signs explicitly display the eclectic and international flavor of the market. However the lack of organization among the signage can be very disorienting for new visitors.



## SIGNAGE

Market Signage

<b>CHICKEN</b> <b>CKN. WING</b> <b>CKN. LEG QTR.</b> <b>CKN. BONELESS BREAST</b>	<b>FOWL</b> <b>DRUM</b>	<b>FRESH BEEF</b> <b>FRESH BEEF RIBS</b> <b>FRESH BEEF LEGS</b> <b>FRESH BEEF KNUCKLE</b>	<b>FLAP MEAT (FAJITA)</b> <b>FLANK STEAK</b> <b>NEW YORK STRIPS STEAK</b> <b>RIBEYE STEAK</b>	<b>BEEF TRIPE</b> <b>COW FEET</b> <b>COW SKIN</b> <b>OXTAIL</b>	<b>SMOKED GOAT</b> <b>GOAT (FRESH)</b> <b>WHOLE LAMB</b> <b>LAMB LEG</b>	<b>FRESH PORK</b> <b>PORK SHLD. BUTT HAM</b> <b>PORK LOIN</b> <b>PORK RIBS</b>
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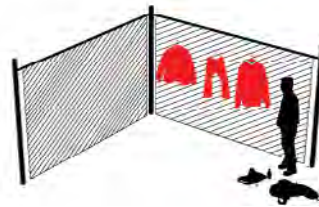


Market Signage

Contemporary urban design theory would suggest that open space should be well defined with buildings that create a continuous street edge, concentrate activity, and engage pedestrians. Much of the market area falls short of this paradigm, with its abundance of vacant land forming large ambiguous open spaces. These open spaces are almost always fenced in and restricted to the public. The fences are mostly chain link and often topped with barbed wire. While these fences are typically seen as a sign of blight, they occasionally provide advantages similar to those of a continuous building street edge. The fences concentrate activity on the street and are activated by people sitting and leaning against them. Many of the vendors have re-appropriated the fences as display racks or signage which engage pedestrians and add visual interest to the street. The fences also provide a structure for climbing plants to inhabit these spaces.



Fence as Vertical Garden



Fence as Display Rack

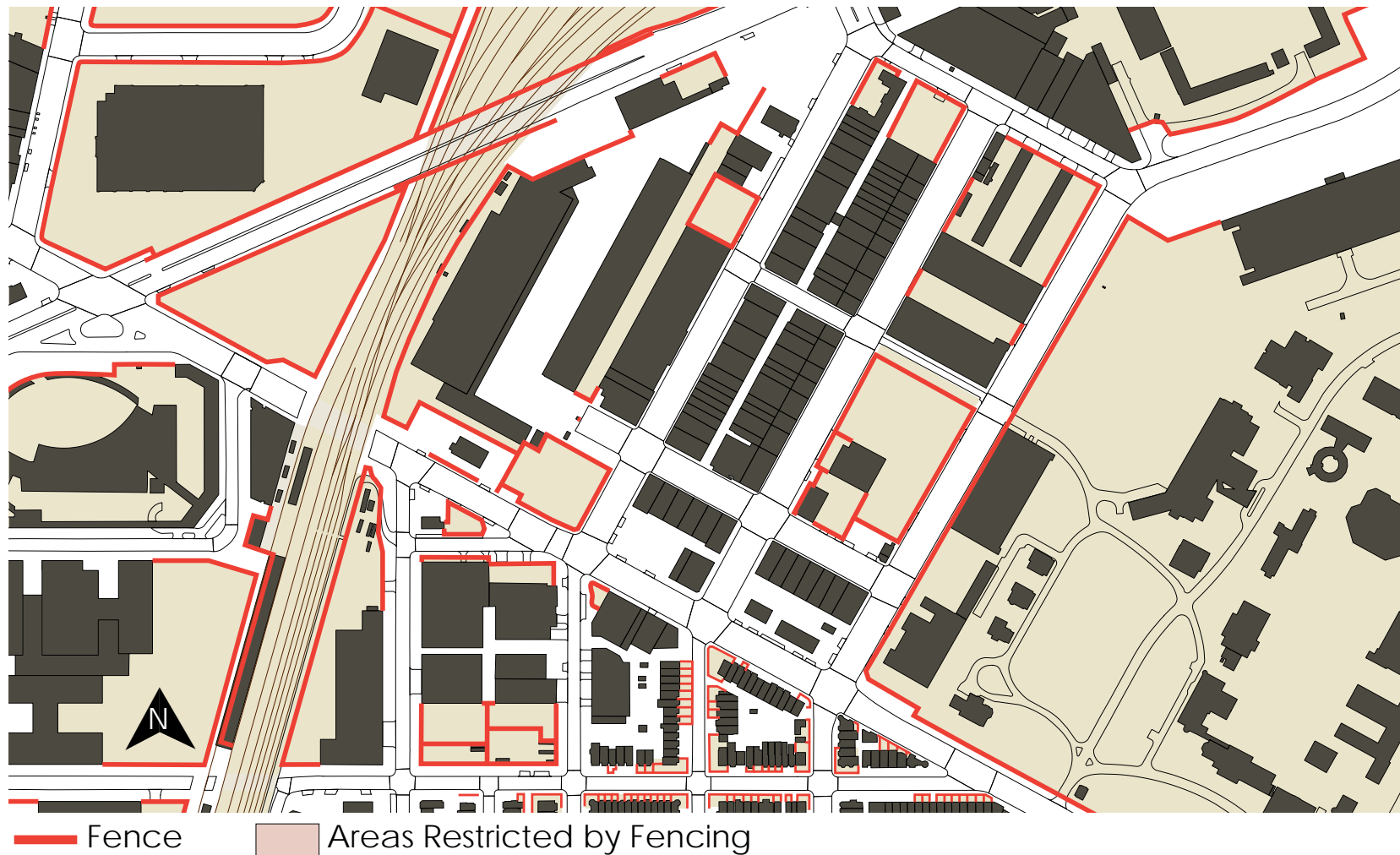


Fence as Signage



## FENCES





Walking around the market often reminds me of rowing a small kayak in a harbor full of large barges, slowly pulling in and out of the docks. Traffic calming is a strategy used by urban designers to create impediments to high-speed traffic and unsafe driving. While typical traffic calming devices are plantings and medians, traffic is calmed on several streets of the market by large trucks and horizontal parking spaces. Deliveries are made in anything from small pickups and vans to large eighteen wheel semis. When they are not making deliveries, the trucks are often left parked along the streets throughout the market. These massive objects have a presence similar to the buildings themselves in the way they define space and serve as visual landmarks. Some trucks can be seen in the same place over the course of many visits to the market and may even be used as permanent storage for the businesses. Others are constantly moving to and from the area. The movement and aesthetic of the trucks are fundamental contributors to the architectural character of the market.

## TRUCKS



Traffic Calming



Vending



Signage



Trucks



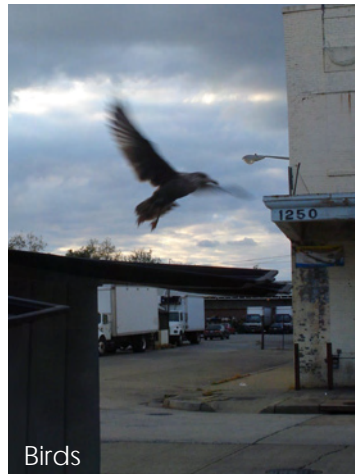


Trucks



Birds are ubiquitous in many great urban public spaces throughout the world, from Central Park to the Piazza San Marcos. While birds are often considered a nuisance they also add life and excitement to a place. Just as perception is the only difference between a plant qualifying as a weed or a flower, the same applies to pigeons and doves. Here the birds are mostly gulls whose squawking calls could lead me to imagine I was at the beach if I closed my eyes long enough. These birds are most likely attracted to leftover food and open dumpsters which provide for an easy meal. These birds usually stick together and often seem to take over an entire intersection or roof top fluttering around and landing on every available perch. However, their dominance is just an aberration, as they instantly scramble every which way as soon as a pedestrian or vehicle approaches. They do not seem fond of the crowds of the flea market and tend to oversee the area from above waiting to flock to a dumpster or leftover food as soon as the people leave them alone.

## BIRDS

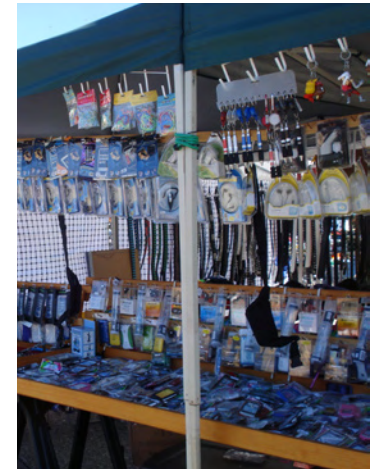


Birds



The most ephemeral aspect to the area is the flea-market which comes and goes every week with a variety of new vendors and merchandise. There are no marketing departments or interior designers to coordinate the vendor's displays, but there is no question that great care is taken in the presentation of their wares. Some vendors have purchased or reclaimed formal display items such as mannequins and display cases. Others make use of fences, crates, folding tables, and boxes. But they all focus on presenting as many goods as possible in their small spaces, which fills the entire lot with a vibrancy of color and form. When the flea-market closes the vendors pack up and the space reverts to an empty sea of asphalt, however the surrounding buildings retain their life and several of the vendors stick around and set up outside the DC Farmers Market building every day. Inside the buildings the same sort of eclectic displays can be seen throughout the week.

## MERCHANDISE DISPLAY

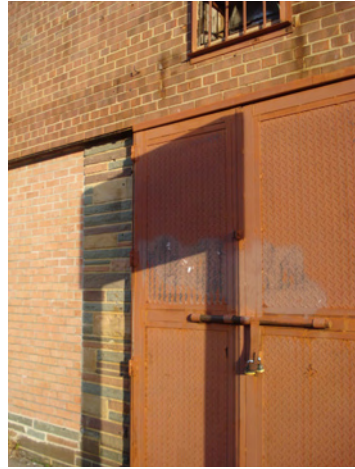


Merchandise



Because the market area consists of almost exclusively retail uses, activity levels in the area drop sharply in the late evenings. Because of this and other neighborhood dynamics, protection of their property is a major concern for the business owners. These owners use heavy duty doors and locks to secure their merchandise while they are away. Security doors of this nature are often considered another sign of urban blight and unsafe conditions. While there is certainly a justification for these perceptions it is not uncommon to see similar security doors in the most high-end retail districts of the city such as Downtown D.C. and Georgetown. The doors here however, are less uniform and have a more rugged appearance. These doors add to the ritual experience of the market. Every morning the businesses open up shop with a cacophony of steel rolling and clanking as a precursor to the liveliness of the day. The look and feel of the market changes dramatically as doors open and close to welcome new customers.

## SECURITY DOORS

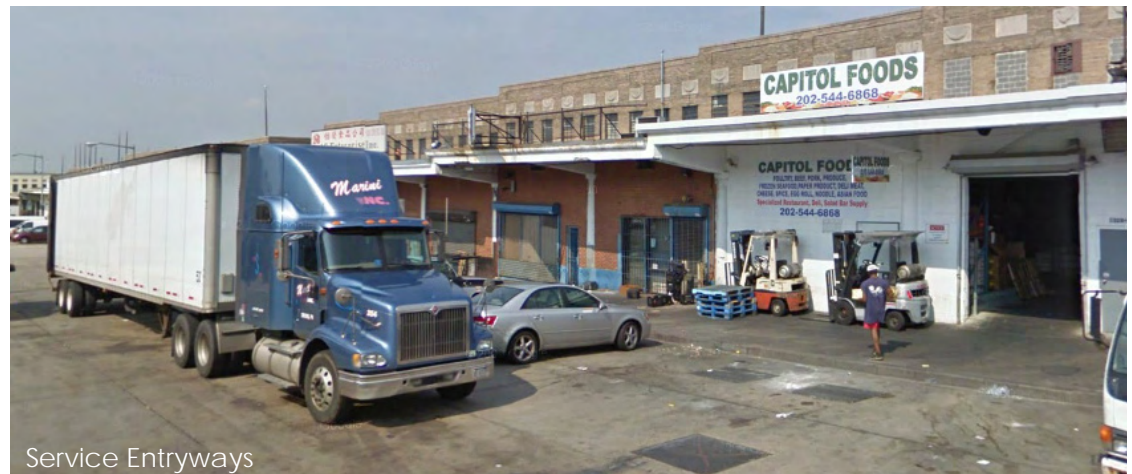




Security Doors

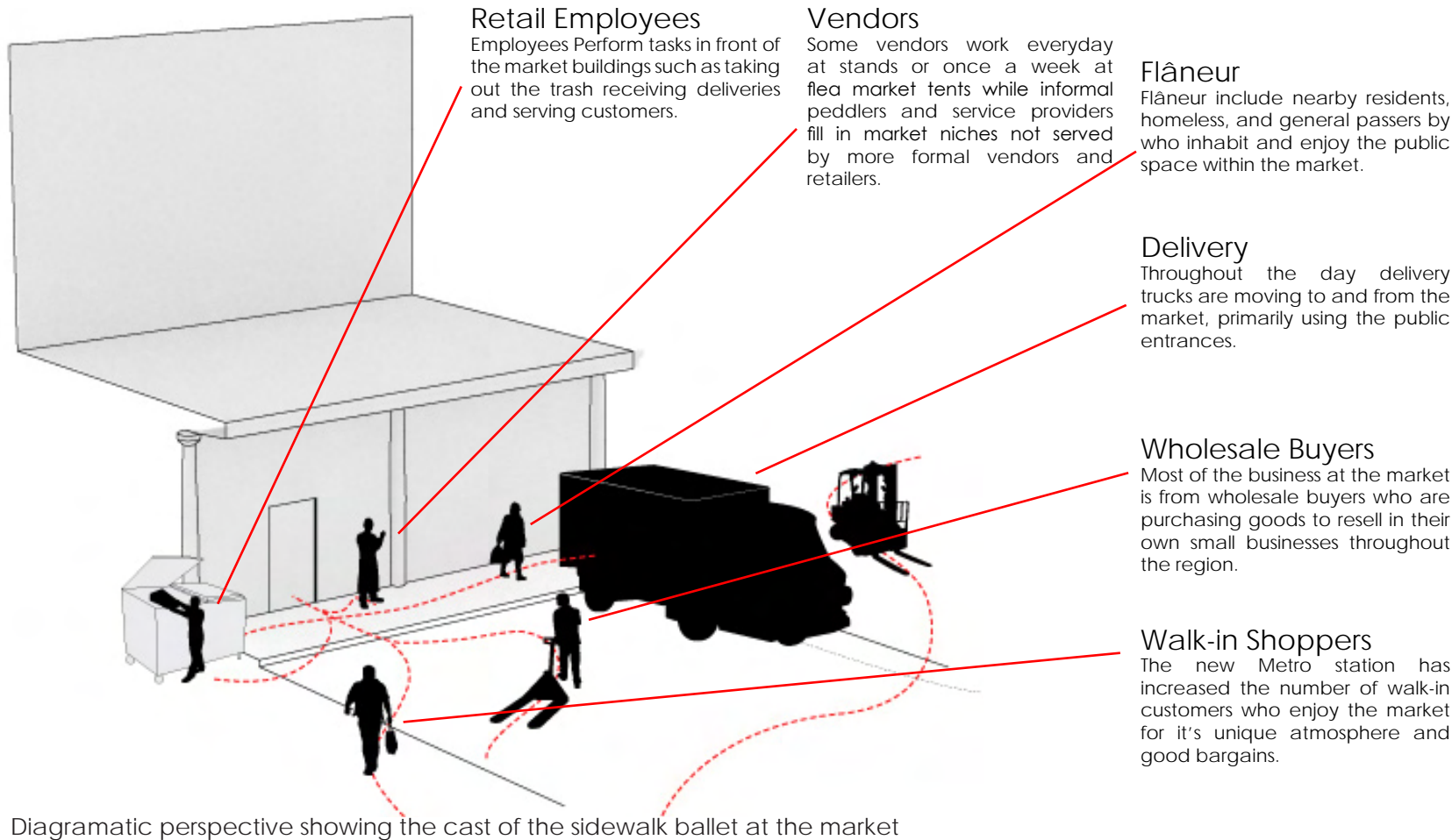
Jane Jacobs describes the everyday activities on her street in Greenwich Village as a “sidewalk ballet.”<sup>5</sup> This movement of seemingly unrelated workers, residents, and pedestrians leads to a lively improvisational performance giving vitality and interest to the neighborhood. The ballet here is much different than in Greenwich Village, but no less vibrant, as many diverse users interact within the space. Conventional urban design best practices would suggest that service worker’s spaces should be hidden from view; the way stagehands work backstage to provide a curated experience for an audience. But this is not the mind set at the market. Though there are small alleyways behind most of the buildings, it is much easier and more efficient for deliveries and wholesale pick-ups to be handled at the front door. This gives the market an authentic feeling of commerce and utility that are not present in the more sanitized retail districts of the city. On the opposite page are descriptions of the various users that make up the sidewalk ballet of the market.

## SERVICE ENTRYWAYS



Service Entryways





*If designers were to re-create public spaces according to the actual patterns of neighborhood residents, would a different set of values attitudes and forms unfold?<sup>6</sup>*

*-Walter Hood, Urban Diaries*

One of the more compelling aspects of the market is the presence of the street vendors. These vendors: have colorful displays which add visual interest to the street, play music that can be heard throughout the market, and engage people by selling goods or just by socializing with residents and visitors.

Despite the valuable services that street vendors provide they are often seen as nuisances or illegitimate businesses. In many commercial areas of DC, street vendors are banned or limited to certain areas. These bans are supported by formal businesses who believe that street vendors are taking their customers or that customers are scared away by vendors that may make them feel uncomfortable. These attitudes toward street vendors are certainly shaped by racial and cultural prejudices but as sociologist Mitchell Duneier points out, physical aspects of the built environment also contribute to negative perceptions of street vendors. When designs do not accommodate the needs of vendors they are often

unable to comply with accepted social norms and appear out of place or as signs of disorder.<sup>7</sup>

In his ethnographic book, *Sidewalk*, Duneier spends several years working with street vendors on 6th Avenue in New York's Greenwich Village. He observes that attempts by police and business improvement districts to prevent street vendors do not eliminate them but often lead to more public disorder by interfering with complex social structures among the vendors. Vending serves as type of informal entrepreneurial opportunity which often provides a critical path for disenfranchised citizens to earn an honest living and participate in meaningful social networks. The many well established vendors serve as friends, mentors, and role models for these vendors that are dealing with significant daily stresses. He suggests that urban design strategies that include amenities such as vendor storage and public restrooms would have a significant impact on perceptions of street vendors.

*"Any society with high levels of economic inequality, racism, illiteracy and drug dependency, and with inadequate transitions from mental hospitals and prisons to work and home, will have vast numbers of people who cannot conform to the requirements of its formal institutions. Given this, the correct response is not for the society to attempt to rid its public spaces of the outcasts it has had a hand in producing. It is vital to the well-being of cities with extreme poverty that there be opportunities for those on the edge to engage in self-directed entrepreneurial activity."<sup>7</sup>*

-Mitchell Duneier, *Sidewalk*

## STREET VENDORS

Currently the majority of the everyday street vending takes place along the edge of the DC Farmers Market building. These vendors activate the otherwise blank facades and serve customers as they enter the building.

Other daily vendors set up along Florida Avenue or out of cars in the street parking spaces within the market.

On the weekends all of the daily vending spaces are typically filled in addition to the flea market which takes place in the large parking lot that is fenced off and closed for the rest of the week.

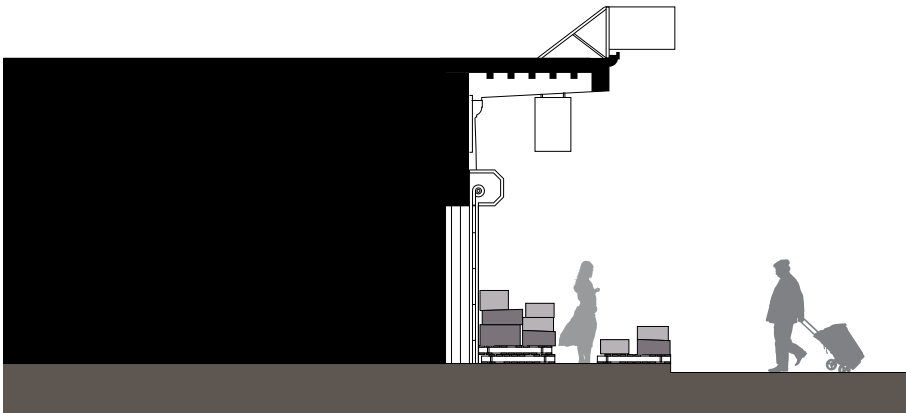
Some flea market vendors set up along the fences which can be used for displaying goods. Others set up in the open parking spaces.

There is a small storage unit that remains on site where some of the vendors keep their tables and merchandise when the flea market is not in session.

## VENDING CONDITIONS

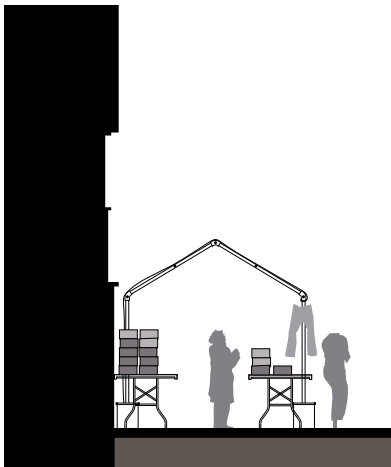


Figure 11. Aerial view during fleamarket



0' 5' 10'  
Section- entry to historic market buildings

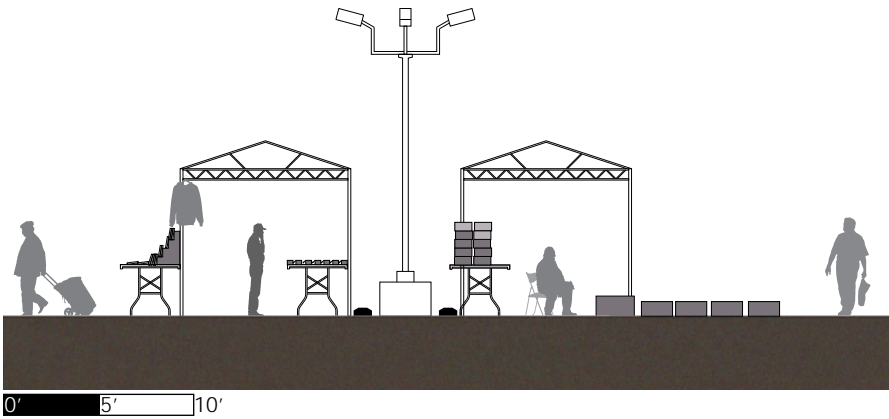




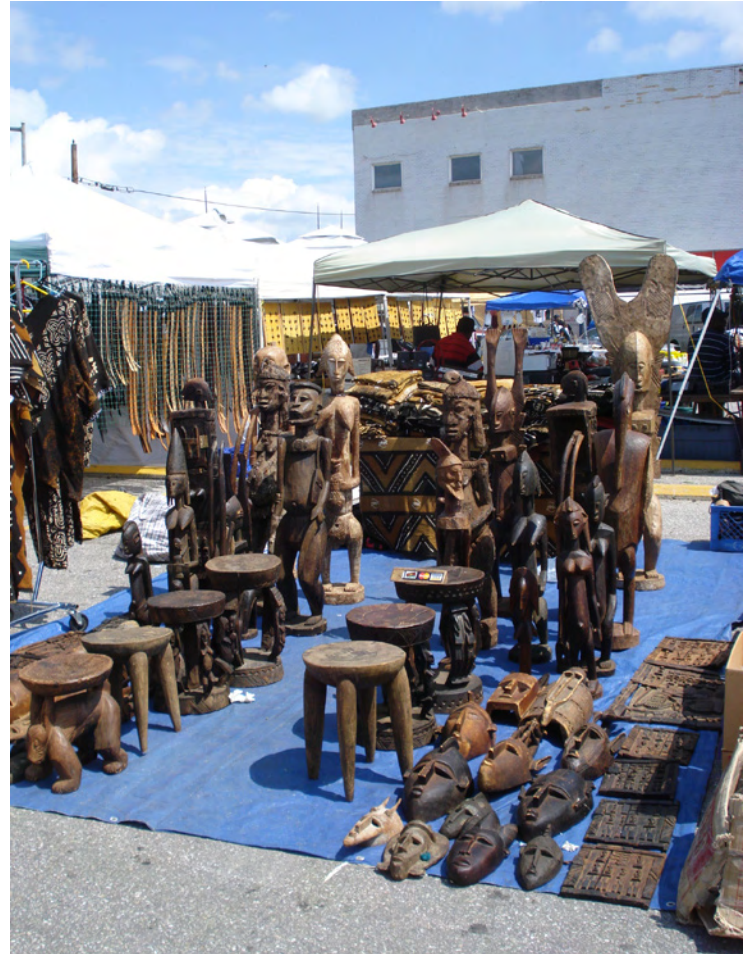
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Section- daily vending tents in front of DC Farmers Market

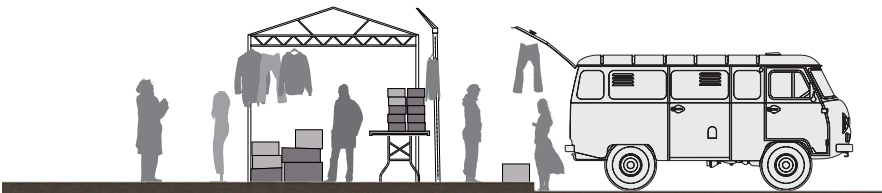




Section- fleamarket vending tents







0' 5' 10'

Section- fence and parking space vending



DC Farmers Market Building



Funky Flea Market

# 4. DESIGN INFLUENCES

The Fulton Mall is a major retail street which runs for several miles stemming from the heart of Downtown Brooklyn. By most standards the Fulton Mall would be considered a great success. It has some of the highest retail rents in the country and has a vibrant street life. However its unconventional character, diverse racial constituency, and lack of design order have caused it to be a constant target for planners and urban designers who often refer to it as “blighted.” Over the years a number of masterplans have been proposed to unify the architecture and draw in a more traditional clientele. Though, these plans were all partially implemented, none were as comprehensive as initially intended. Currently the city is again trying to sanitize the area and coordinate the design. In *Street Value*<sup>8</sup>, the authors critically examine the planning history of the site and propose design guidelines that celebrate the dynamic value inherent to the Mall.

## STREET VALUE SHOPPING PLANNING AND POLITICS AT FULTON MALL



Figure 12. Images from *Street Value*

"The decision to redesign the mall was publicly promoted as a site specific response to research conducted in the course of preparing the Downtown Brooklyn Plan. But as our interviews make clear, design decisions (both physical and financial) also drew on a number of different desires, contexts, and assumptions, and many of those had more to do with trends in architecture and urban planning at that time, than with the specifics of life on Fulton Street."<sup>8</sup>

- Meredith TenHoor,  
Street Value

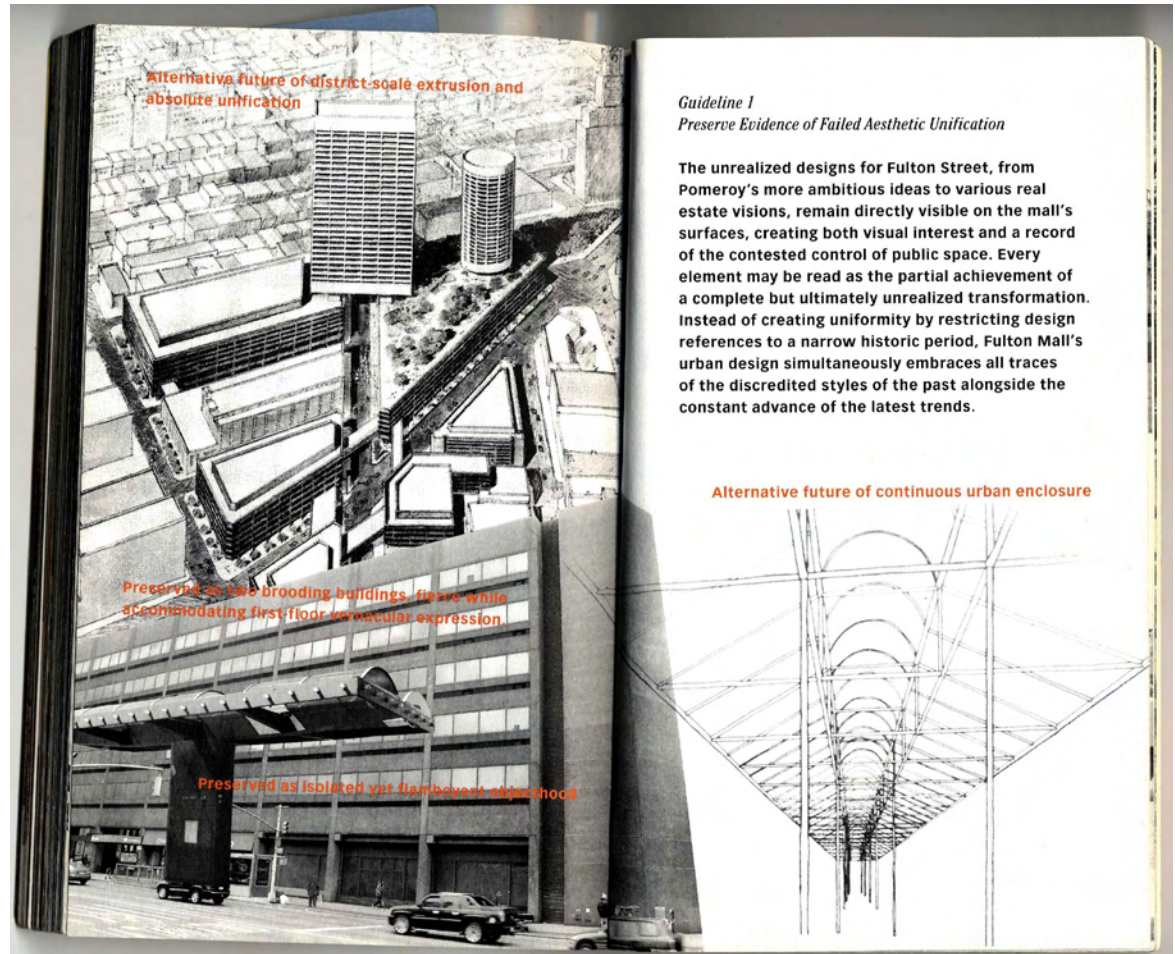


Figure 13. Images from *Street Value*

Walter Hood recognized that urban parks in low-income communities are typically designed according to predetermined values about public space imported from middle class sensibilities. According to Hood this not only makes the parks less usable but also contributes to a negative perception of users who seem out of place in these spaces that do not serve their needs. In *Urban Diaries*,<sup>6</sup> Hood observes actual use patterns in three urban parks. Without judging them based on a normative view of appropriate behavior, he proposes “improvisation” as a design strategy where new designs are aimed at dignifying existing uses and creating an environment that is specifically tailored to the needs of the existing residents. Ideas from this book can be seen in his built work such as Lafayette Square Park. The city’s impetus for the redevelopment of the park was to clean up the existing park which had many transient inhabitants. Rather than designing exclusively for new affluent users. Hood’s design allows new and existing users to coexist by minimizing conflict areas and providing amenities such as public toilets and showers.

## URBAN DIARIES WALTER HOOD



Figure 14. Images of Lafayette Square Park

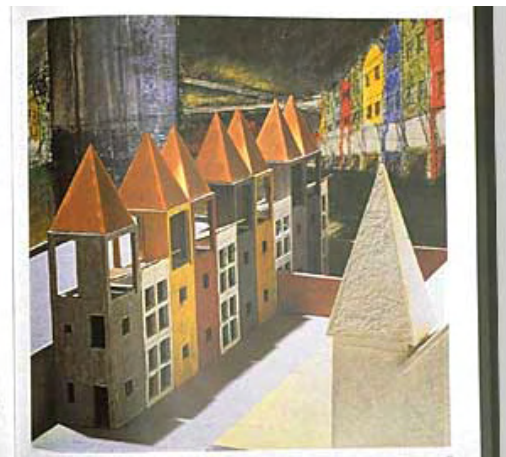
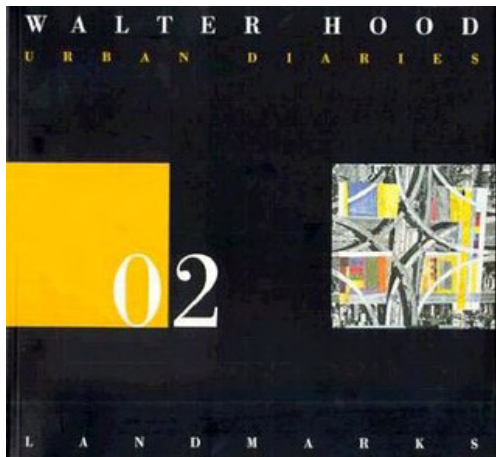


Figure 15. Images from *Urban Diaries*

Red Hook Park has a large field that attracts neighborhood residents to play and watch soccer. Seeing its popularity some of the local residents (primarily Latin American) began vending homemade food for the players and spectators. The vendors which have been serving at the park since 1978, recently began to receive high praises from foodies and bloggers throughout the city, who were impressed by the quality and authenticity of the homemade cuisine. In response to this popularity the city began to regulate the market to control the crowds and ensure the sanitation of the food. One requirement forced the vendors to work from trailers at the edge of the park. These trailer are cost prohibitive for many of the vendors and detracted from the previous open character.<sup>9</sup> To address this issue the local chapter of Architecture for Humanity organized a competition to design a suitable home for the vendors that would not impede other uses of the park. The winning design by Carolina Cineros and Mateo Pinto works within the space of the existing fence line to provide deployable vending and seating spaces for the market.

## FOOD FENCE- FIELD FENCE

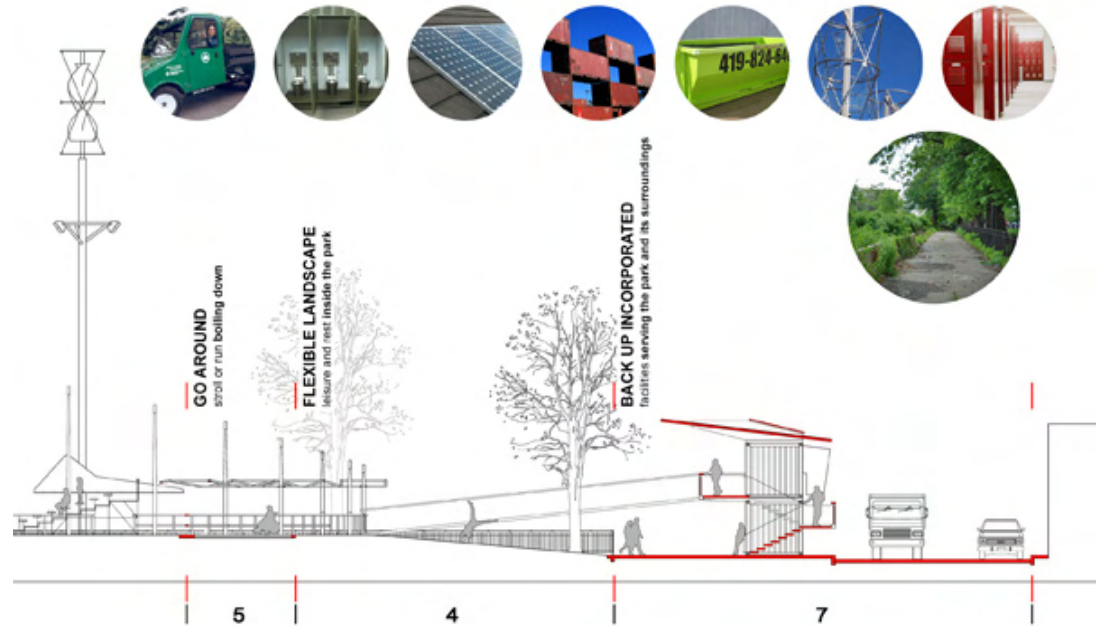
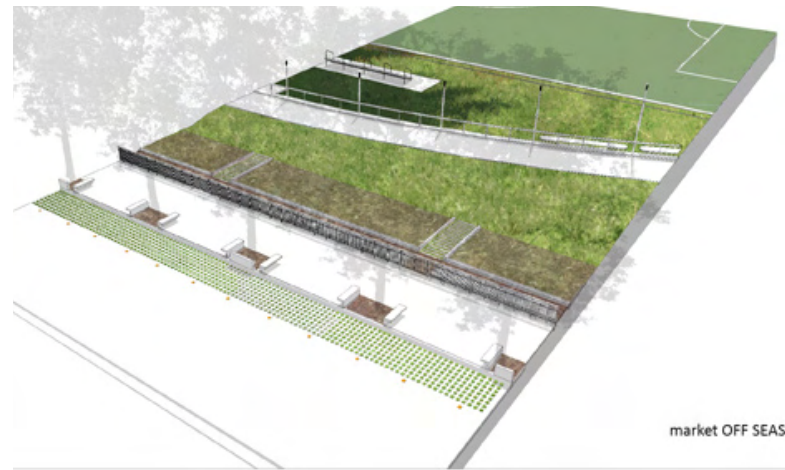


Figure 16. Design Images for Food Fence-Field Fence





market ON SEASON  
WEEKENDS



market OFF SEASON

“Deaf people inhabit a rich sensory world where vision and touch are a primary means of spatial awareness and orientation. Many use sign language, a visual-kinetic mode of communication and maintain a strong cultural identity built around these sensibilities and shared life experiences. Our built environment, largely constructed by and for hearing individuals, presents a variety of surprising challenges for deaf people. Recently, deaf people have responded to these designs with their own particular way of altering their surroundings to fit their unique ways-of-being. This approach is often referred to as DeafSpace”<sup>10</sup> Hansel Bauman who is the Director of Campus Design + Planning for the university has been participating in research into this phenomenon and is developing a series of DeafSpace Design Guidelines. These guidelines define architectural design elements that address five major intersections between deaf experience and the built environment: space and proximity, sensory reach, mobility and proximity, light and color, and finally, acoustics.

## DEAFSPACE

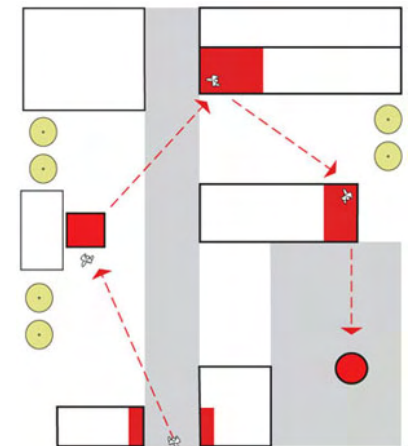
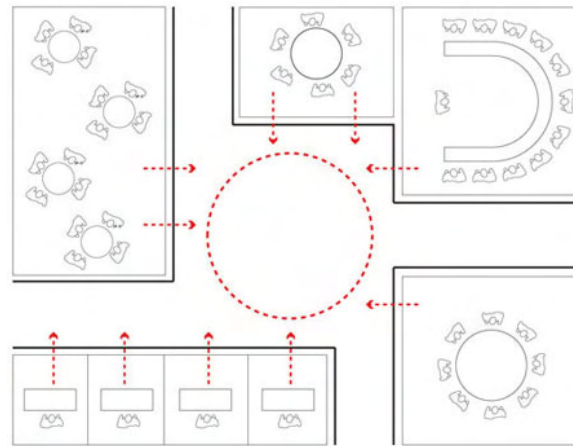
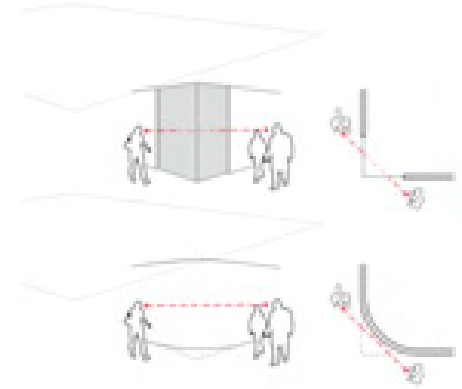
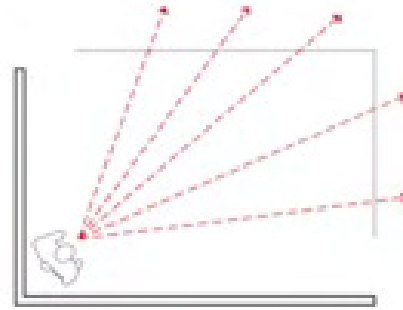
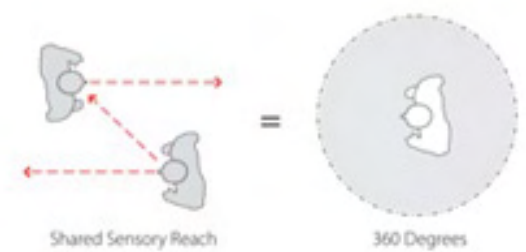
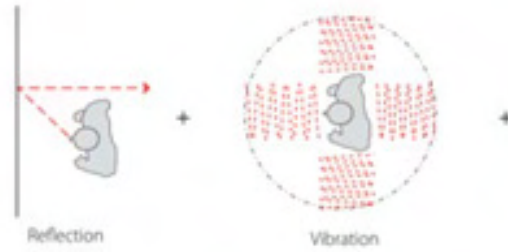
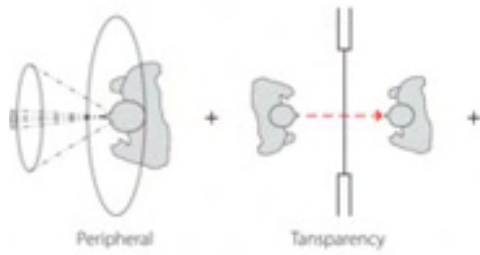
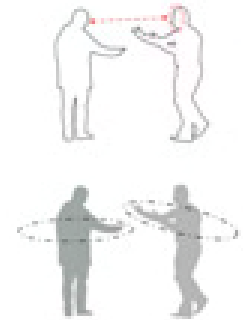
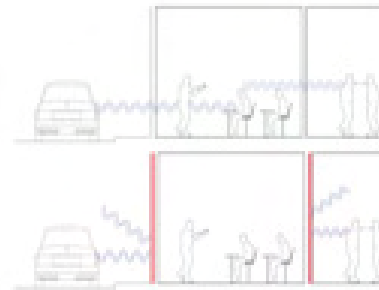


Figure 17. DeafSpace Design Guidelines





Historic Market Buildings



Funky Flea Market

# 5. AN ALTERNATIVE VISION

*An environment that cannot be changed invites its own destruction. We prefer a world that can be modified progressively against a background of valued remains, a world in which one can leave a personal mark alongside the marks of history.<sup>11</sup>*

– Kevin Lynch, “What Time is this Place?”

Many times when a neighborhood becomes loved by residents and visitors there will be attempts to preserve its existing condition through planning and zoning ordinances. At this site, while there is significant opposition to the current redevelopment plans, there is also a strong recognition among users of the need for change. During my ethnographic research at the market I met a number of people who said they benefitted from changes in the area such as decreased crime and new amenities. There is also an appreciation of many of the aesthetic improvements.

Also from a smart growth perspective overly restrictive neighborhood preservation regulations can reduce urban density which can increase rents and reduce the amount of people that benefit from walkable urban communities and mass transit. Restricting density also encourages development on the fringes of the city which takes

place on previously undeveloped land and requires less sustainable forms of transportation.

This project will propose an alternative vision for the development of the market that will support the existing users and respect the distinct cultural value of the site. While this vision aims to retain much of the existing character of the site, I will not approach this as a cultural preservation project. Any major redevelopment of the site will alter it into something new and an attempt at complete preservation would only result in faux reproductions of the existing market. In contrast this project will propose the next evolution of the market by building on its unique history, while embracing changes and new users. There is potential for a wonderful synthesis of the two neighboring cultures, that of the market and that of deaf community. In addition the new vision aims to attract visitors from throughout the city as well as tourism.

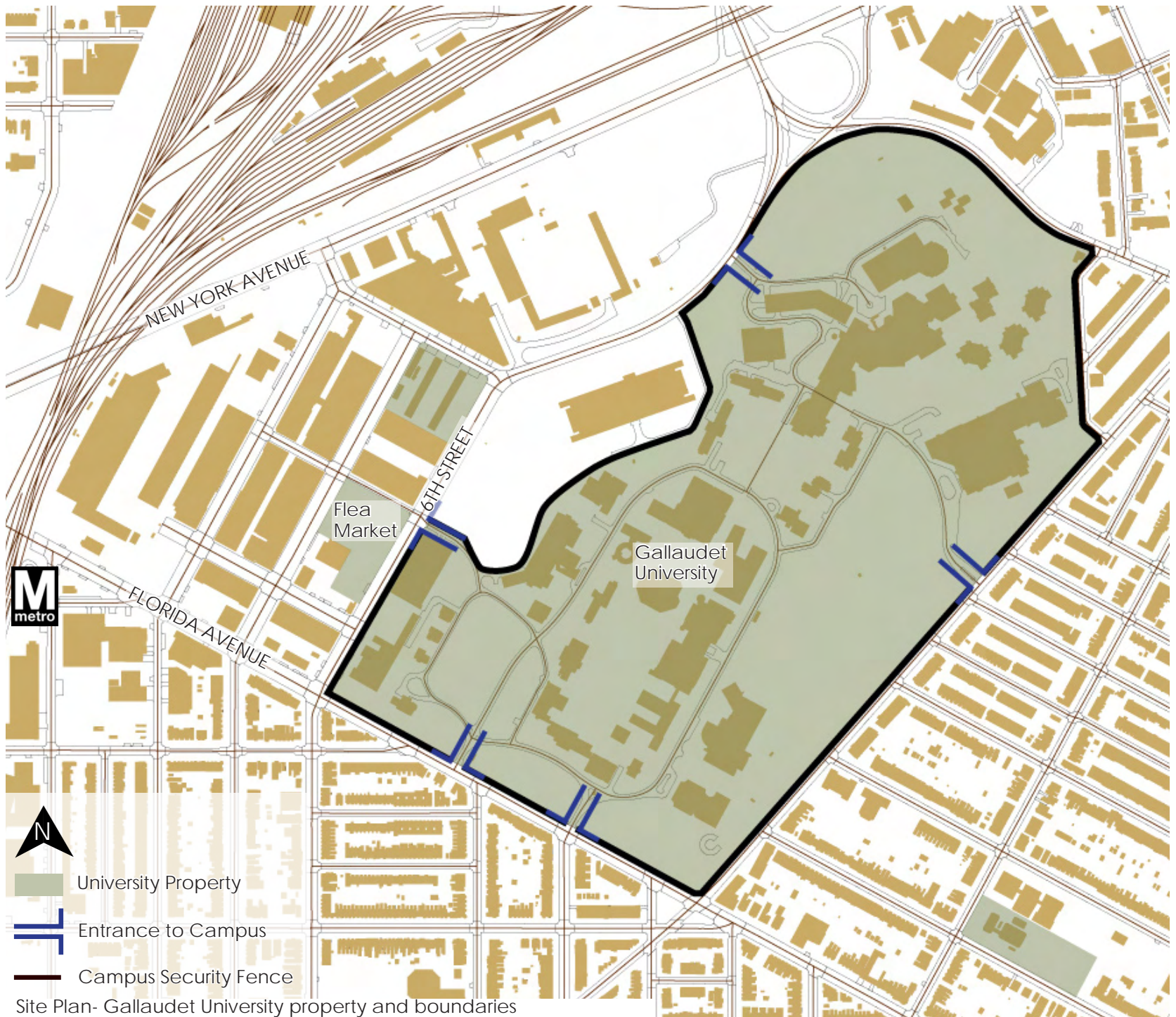
## AN ALTERNATIVE VISION

The diagram on the following page shows the property owned by Gallaudet University and the limited access to the campus. As mentioned earlier, the isolated nature of the campus was originally an asset that attracted prospective students who were often disrespected by mainstream society. However, this is no longer the case as new technologies and changing social perceptions have allowed young deaf people to take part in the same culture as their hearing peers. Now many prospective students are discouraged by the isolation of the campus, thinking that they will be confined to only interacting with other deaf students and have limited access outside of this community.

For this reason the university is attempting to open up its campus to be more integrated with the surrounding neighborhood. This will include developing their property within the market as well as creating new entrances to the site along 6th Street.

## EXPANSION OF GALLAUDET



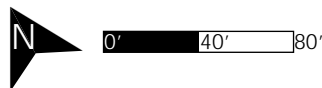
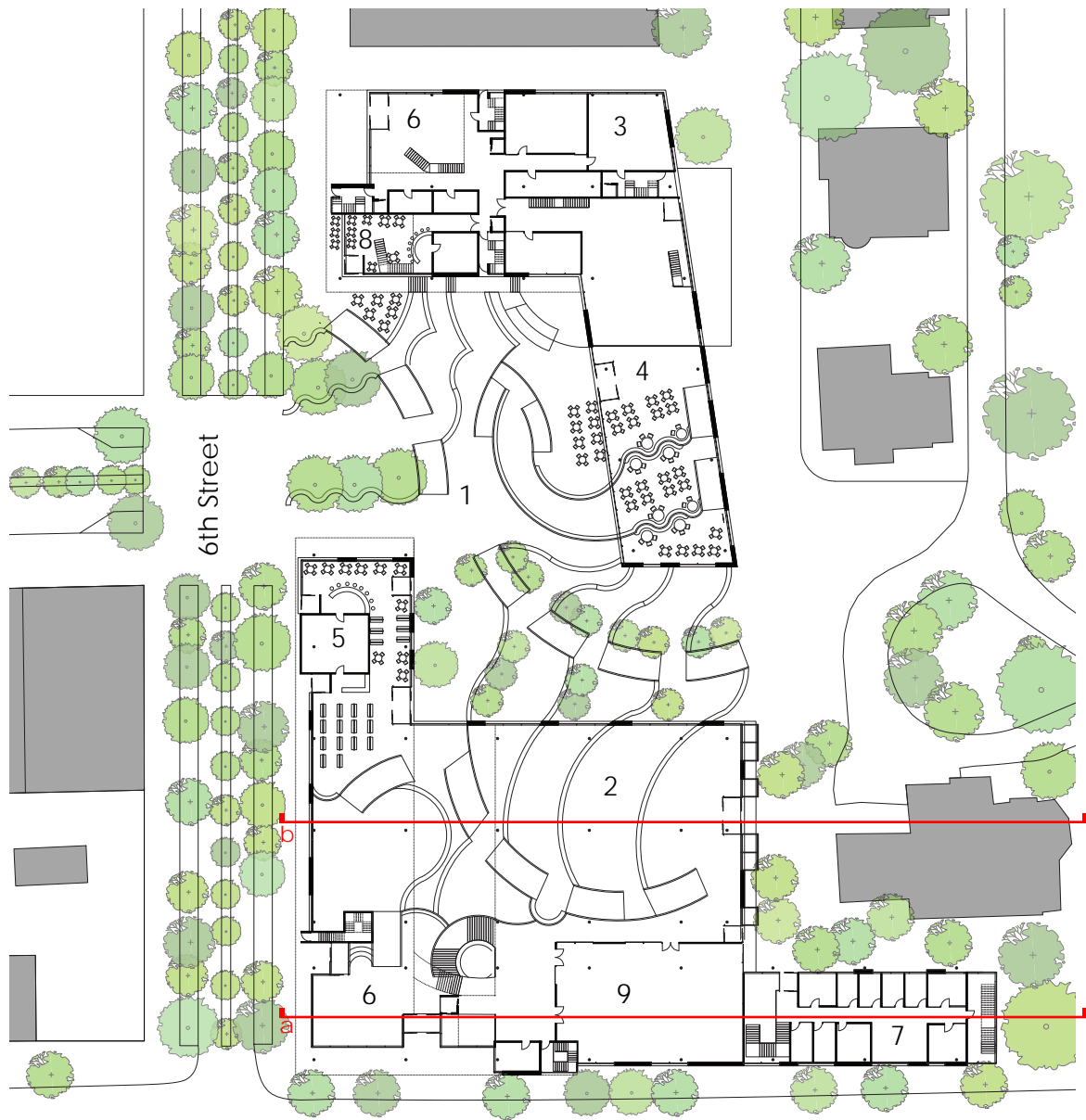


Site Plan- Gallaudet University property and boundaries

One of the projects that Gallaudet is exploring is to develop an innovation lab at the corner of 6th Street and Florida Avenue. Some of the programs proposed for this multi-use building include a deaf cultural museum, culinary arts center, health clinic, business incubator, student housing, research labs and classroom space. The innovation lab would focus on research partnerships between the university and outside institutions. This was the proposal that I took on for my original studio project. The project site is situated within the current campus boundary which currently acts as a barrier between the market and the university. This project aimed to dissolve this boundary by creating a public plaza to serve as a new entryway to the campus. This plaza was thought of as a front porch for the university where students could gather in a comfortable campus setting but still be connected with the vibrant urban market adjacent to the site. The building was designed to celebrate the Deaf Design Guidelines, focusing on visual continuity, quality of light and deaf social patterns.

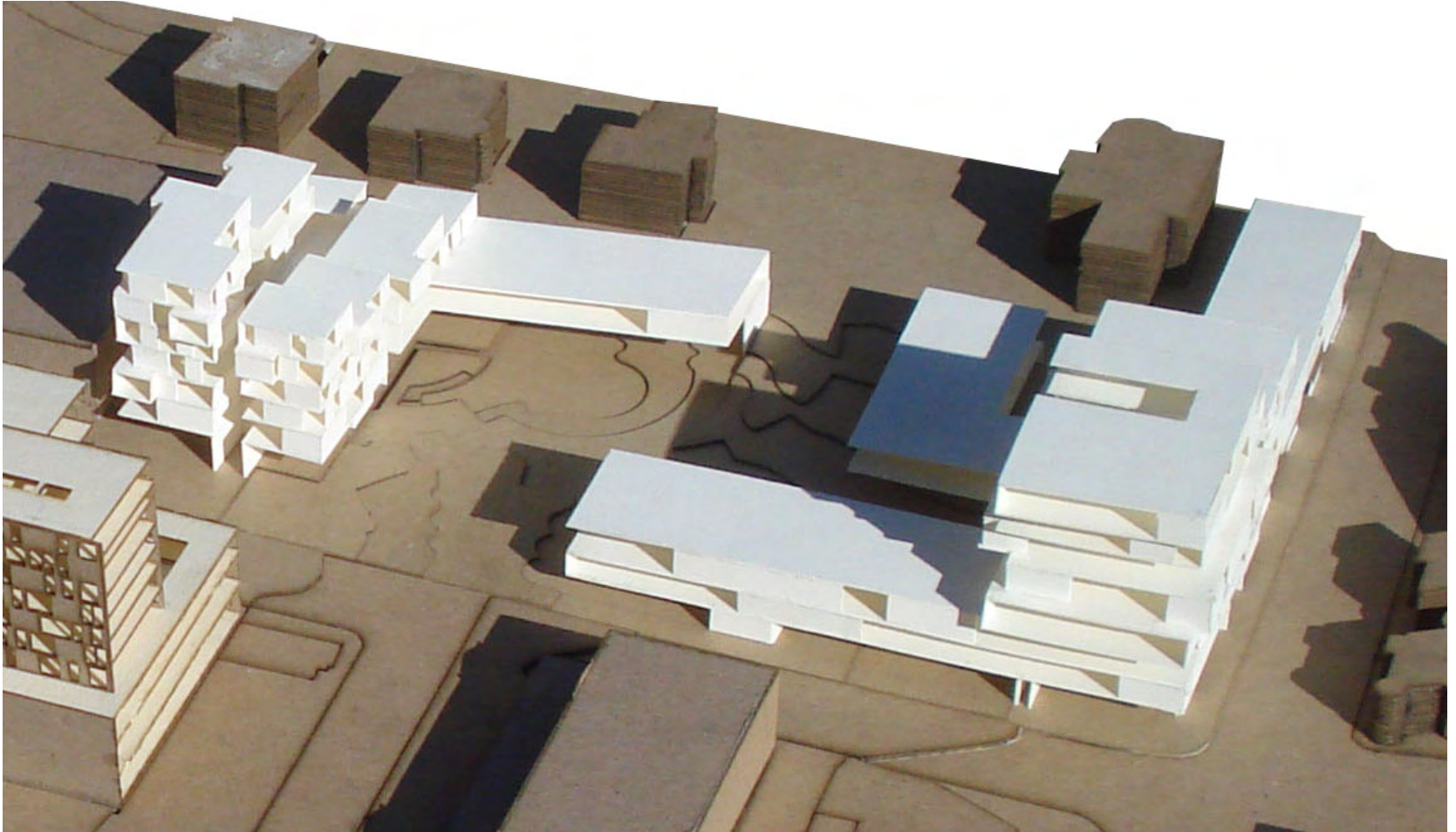
## GALLAUDET INNOVATION LAB

- 1- Public Plaza
- 2- Deaf Cultural Museum
- 3- Culinary Institute
- 4- Student Dining Area
- 5- Cafe / Bookstore
- 6- Lobby
- 7- Health Clinic
- 8- Restaurant / Bar
- 9- Research Classroom

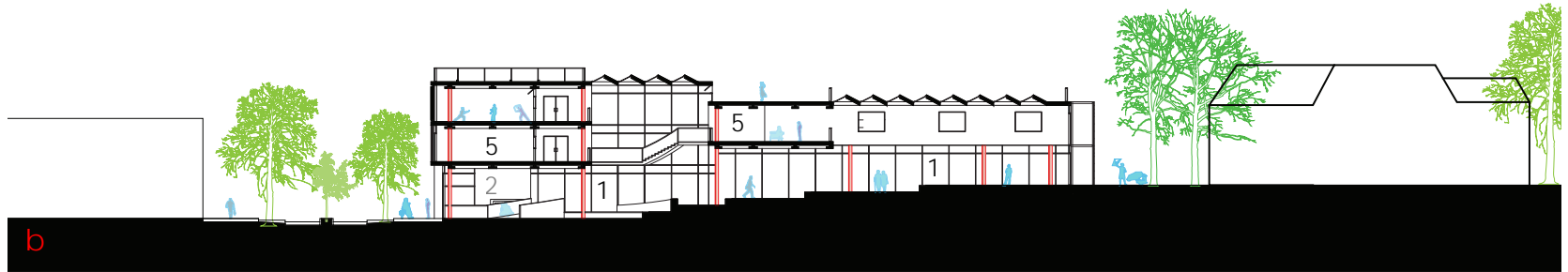


Florida Ave

First Floor Plan- Gallaudet University Innovation Lab



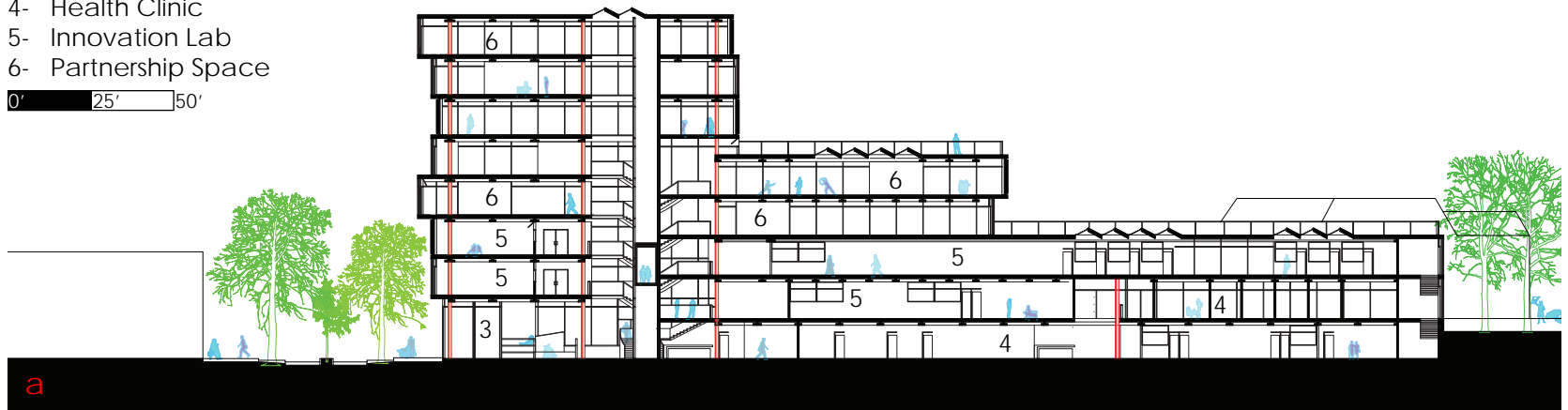
Site Model- Gallaudet University Innovation Lab



Section- Gallaudet University Innovation Lab

- 1- Deaf Cultural Museum
- 2- Cafe / Bookstore
- 3- Lobby
- 4- Health Clinic
- 5- Innovation Lab
- 6- Partnership Space

0' 25' 50'



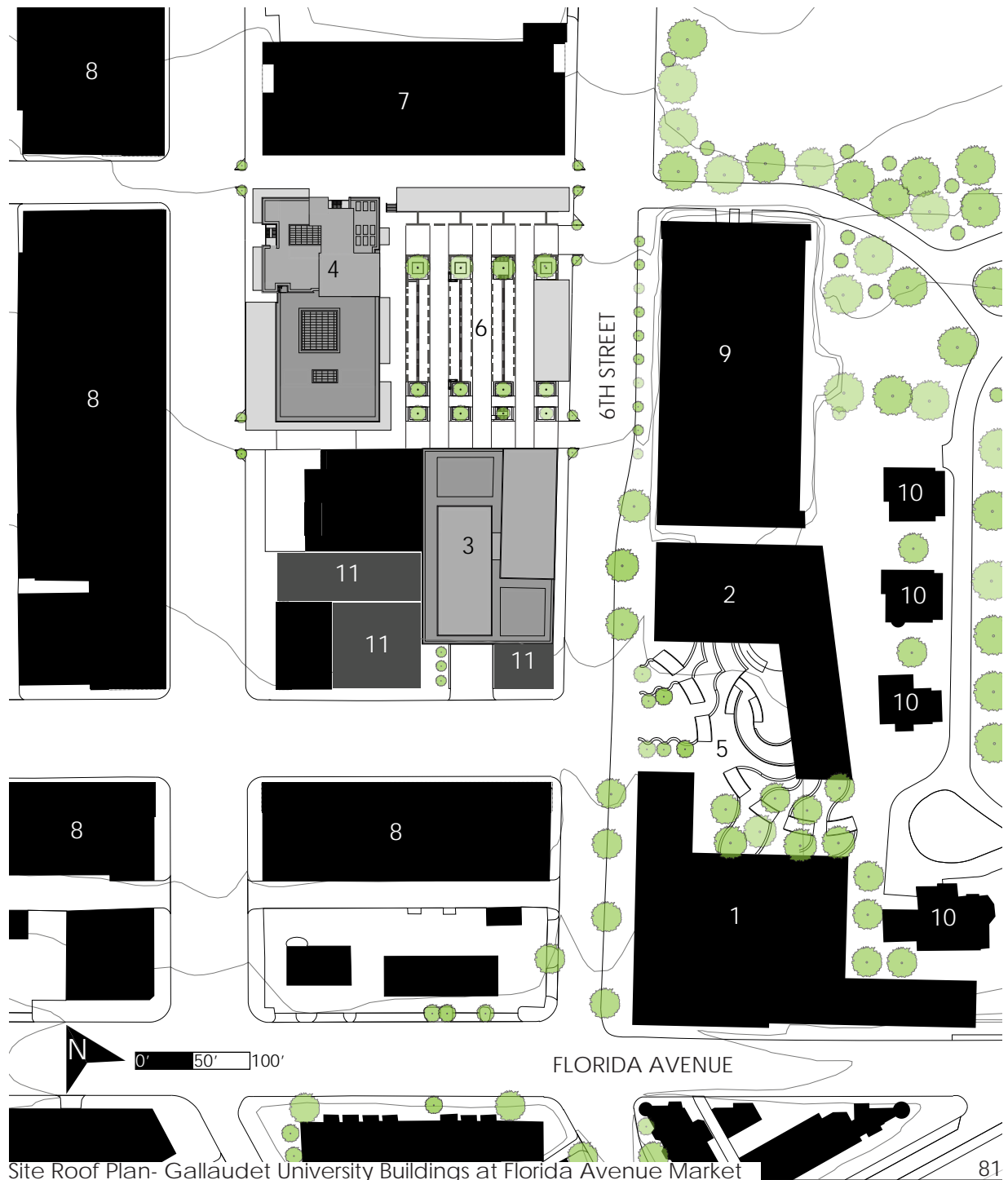
Section- Gallaudet University Innovation Lab

Gallaudet also plans to expand its campus into the market area with student housing, as well as a theatre and other facilities for their visual and performing arts program. This project is being proposed for the parking lot where the flea market currently takes place. For my thesis project I laid out a plan for two university buildings which would provide space for these programs and also support the existing uses of the site.

To accomplish this, the project will rely of the ingenuity of the existing users, primarily the street vendors, to take advantage of architectural resources provided by the design and also to reappropriate spaces temporally, making use of opportunities when spaces are not being used for university purposes. The project is designed as two buildings oriented around a large public plaza which is designed to facilitate this creative and unpredictable use of open space by the existing users.

## EXPANSION INTO MARKET

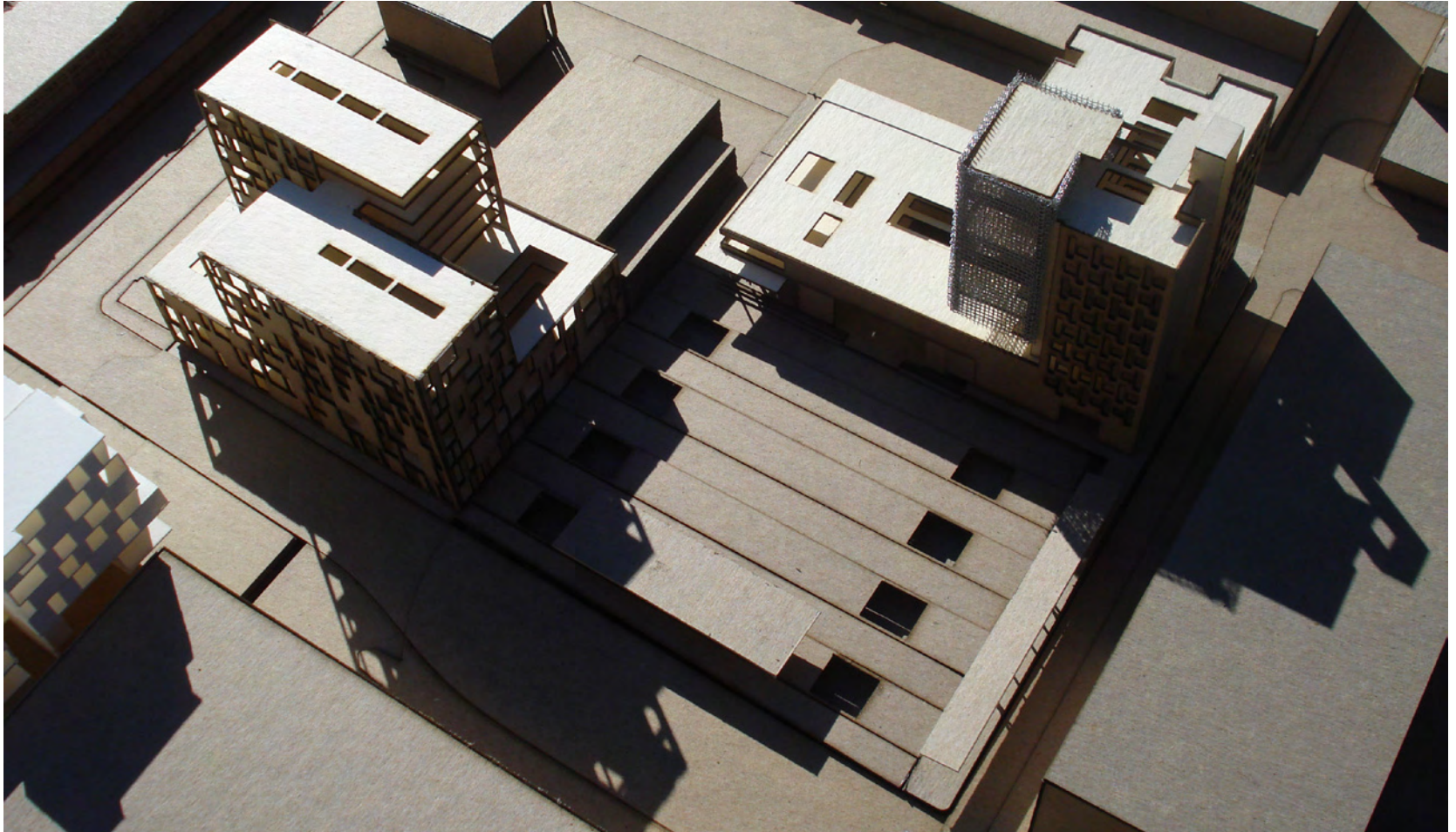
- 1- Innovation Lab + Museum
- 2- Student Housing + Dining
- 3- Student Housing + Plaza Support
- 4- Visual and Performing Arts + Black Box Theater
- 5- Student Plaza
- 6- Market Plaza/Amphitheater
- 7- DC Farmers Market
- 8- Historic Market Buildings
- 9- University Parking Garage
- 10- Historic University Buildings
- 11- Proposed Infill Sites





Site Model- Gallaudet University Buildings at Florida Avenue Market





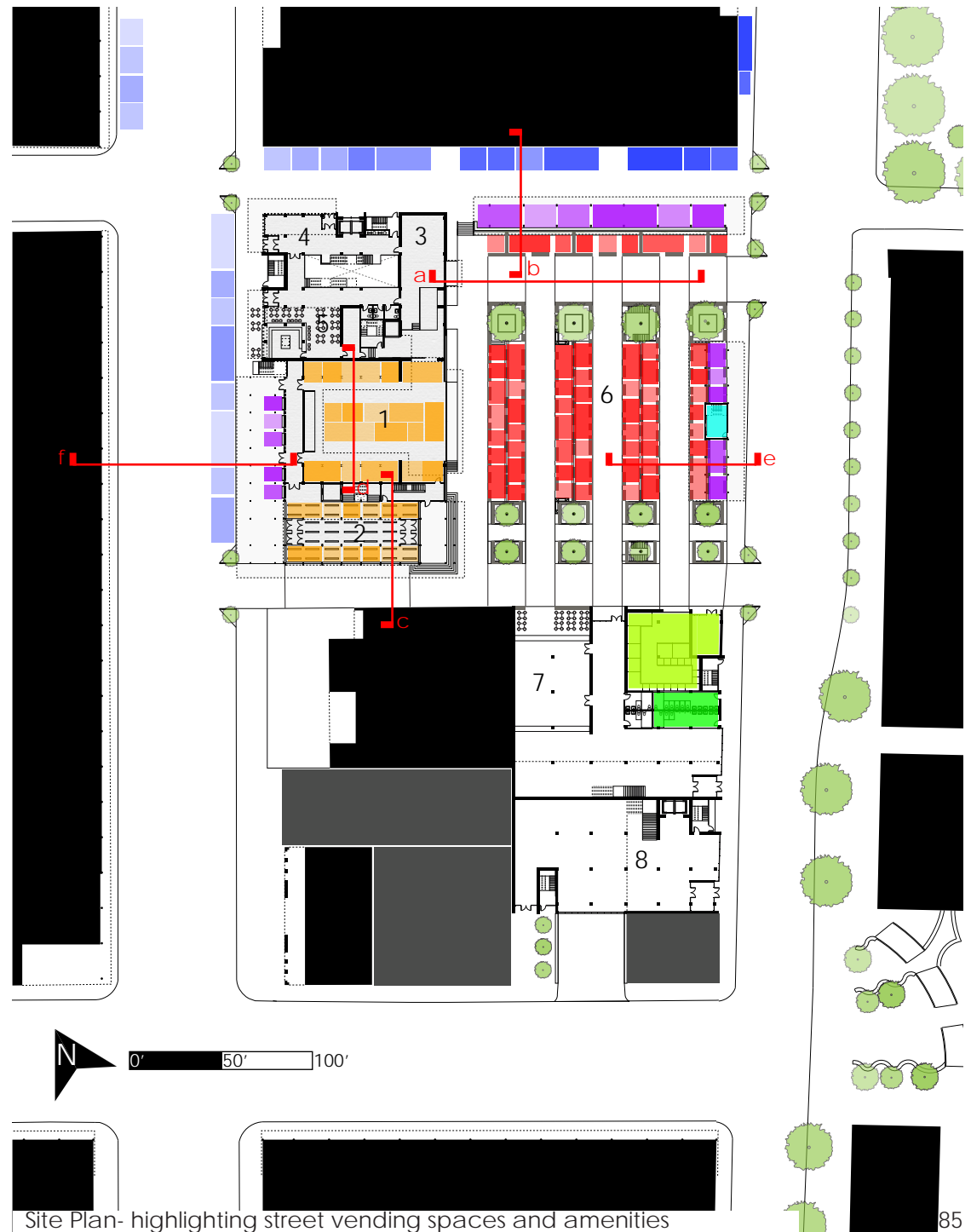
Site Model- Gallaudet University Buildings at Florida Avenue Market

In this design the practice of street vending is legitimized by providing architectural elements and spaces specifically designed for this purpose. Permanent benches and ledges provide a platform for vendors to display their goods and steel framed shade structures reflect the historic open market spaces of the original Union Market. These daily vending spaces are provided at the edges of the plaza to engage visitors. The seating for the amphitheater is designed to double as vending space for the flea market with accessibility for trucks. The lobby and theatre spaces of the arts building can be converted to indoor vending spaces. The A/V room at the back of the amphitheater will replace the existing DJ booth. Also storage space and public restrooms are provided as resources for the vendors, on the ground floor of the student housing building. These amenities give the vendors much needed privacy and security which allows them to conduct their business with dignity and respect.

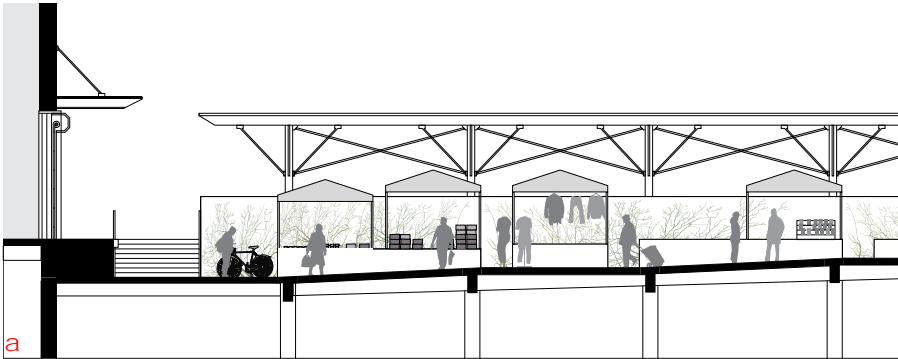
## MARKET PLAZA

- 1- Black Box Theater
- 2- Theater Lobby
- 3- Backstage
- 4- Visual and Performing Arts Lobby
- 5- Silent Restaurant and Bar
- 6- Market Plaza/Amphitheater
- 7- Restaurant and Bar
- 8- Student Housing Common Space

- A/V + DJ Booth
- Vendor Storage Space
- Public Restrooms
- Existing Vending Space
- Covered Everyday Vending
- Fleamarket Space
- Interior Fleamarket Space

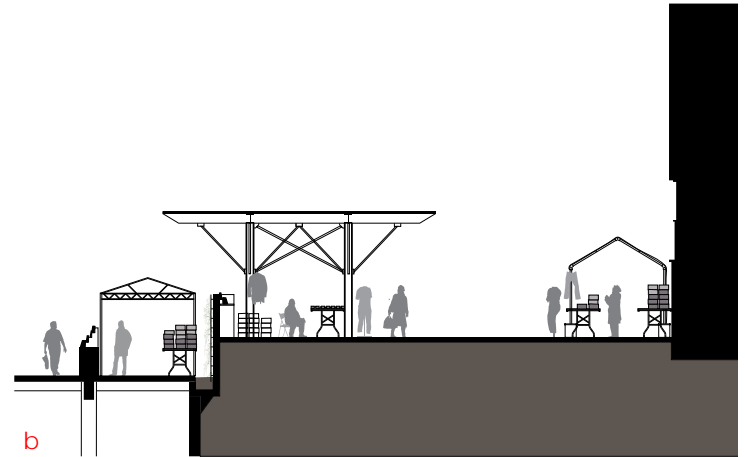


Site Plan- highlighting street vending spaces and amenities

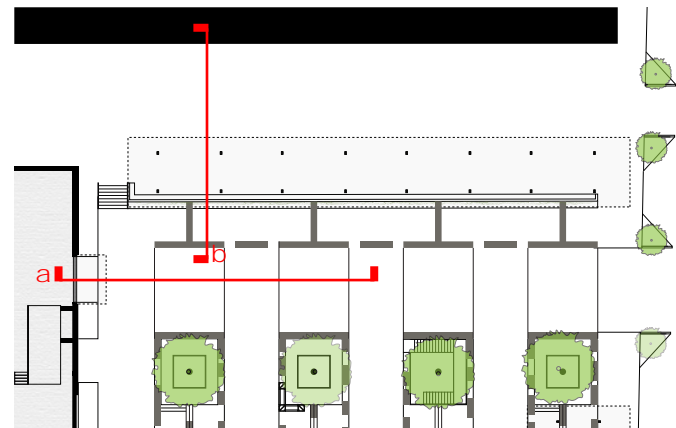


Section- vending spaces and loading dock

0' 10' 20'



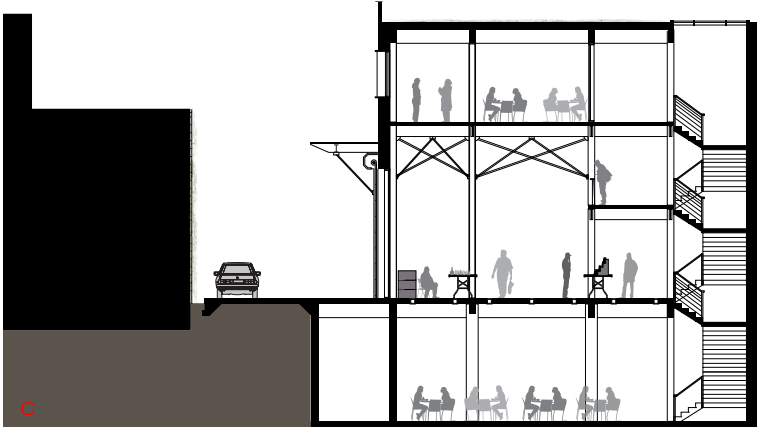
Section- new and existing vending spaces



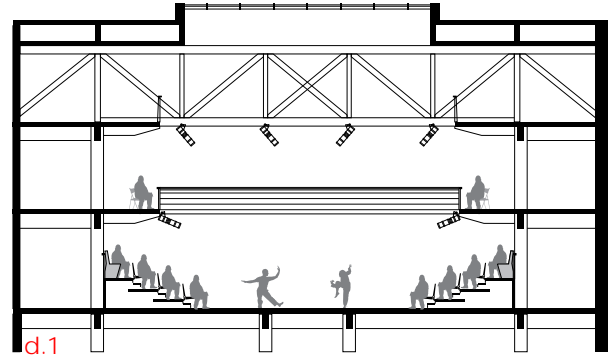
Plan Detail- new and existing vending spaces



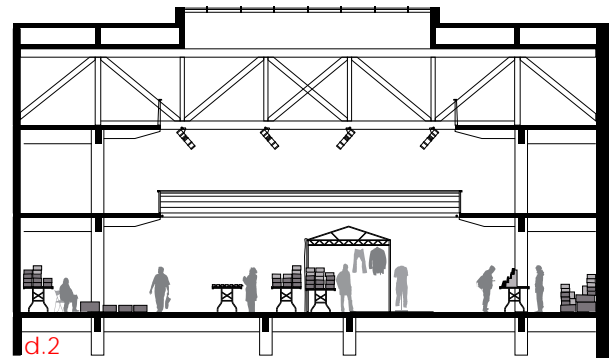
Perspective View- of vending spaces and loading dock



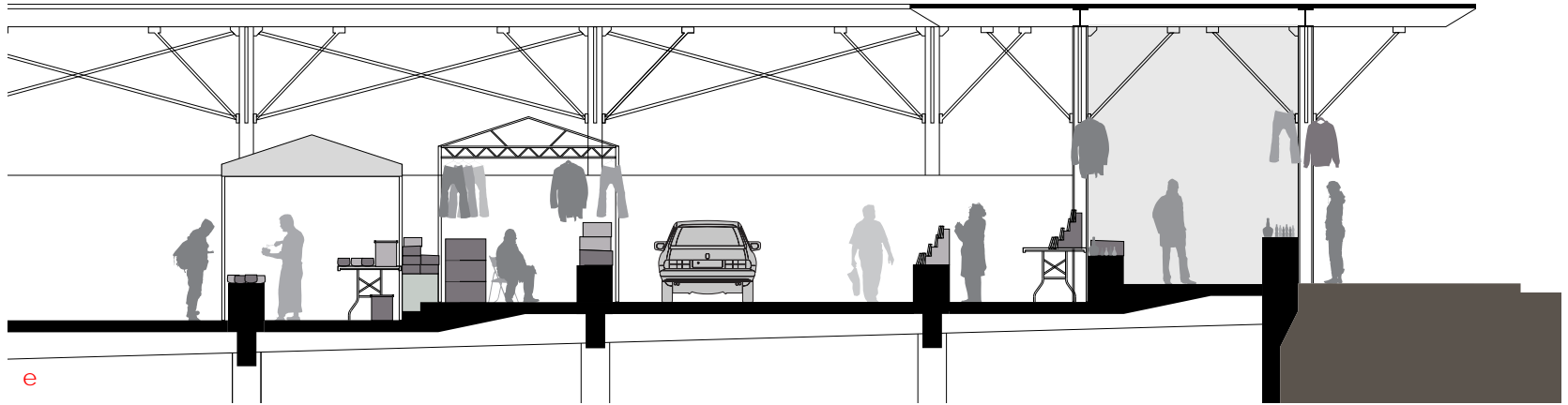
c  
Section- vending spaces in theater lobby



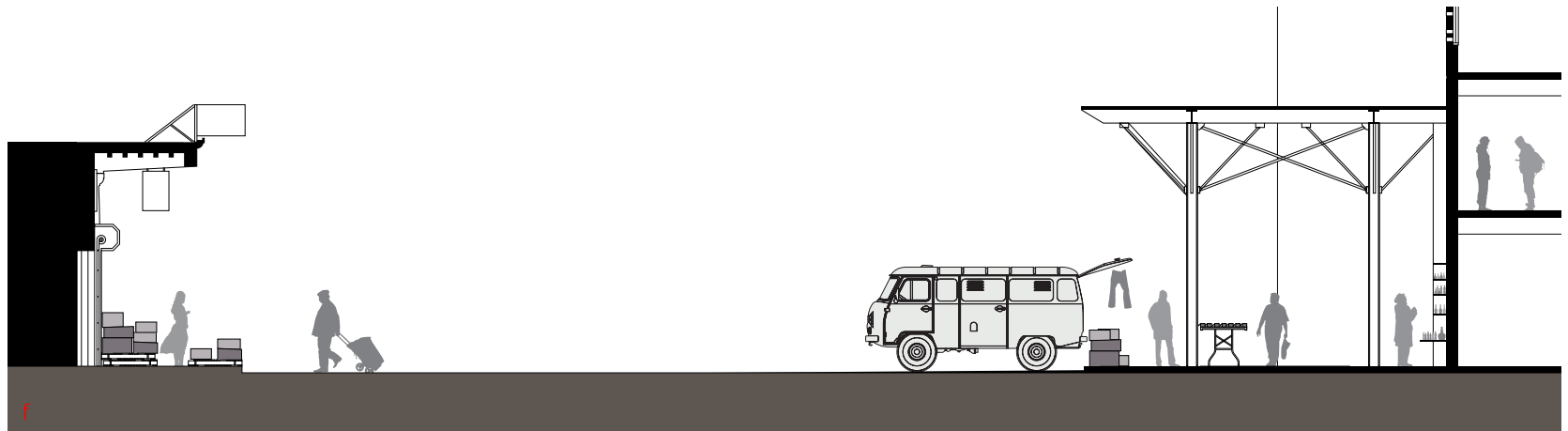
d.1  
Section- theater in traverse configuration



d.2  
Section- vending spaces in theater  
0' 10' 20'



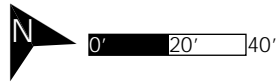
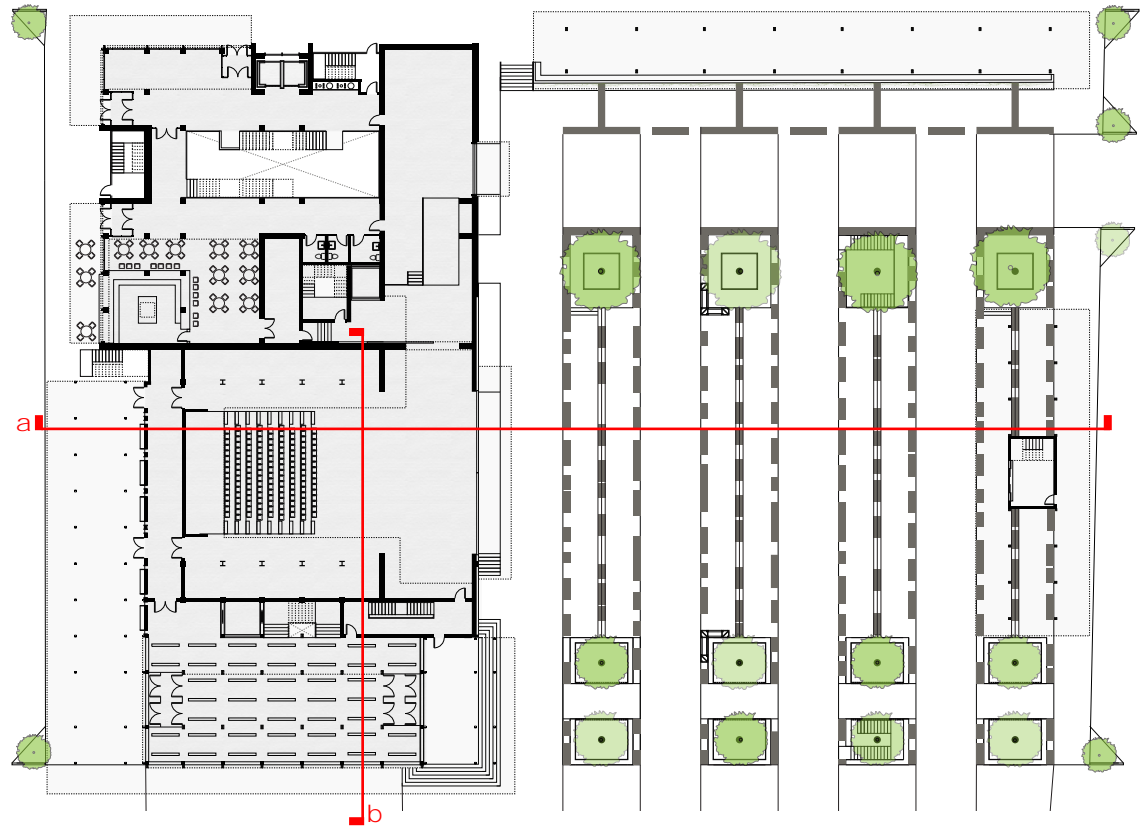
e  
 Section- vending spaces in amphitheater  
 0' 5' 10'



f  
 Section- historic market building entrance and vending spaces under entrance canopy  
 0' 5' 10'

The theater will attract visitors from around the region providing an opportunity for all people to engage with the deaf culture at Gallaudet. The black box theater typology was chosen for its flexibility and will be used for lectures, theater, dance, and visual arts performances. It will also serve as an indoor space for the flea market. The space can be easily reconfigured because of its exposed infrastructure and mobile seating platforms which can be tucked away at the rear of the theater. The stage is bi-directional, with large steel sliding doors that open to the rear. Set construction is treated as an urban spectacle with the loading dock in the front of the amphitheater. The open foyer at the south of the building is glass on three sides which can be covered by rolling steel doors. During use these doors can be rolled up and the room will be a beacon of light and activity in the market. The space is entered under large canopies that facilitate vending for the visitors. The space can also serve as indoor vending space during the flea market.

## BLACK BOX + AMPHITHEATER

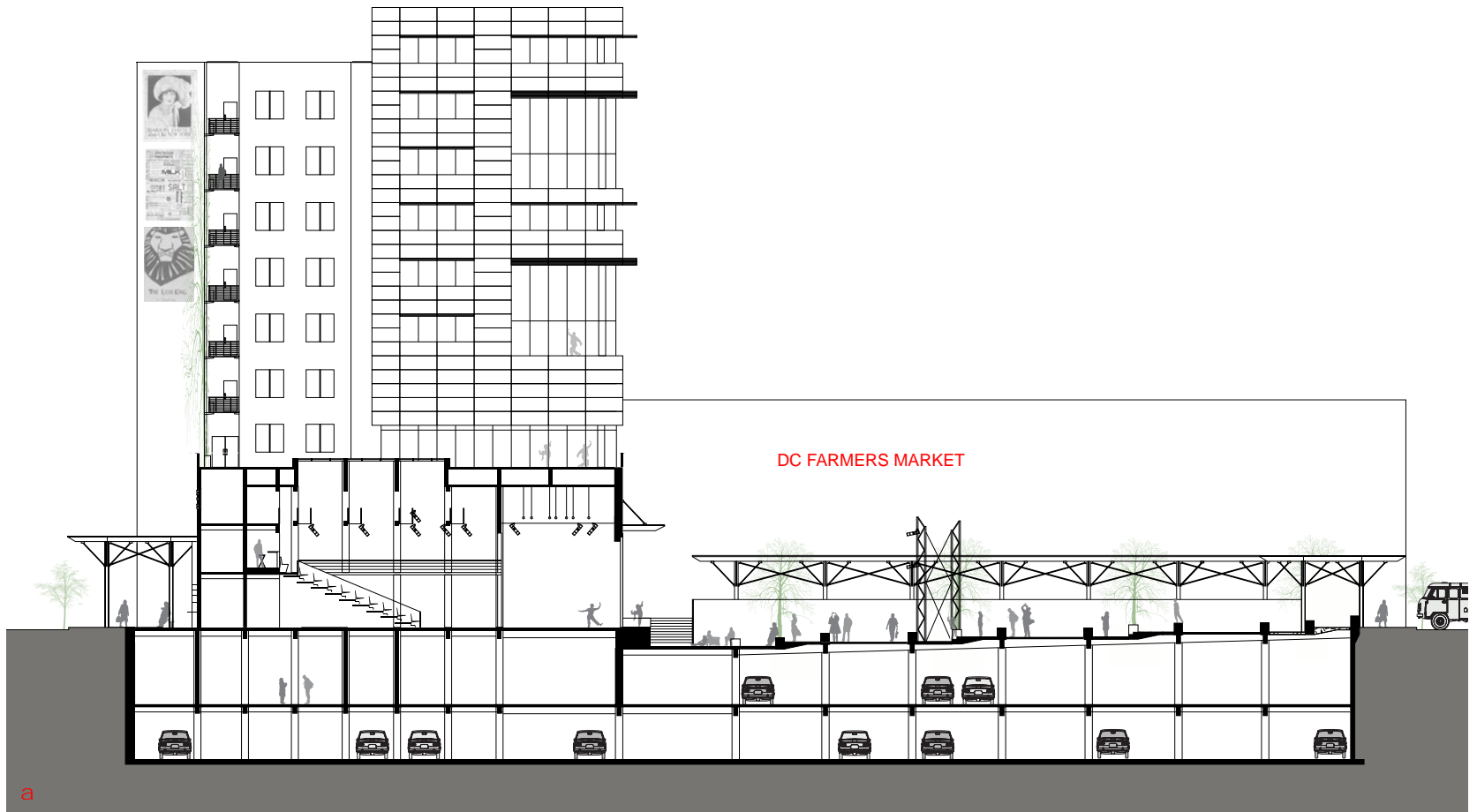


Plan- black box theater and amphitheater



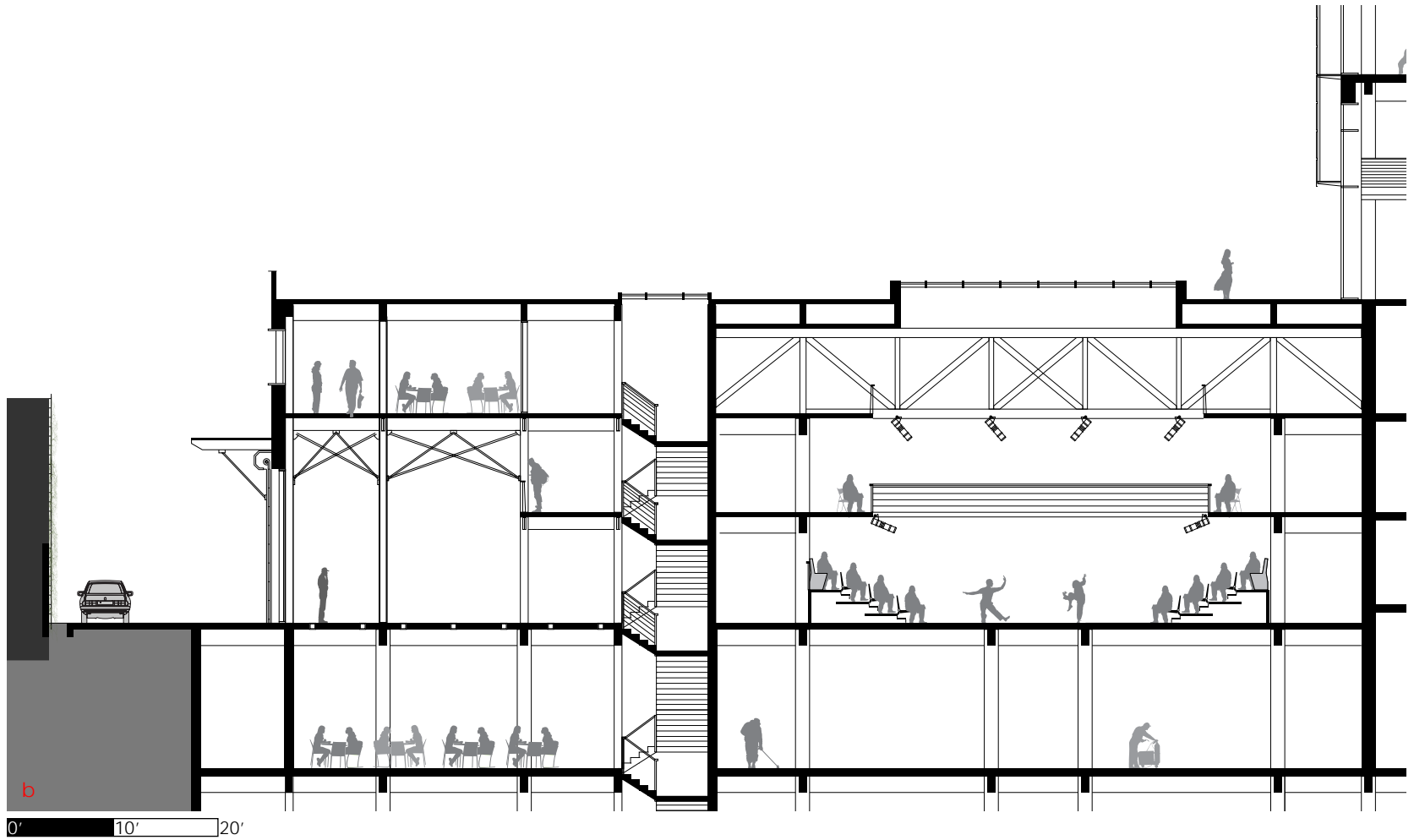


Perspective- view to closed stage from amphitheater



0' 20' 40'

Section- black box theater and amphitheater



0' 10' 20'  
Section- black box theater and lobby

The lines between service and public spaces are blurred as the underground parking garage is treated as a continuation of the public realm. Trees are planted at the first level below grade and rise up through large openings which provide ventilation and natural daylighting for the garage. The stairs ascend around the tree trunks to the outside. At the plaza level visitors walk amongst the tree canopy, which architecturally informs them that they are standing on an artificially constructed ground plane. Below the foyer a cafe and dining area provide refreshments for theatergoers. The glass storefront of the cafe opens to an allee of trees in the garage level which is neither exterior nor interior. The below grade dressing rooms receive daylight from a large atrium. Whilst the dressing rooms remain private the green room is open creating a visual connection between the public spaces of the building and the back of house functions of the theater.

## BACK OF HOUSE PERFORMANCE



Below Grade Plan- dressing rooms, theater cafe, and parking garage



Section- through stairwells and tree boxes

0' 5' 10'

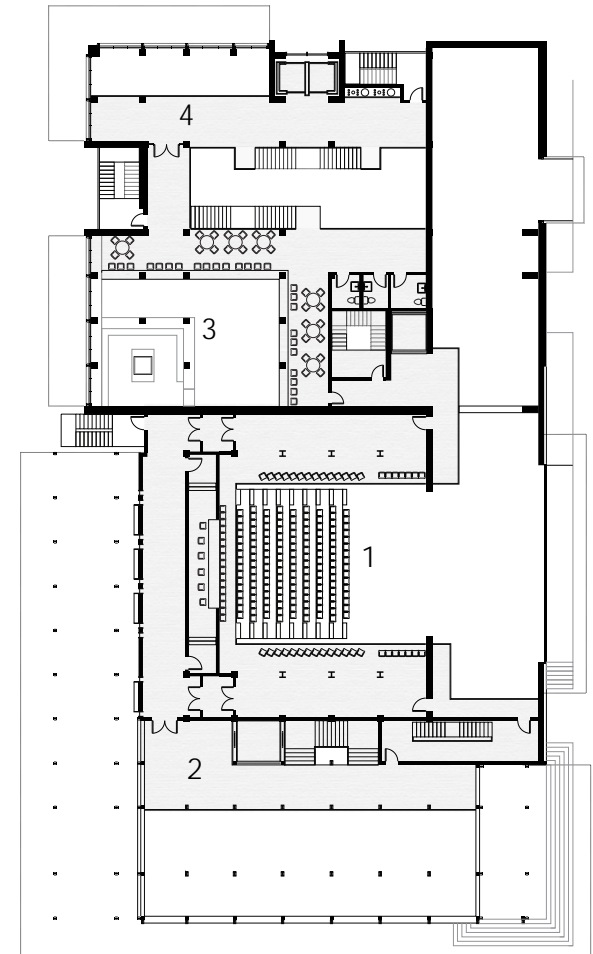
The educational spaces of the Visual and Performing Arts Building are concentrated in an 11-story tower at the north east end of the building. One faculty member at the university expressed the desire to create a silent restaurant and bar, where alumni and students could gather and outsiders would come to experience the social atmosphere at Gallaudet. This restaurant is located at the base of the tower. Rather than providing a stage for live music, the 2-story bar is oriented toward an open kitchen where patrons are treated to culinary performances. The kitchen also opens up to the sidewalk where food is served to the exterior cafe seating.

The bar is situated directly off of the large atrium. This atrium ascends top of the tower, providing open sight lines, which allow for visual communication between spaces and levels of the building. The centrally located atrium also promotes natural ventilation and provides ambient multi-directional daylighting

## VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING

for spaces throughout the building. The quality of light is particularly important for deaf people who rely heavily on visual communication and often experience eye fatigue. Hearing people often use audio clues to form a connection with circulation spaces outside of enclosed offices. This connection is augmented in the building by providing interior windows from the offices.

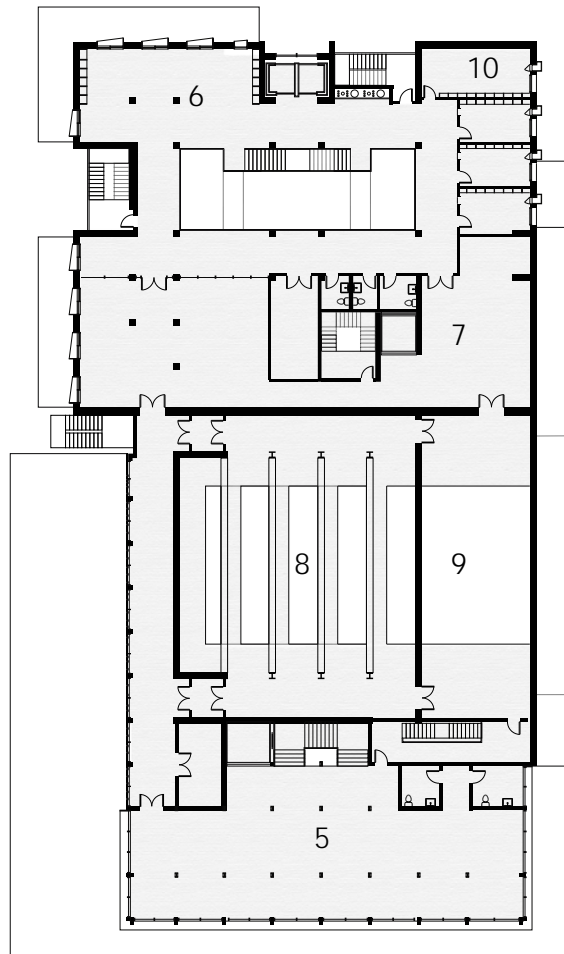
The rooms on the upper floors are laid out around the atrium. The atrium is slightly off-center to allow for larger rooms on the south west end of the tower. The studios and classroom spaces are located at this end with unobstructed views to the Washington Monument and Capital Dome. Each of the office spaces also has a view to at least one of these landmarks. The studios are double height spaces with walkways above to allow other students to watch rehearsals or performances. The fourth floor opens up to a large green roof above the theater. The rehearsal studio on this floor has full height sliding glass doors which can be opened to serve as a stage for a smaller outdoor performance space on the roof.



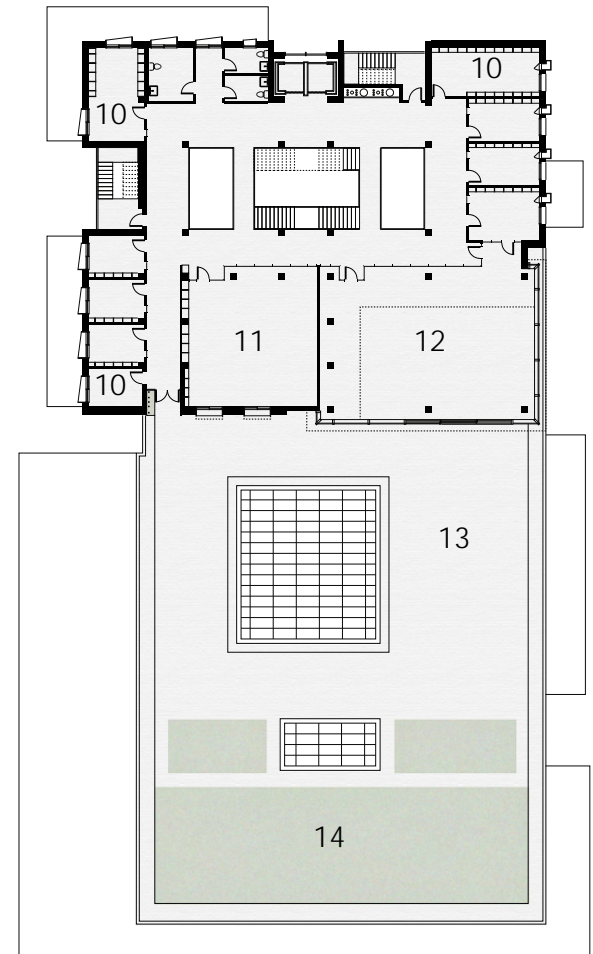
Second Floor Plan

0' 20' 40'

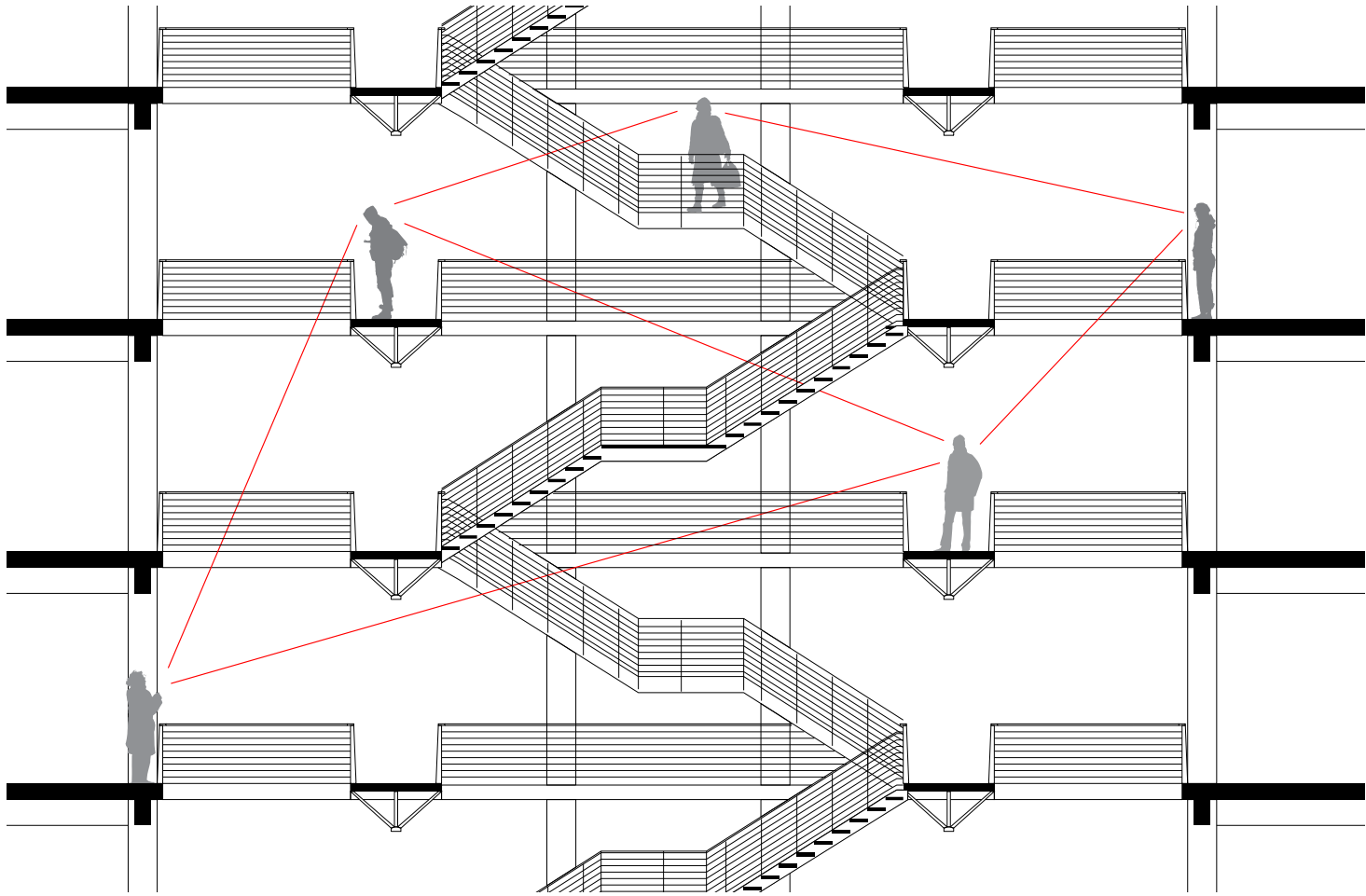
- 1- Black Box Theater
- 2- Theater Lobby
- 3- Silent Restaurant and Bar
- 4- Mezzanine
- 5- Event Space
- 6- Study Area/Lounge
- 7- Theater Storage
- 8- Theater Rafters
- 9- Flyspace
- 10- Faculty Offices
- 11- Classroom
- 12- Rehearsal Studio
- 13- Rooftop Theater
- 14- Avian Garden



Third Floor Plan



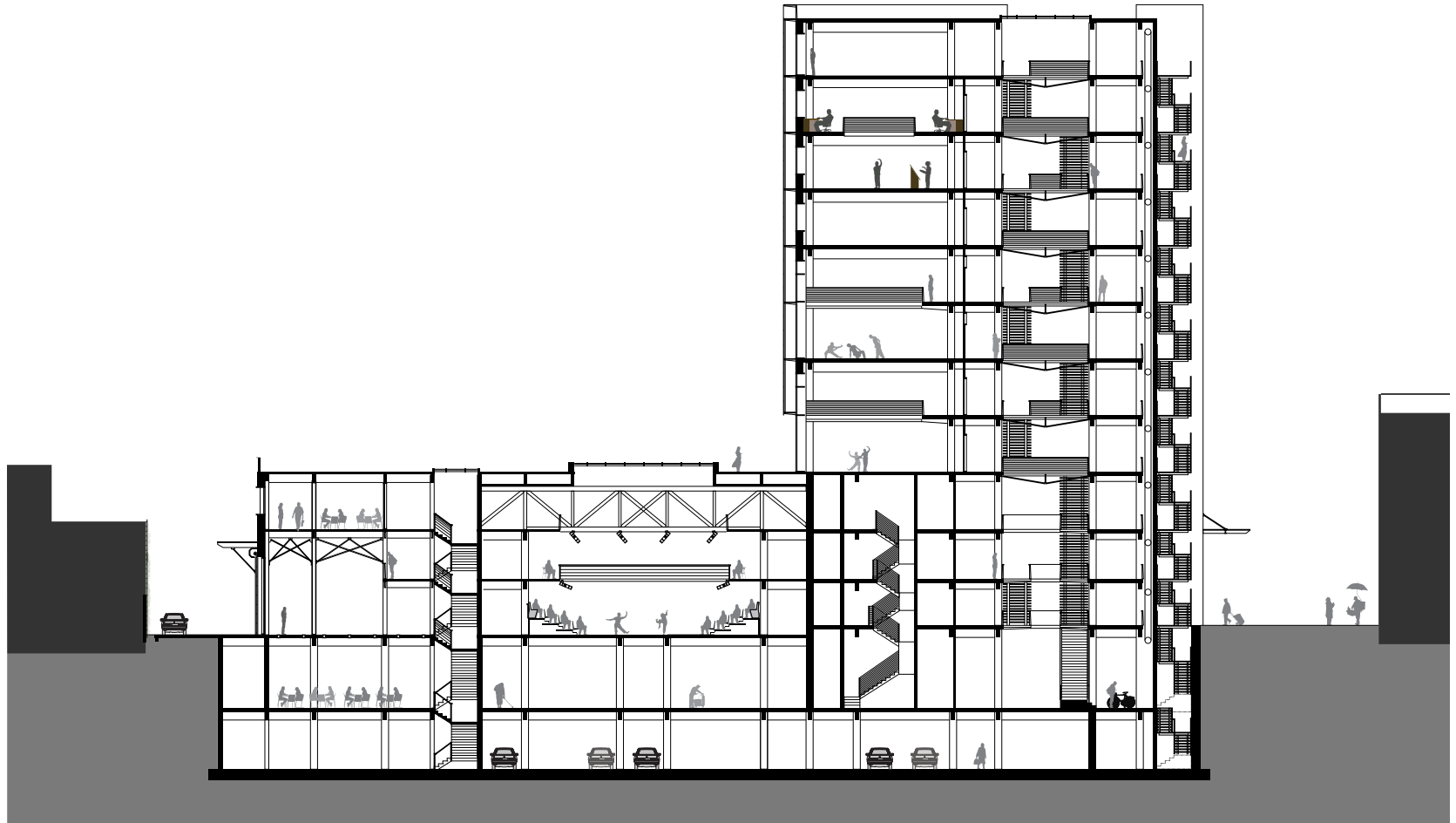
Fourth Floor Plan/Roof Terrace



Section- central atrium

0' 5' 10'



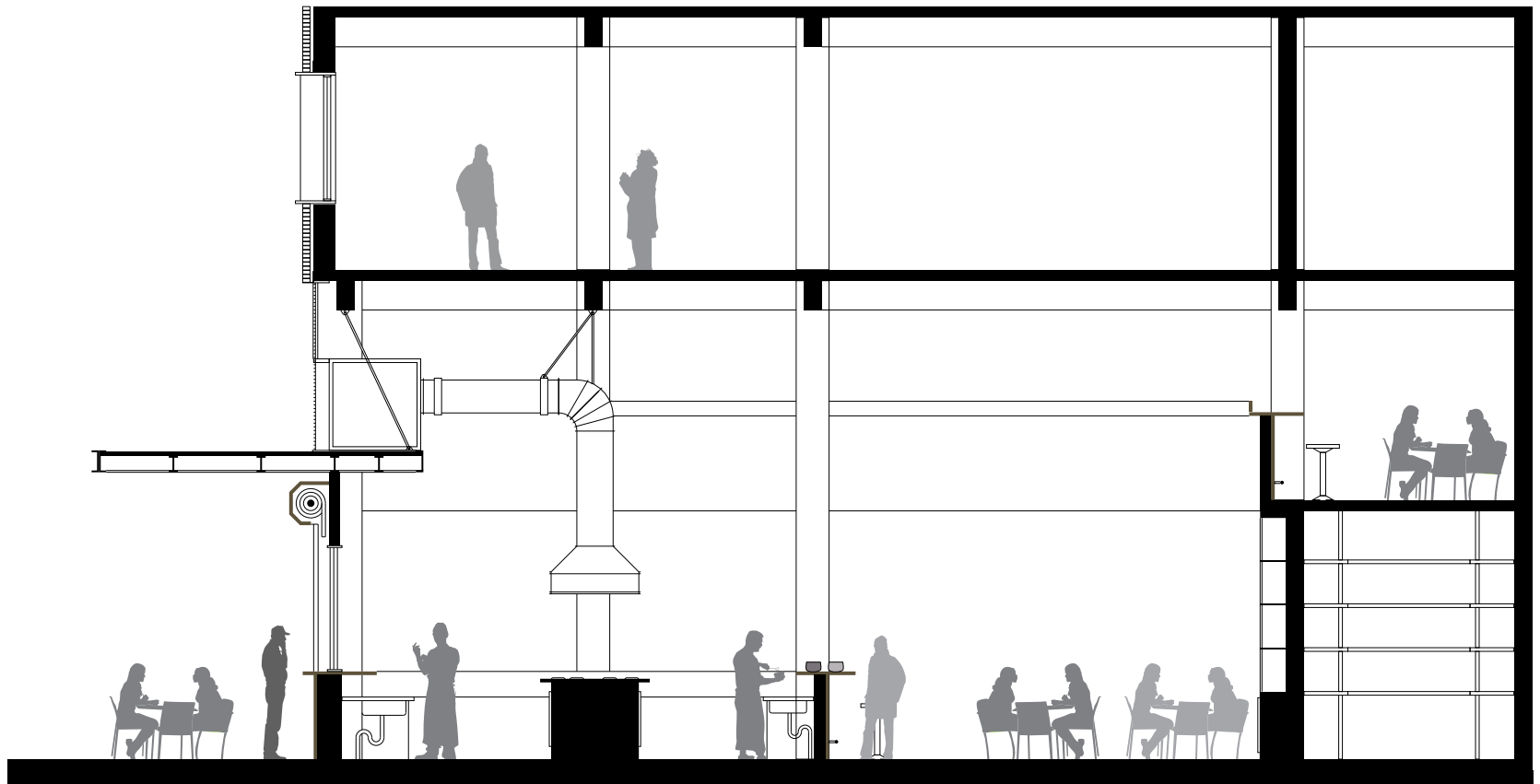


Section- central atrium

0' 10' 20'



Perspective View- silent restaurant and bar, cafe seating



Section- silent restaurant and bar

0' 5' 10'

The building's facade features a variety of treatments, inspired by the bricolage of the market. However the design does not rely on users to make major architectural alterations, because this would be unlikely for a building of this type. Rather, materials and details were selected to allow the users to manipulate the facade to accommodate their needs.

The rehearsal and design studios in the tower have large south facing curtain walls with adjustable perforated-steel sun shades on the exterior to control the quality of light. When the shades are open, the studios are visible from the plaza and rehearsals become quasi-performances. When the shades are closed movement within the studios will create dynamic shadow effects on the façade.

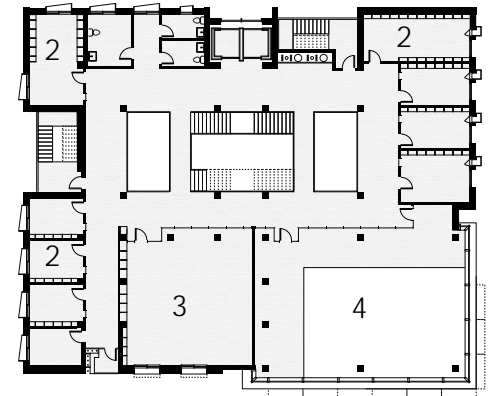
Windows for office space on the southeast facade are fitted with planter boxes. Each faculty or staff member will be in charge of their own gardens, which will encourage variation in the amounts

## BUILDING ENVELOPE

and types of plantings. Additional areas of the building are designed for larger climbing gardens, which could be tended maintenance staff or students. The other office windows are fitted with projecting steel frames that block direct sunlight and are varied depending on the orientation of the window.

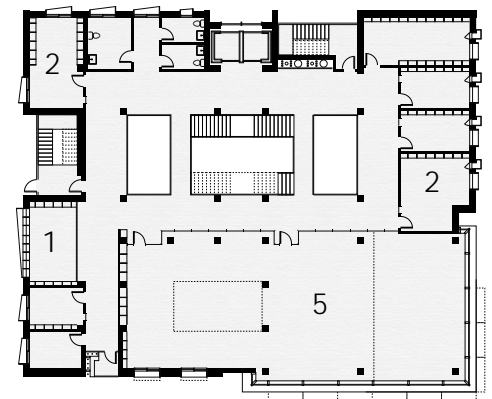
Circulation such as the glass elevators and open stairwells are located at the edge of the building and will give movement to the facade. The exposed steel stairwells and window frames will patina over time and react with the reclaimed bricks that clad most of the building.

Specific areas of the facade are left unobstructed to provide space for theater posters to be painted directly onto the brick. As new posters are painted for each subsequent performance the previous posters will fade, creating a visual record of the history of the theater. The name of the university is displayed by removed bricks on the northwest facade. This brick cladding sits in front of glass which will allow light to shine through the lettering in the evening.

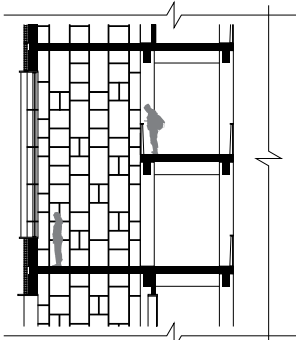


Fifth Floor Plan

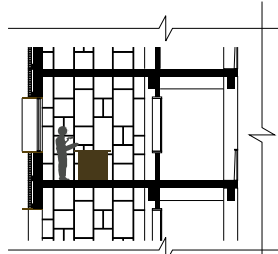
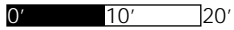
0' 20' 40'



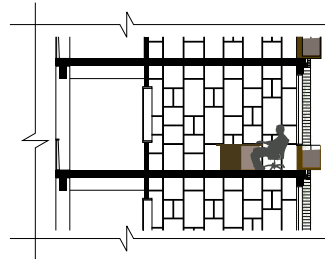
Tenth Floor Plan



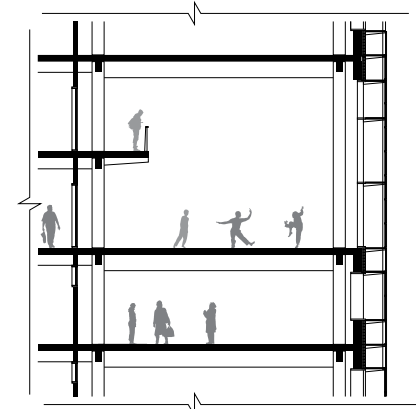
Section- Study Area



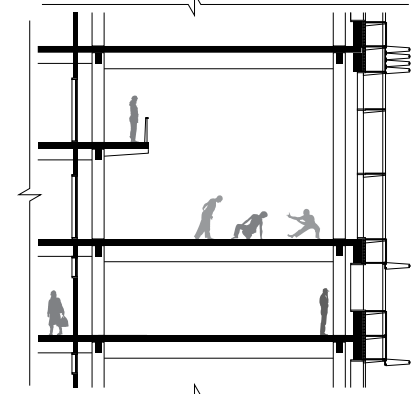
Section- North Facade



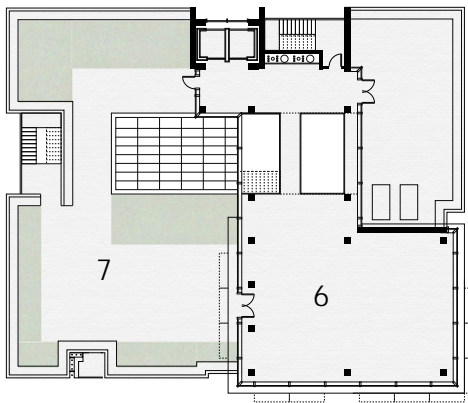
Section- South Facade



Section- Rehearsal Studio  
Screen Closed



Section- Rehearsal Studio  
Screen Open



Penthouse/Roof Plan



- 1- Study Area/Lounge
- 2- Faculty Offices
- 3- Classroom
- 4- Rehearsal Studio
- 5- Visual Art Studio
- 6- Event/Hospitality Space
- 7- Avian Gardens



Northwest Elevation



Southeast Elevation



Perspective View to Tower from West





Perspective View to Tower from South



Perspective View to from West



Perspective View to from South

- 1- DCOP. District of Columbia, Office of Planning, (2009). Florida avenue market study. Retrieved from website: [http://planning.dc.gov/DC/Planning/In Your Neighborhood/Wards/Ward 5/Small Area Plans & Studies/Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan Main Page](http://planning.dc.gov/DC/Planning/In%20Your%20Neighborhood/Wards/Ward%205/Small%20Area%20Plans%20&%20Studies/Florida%20Avenue%20Market%20Small%20Area%20Plan%20Main%20Page)
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## ADDITIONAL SOURCES

All images and drawings are produced by the author unless otherwise noted.

All referenced images comply with the fair use policy of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Figure 1. Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan in Context- p. vi

DC Office of Planning, Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan, <http://planning.dc.gov/DC/Planning/In+Your+Neighborhood/Wards/Ward+6/Small+Area+Plans+&+Studies/Florida+Avenue+Market+Small+Area+Plan>

Figure 2. Gallaudet University 1864- p. 4

Gallaudet University Image Archive

Figure 3. Center Market (1878-1931)- p. 6

Smithsonian National Museum of American History, all images on page, [http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/exhibition/exhibition\\_4\\_2.html](http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/exhibition/exhibition_4_2.html)

Figure 4. Union Market (1921-Present)- p. 7

DC Office of Planning, Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan, all images on page, <http://planning.dc.gov/DC/Planning/In+Your+Neighborhood/Wards/Ward+6/Small+Area+Plans+&+Studies/Florida+Avenue+Market+Small+Area+Plan>

Figure 5. Florida Avenue Market & Context- p. 9

Pictometry International Corp., background image, <http://www.bing.com/maps/>

Figure 6. Funky Fleamarket Images- p. 10

Funky Fleamarket, <http://www.thefunkyfleamarket.com/>

Figure 7. Funky Fleamarket Overview- p. 11

Richard-Sia, Malonda, Funky Fleamarket <http://www.thefunkyfleamarket.com/>

Figure 8. One of two illustrative site plans provided in the DCOP Florida Avenue Small Area Plan- p. 23

DC Office of Planning, Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan, <http://planning.dc.gov/DC/Planning/In+Your+Neighborhood/Wards/Ward+6/Small+Area+Plans+&+Studies/Florida+Avenue+Market+Small+Area+Plan>

## IMAGE CREDITS

Figure 9. Renderings intended to help visualize the character of the public spaces recommended by the Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan.- p. 24

Ibid. all images on page

Figure 10. Renderings intended to help visualize the character of the public spaces recommended by the Florida Avenue Market Small Area Plan.- p. 25

Ibid. all images on page

Figure 11. Aerial view during fleamarket- p. 55

Google Earth, background image <http://maps.google.com/>

Figure 12. Images from *Street Value*- p. 62

Woo, R., Tenhoo, M., & Rich, D. (2010)

Figure 13. Images from *Street Value*- p. 63

Ibid.

Figure 14. Images of Lafayette Square Park- p. 64

Hood Design, <http://www.wjhooddesign.com/> . all images on page

Figure 15. Images from *Urban Diaries*- p. 65

Hood, W., & Levy, L. (1997). all images on page

Figure 16. Design Images for Food Fence-Field Fence- p. 66-67

Pinto, Mateo, <http://mp-into.com/index.php?/architecture/rhv-marketplace/> all images on page spread

Figure 17. DeafSpace Design Guidelines- p. 68-69

Bauman, H. Deafspace. Retrieved from <http://www.hbharchitecture.com/index.php?/ongoing/deaf-space-design-guide/>