

Oasis in the Desert

A satellite art campus in
Downtown Las Vegas

A thesis project by Vignesh Kamath

Oasis in the Desert

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Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master in Architecture

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Abstract

Downtown districts of cities are usually the first areas to be developed and can inform one of how and why growth occurred in a particular instance. Las Vegas, an oasis within the Mojave desert, originated due to its strategic location in the Southwest US that provided spring water for westward travelers.

The area currently known as downtown Las Vegas, one of the first areas to be developed, is depressed due to economic downturn. An arts district is emerging in this district. However, its growth is hampered by a lack of foot traffic and local activity.

University of Nevada - Las Vegas (UNLV) is in need of a new building for the arts department to accommodate its expanding program.

The purpose of my thesis is to propose a satellite campus in Downtown Las Vegas that can house an arts building along with workshops and art galleries. The goal is to stimulate the development of the downtown arts district by developing strong interaction between the students and local arts activity.

Acknowledgments

To my committee:

Thank you for your guidance and encouragement through the last two years. Your knowledge and wisdom has helped me grow into a better designer and student of architecture. Your kindness, warmth and acceptance is much appreciated.

To my parents:

Thank you for your continued support through everything I've been through. It is only because of your sacrifices and unconditional love that has made me into who I am today.

To my sister :

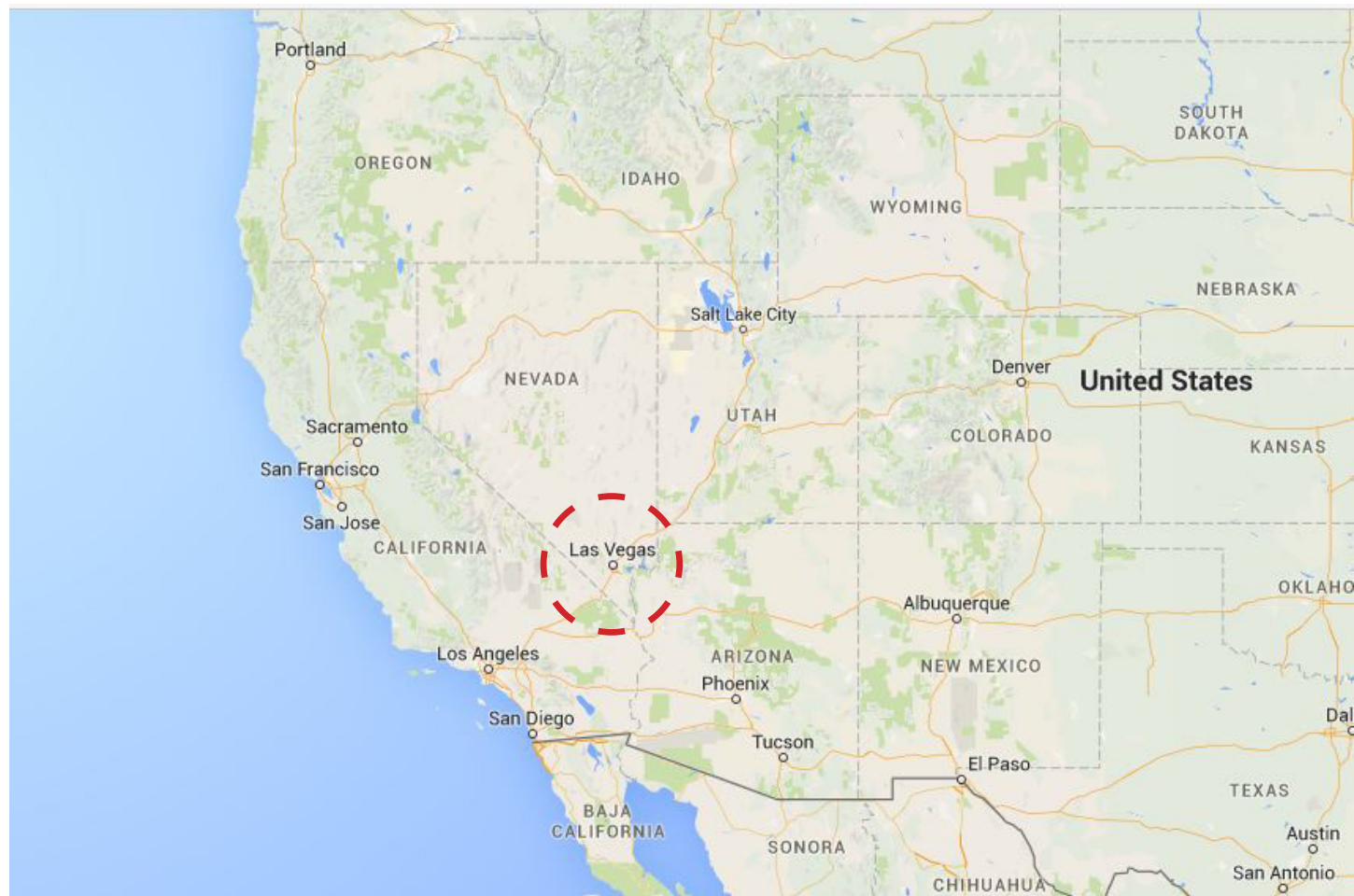
Thank you for your unwavering love and affection. You give me courage in life to keep moving forward and face every adversity and challenge I encounter.

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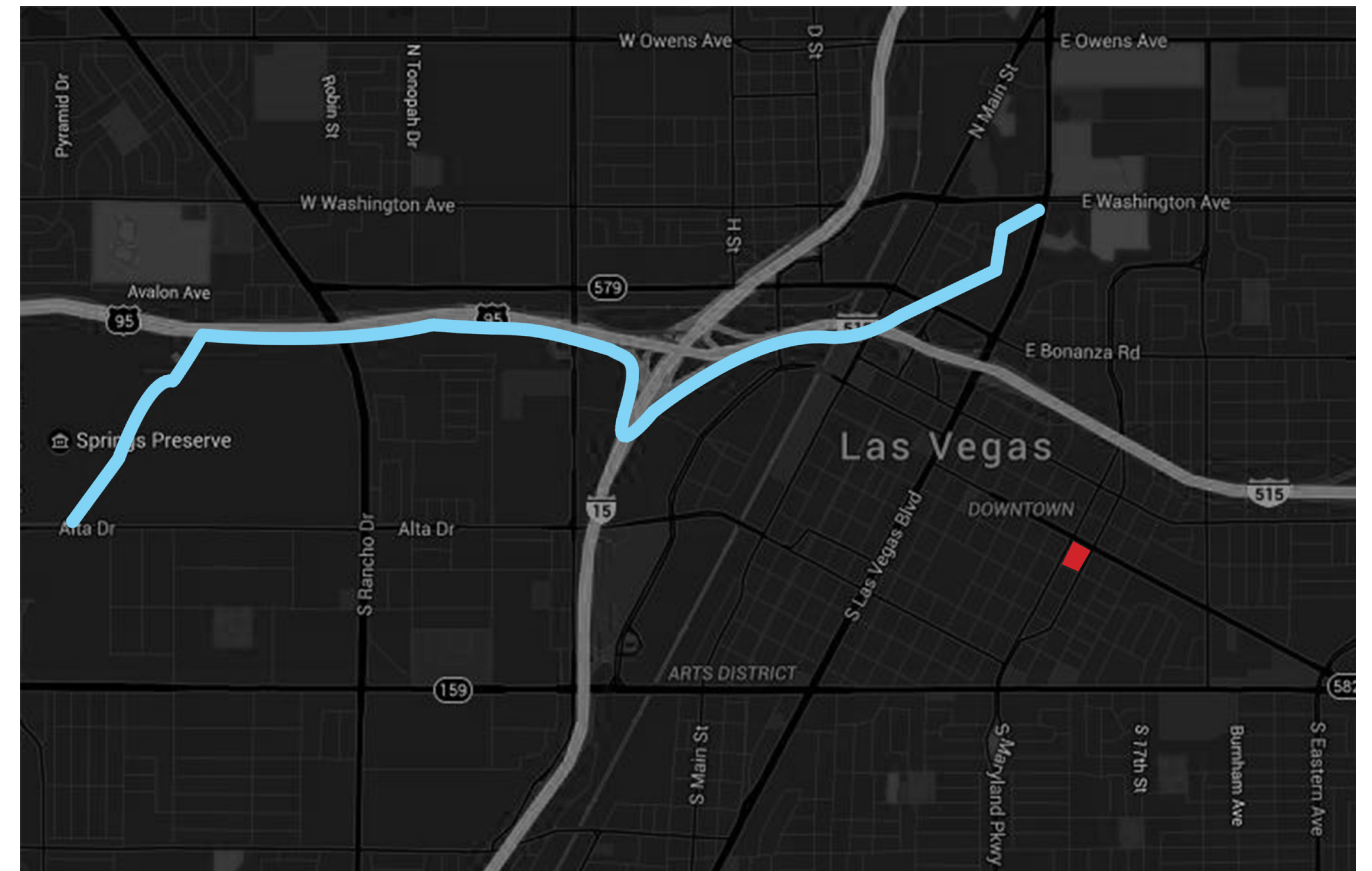
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Site

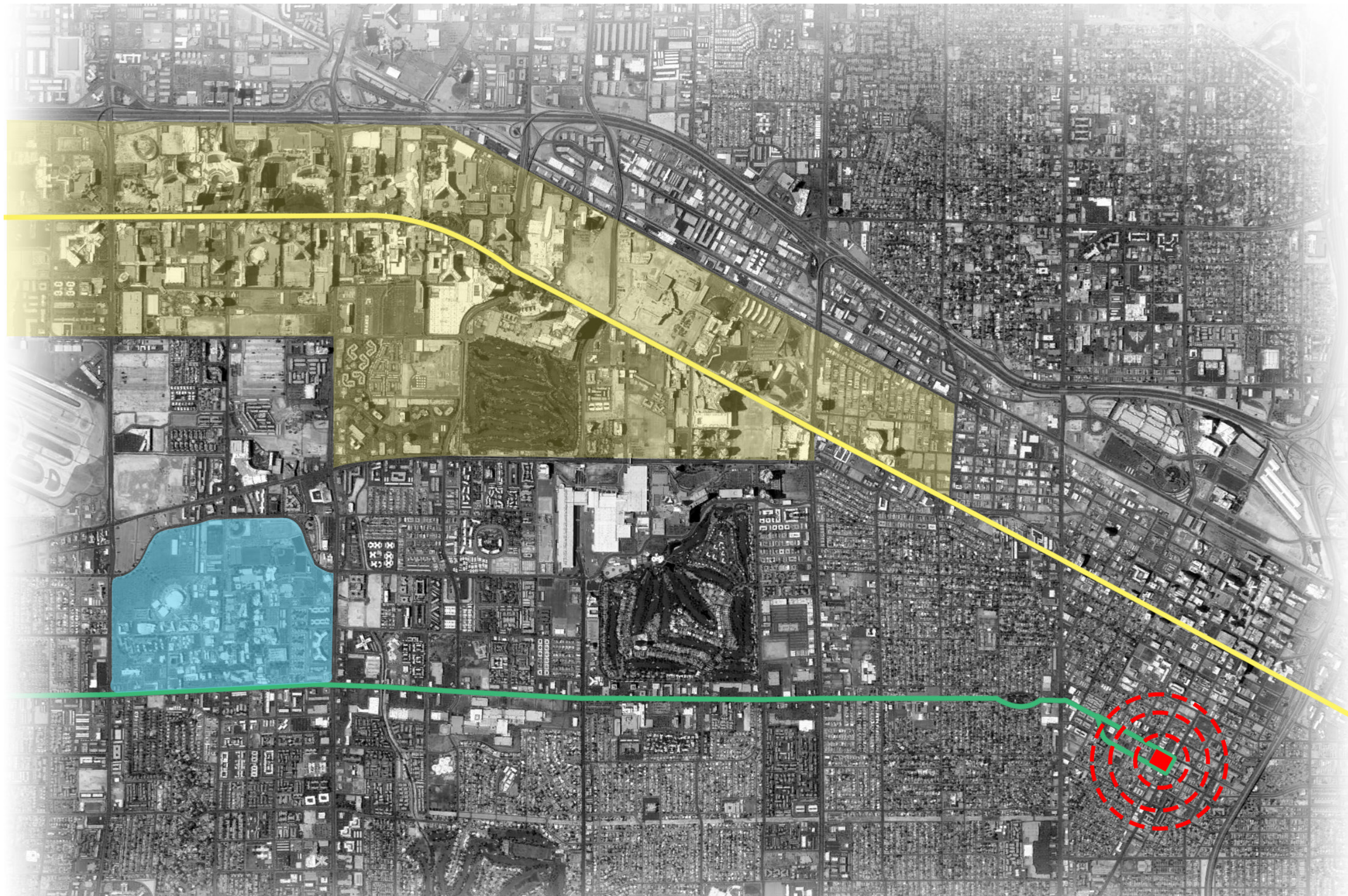


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Base image source: 1.

- Las Vegas creek
- Site



Las Vegas Blvd.

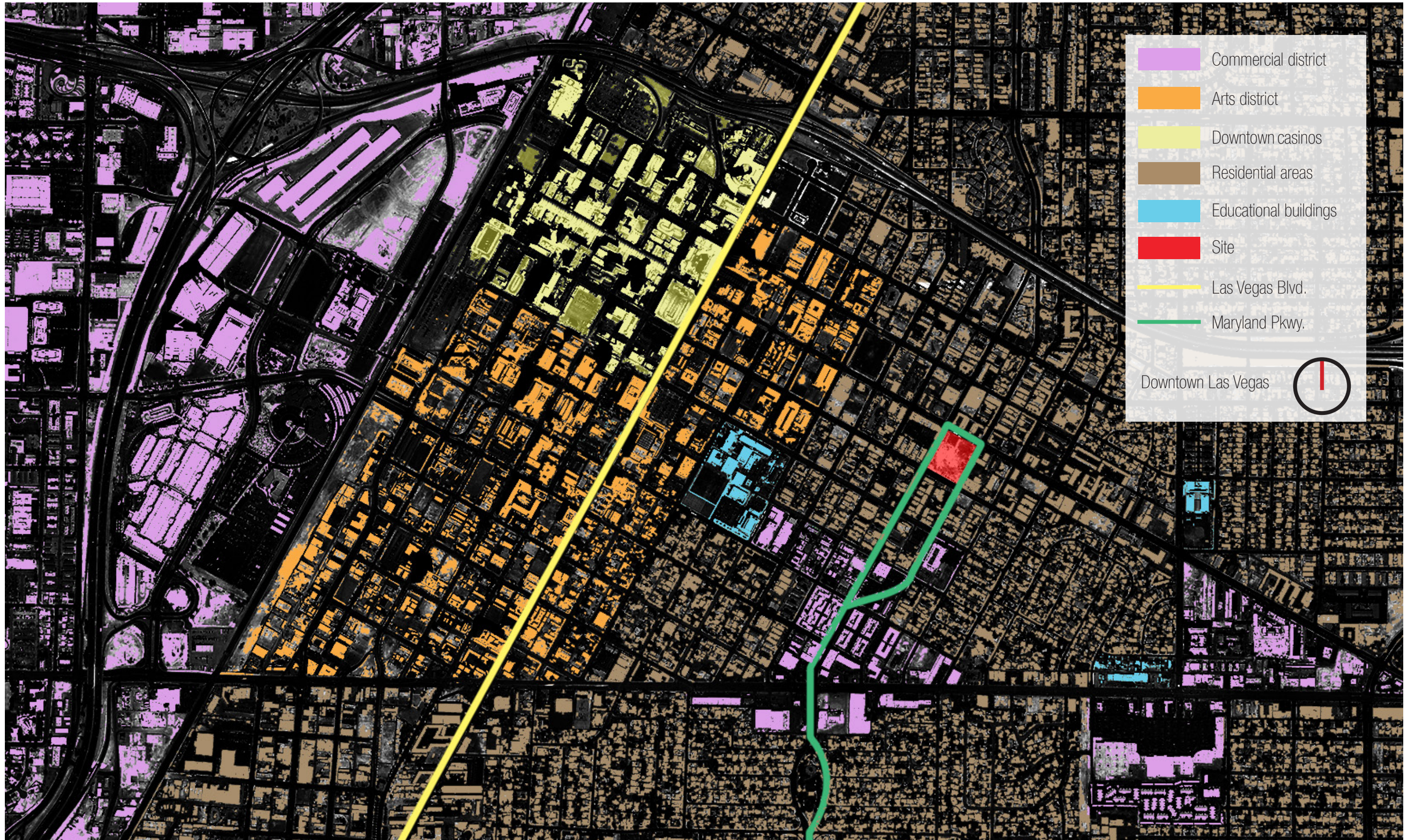
Maryland Pkwy.

'Strip' Casinos

UNLV main campus

Site

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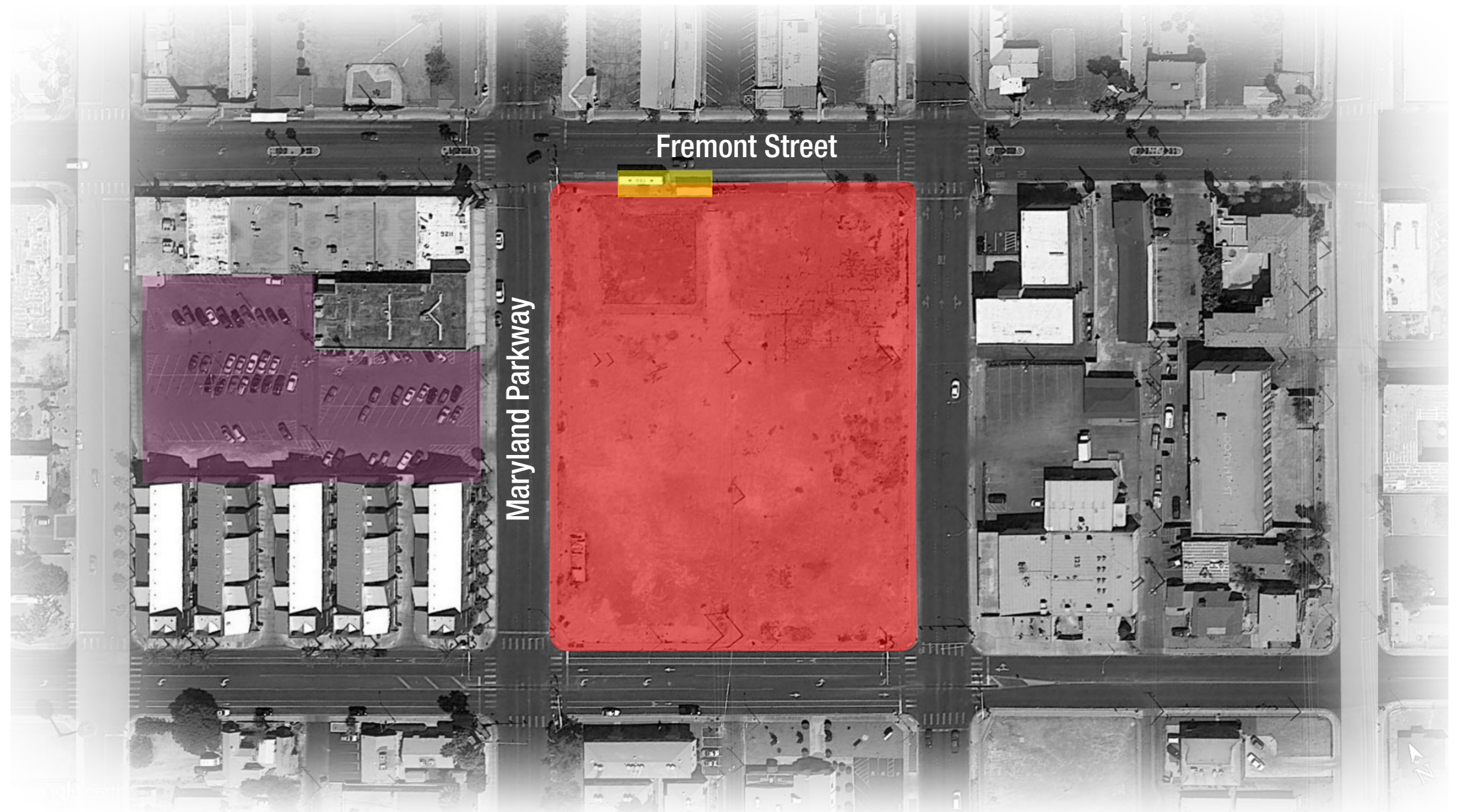


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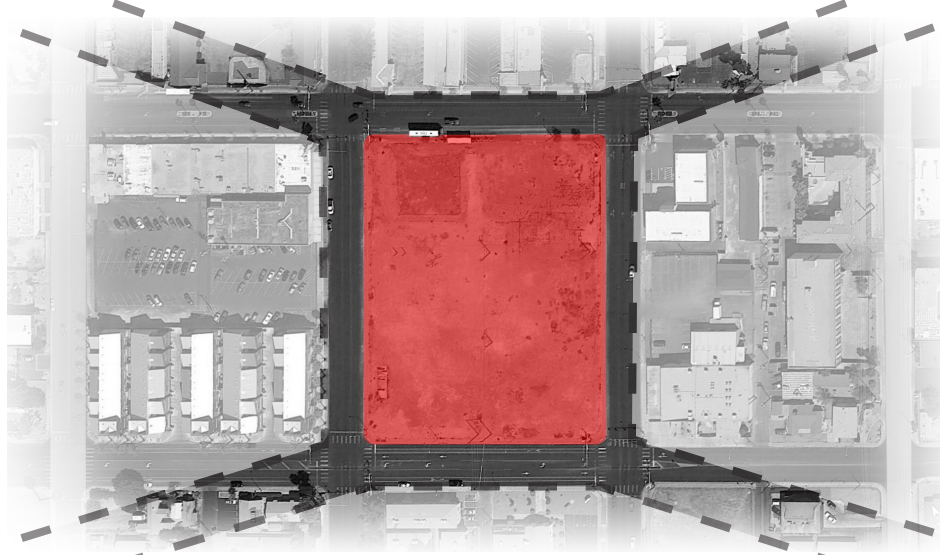
The site of this project is in Downtown Las Vegas, located on Fremont Street and Maryland Parkway. The site is undeveloped and lays diagonally to true north. Destitute motels, extended stay hotels, multi-story apartments and several commercial buildings surround the site. A bus stop located on Fremont street acts as a primary entrance to the site; while the parking lot located to the west of the site is the primary parking area for private transport.

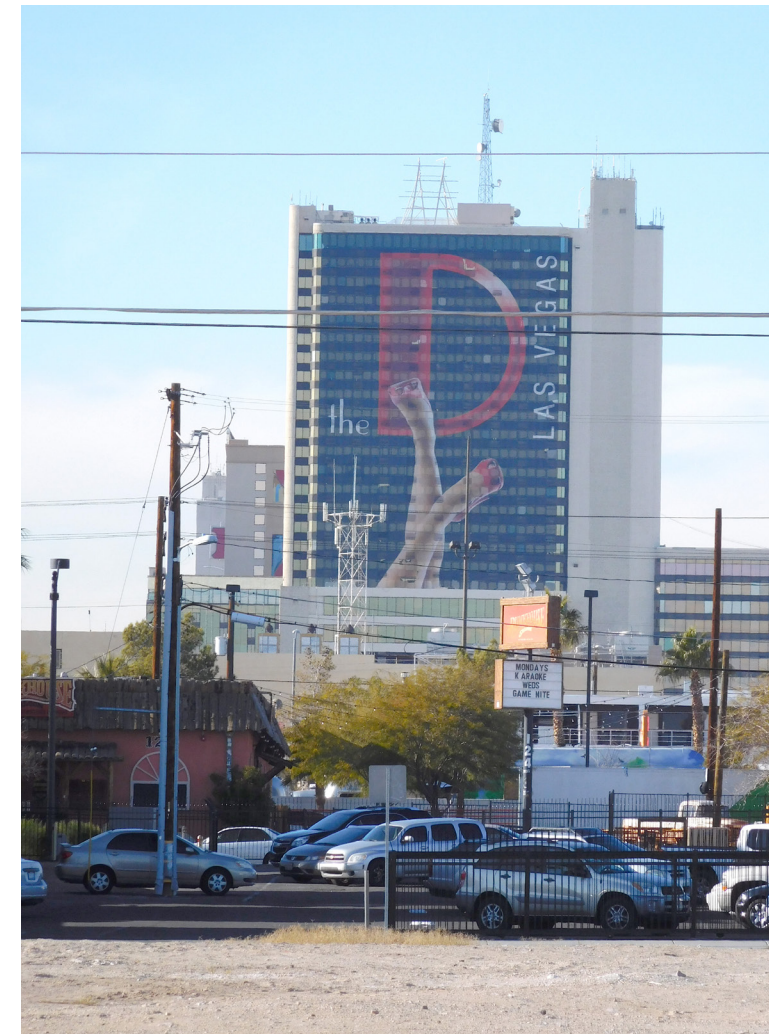
-  Fremont street bus stop
-  Primary parking area
-  Site

Site context



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Concept and Diagrams

The concept of the project reflects upon the very nature of Las Vegas itself. As an oasis, Las Vegas provides a moment in the desert where one can find

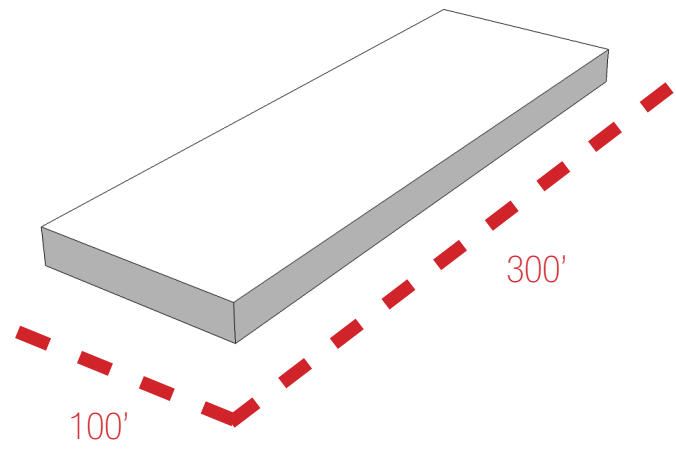
shelter from unyielding elements,
replenishment despite the barren earth that surrounds it and a
place of gathering among desolate terrain.

These elements are adapted into this project by providing

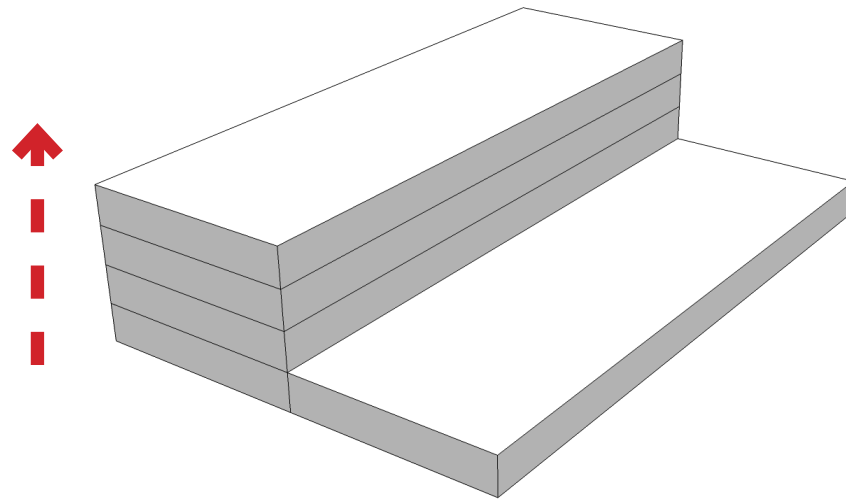
a *haven* from the harsh environment,
a place to *quench* your thirst for creation
a place of *congregation* in a depopulated surrounding

These characteristics are achieved by adapting elements throughout the design that evoke the imagery and qualitative nature of an oasis by

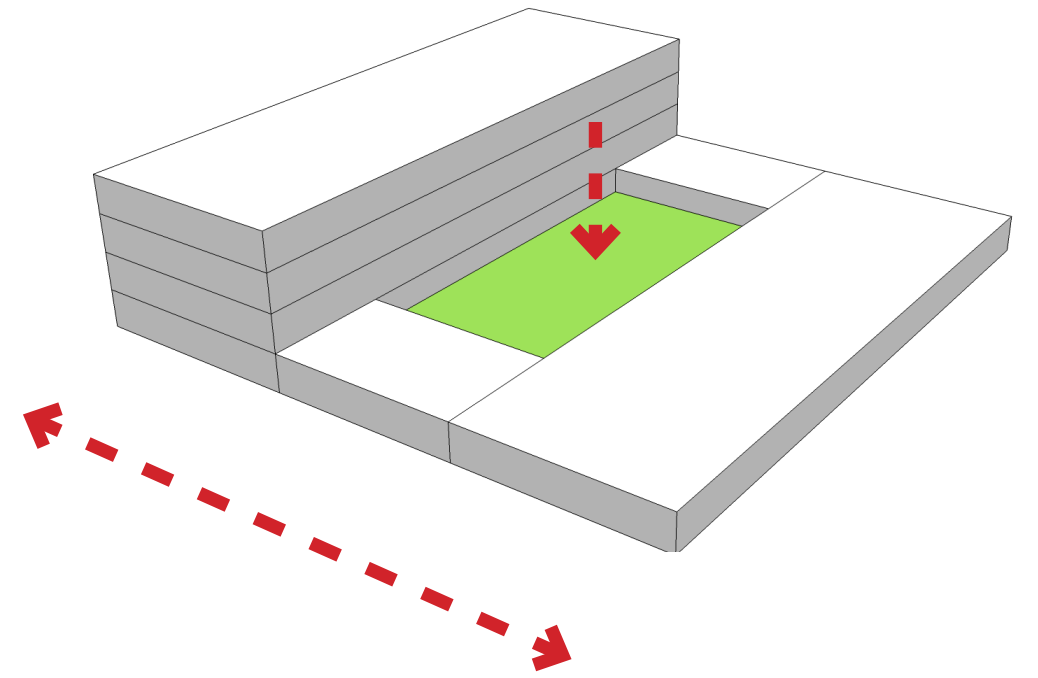
providing *shade* from the scorching sun
invoking the tranquil nature of *flowing water* and
creating *gathering areas* that enable growth through communal sharing and learning



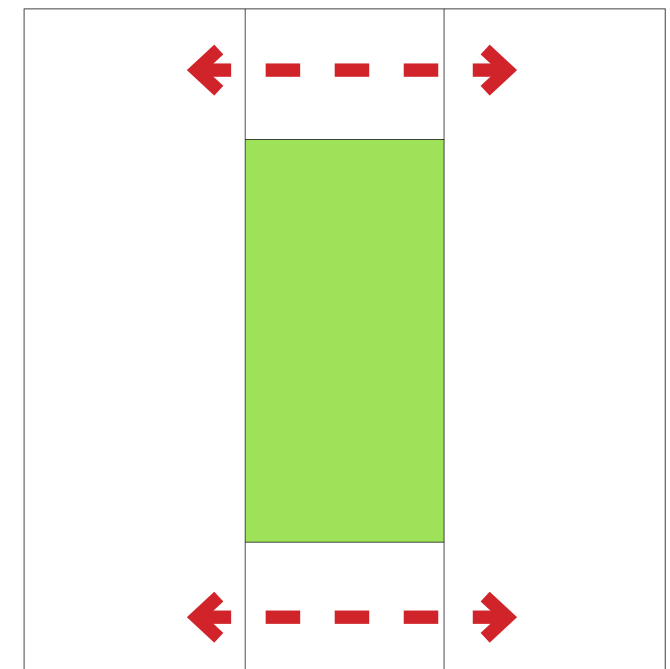
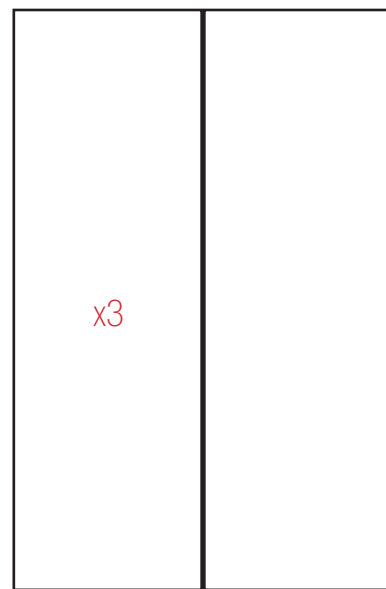
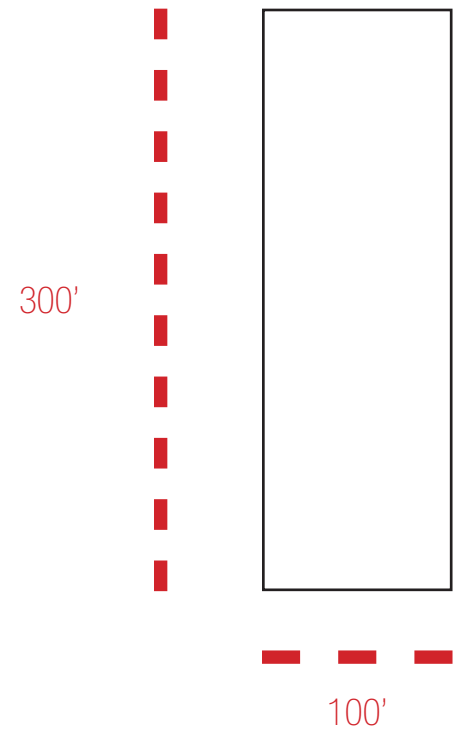
1:3 proportioned mass

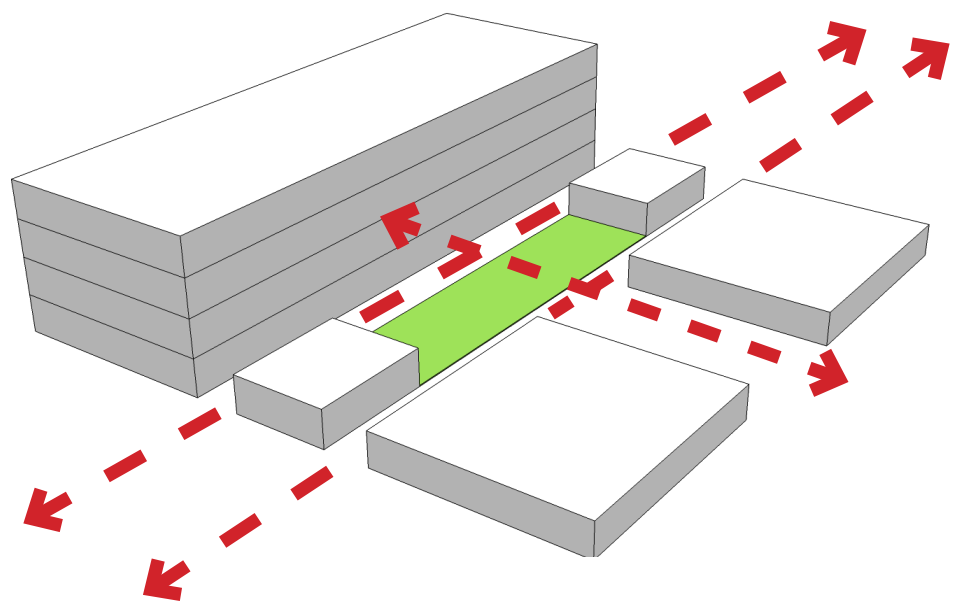


establish hierarchy

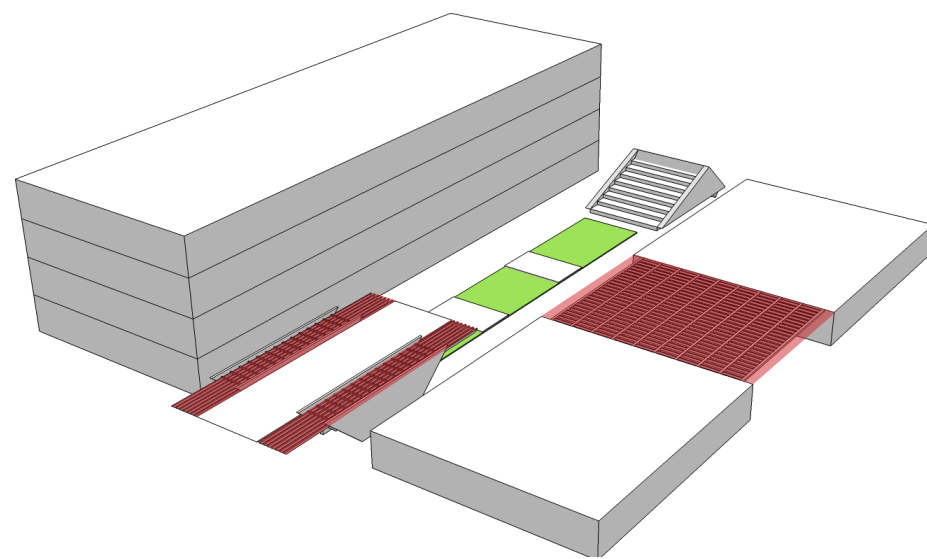


create courtyard

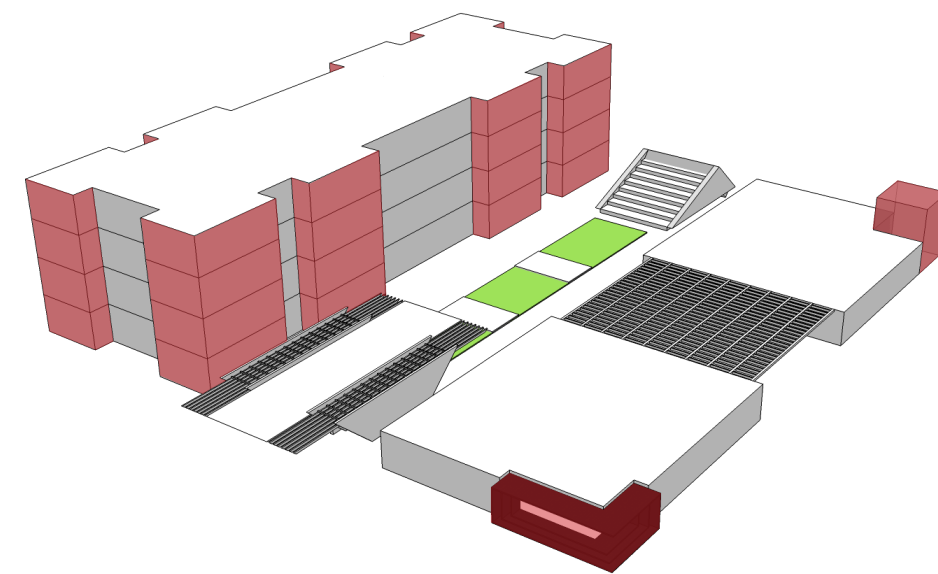




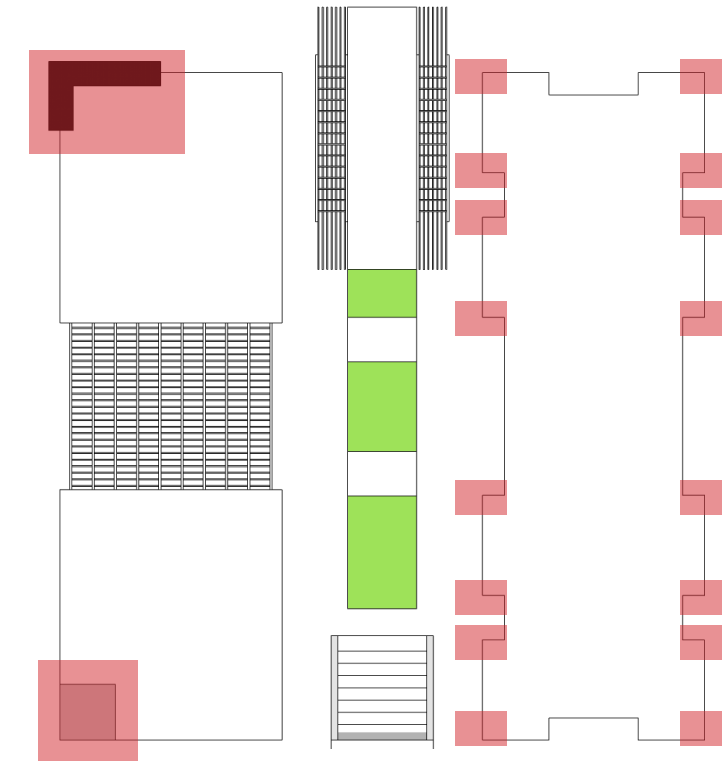
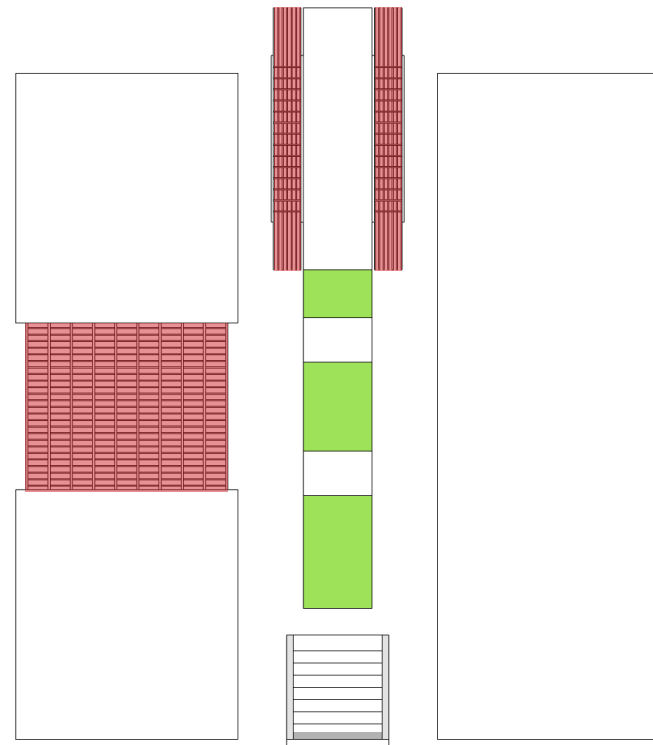
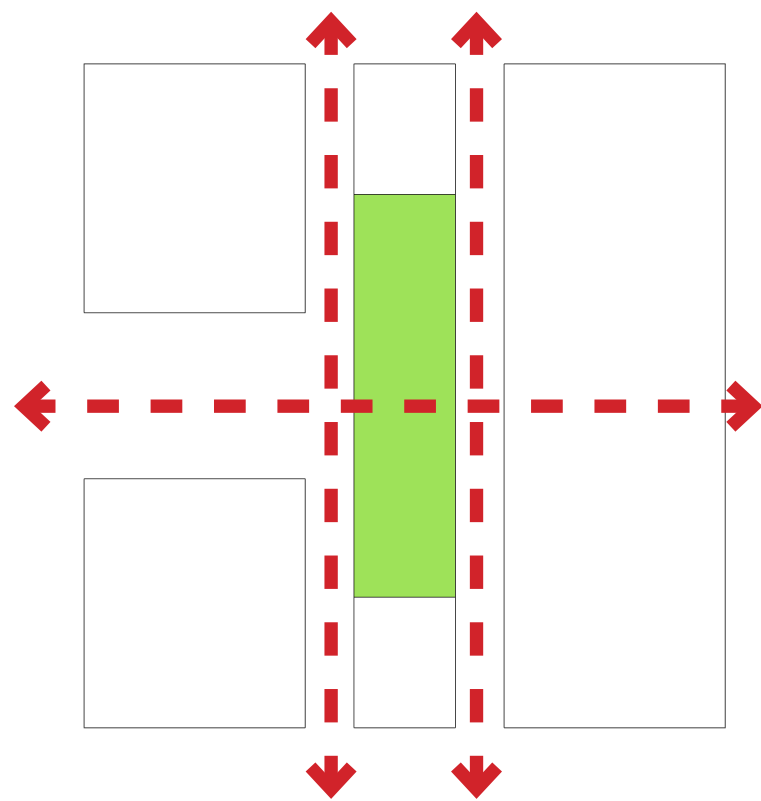
separate for accommodate circulation

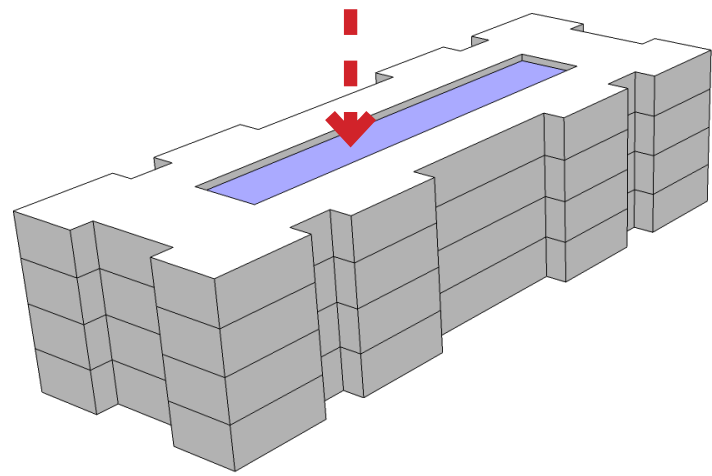


mark entrance

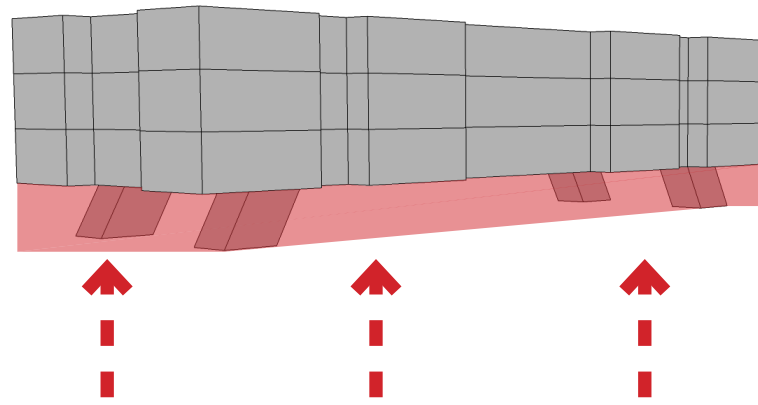


express corners

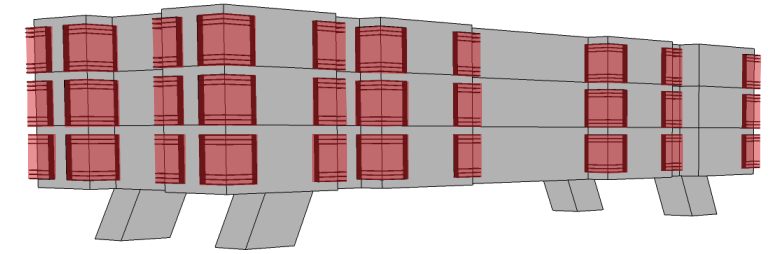




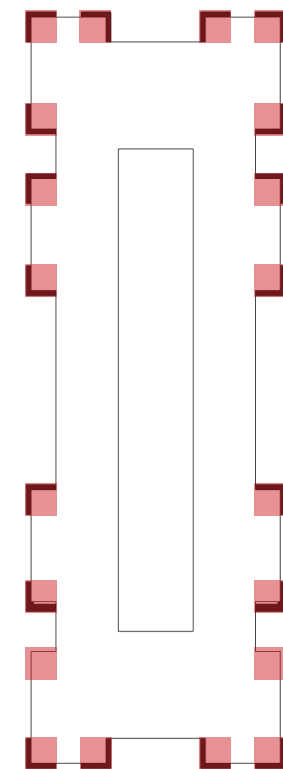
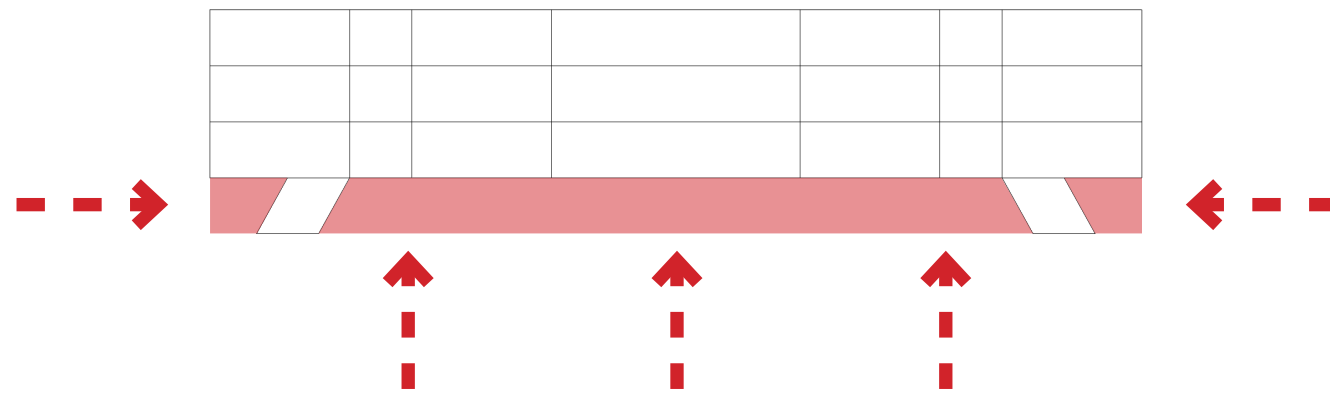
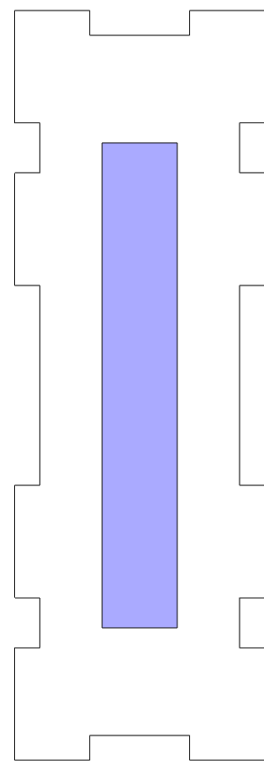
create atrium



establish hierarchy



express corners



Design Drawings



Fremont Street

Maryland Parkway

2

1

5

3

4

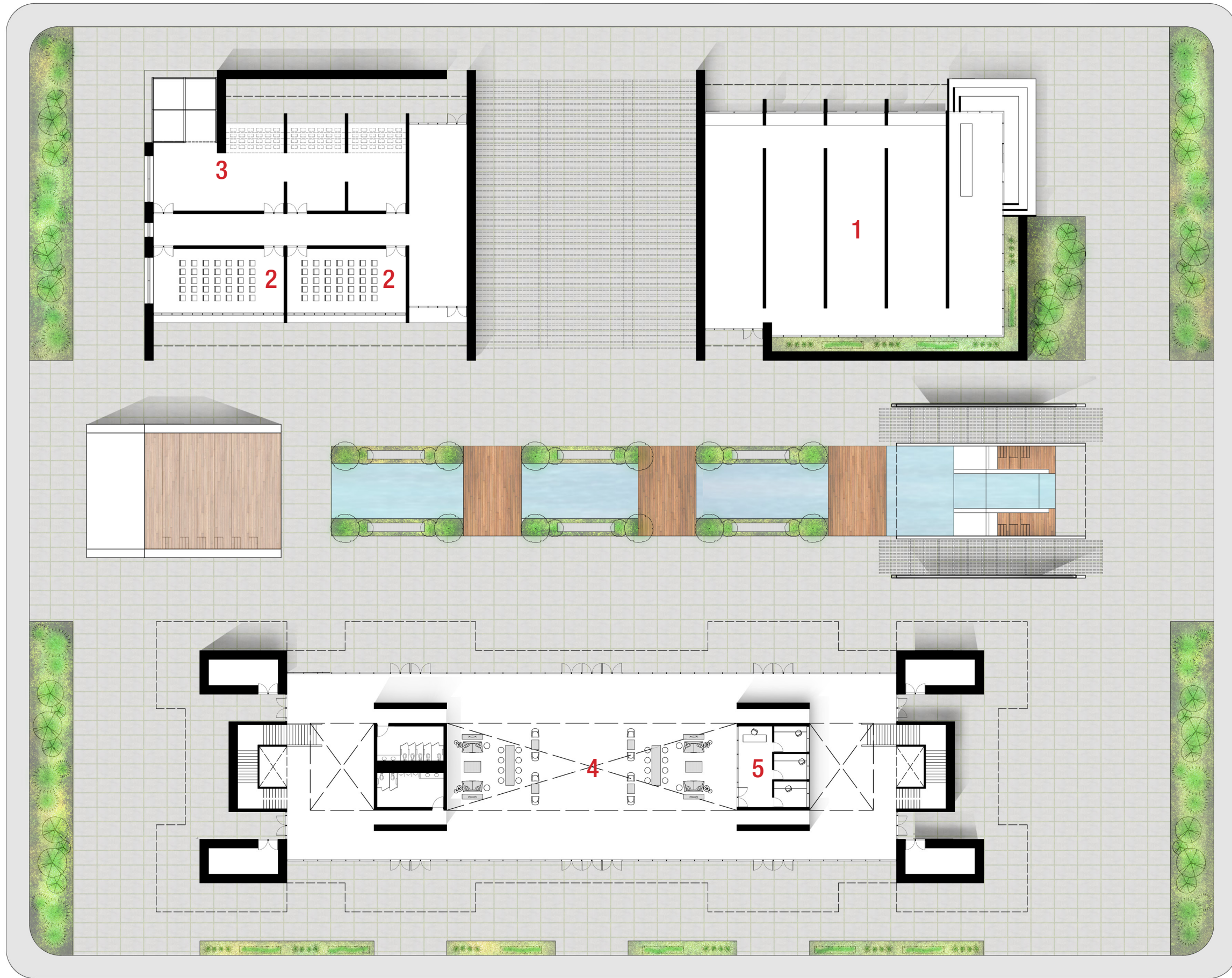
UNLV

- 1 Fremont bus stop
- 2 Art gallery
- 3 Workshop/Classrooms
- 4 Outdoor seating
- 5 Arts building

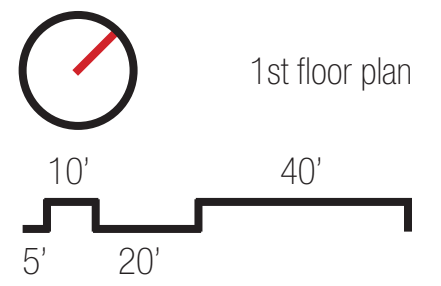


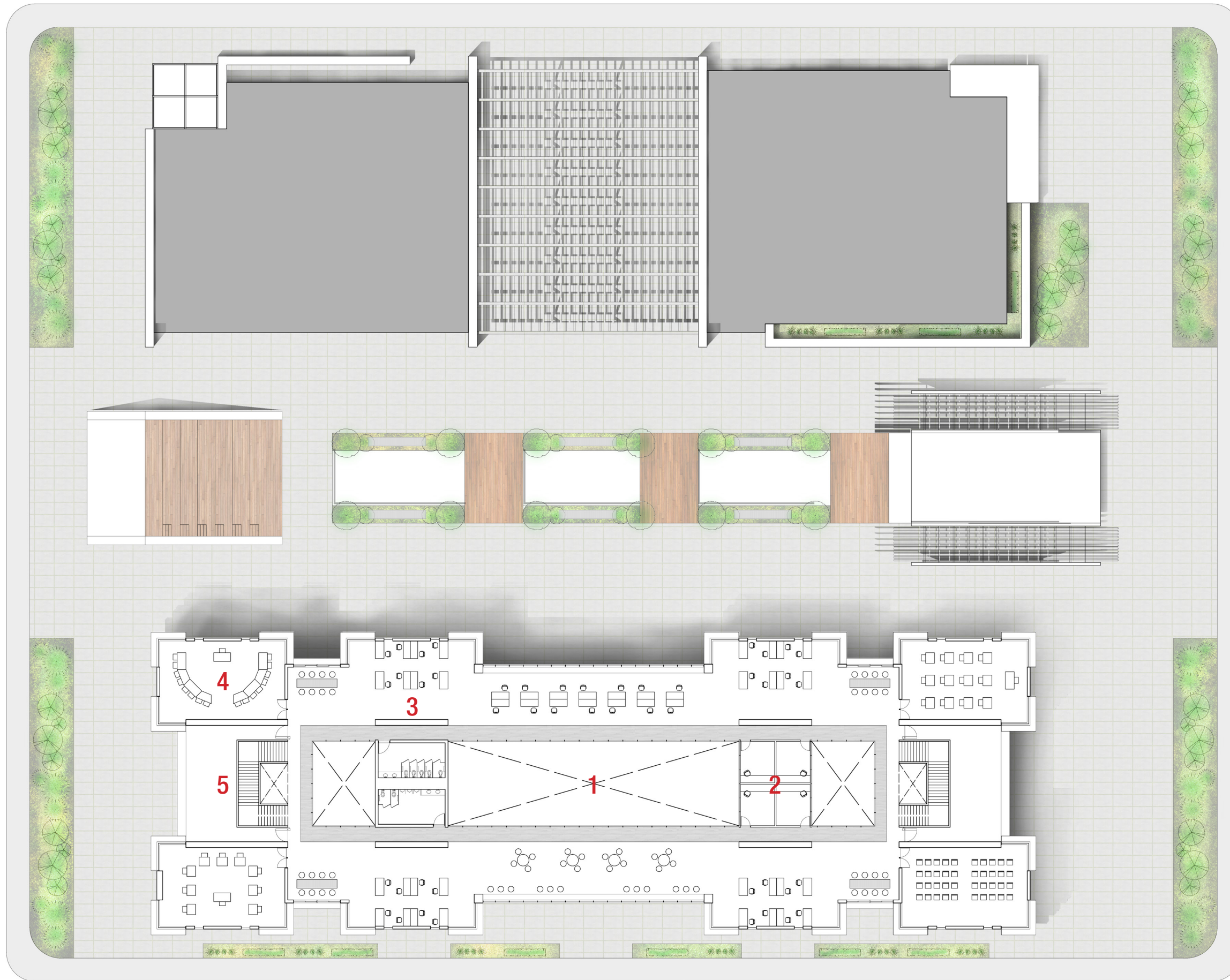
Site plan



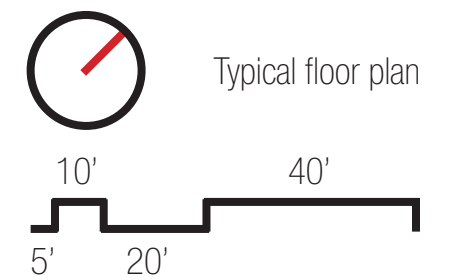


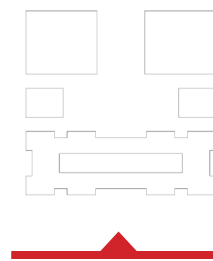
- 1 Art gallery
- 2 Classrooms
- 3 Workshops
- 4 Atrium
- 5 Administrative suite





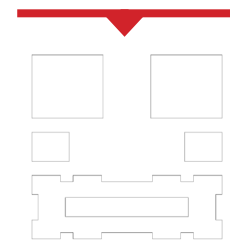
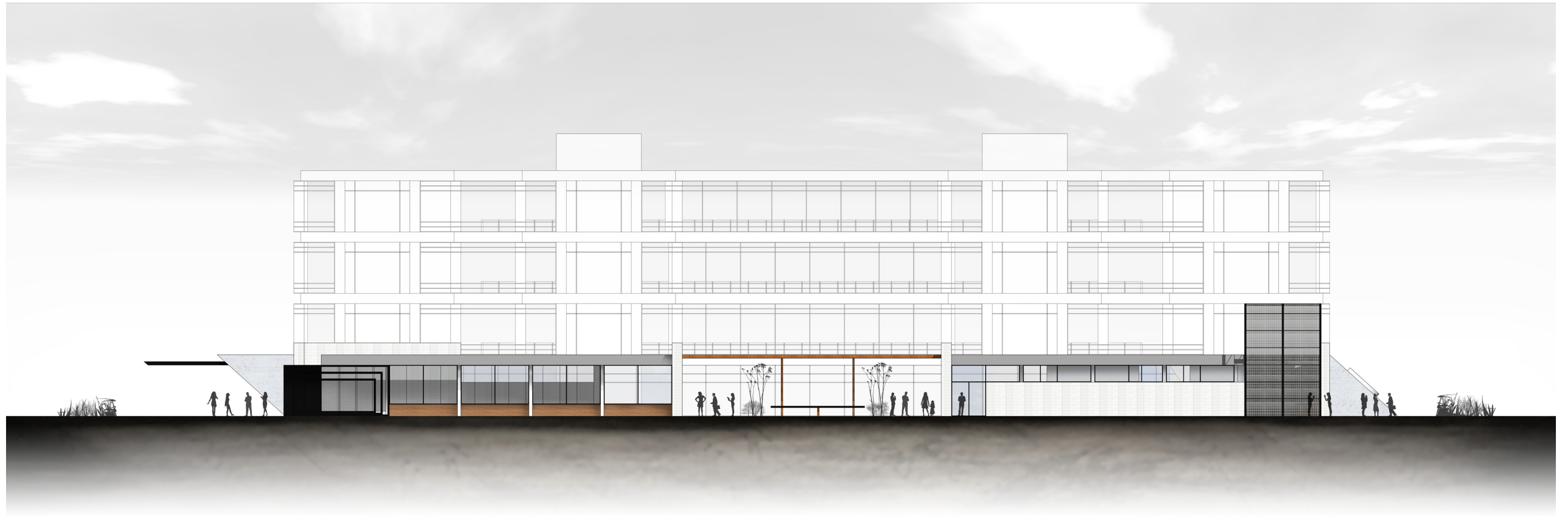
- 1 Atrium
- 2 Administrative suite
- 3 Studio space
- 4 Classroom
- 5 Outdoor balcony





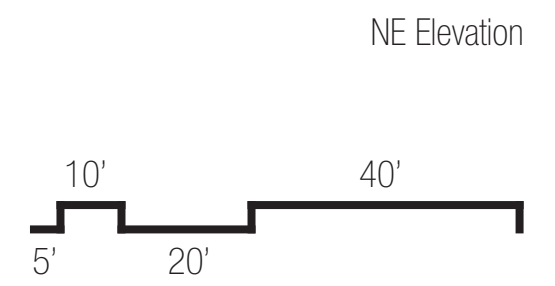
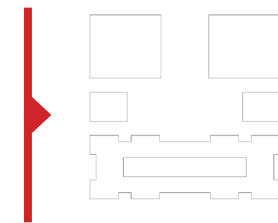
NW Elevation

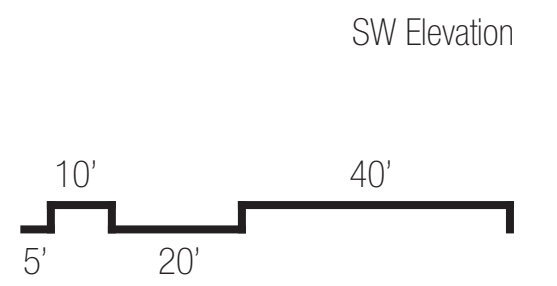
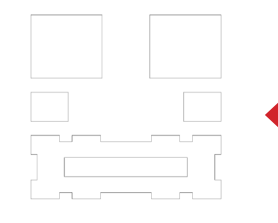


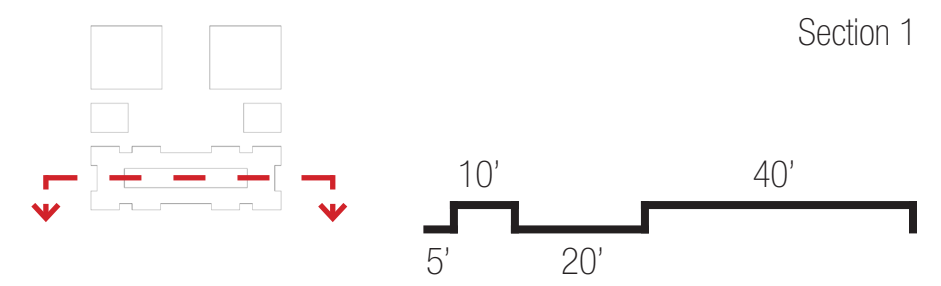


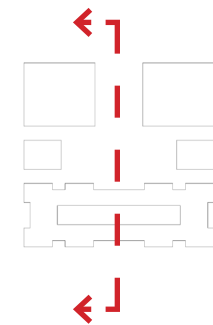
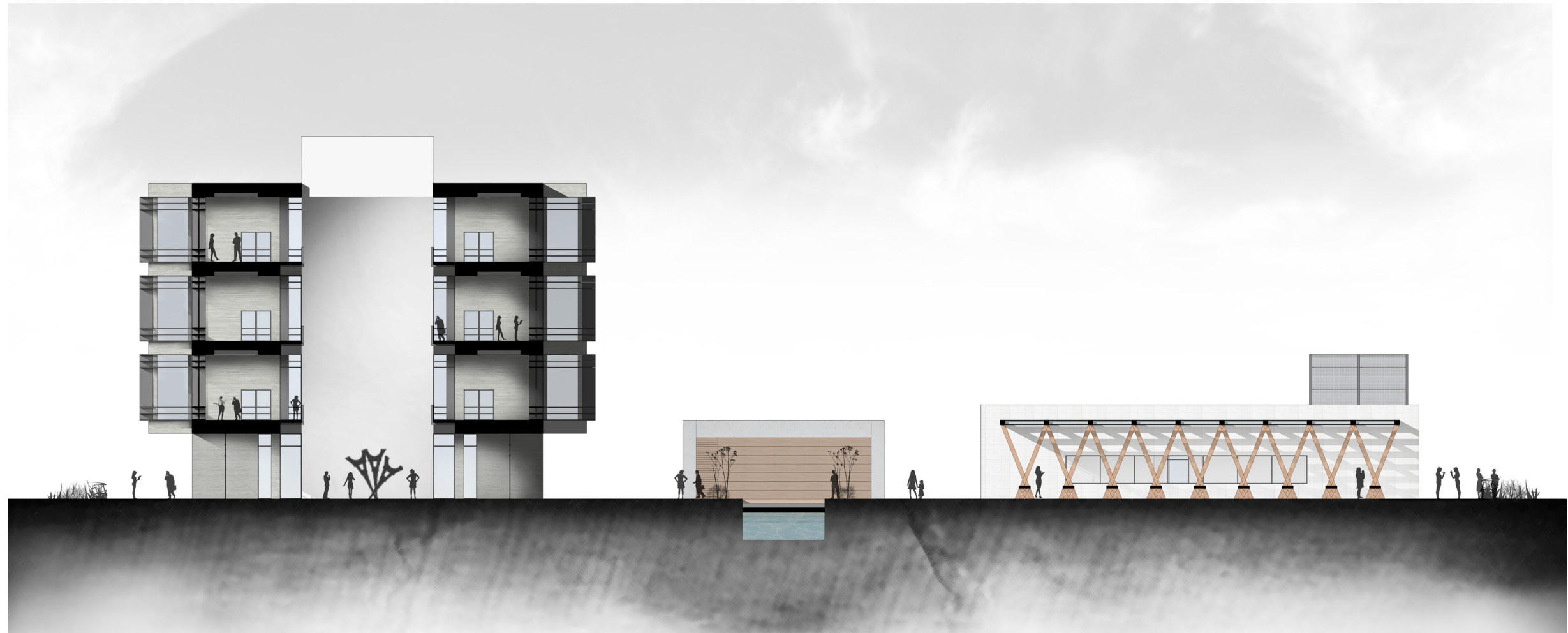
SE Elevation





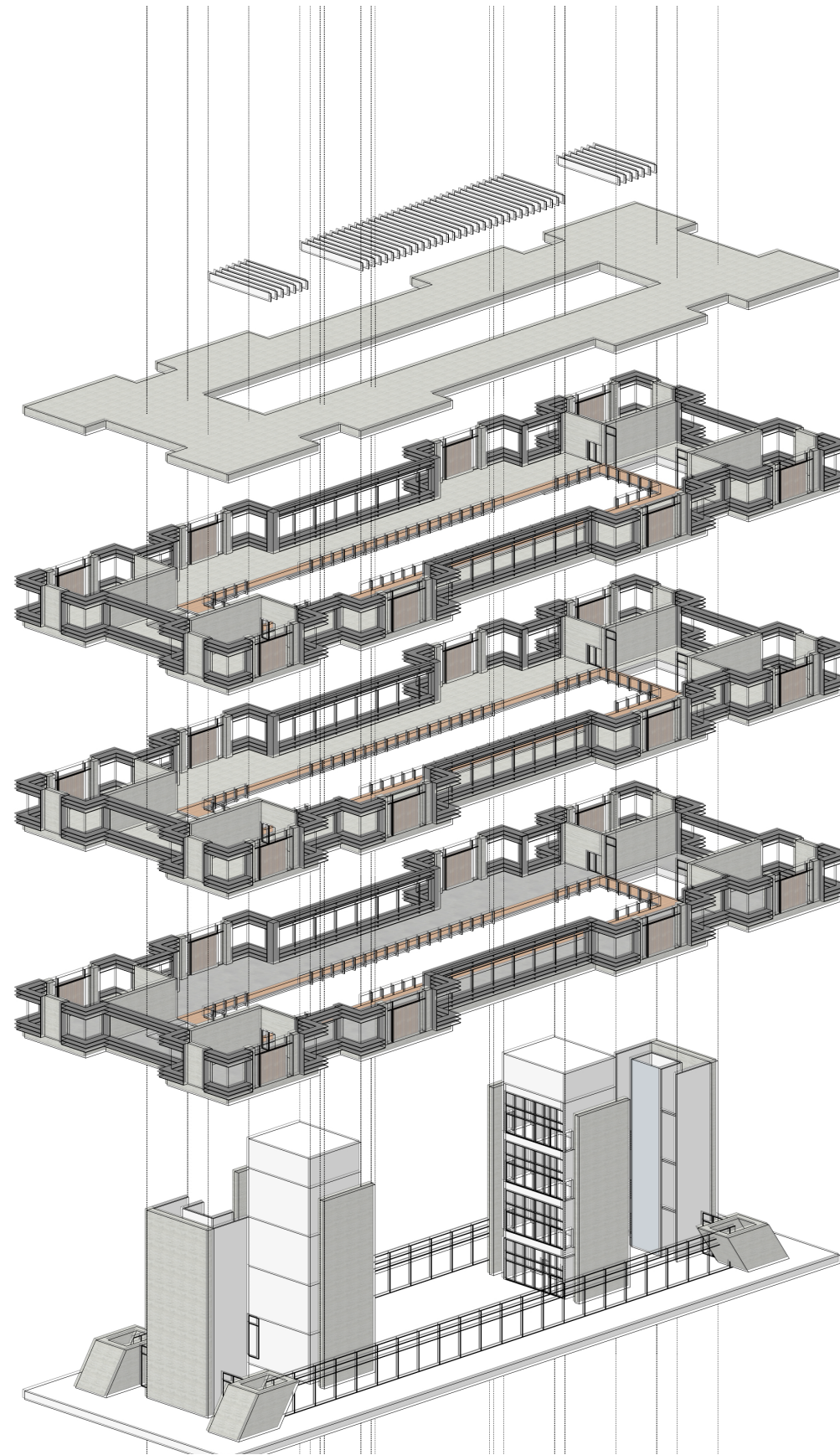




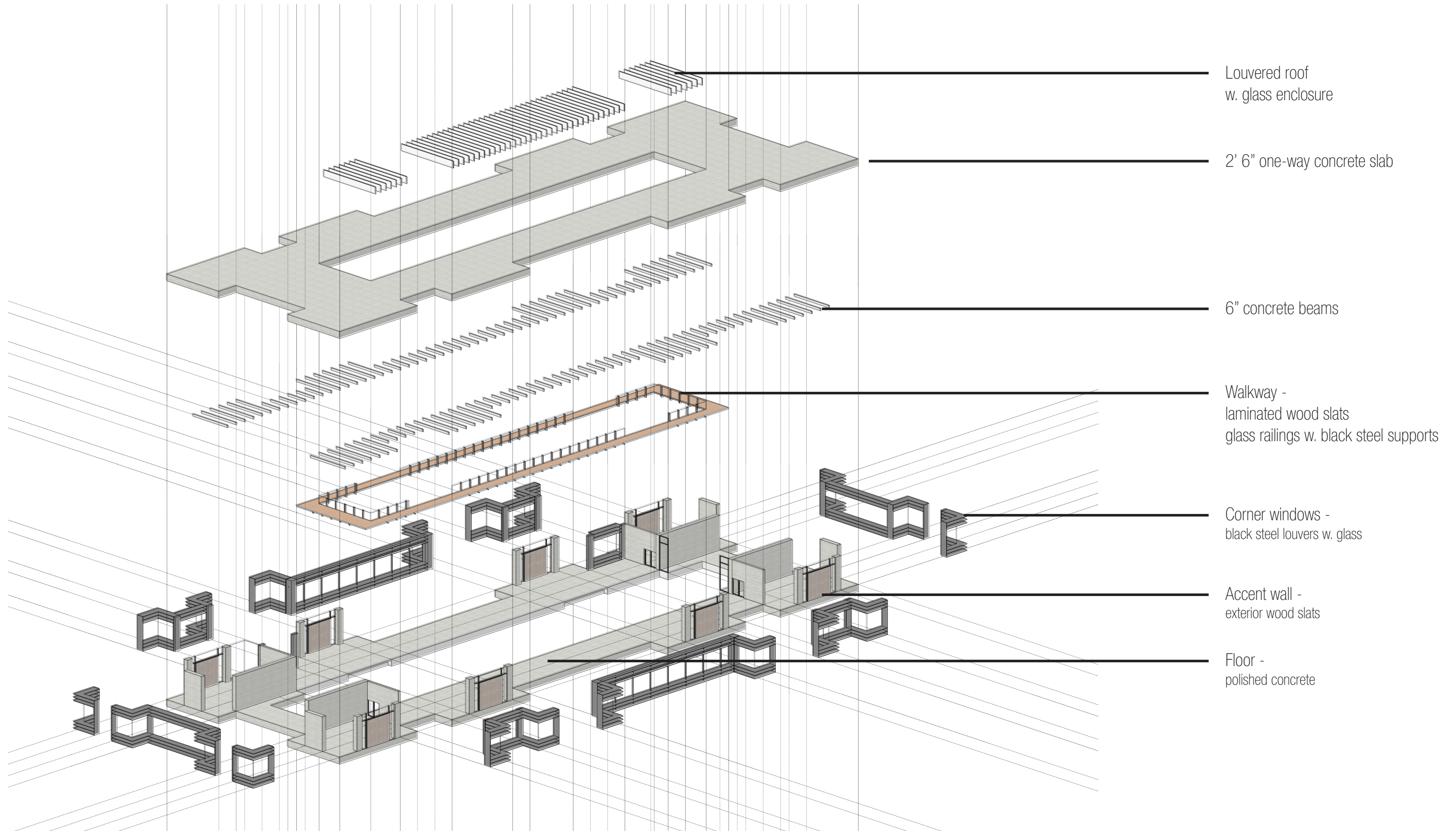


Section 2



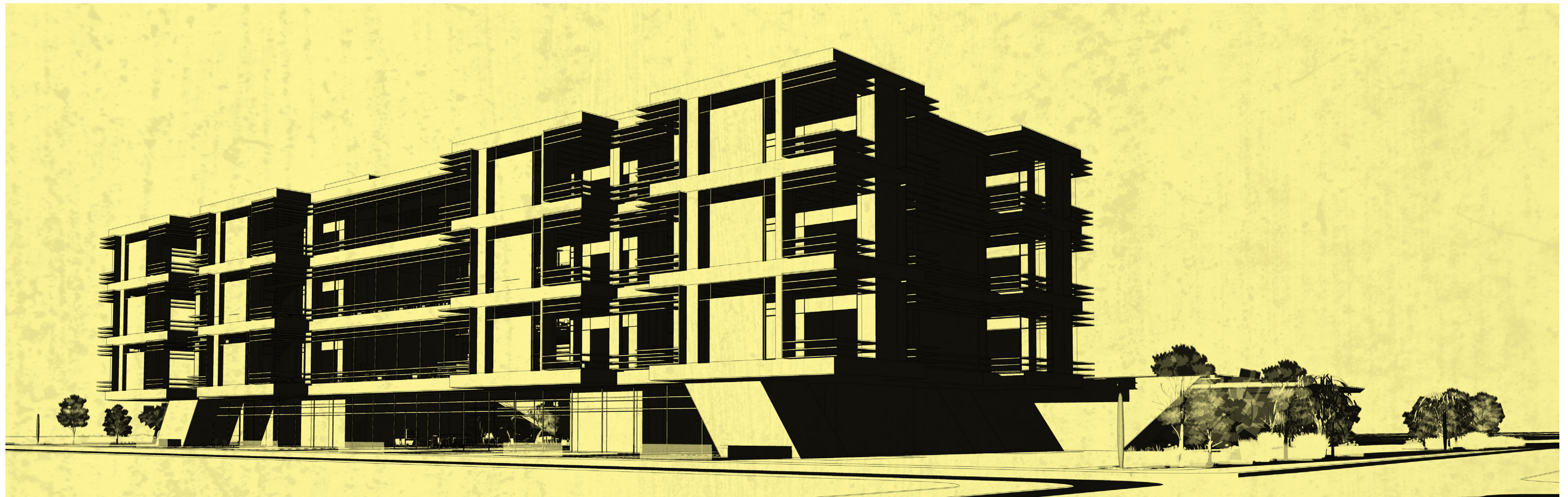


Academic building axon

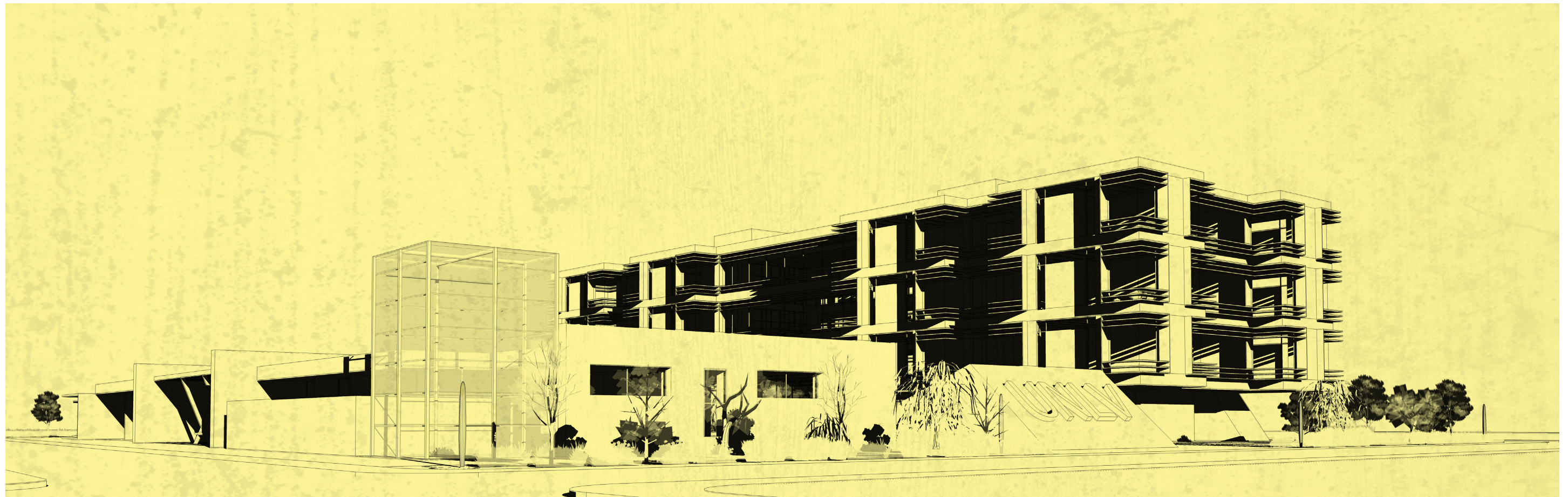


Academic building axon - Typical floor

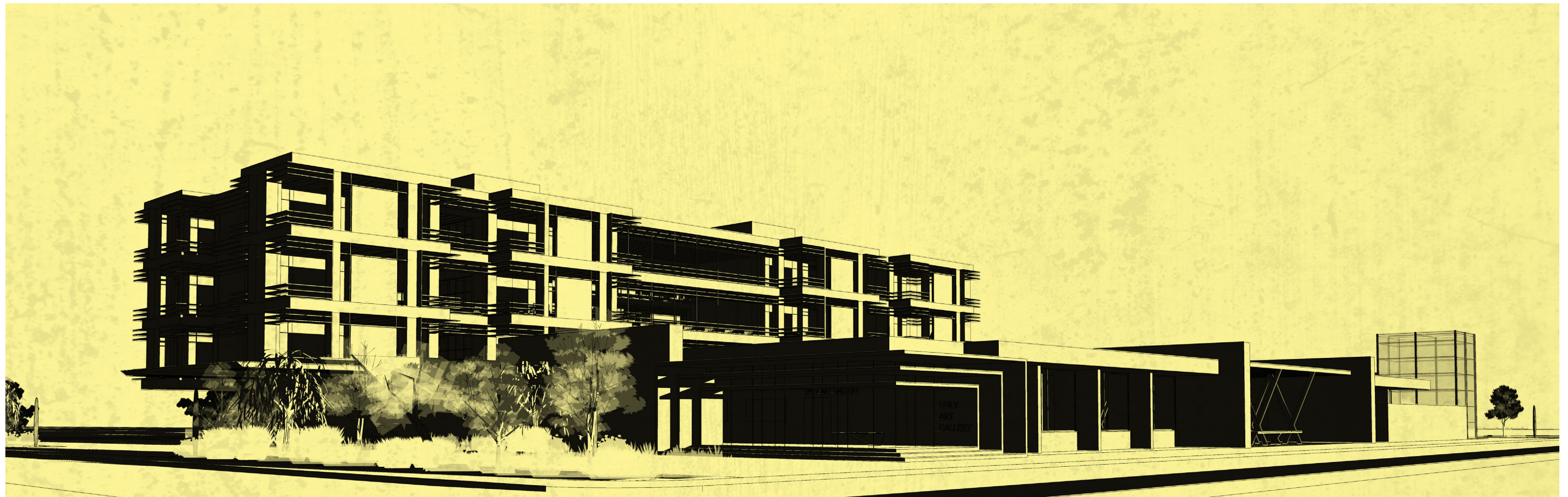
Shadow Renders



SW perspective



NE perspective



South perspective

Design Renders



Fremont street entrance



Workshop building perspective



Maryland Parkway entrance



Entrance into courtyard



Fremont bus stop entrance



NE Perspective



Courtyard perspective from outdoor seating space



Courtyard perspective from bus entrance



Art gallery entrance



Ground floor/Atrium



Typical studio space

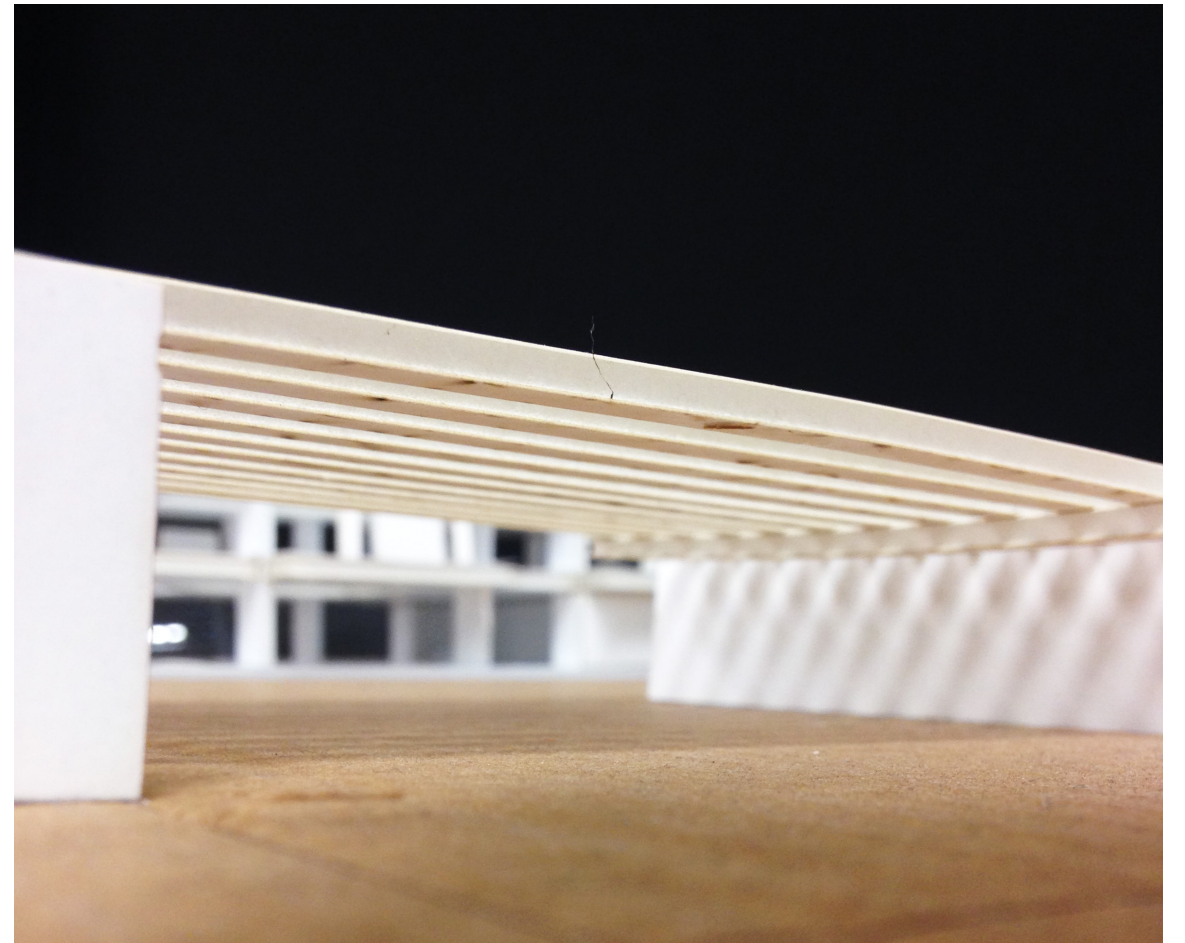
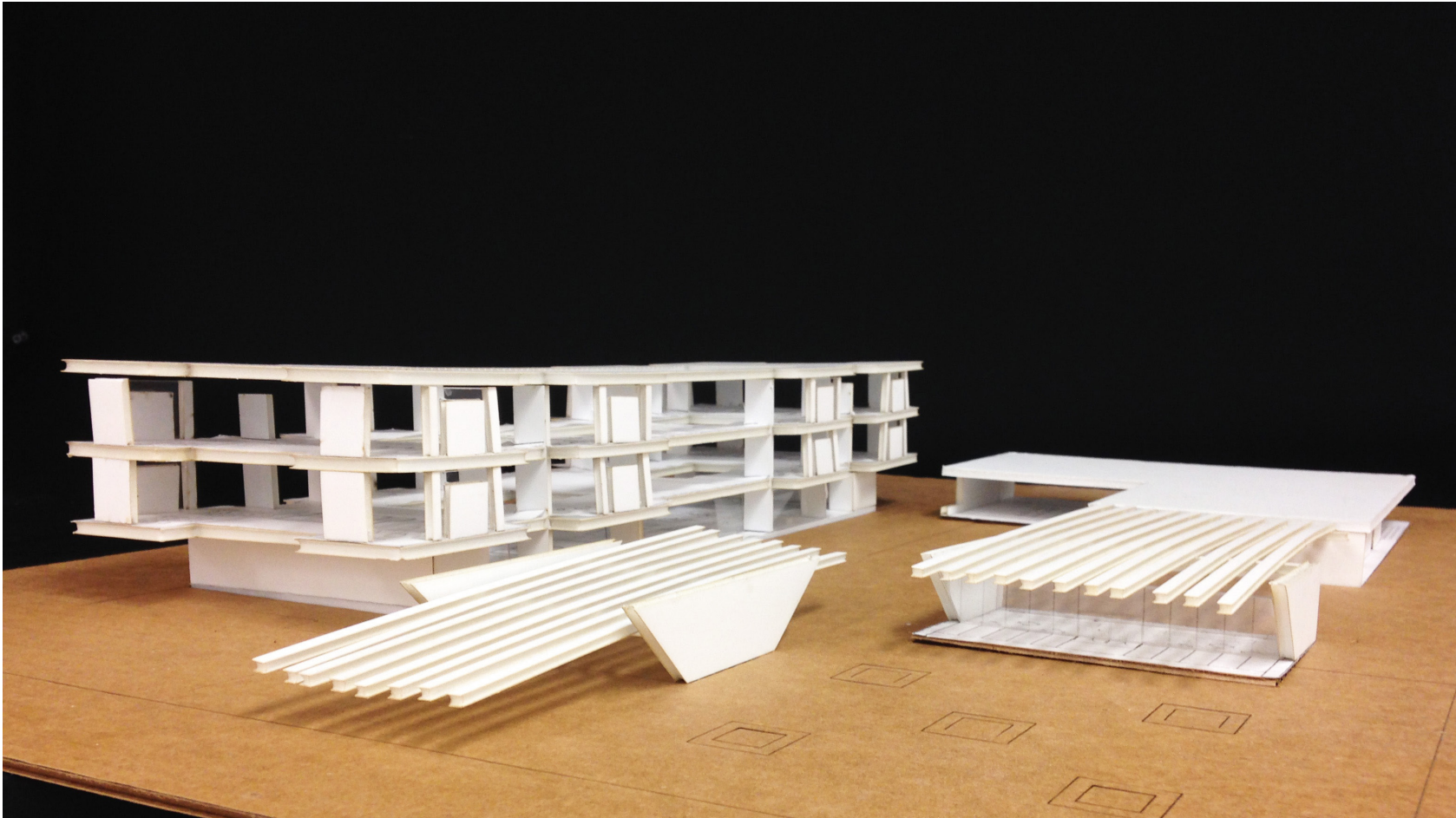
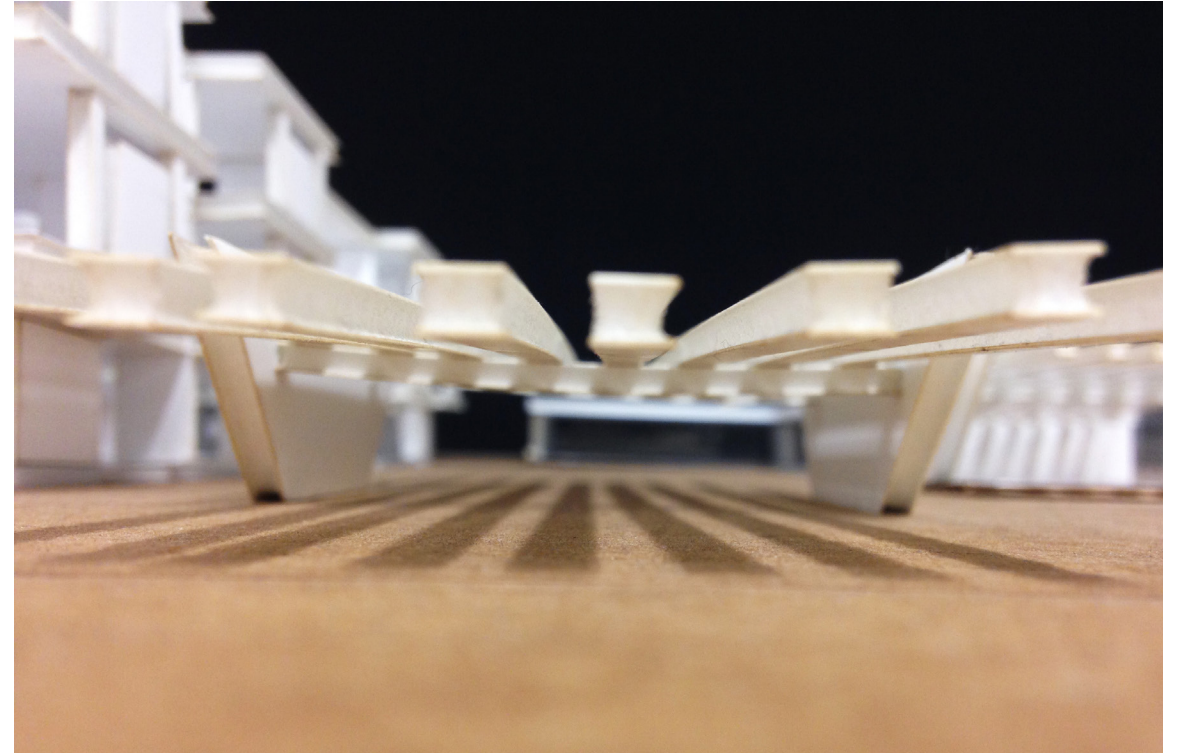
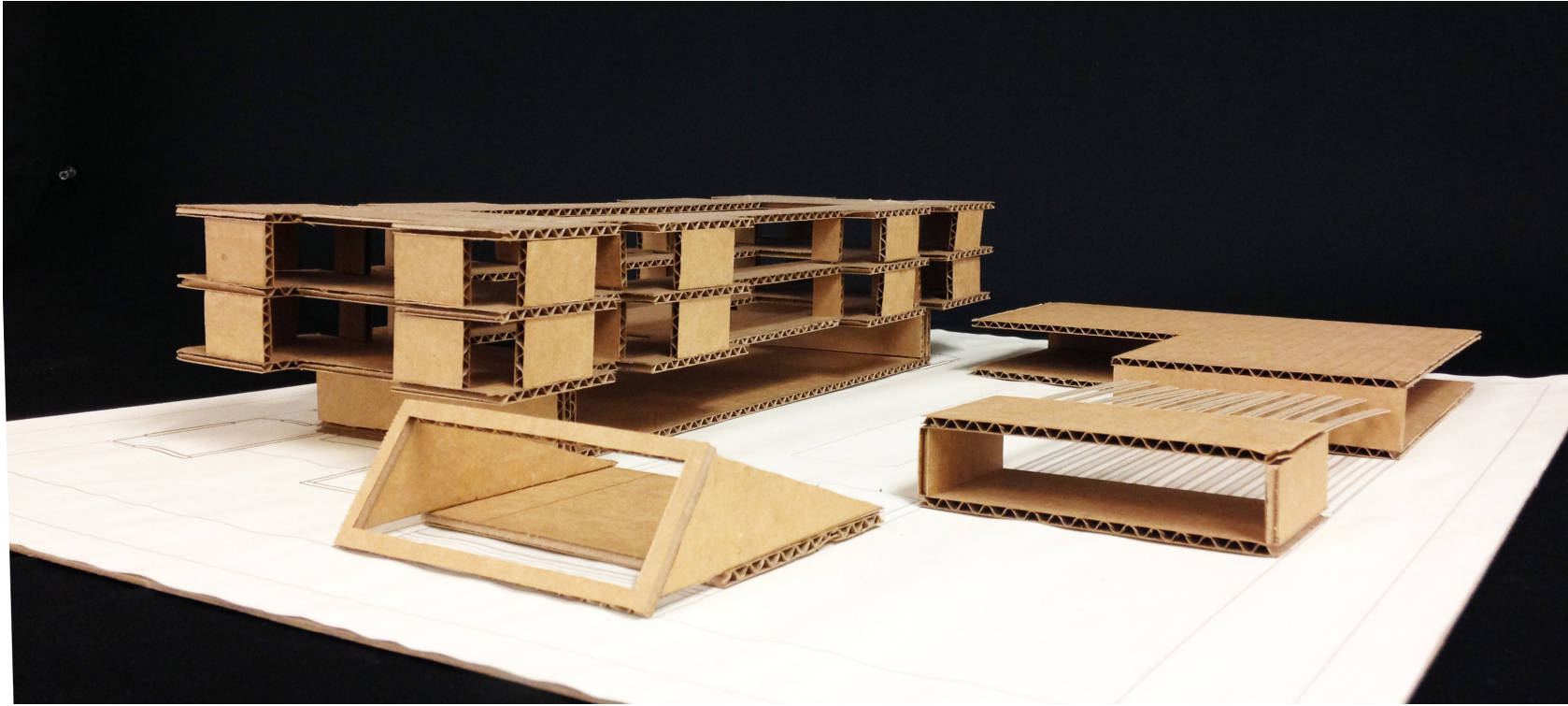


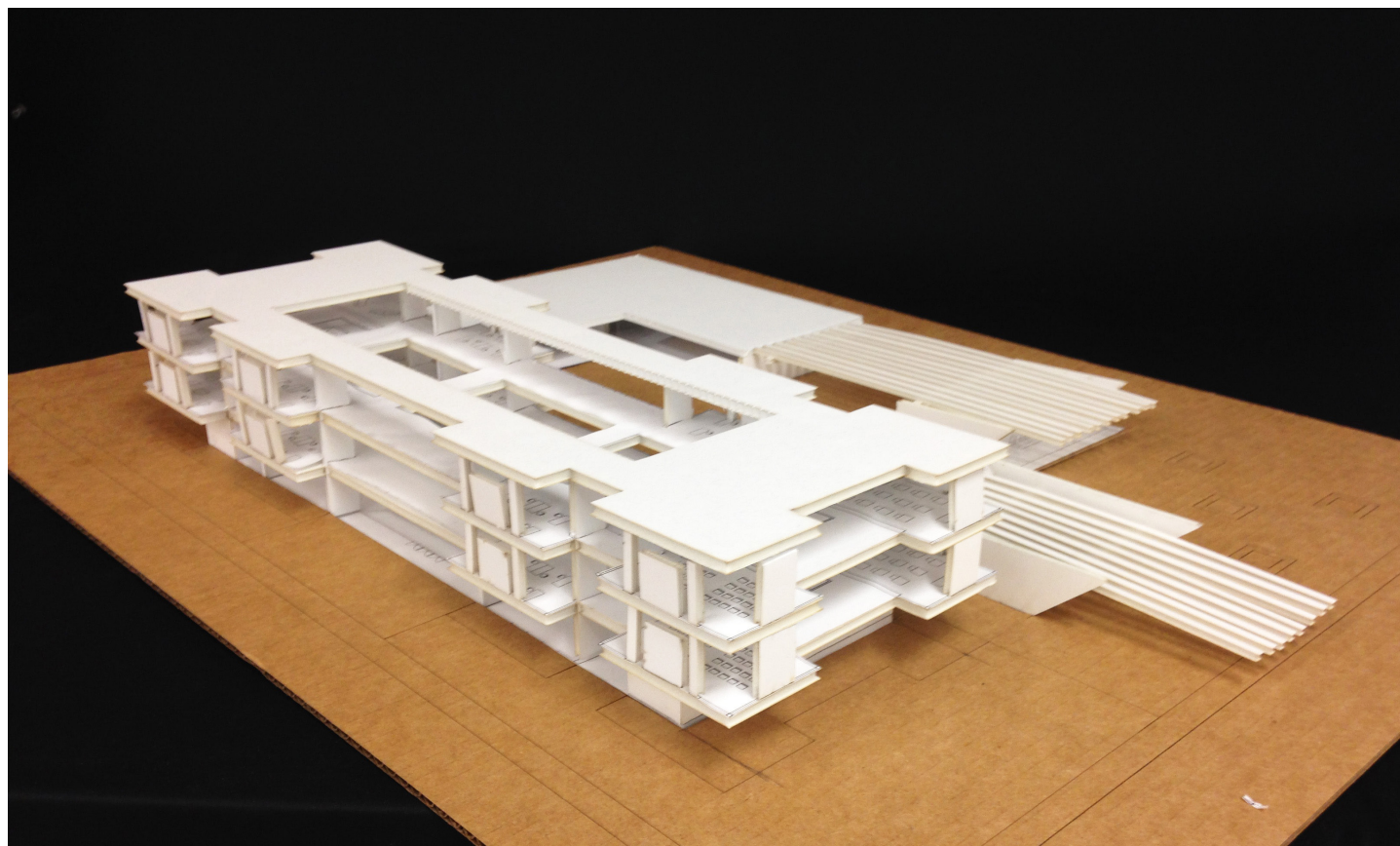
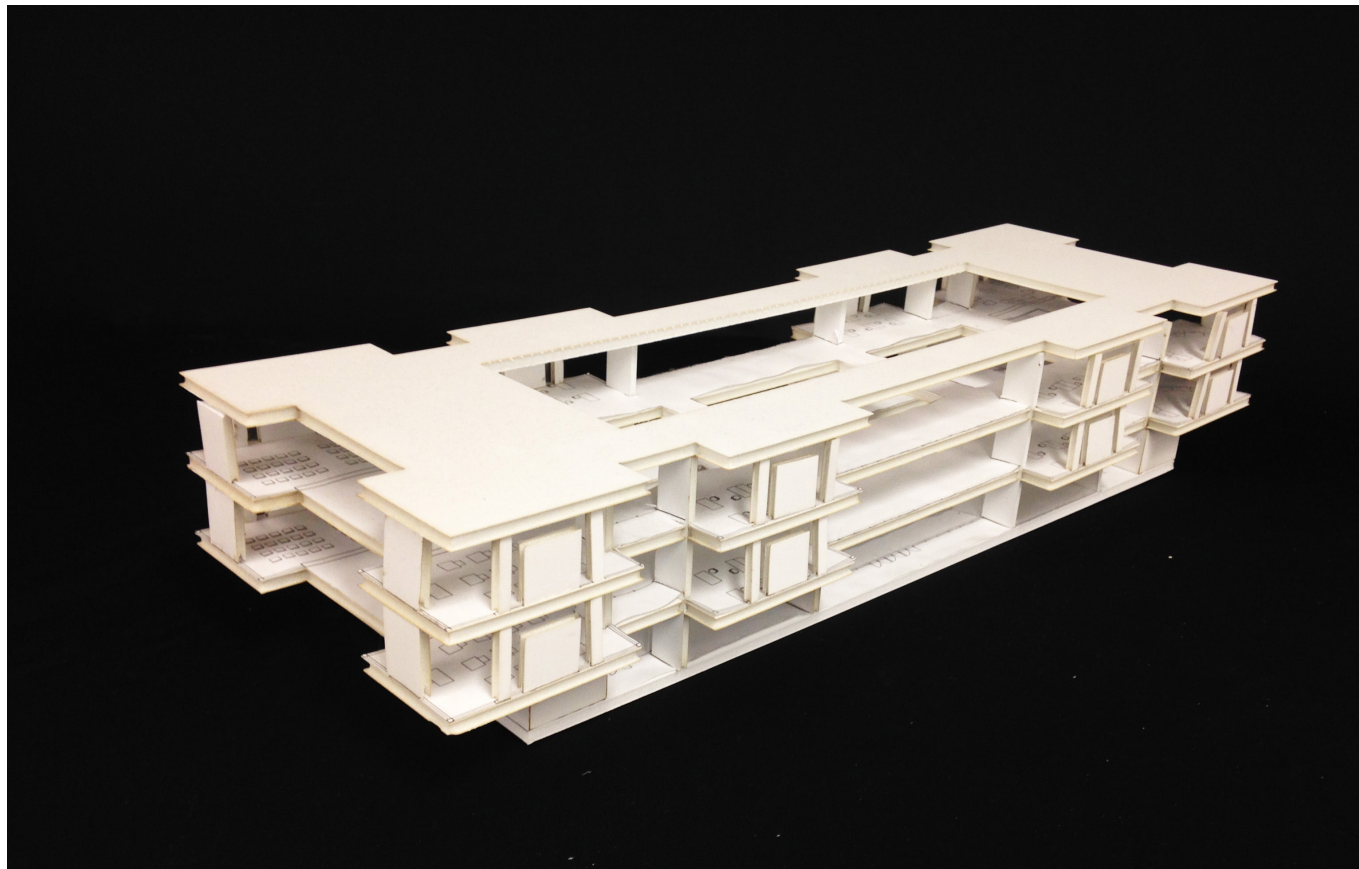
2nd floor perspective

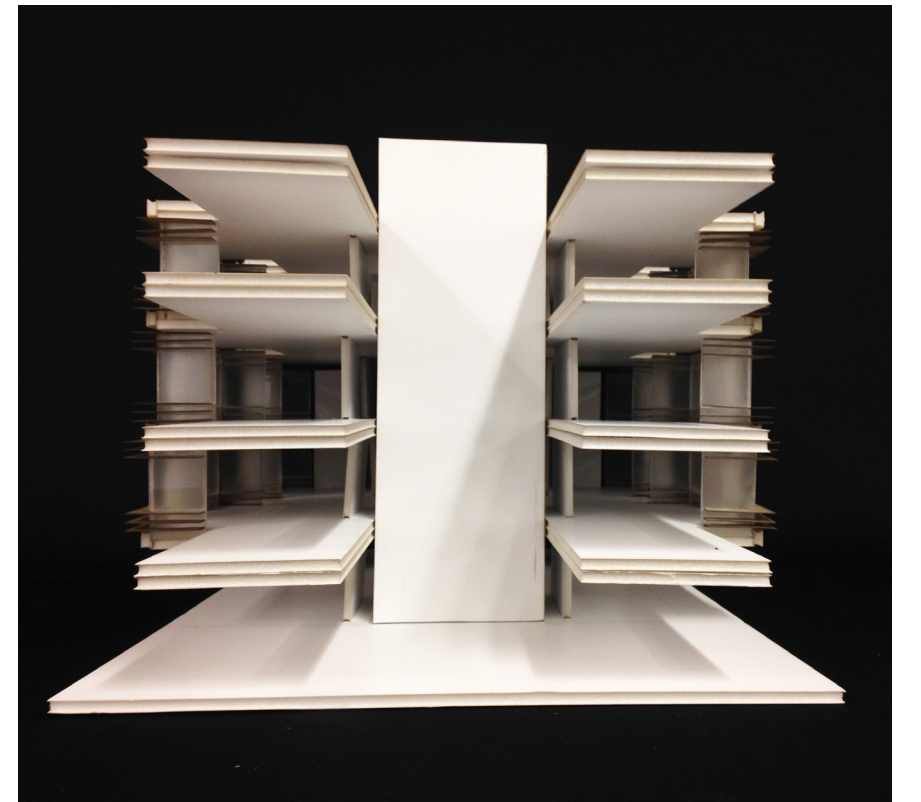
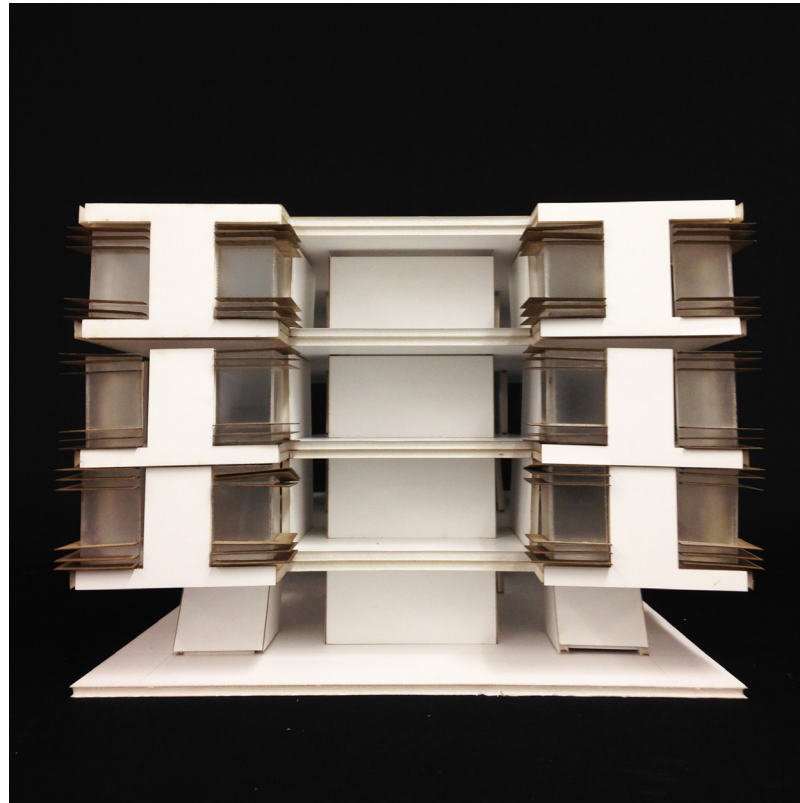
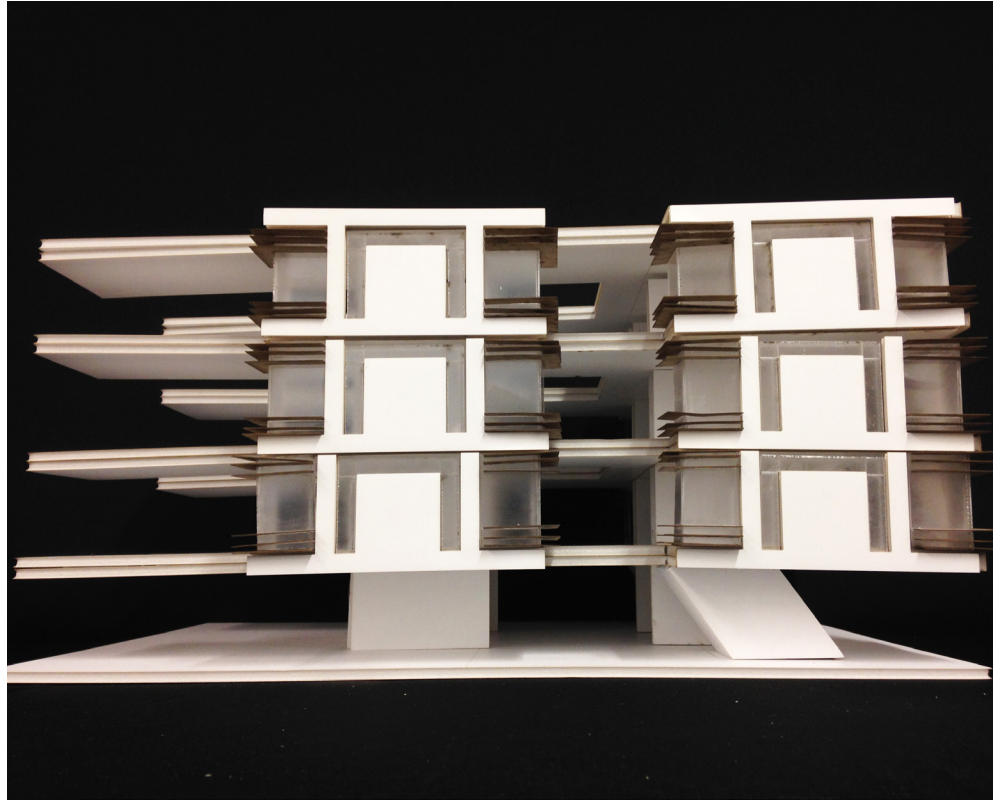


Typical classroom

Model Images









Conclusions

The intention of this project was to stimulate the development of downtown arts district by fostering interaction between the students and local arts community. The goal was to infuse downtown Las Vegas with foot traffic that can stimulate local businesses while also creating spaces where students can gain knowledge, hone their skills and display their talent in a campus that can initiate a dialogue with the downtown arts community.

All the structures on the site are treated and expressed in their inherent character to inform the users of their function and how they differ from one another. By creating a context appropriate academic arts building, the students are provided with a place of shelter from the surrounding to learn and explore their interests. The arts gallery, the workshops and the courtyard are areas of gathering where students can share their craft with the local arts community, which can help to develop a relationship between the two groups.

In a larger context, Architecture is a product of its surroundings. It is a reflection of the history of the place and the activities that occur in that place. It expresses and gives a sense of identity to the community. The courtyard, the allegorical oasis on the site, provides an area for gathering that activates its surroundings. It not only reflects on the origin of downtown Las Vegas but also speaks to the identity of Las Vegas as an oasis in the desert.

Bibliography

All drawings and photographs by author unless noted otherwise.

1. Base image for diagram: "Las Vegas, NV" Map. *Google Maps*. Google, 04 April 2016. Web.
2. Base image for diagram: "Las Vegas, NV" Map. *Google Earth*. Google, 04 April 2016. Web.