REVEALING AND EXPOSING
THE CITY BEHIND THE SYMBOL

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ABSTRACT

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Washington, D.C. is a city that is designed to serve an entire nation; yet, as a result of this, its own history and people can seem to be lost in the shadow of the federal city. With an abundance of museums throughout the city, the museum that is needed, but no longer exists, is one for the District itself. This omission leaves a tremendous gap in historical knowledge and no representation focused on the character of the city itself. How can we fulfill this need in a way that is unique to this specific city and would provide more than an exhibit by allowing people to be surrounded by and contribute to the accumulated evolution of their history?

Adaptive reuse encourages the gradual unearthing of historical inspiration, which allows representation of existing and past local populations. For my thesis, I sought to fulfill this need by turning to the existing fabric of the city, learning from it, and eventually employing adaptive reuse techniques to unify the existing framework with the new program.

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In a city such as Washington, D.C., which is filled with history and which focuses on historical knowledge and representation, the history and fabric of the city itself can seem to be overshadowed. By looking at the existing character of D.C. and its architecture as the foundation and using adaptive reuse techniques, the neighborhoods could be brought to the forefront and the true backbone of D.C. could shine. This would better represent a city that has been much more than a tourist attraction, but a home, and thus represent the people who have created this rich history.

The people within the District need an outlet to regain ownership of their history, create a place to learn about their city, and share what makes the larger District so unique. For my thesis, I sought to explore this history and provide this outlet by repurposing an existing building within the city.
DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my amazing parents who fostered my love of architecture and history. From constantly taking me to museums, to inspiring me with your passionate restoration of the farm, thank you. Love you both!

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This would not have been possible without the help of so many people along the way. I would like to specifically thank my committee members, Susan, Jodi and Elizabeth. You have all fed my hunger for history and adaptive reuse, and I could not have asked for a more helpful committee. Susan, your love for this city is infectious and has helped me to grow even more and I thank you for encouraging my pursuit from the beginning. Jodi, thank you for encouraging me to step out of my comfort zone and keep reaching my design goals, your help was invaluable. And finally, Elizabeth, thank you for sharing your depth of knowledge on preservation and inspiring me to keep bringing together my love of history and architecture.

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Discovery Period | The Need

Having grown up in the D.C. metropolitan area, I wanted the subject of my research to involve the history of Washington, D.C., with the hope that my project would add to the depth of character of the District. This seemed very much in the spirit of a city that has such an emphasis on historical knowledge and representation of past events and would be best achieved by turning to the existing fabric of the city. In the mindset of capturing the historical knowledge and representation of past culture reflected by the District, a city with countless museums and historical resources, one museum seemed to be missing— a city museum. Namely, a museum that would focus on the history of the local city itself, which functions alongside the federal city.

City Museum
Apart from the Smithsonian and privately funded museums within the federal city, there is a community museum which represents the Anacostia community of D.C. However, there currently is no museum that represents the entirety of the population that lives in the District. This seemingly large oversight was explained when it was determined that the Carnegie Library used to house a City Museum of D.C., supported by the Historical Society of D.C. However, it closed in 2005.
Carnegie Library
The Carnegie Library is a focal point in the city due to its location in Mount Vernon Square which divides K Street. This location seems to separate the city from the more local neighborhoods. The City Museum of D.C.’s short-lived history can be partially attributed to its location in the square, which is somewhat isolating and which made it hard to maintain any type of program that required foot traffic as the main way to attract visitors.3

Program Adaptation
With its eye-catching location, the program designation has been modified in an attempt to attract consumer-driven foot traffic. After restorations, the building will house primarily retail on the main floor with the Historical Society of D.C. maintaining a presence on the upper floors. The restorations include the creation of an atrium to open up the interior of the building. However, with the main floor being retail, specifically an Apple store, it is questionable how many visitors would venture further into the building for the small exhibits provided by the historical society.4 As such, the city still seems to be in need of a true city museum for all of its residents.
As the national capital, Washington, D.C., has a unique identity made up of residents, short-term residents, commuters and tourists. Being the political focal point of the nation makes the city subject to the changing of political leadership and a rather transient city. The daytime population increases as a much larger number of people commute into the city than commute out or travel to work from residences in the city, as shown in Figure 7. As such, the number of people commuting into the city during the day can appear to alter and overshadow the local city, which remains once much of the daytime population has returned to the suburbs.

**Focal Points**

With an emphasis on daytime commuters, the area promoting tourism is centered around the original ‘federal’ city within the District of Columbia. Eric Fischer’s image charting photographs using geotagging, time, date and people, show the areas in which the most photos are taken by tourists, who do not stray far into the neighborhoods of the District, as shown in Figure 8. However, there is a vertical trend upwards on the perpendicular axis of the streetscape that seemingly ends at Mount Vernon Square and the convention center. With the federal city seemingly belonging to the tourists, the intent is to create a city museum primarily for the residents of DC to feel that they are a part of the extensive history of the District.
Discovery Period | The Location

Axis
In conjunction with the imagery from Eric Fisch-er’s photography mapping, the majority of the museums in the city are in proximity to, if not on, the National Mall. The National Mall consists of the Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial on a line intersecting with the perpendicular axis line of the White House at the Washington Monument, thus creating a cross-axis from east to west. The Na-tional Portrait Gallery (shown in red), however, adds a north-south axis to the Mall. This axis leads up 9th Street and seemingly comes to an end at Mount Vernon Square as it creates a form of barri er and marks the unofficial beginning of the local neighborhoods of the District.

System of Alleys
With the focus pointing towards the neighborhoods as the overlooked identity of the larger District, the hidden history of the alleys came to the forefront. The alleys were added shortly after Pierre L’En-fant’s late eighteenth-century plan was established as the physical city and were historically ‘H’ or ‘I’ shaped. These designs had larger alley widths reaching 30 feet within the square and 15 feet connecting alleys off of the public streets. This provid ed privacy and led to them being considered “blind alleys,” with hidden lower income communities that boomed following the Civil War.

Figure 9. Map of the City of Washington; For use of the Engineer Commissioner, D.C., showing howing the typical “H” and “I” shaped alley systems, D.C., 1872
Neighborhood of Alleys

The complex history of D.C.'s alley systems can be best examined by looking at the era of construction. The large rise in the construction of alleys seen in the 1880s was due to the increase in the number of stables being built on the inside of the squares as well as the increase in alley dwellings. This spike then levels out after a law was enacted that outlawed the construction of housing within alleys. This number then spikes again with the transition to automobiles, starting around 1910 with the construction of garages. However, with this transportation invention came the transition to people moving farther out into the suburbs and other factors.

After examining the overall dates in which alley construction boomed, it was time to zoom into the neighborhoods. Keeping in mind the significant baroque axis of museums along with the current location of the Carnegie Library and Historical Society, Shaw stands out as a neighborhood of interest due to its significant number of alley buildings as well as its location.
An alley:

“Any court, thoroughfare, or passage, private or public, thirty feet or more in width, that does not open directly with a width of at least thirty feet upon a public street that is at least forty feet wide from building line to building line...”

-Dwelling Act of 1934

Displacement
Consistent with the timeline of the construction dates of alley dwellings discussed above, part of the sudden decline in alley dwellings can be attributed to government action to clean up the city. The Dwellings Act of 1934 “sought to eliminate the unhealthy and dangerous conditions in the city’s alleys to improve the quality of life for alley dwellers” and forced people to clear out of the alleys that were their homes. Despite its apparent good intentions, the Act can be seen as encouraging the uprooting of communities and displacement of people. One term used to describe this affect is “root shock,” which Mindy Fullilove defines as “the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one’s emotional ecosystem.” This type of shock is something of significance to this area and the people affected deserve a platform to give their perspectives on this history.

One way in which these types of individual histories are told is through oral histories. There is a program called Story Corps that travels throughout the country and has locations for people to record their oral histories. Bringing this program to D.C. and its alleys would provide an avenue for this root shock to be verbalized and preserved for future generations.
Discovery Period | The Stables

When looking at the overall breakdown of building types within D.C., stables and garages make up the vast majority of the building fabric. The Shaw neighborhood stands out as a place of interest due to its location, but now also because of the large number of stables and garages within its alleys. Shaw itself has numerous stables, but out of thirty-four total, twenty-five are within Blagden Alley and Naylor Court.13

Thus, when looking at the Shaw neighborhood, the number of stables and garages would make them a hard building typology to miss. However, the most common type would have been private, single family garages or stables as the majority of the larger commercial stables were on the main streets.14 These larger commercial stables would be a more realistic size for the proposed program.
Commercial Stables

“The commercial stable or livery stable is a large stable structure where horses and carriages could be had for hire, or where horses were kept and fed for a fixed charge.”

- Definition of Commercial Stables

Images of the interior of historic commercial horse barns are hard to find within DC, with only about 8 out of the approximately 300 stables being categorized as such after the survey. Thus, we will have to look outside of the District.

The C.W. Miller Livery Stable in Buffalo, New York, is a commercial, multi-story, masonry building that is on the National Register of Historic Places. The original horse ramps were wooden and spanned length of the building at a gradual slope within the central bay. There were also “L” shaped wooden ramps that were wider and in the corners. Later, the building was re-purposed into a car garage by the name of Huron Street Garage.
Discovery Period | The Marriage

**Emphasizing the Past**

The issue of identity comes up when taking an existing building or element and adding something new. There are the physical elements to consider as well as the unseen identity and overall character of the entity. Thus, it becomes important to identify these elements and establish their relationships to each other, but also recognize their identity and significance so that they can come together to create something better.

**Understanding Adaptive Reuse**

With a project that is not historically designated, the decisions with respect to adaptive reuse are not dictated by a larger body of rules, otherwise known as the Secretary’s Standards, which aim to protect historical buildings. Thus, the approach taken to marry the different elements in the design can bend and be tailored to the specific needs, step by step.

“Secret #1: There are no secrets to a happy marriage. Because like a real marriage, a garden, or any living thing, the city needs to be constantly re-newed - but can only grow from its past.”

- Dennis Frenchman

Figure 22. “Dispatchwork” Lego art by Jan Vormann, which represents the idea of marrying old and new and making something unique from it.
Program and People (Left)
This collage shows the marrying of the larger idea of the city museum program with the people of D.C. With the neighboring alley museums in Blagden Al-ley and the rich history of the alleys as places where people once lived, the alley and the museum can once again be the place for the people of D.C.

Local and Larger (Upper right)
This collage shows the marrying of the smaller lo-cal and larger city aesthetics of D.C. 9th street has the smaller residential row houses of neighborhoods rich with alley systems while the larger facade of the Washington Convention Center represents the larger zoomed out version of D.C. Despite this contrast, they both make up the District and can work togeth-er in how they serve the community.

Front and Back (Lower right)
This collage shows the marrying of the front and back of the District. The alleys represent the hid-den backside of the District with the federal city as the exposed front. The objective being to emphasize that although they have different characters, they are both a big part of what makes the District of Co-lumbia what it is.
Design Period | The Site

After discovering the vast history of the Shaw neighborhood and its horse stables, the choice to have the City Museum of D.C. in the former Tally Ho Stables was a natural fit.

Diagram of heritage trail through Shaw neighborhood which passes the site and can be incorporated.
May 10, 2016

This map is as accurate as currently available data allows. It is a planning and informational document not intended for legal determinations.

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Period of Significance
1833-1932

Year of Construction
1839 - 1880
1881 - 1904
1905 - 1918
1919 - 1932
1933 - 2014
Pre-90’s Renovation
1300 Naylor Ct. N.W., D.C.

Originally known as Tally Ho Stables, a commercial livery stable, the building was designed by Diller Baer Groff in 1883 for Holmes & Thompson. Tally Ho Stables stands out from other buildings in the District as well as from other buildings in the neighborhood due to its size and commercial use. As a commercial horse stable, it was used to stable multiple horses for people to use in the city. In the 1920s, it was converted into stables on the upper floor as well as the “District’s Street Cleaning Department.” Later, the stable was converted into a car garage known as the North West Garage. The large-scale and commercial use of the building is significant as it has been used to serve the general public from the time of its construction, which distinguishes it from the residential buildings in the area.

The primary construction of the original building was brick, with large floor level hayloft openings as well as higher stall windows. On the interior, there were wooden ramps consistent with commercial stables at the time, which allowed the horses to be stalled on the second floor. The main recognizable elements of the design include the “stepped pediment roofs culminating at the center” as well as the “nine bays of rectangular stable door openings separated by brick piers.”

Figure 27. Sketch of Tally Ho Stables in alley of 900 block of O Street NW, Naylor Ct., D.C. 1880’s

Figure 28. House at 918 O Street SW with Tally Ho stable in background, Naylor Ct., D.C. 1910

Figure 29. Buildings in alley behind 900 block of O Street SW, Naylor Ct., D.C. 1970’s

Exploded axon showing what was supposedly demolished and what was existing prior to the 90’s renovation.

Figure 29. Buildings in alley behind the 900 block of O Street SW, Naylor Ct., D.C. 1970’s

Historical Society of Washington, D.C.
90’s Renovation—
D.C. City Office of Public Records (Archives)
1300 Naylor Ct. N.W., D.C.
Naylor Ct Historic District

Following its life as a horse stable and N.W. Garage, in 1990 it was converted into the D.C. City Archives. The renovation was completed by Kemnitzer, Reid & Haffler Architects, with the building to hold archival storage as well as temporary records.

The main defining elements of this era are primarily to the interior of the building, with the exterior aging and developing an austere appearance within the alley. The exterior alterations include the infill of all windows with brick due to the need for a light-controlled and dry environment, as well as the addition of visible security systems. On the interior, the defining features are those that support the building’s ability to function as storage such as the inset floor tracks for moving the shelving units that take up the vast majority of the building.

Despite its relatively short lifespan, the building has been in disrepair and can no longer function as a storage facility for the City Archives, which require a controlled environment. Thus, the Archives are moving out and the building will become available.
Design Period | The Proposal

City Museum of D.C.
1300 Naylor Ct. N.W., D.C.
Naylor Ct Historic District

With the City Archives being relocated, there is an opportunity for the former Tally Ho Stables to once again serve the public. As a City Museum, the building would expose its own history as well as that of the rest of the local city within the District and its people. In order to expose and reveal its history, various elements were reintroduced in a playful manner in order to allow the building to perform a function as well as opening it up to the city.

The elements that are emphasized from those that have remained consistent within the building include the structure, a stable-reminiscent facade design, and the roofline. The main elements reintroduced from the stable era include a wooden stair reminiscent of the wooden horse ramps as well as the opening up of the horse stall and hayloft windows on the first and second floors. Those elements used from the City Archives period include the storage floor tracks as well as the idea of the storage of history. The new elements aspire to open up the building from within and to the city. These start with a larger entry encompassing two bays, a glass elevator, and a second floor opening, and finish with an occupiable roof.
When redesigning the building to house the new program of the City Museum, the material palette and its character within the alley were the first things I looked at.

Existing Materiality

The main existing exterior material palette in the surrounding buildings in the alley consists of primarily brick facades and brick pavers. However, the east, north and south facades of the building are coated in thorolastic weathering coating. This variance in facade material helps the building to stand out in the alley and was something that appeared to have become part of its identity and so was kept as part of the design, along with emphasizing the brick still visible on the west facade. The main interior materials include concrete visible on the flooring and columns, concrete masonry unit columns and walls, and metal structure and detailing.

Introduced Materiality

Many of the new introduced materials are reminiscent of the older eras of the building such as the incorporation of wood for circulation and glass in the window openings. Lastly, a green roof was added to bring greenery into the otherwise paved alley as well as greystone pavers to highlight the path surrounding the museum.
Historically, this was the main elevation and entry. Thus, the design is meant to play on the historic elements by opening up the windows, creating doorways reminiscent of the windows before them, and making the roof occupiable yet unobtrusive from ground level.

This elevation becomes the main entry by opening up two bays and drawing people in from the southeast corner of the building. The second floor large stable windows are popped out so they overlook the largest alleyway and provide views towards the city and neighborhood. The roofline is most visible on this side as this is the elevation which faces out of the alley neighborhood.
West Elevation
This elevation has the least intervention as it is connected to the neighboring buildings and maintains the exposed brick facade.

North Elevation
This elevation maintains the enclosed windows from the '90s renovation into archival storage because it faces a small alleyway with little light. The roofscape on this north side also shows the opened mezzanine roof and second floor roof ventilation, as well as the wrapping of the exposed brick on the west elevation.
Existing Ground Floor
The first floor of the existing City Archives is segmented into many rooms used to support storage and use of the archives. Although the multitude of rooms hides the large space, it helps the space function better for its current program. A few of the takeaways from this layout include the use of the structural columns on the west facade to segment space naturally as well as the prominence of the elevator location within the first floor.

Existing Basement
The basement is currently used as a mechanical room.

Existing Mezzanine
The mezzanine is yet another place for archival shelving that slides on the floor tracks. The roof space is not used except to walk a narrow path to the elevator and cooling rooms. Due to the low pitch of the roof, this space seems underutilized and could add space to the building.

Existing Second Floor
Except for small enclosed staircases, the floors of the building are closed off to each other for security reasons as well as practicality. The second floor is large, but it is filled with rows of shelving that sit on the inset tracks on the floor and slide to provide openings. It is also completely enclosed, with all of the many windows filled in so they no longer offer views from the interior. With this space cleared of shelving and opened up, it would provide a significant amount of space.
The design opens up the southeast corner bays and former windows as the entry in order to expose the building to the alley and 9th Street. Once inside, it is entirely open space, with the only rooms being along the west wall, as dictated by the structural column line. The main space can be used as community flex space for activities such as lectures and community events. The centerpiece of the first floor is the large spanning wooden stair reminiscent of the wooden horse ramps that wraps around the glass elevator and allows people to partake in programmed spaces as they continue into the building.
Walking up the winding, occupiable stair around the glass elevator brings visitors up to the main museum exhibit space. The museum exhibits are centered around the local neighborhoods, their rich history, and the building’s history, and offer a place to showcase the works of people in the community. This is supplemented by having Story Corp recording stations along the back wall, with places for people to record their stories. Lastly, to bring attention to the newly-opened windows, there is movable seating that can be positioned in front of the windows as well as window pop-outs for views of the city and neighborhood.

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South-North Section
South-North section highlighting the occupiable stair spanning the ground floor and its storage beneath. It also emphasizes the verticality of a very horizontal building by connecting the interior to the roof via a glass elevator. Lastly, it shows the exposed structure that is a guiding force for the layout of rooms as well as the roof insets that follow the spacing of the trusses and roofline.

West-East section
Showing the opening of the interior of the building from within as well as to the outside.
View of entry showing former archival shelving tracks reaching outside the building and the metal-lined doorway bringing people in from the east elevation.

View of occupiable lecture stair to second floor.
View of occupiable stair bringing people through the building and providing program pop-out spaces to learn about the history of the building along the way.

View of second floor museum exhibit space that has connections to the floor below, roof projects and outside neighborhood.
View from rooftop where visitors can and their experience by looking out to the city, into the building and onto the elevator shaft to watch documentaries relating to the area.

View of roof inset that allow views into the building as well as reflection to be left in the wishing wall.
Conclusion

D.C. has always felt like a special city to me beyond the symbolic sites and national importance, and I wanted to use this thesis as an opportunity to learn more about its history. Adaptive reuse is a type of architecture that is deeply rooted in the history of not only a singular structure but everything about where it is and how it came to be. There is not a single layer, but a multitude of layers that each leave their mark to be discovered and adapted to new circumstances. Like a city, buildings can have many lives and things can be left behind. As a part of this thesis, rooted in creating a place for people who have been either overshadowed by the more prominent federal city or displaced, I wanted to ensure that the identity of the city and this building was brought up and intertwined with the design. The approach that I took was to unfold the building layer by layer, examining each defining feature, with the goal in mind of creating a true city museum that represents the history and people of the District. In the end, despite the many individual decisions made throughout the design, the goal continued to be to return the building to the people of D.C. and open it up so the history of the city and its alleys can be discovered and preserved.