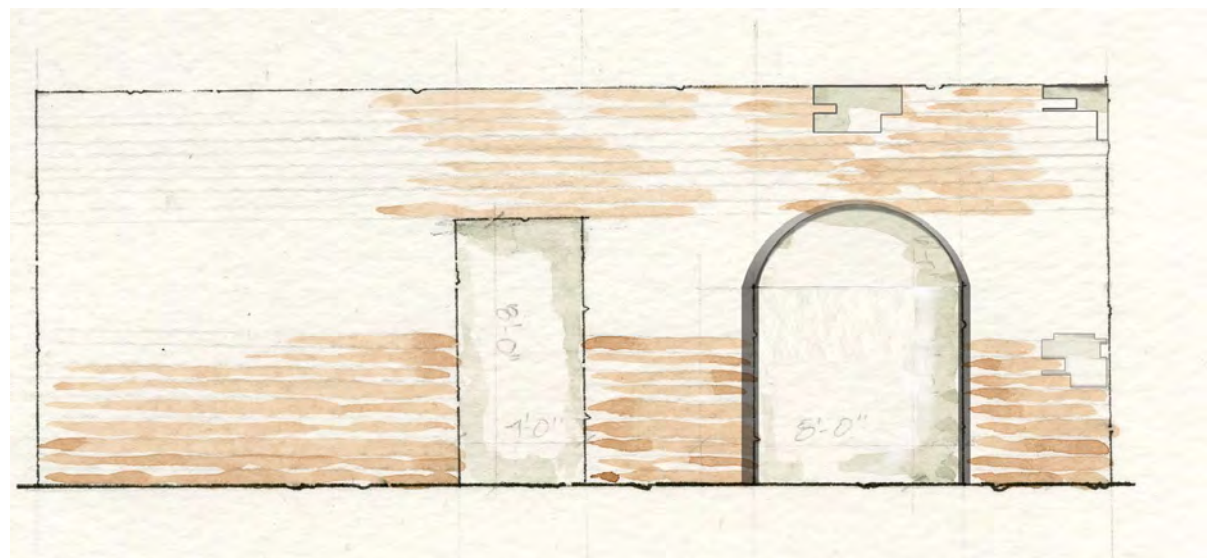


perpetuate the revolution

EMBRACE THE BRICK WALL





Amber Nicole Ovitt

Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia
Polytechnic Institute and State University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of:
Master In Architecture

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p e r p e t u a t e t h e r e v o l u t i o n

EMBRACE THE BRICK WALL



Embrace the Brick Wall

Amber Ovitt

Washington D.C., along with similar historically significant cities, boasts architectural treasures. Understanding how our above-ground archeology, which represents the passage of time and suggests urban development, will continue to influence our architecture today, is the essential core of this thesis. 14th Street is one of the crucial entrance corridors of the city, existing as a vertical way-finder for modern day travelers coming in and out of the District. Brick rowhouses line this valuable street, providing multi-use functions that have evolved over the past century. Unfortunately, most of these urban gems have lost their place to the City's superblock high rises. The program of this thesis serves the Corcoran School of Art + Design with a new central campus location in D.C. while reusing an existing block of brick parti walls, excavated from rowhouses of the past. The modern need of maximizing space is thoughtfully merged with the intentional reuse of historic structures.

a b s t r a c t



To my mentor, my idol, my committee chair: Susan Piedmont-Palladino. Her consistent level-headed approach to my consistent chaos helped me to achieve balance between thesis and program. To my committee member Paul Emmons, who focused my theoretical lens and guided the conceptualization of my ideas. To my committee member and professional realist, Jim Ritter, who allowed me to express and grow my ideas while keeping my design on the practical ground. I genuinely appreciate my committee for its advising, teaching, and therapy.

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Upon reflection, I realized I could not have finished my thesis without the friendly help of Henry Hollander. It is to him that I owe the timely completion of my Masters degree and my undying affection to the WAAC.

d e d i c a t i o n a c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s



Abstract
Acknowledgements

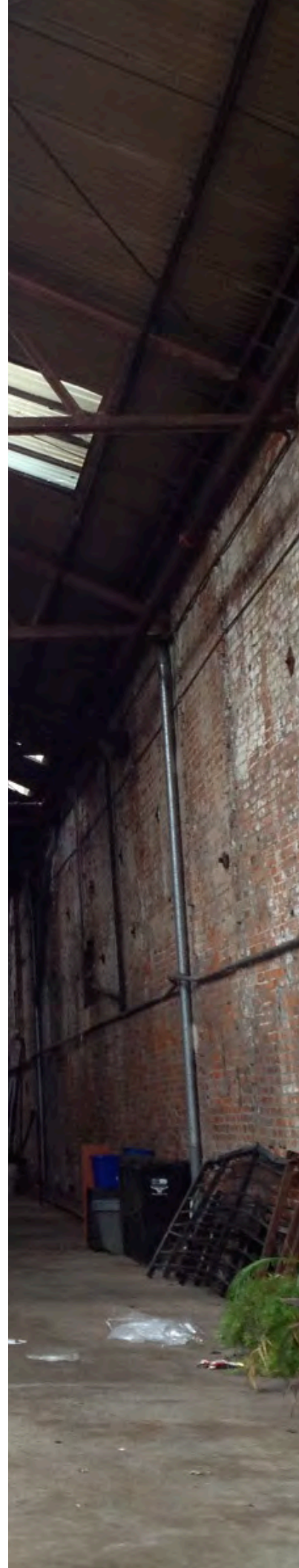
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“we make people aware of what is already there: the form that we produce brings out the properties and qualities of the world around it.”¹





i n t r o d u c t i o n

Historic preservation, now centralized within architectural practice and theory, has made a comeback. After a century of declared architectural eras cultivated its own architectural celebrities and the styles that followed them, the idea of adaptively reusing structures--now considered historic in this abbreviated timeline--is the trend. It is important to understand what is new versus what is being resurrected. When interviewed about this interplay, Jacques Herzog comments, "...what exists and what is new has become completely convoluted. It is easier to pursue particular interests when things can't be distinguished, when issues are blurred..."²

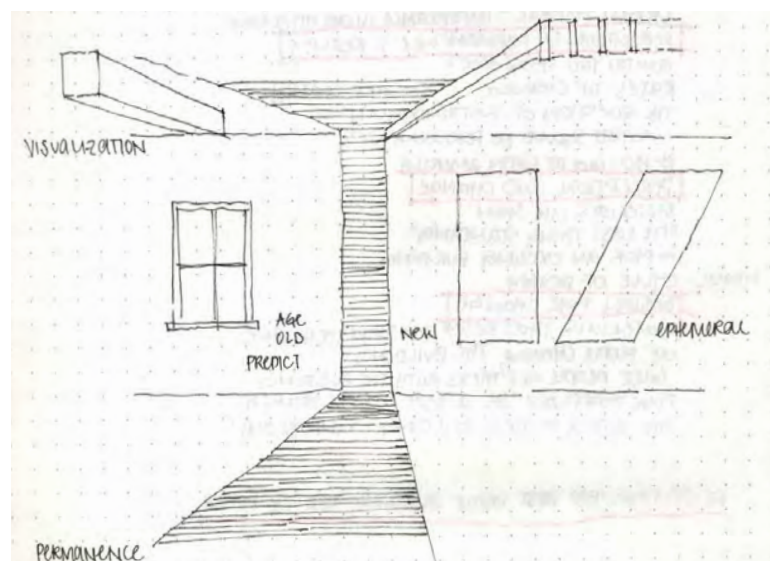
The architecture of the past is most undeniable when blatantly confronted by it. The effective reuse of old, decaying structures is an innovative reflection of the city. However, neglecting such remnants, like the vacant New Orleans warehouse [shown left], may further encapsulate a city's negative opinion of old buildings. Discovering the unique dialogue between old and new architecture within an urban environment, and designing to implement this relationship, plays an important role in a city's development. This thesis inherits existing architectural elements of a site and weaves them into a new design that may inspire future rehabilitation.

Perception of Permanence + Reality

There is an intriguing sense of hope lying latent within the design of a building and its constructed life; invincibility. A designer hopes for longevity as a positive architectural response to the integrity of material choice and structure. A society hopes for longstanding buildings in order to deflect change within our lifetime.

“The circumspect attitude towards the past makes contemporary architecture not just more open to what the future might bring, but more concerned with temporality, rather than “imageability” of space and form. The challenge is that our architectural understanding of the temporal is not as sophisticated (yet) as that of the spatial and formal dimensions of a building.”³

Our focus towards understanding architecture in not only place and space, but time. The sketch [below] represents the gap between old and new; permanent and ephemeral; timeless and in time. The critical relationship amongst these terms breathes into our architecture, whether we recognize it or not. Consideration of the endless possibilities within temporality in architecture will be the recognizable theme within this thesis.





The careful restoration of the Neues Museum in Berlin, by David Chipperfield and Julian Harrap, exemplified the precise consideration of the old while applying new materials and design concepts. The architects carefully dissected the historic edifice, removing only the incongruent features and adding simple modernities.

“What makes the Neues Museum shocking is the level of restraint the architects demonstrated...Chipperfield and Harrap opted for the precision of discreet interventions. Their design consisted mostly of removing historically insignificant elements. When they did add, they did so to enhance what was there, as one adds salt to bring out the flavor of a dish instead of covering it with sauce.”⁴

What is beautiful about this project, and the reason it was selected as a case study, is its ability to perform its simple programmatic function, without any threat to its future uses. This building, once re-adapted and re-imagined, has unlimited potential uses. Not only has its revised structure lengthened its life, but the careful architectural considerations of space, place, and time has gained the perception of being timeless, which may be the most worthwhile design addition to this building.



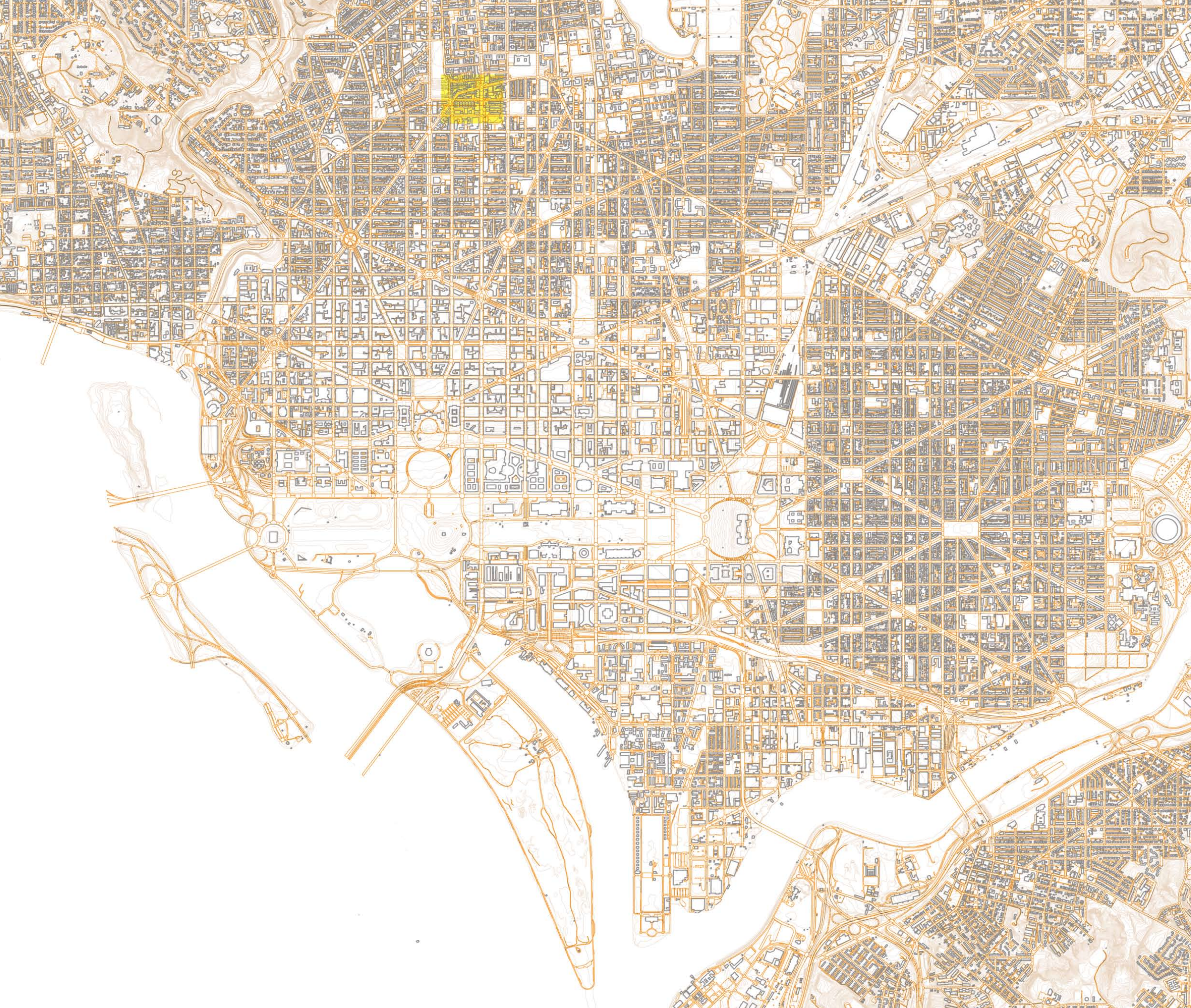
Designing for Change: Reduce, Reuse and Build Anew

The current conversation about historic preservation and sustainable development tends to be diluted by the impossibly rigorous chatter of new technologies, while we may be missing the metaphorical forest through the trees. Have the proper tools, reputable enough in their design, not arrived in order to offer centuries of resilience towards the built environment? These “tools” could be as simple as an active or passive system, or could be as complex as a hydro-powered turbine. The point of this thesis is not to refute the centuries of industrial development, but instead, to thoughtfully remember it by reusing the existing fabric of our cities.

The argument between historic preservationists and energy conservationists is inevitably linked by their similar goal to build better buildings. The inevitable question between building new or reuse fails to see the obvious solution: the symbiotic nature of doing both. Vernacular architecture thrives off of its ability to appropriately adapt to its environment. Although the idea of “historic” is often synonymous with the idea of “dilapidated”, many design elements of older buildings are more energy efficient than their new counterparts. Similarly, advanced technologies used today provide comforts that are simply missing from century-old structures.

In our attempt to recreate the building techniques of our predecessors into brand new buildings, we tend to default to design compromises, which in turn become less confined to aesthetic value. In a more successful marriage between old and new, the harmony between the existing architecture and innovative design concepts not only preserves years of embodied energy, but serves as a strong architectural concept for upcoming generations. In this false dichotomy, the argument is not for one or the other, but understanding the inherent link between them, and achieving that.

It is so important to understand the idea of both concepts existing within our cities. Encouraging these ideas to intertwine, not just within the same city, but the same building, could lead to an actual style and desirable design aesthetic. Effort should be put into maintaining our comfortable, walkable cities. Encouraging energy efficiency in new buildings and revitalizing the old buildings leads to another conversation: making places memorable and remembering the places we've been.



s i t e a n a l y s i s + r e s e a r c h

The City constantly changes, adapting through history and growth. Our nation's capital, however, was founded from an entirely clean state. A thoughtful layout of streets, avenues, roundabouts and green space, L'Enfant's urban reinvention of the European city breathed New America.

According to the National Park Service:

A plan as grand as the 200 year old city of Washington, DC, stands alone in its magnificence and scale. But as the capital of a new nation, its position and appearance had to surpass the social, economic and cultural balance of a mere city: it was intended as the model for American city planning and a symbol of governmental power to be seen by other nations. The remarkable aspect of Washington, is that by definition of built-out blocks and unobstructed open space, the plan conceived by L'Enfant is little changed today.⁵

The purpose of the thesis site analysis is to connect the fundamental concepts of temporality and change within the scale of a building to the scale of the city.

Part
of the City
WASHINGTON



A History in Land Use

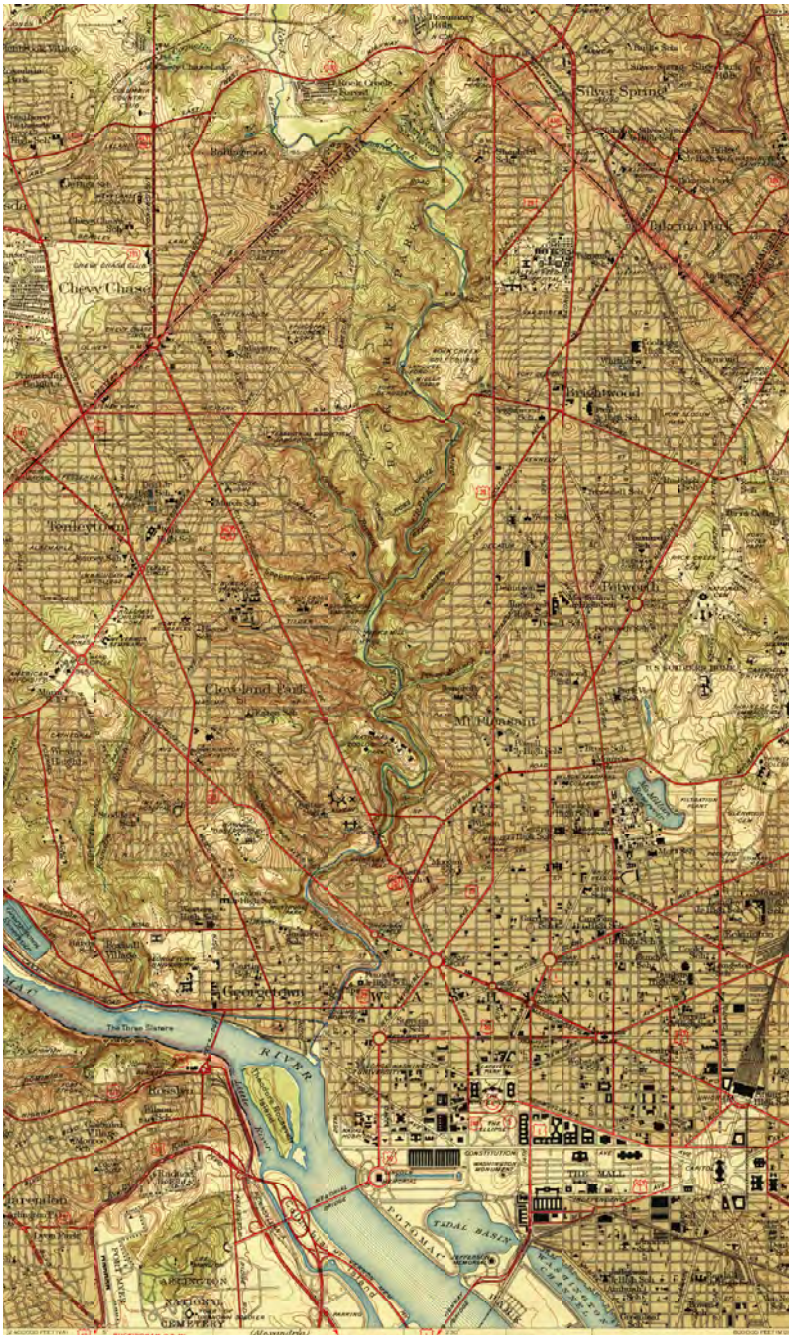
An involved site analysis requires the ability to expand one's view to an urban scale. The attempt in zooming out, in order to comprehend the form of the city or surrounding area, enabled the preliminary research to involve the District's history and urban development. As our American history books might suggest, we transformed from an agrarian society to an industrialized society. The map to the left is a layered representation of the district in its purest, civilized form (agrarian, red blocks) transposed with its first step into a systematic urban layout (industrialization, background map). An interesting discovery from this exercise is seeing how land use priorities can change from one century to the next. The large, varied shades of red blocks vaguely define land parcels that were dedicated to crop-growing, agricultural needs, or just untouched nature. The grid layout is a rigid definition of blocks and divided land ownership with latent intent for development. One could also infer that the city blocks and roads were not at all influenced by its previous land lots. This dramatic shift becomes a major realization of how time and scale are implemented into this thesis.

Urban Alterations

The USGS maps [shown right], archived at the Library of Congress, are proof of the City's altered landscape and scale. Much like the shift from agrarian land use to divided parcels of a city, Washington, D.C.'s past century has revealed topographical alterations and a rise in infrastructure.

Le'Enfant's plan has shown us the proper urban layout created from European influence and American ingenuity. The District's grid is not only composed of streets and buildings, but of parks and the natural landscape. The preservation of these green spaces, along with a sensibility towards building scale, has made Washington one of the most beautiful and walkable cities in the country. Why, over the past century, has this city maintained such a valuable urban landscape? And moreover, what careful considerations of preservation have overcome the city's growth and advancement over time?

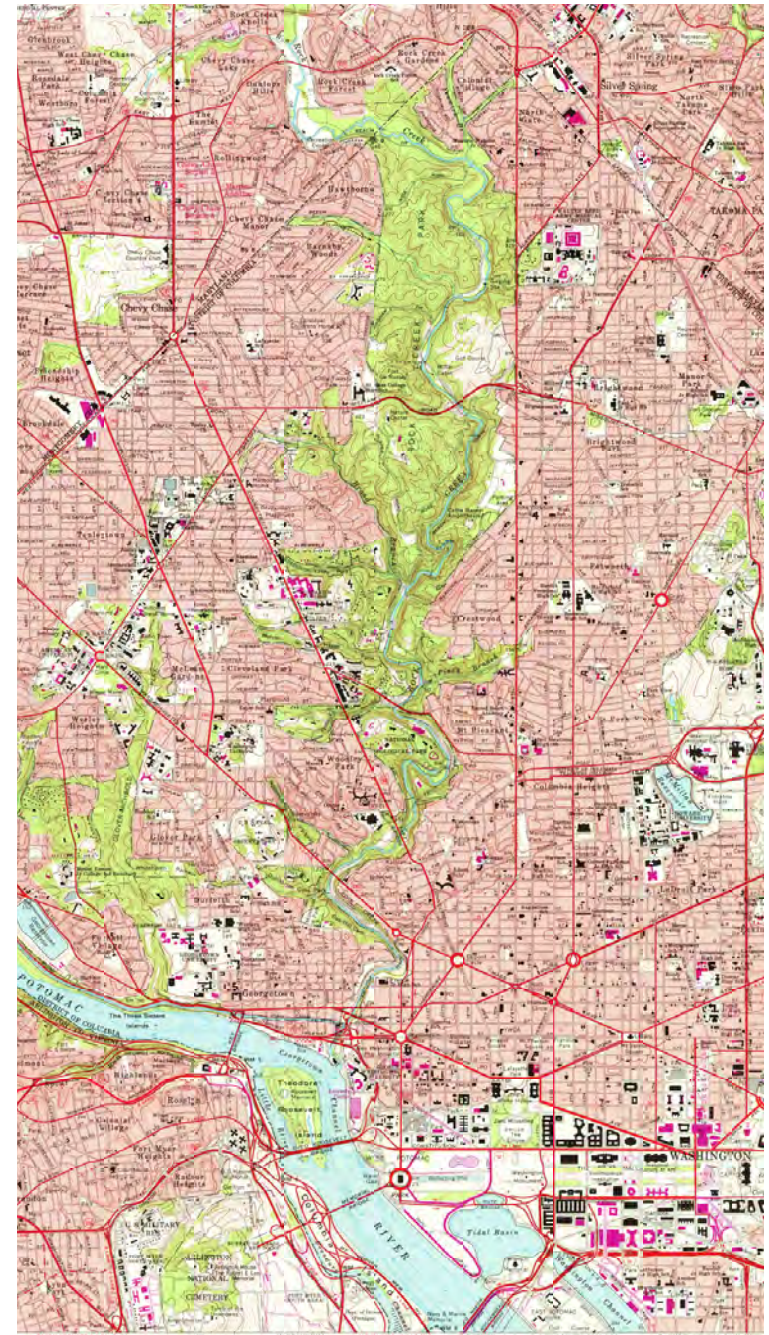
Urban renewal alongside urban preservation breeds many policy and land use questions, something this thesis does not need to employ. However, the ability for preservation and renewal to coexist is representative of this thesis, but at a much larger scale.



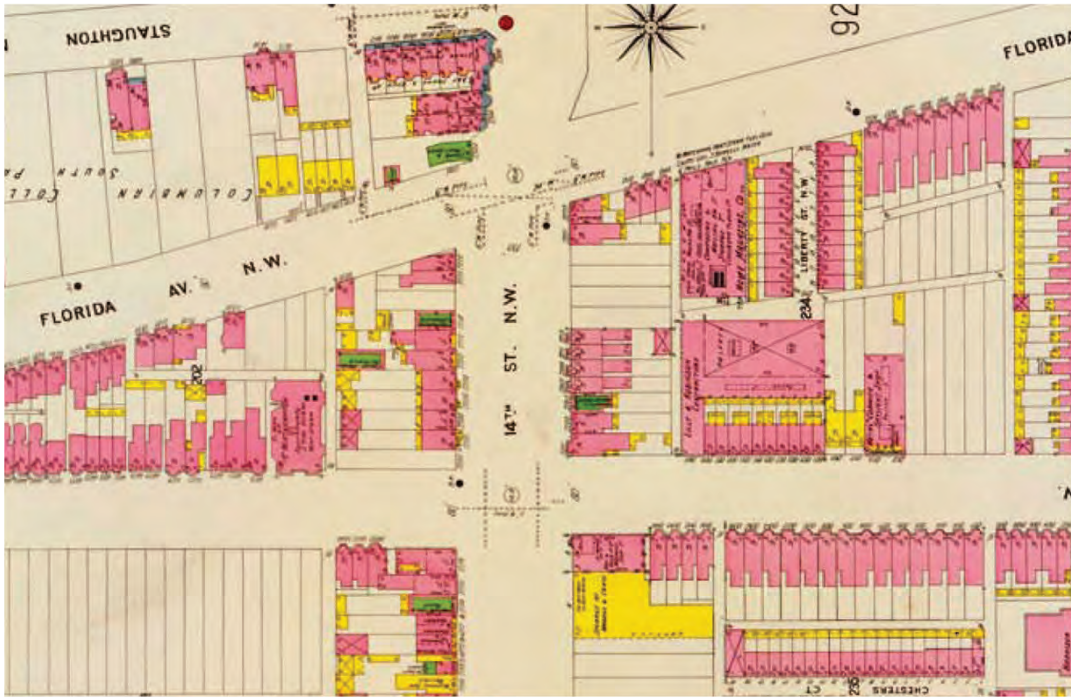
1945



1951



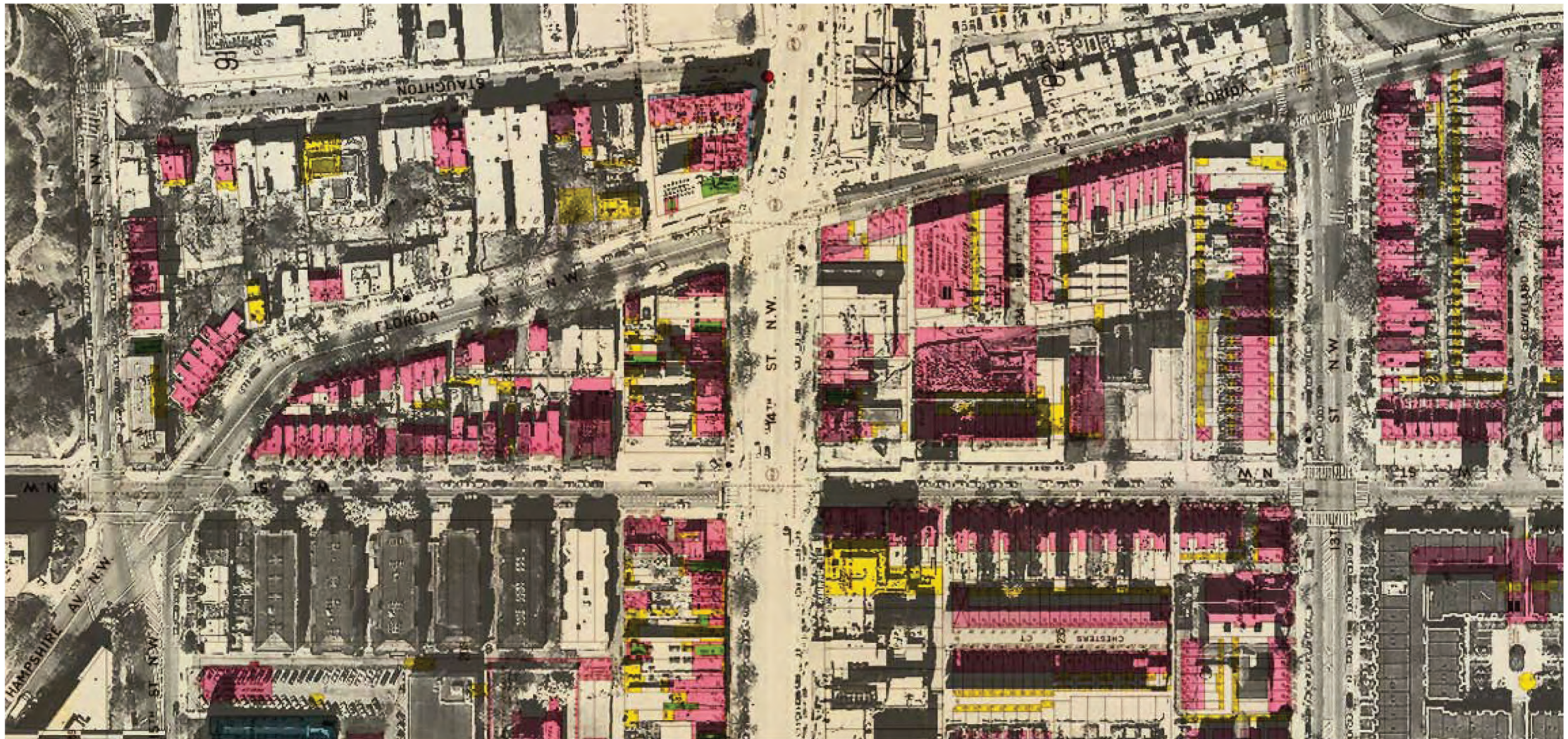
1965



Library of Congress
Sanborn Maps: 1903



Google Maps
September 2012



Site Location: Peeling Back the Layers

The vacant site at the corner of 14th Street and W Street drew my attention with its latent potential for architecture. The map study [left] layers a parcel map from 1903 against a present-day Google satellite image. The obvious century-old buildings were revealed by this overlay, as well as any new growth or change. At such an intricate scale of one city block, a dramatic shift takes place. Row houses either remain or get excavated and are replaced by superblocks.

Today's focus on urban development pushes the limits of land usability. The maximization of space in proportion to the building's footprint hurls urban real estate into a robotic system. The vertical limit is pressed, despite the District's strict height limitations. In return, design is compromised and developers could not be more thrilled.

Brand's depiction of a city's shearing layers of change suggests "slow is healthy." ⁶ An understanding of the different rates of change within a site and its building components leads this thesis towards a realization about the site: "The slower process of a building gradually integrate trends of rapid change within them. The speedy components propose, and the slow dispose." ⁷ The site is seen as the slowest of the components, and the most powerful in regards to influencing change.

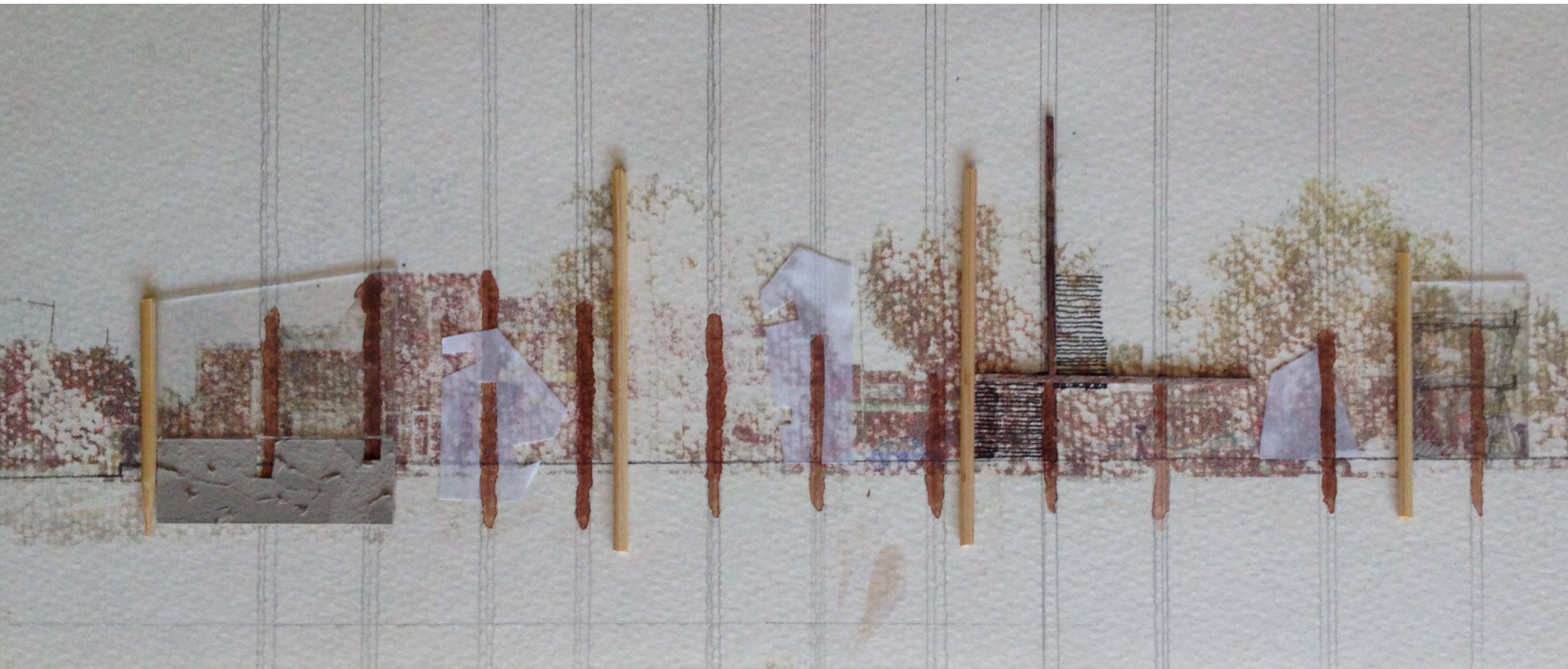
Excavating a Site

The vulnerable brick wall facing W Street at the 14th Street intersection begs for attention. Somewhere amidst the rough brick of the party wall and its layers of historical information, the thesis was realized. Although this site is unwisely used as a parking lot, the entire block of row homes and party wall structure allows for an opportunistic architecture.

As shown in the material call-out [below], the architectural archeology of a site should be as treasured to the aspiring architect as the original tradesman that constructed it. Understanding and preserving features like brick arches and wall parapets gives more meaning to the new materials which are allowed to coexist with the remains. Another important aspect of excavation involves interpretation. The last brick party wall, shown in the photograph, exposes itself to the public, giving an imaginative glimpse into the parking lot's history. As revealed by the missing bricks and obvious pattern of holes in the wall, the final row home was demolished.

While the vacant parking lot wept with latent potential, the thesis was evolving into a task which required analysis of the entire block. What one may answer through a design using one brick wall, one could pose ten more questions with an entire row of them. The collage drawing on the top right begins to speak to a couple of the questions drawn from the thesis. How will all of the walls be maintained, structurally? When and where does one introduce new materials? How close does one design in, around, and through the brick walls? How, and why, might one create cohesion?





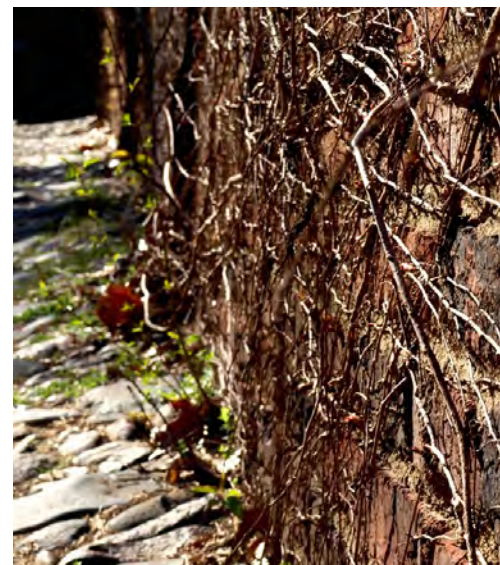
Elevation Collage Exercise - mixed media applied to watercolor paper [above]

Material Call-out Photo Collage at site [left]

A Sensitivity to Scale

Architecture is a medium through which we can explore a variety of scales. This takes place not only in the design process, but ultimately once the building is inhabited and the suggestion of scale becomes an important element. From the considerable imposition of an urban skyscraper to an attenuate suburban residence, the desire for an attention to detail prevails. While the overall contextual scale is important as well, implying a sense of humanity to specific building elements and details is a major focus of design. This involved an intimate look into how we observe the buildings we walk by (or through) and how these small, delicate details might affect the overall building aesthetic on a larger scale as well.

The preservation and interpretation of a series of brick party walls is an attempt to capture the historic scale of the row house in a modern day building. This scale recollects the original city plan, with its blocks divided up into long, individual rectangular plots of land. While we think of these rowhouses as appropriately divided pieces of land for families and local retail shops, their wholistic scale is not generally imposed on one cohesive program or building that may, for example, take up the entire block. This is where the idea of scale across all temporal boundaries is an important concept to explore architecturally.





The significance of these walls lies not only in their historic value, but their ability to transform contemporary spaces into an extraordinary hybrid of new and old architecture. Crisp, white drywall and modern structural technologies, like steel lintels and concrete columns, deserve their own attention as well. However, appreciating the beauty of both new and old architectural elements is heightened when they coexist in the same space. Also, while the brick walls signify the pre-existing function of rowhouses divided into retail, restaurants, and residences in one unified block, they also provide their own problems. The design challenge exists when the need for larger, more contiguous spaces exceeds the need for the size of the spaces contained by the walls. Now, the attention to detail derives from the decision to cut and carve into the existing walls appropriately and therefore creating spaces which contain the old brick walls, not the other way around.

With our contemporary view of new buildings pushing the structural limits and defining new boundaries between form and function, it's no wonder our newly erected buildings utilize similar materials and construction techniques. The more advanced and resonating experience of new architecture should involve an attempt to reuse and recapture existing architecture. The architect's ability to collaborate between the new and the old through intimate detailing will come to define its success.




“since our feelings and understanding are rooted in the past, our sensuous connections with a building must respect a process of remembering”⁸



What is to Remain?

The 14th Street block between Florida Avenue and W Street is a storefront hodge-podge. The chopped arrangement with the usual procession of restaurants, retail and condemnation, is not perceived as an older extension of its surrounding buildings, but more like a recognizable mess within a beautiful historic neighborhood. The sensibility to scale is appropriate for walkability and human interaction with architecture, but that point is irrelevant if people perceive the space as an urban eyesore or unsafe. This block should be capitlizing on its historic charm, with a little modern ingenuity added in, in order to make contextual sense and gain a reputable urban streetfront. So, what is to remain when the rehab takes place? After the signage is torn down and the insides cleared out, how does one prioritize the valued versus the valuable? Similar to an excavation, the tedious removal of parts must have an established rule.

The background is an abstract composition of geometric shapes. It features a dark blue field with several vertical white stripes of varying widths. Overlaid on this are large, semi-transparent light blue shapes, including a wide diagonal band and a horizontal band on the right side. A thin, dark blue line runs diagonally across the bottom right corner.

“Architects’ shift from the pursuit of signature styles to a creative exploration of preservation enables them to deepen the significance of form and space through sharper expressions of temporality.”⁹

p r e l i m i n a r y d e s i g n

The excavation of a site, as an archeological task done by an architect, is a tactful design decision only accomplished by the careful consideration of old and new. Reusing site elements can be a beautiful design opportunity while also proving to be quite a design challenge. The concept of this thesis involves exploring an architectural idea through site, program, and architecture. This exploration requires a disciplinary behavior towards rules, aesthetic consistencies, contextual considerations, and an innovative thought process that appreciates a modern-historic hybrid. The schematic design process willingly delves into every corner of every possible design option, while slowly generating cohesive ideas and insight towards building the thesis question. During this thesis development, existing site elements and new design options competed to find an answer. The best solutions quickly lend themselves to a symbiotic relationship between the old and the new techniques.

The print on the left represents a graphic technique, exploring the rigidity of structure against the flexibility of form. In this particular exercise, instead of exploiting the contrasting elements, you actually achieve a beautiful cohesive balance by allowing the opposite characteristics to complement each other.

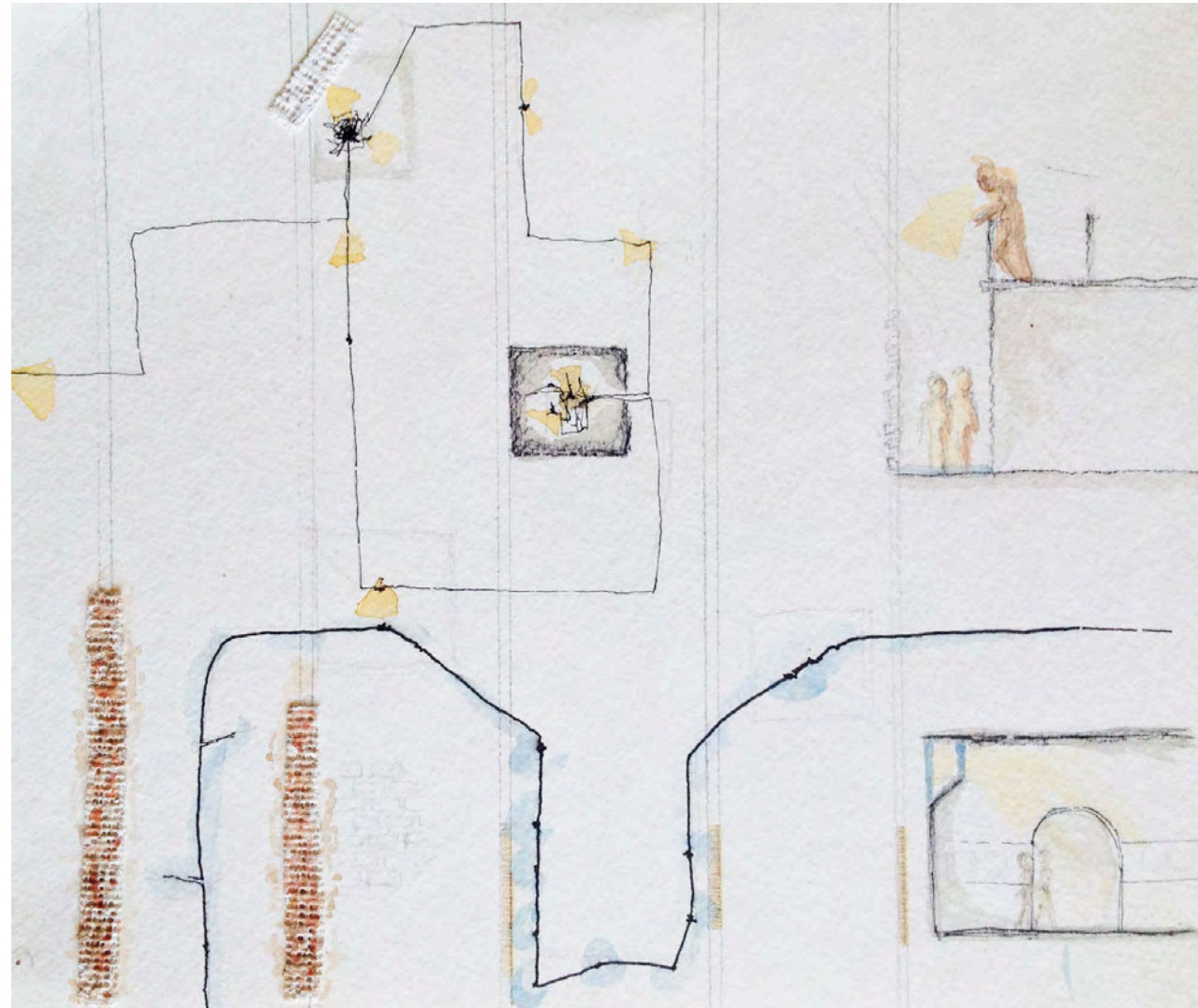


Programmatic Synthesis : An Art and Design School

The mixed-media collage [above] represents various art school specialties. By using the repetition of spaces between walls, each discipline exists within a defined boundary. The various art styles require different spatial qualities including light, machinery, sound, and materiality. This type of program, implementing individual work spaces, collaborative environments and public interaction quickly sought to answer many of the thesis questions.

The dark blocks represent the existing heights of the rowhouses as a reaction to the new building's needs in adjacency to the existing buildings scale. The layers in this collage inform building scheme while allowing circulation of the potential student, visitor, professor, or passerby their own glimpse into the creative world.

The scale of the existing walls present the designer with an interesting problem; to conform, or not to conform. The walls set up width increments of naturally significant 16' spaces. While they feel inherent to a brick rowhouse, forcing this scale within a larger building and program creates residual space. The point of this thesis is to embrace the remnants of the past, while confronting its issues through a present-day lens.



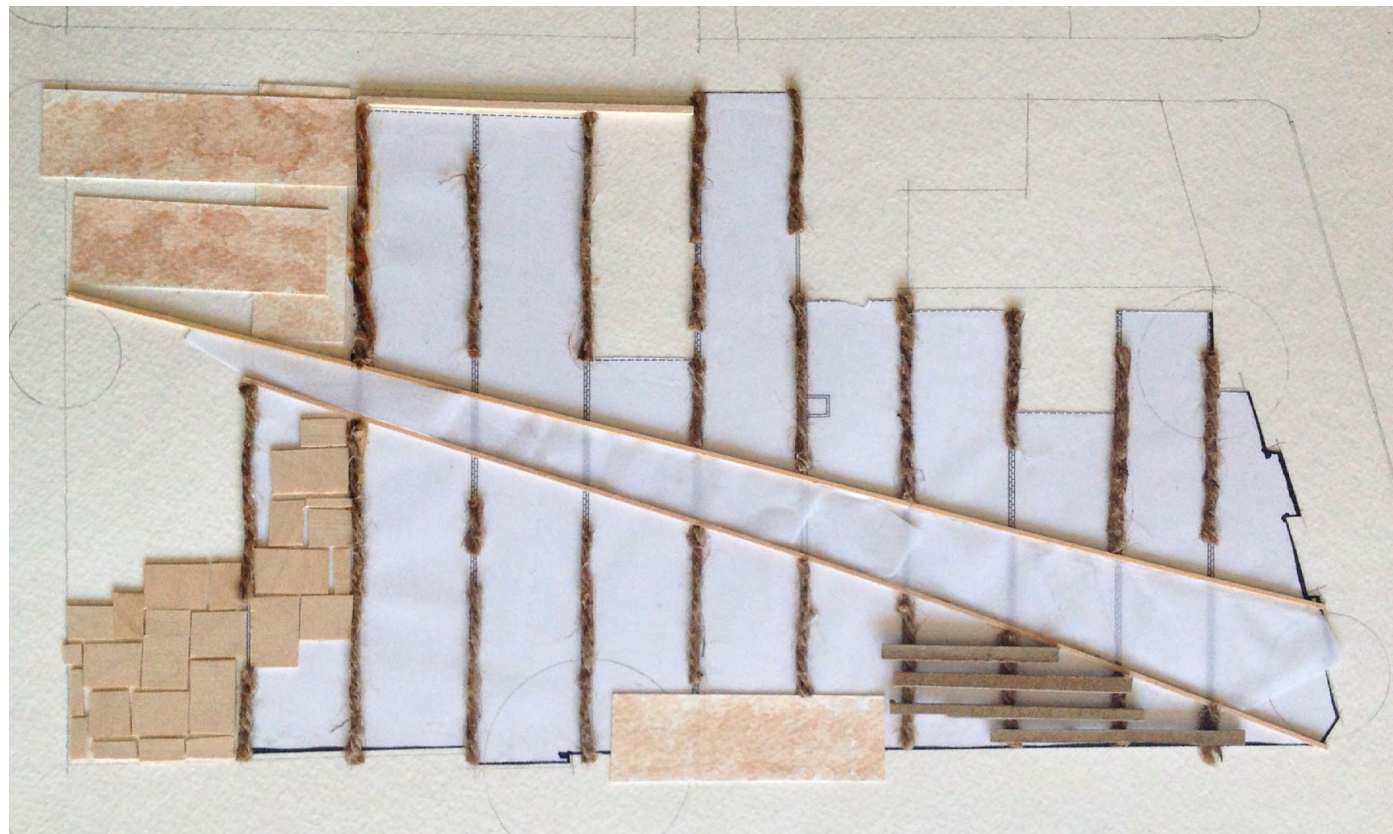
Circulation became a vital component to the design of this school. From the beginning of thesis site research, the movement through and against the walls was an important concept worth development and incorporation into design. The diagram [above] displays thoughtful circulation of the student and the visitor. The student has a quick, intentional path through the building, intersecting walls and spaces more fluidly with quick moments of visual connection to public parts of the school. The visitor has a heavier, leisurely path that appreciates the student work celebrated throughout the galleries. The visitor is led by the brick walls with few moments to cross through and potentially be seen by the active students above.

This first attempt in merging a cohesive design with the standing brick party walls proved to be an exercise in conceptualizing forms. Being able to identify the various parts of the program was a difficult realization, while also designing the merging architectural elements to represent the existing and the new. At this point of preliminary design, the thesis had broken into multiple pieces that were required to fit back into the building and form its totality. The interesting part of designing within this block of rowhouses was the reliable existence of the brick walls. Their ability to stand and define spaces, without being designed to do so allowed the new forms to impose an inevitable transformation.

Through building the practice model shown [below], spaces expressed a merging of old and new materials. Instead of old brick walls defining one type of space, and proposed materials defining another type, there are actually various spaces that share both characteristics. This is important to the thesis in order to represent the importance of both architectural features. In the practice of adaptive reuse, a careful treatment of historical structures requires new technology for reinforcement. In the same hand, new materiality demands deliberate use and proximity to its ancestral partners.

The beauty of the family of brick walls is enhanced by its new adjoining neighbors. While the placement of the new pieces may not reflect the same texture or density, the dialogue between the two becomes an intense conversation between an architectural past and an innovative future.

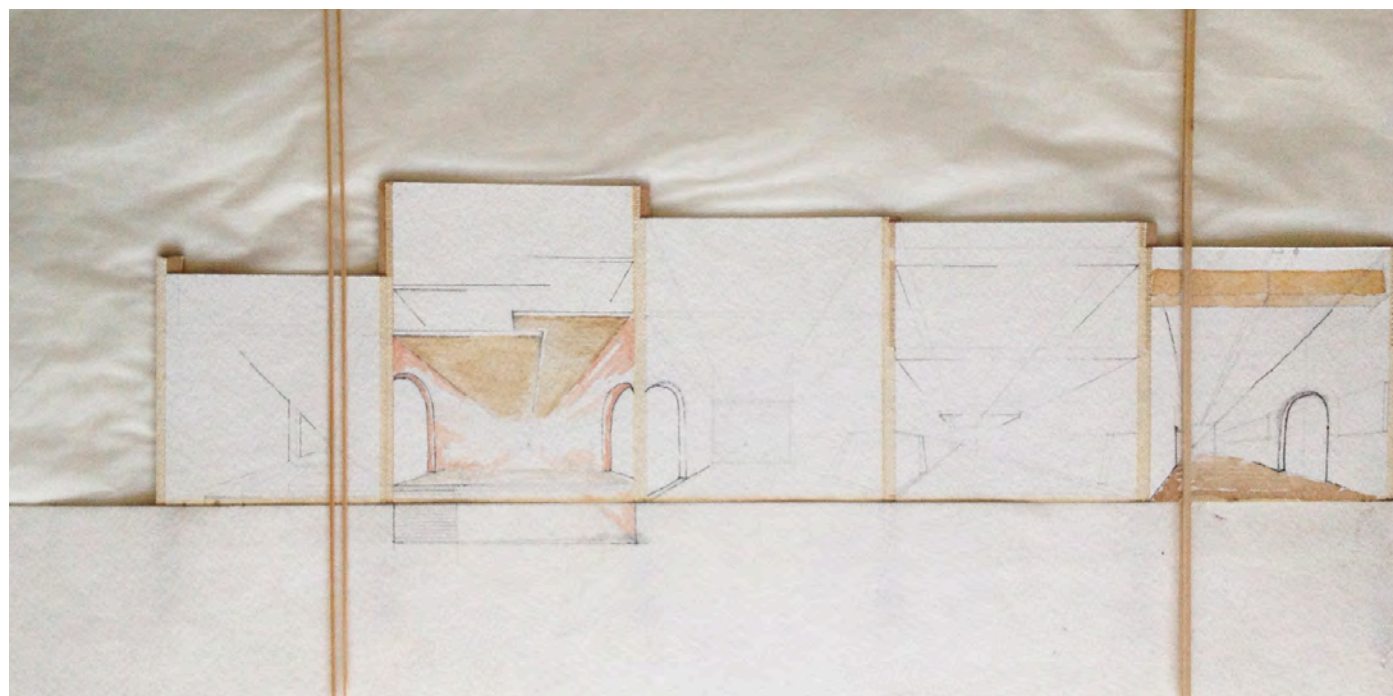




Constructing a Plan: Unifying Elements

The physical construction of a two-dimensional plan [shown above] forced the brick walls to become an actual layer on the drawing. The advantage of this intentional step in the design process allowed the removal, breakage, or preservation of the walls that much more deliberate. The slicing of the rope material, signifying each brick wall, made the walls increasingly more valuable as an architectural element in the whole building. Another decision required of constructing a plan dealt with the totality of the entire building among a series of brick walls, rather than a series of buildings in one block. Unifying the brick walls within one building is an important concept of the thesis, while also allowing separate moments within the walls to happen.

Constructing, or at least conceptualizing, a section drawing should work simultaneously with the plan design. Visualizing spaces within each pair of walls begins to comprehend threshold, moments, and circulation through the building. Crucial architectural decisions, such as proximity and intersections of new materials to the brick, were prompted by working through the sectional exercise [below].

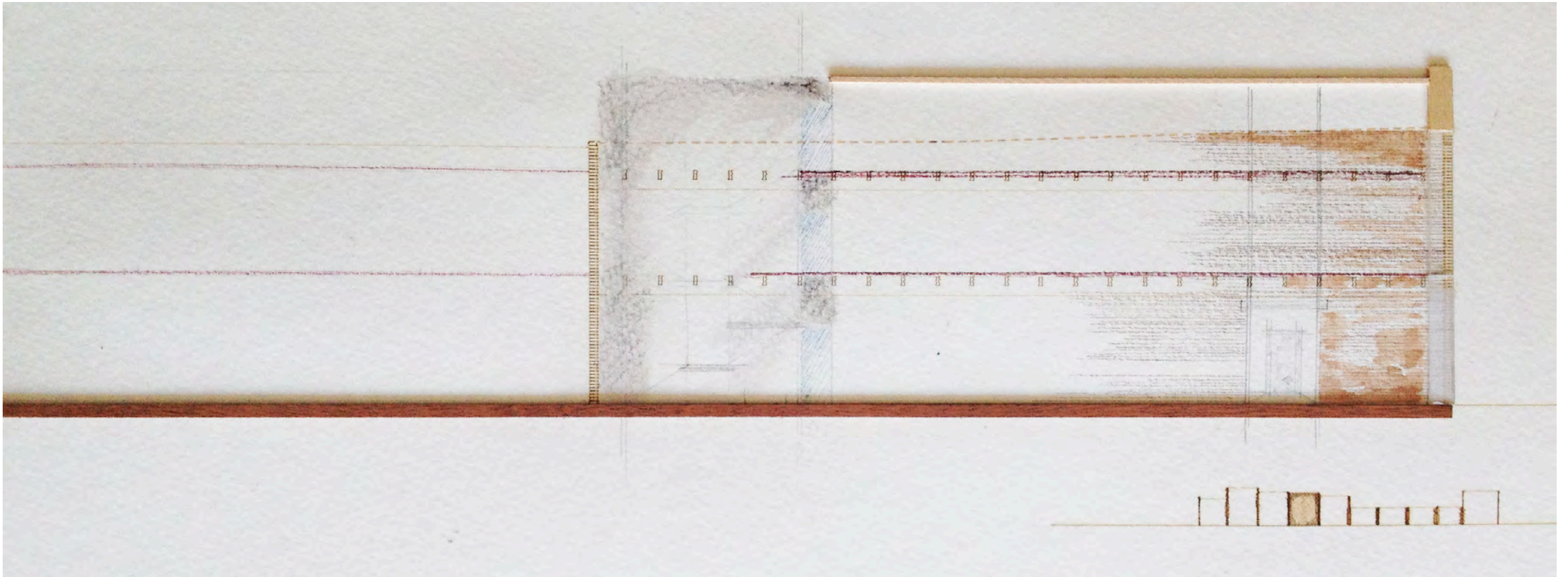


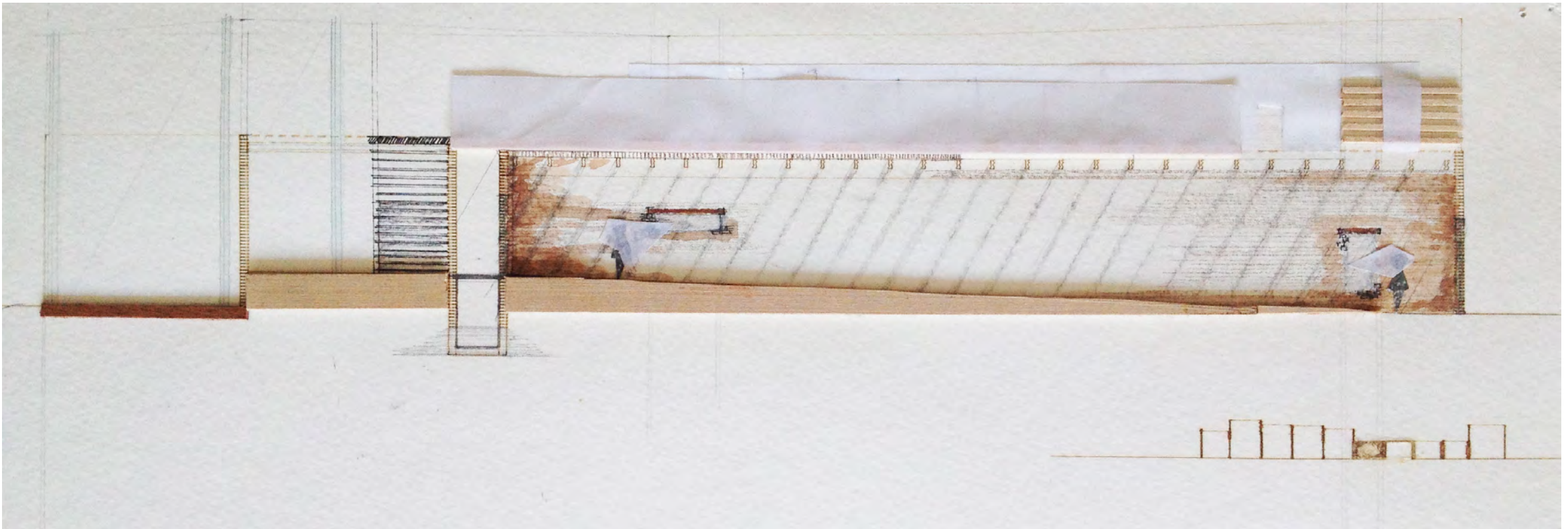
Constructing a Section: Diversifying the Mundane

Designing within a series of moments allows the architect to imagine a specific path through the building as a whole. By allowing one desired moment to define a space, several ideas begin to tell an interesting story. The exercise of constructing a section, began by simply selecting three of the ten contained spaces between party walls. Each of these spaces may differ in their surrounding brick wall heights, although repetitive in nature, these voids express a latent individuality. Areas of entry, communal spaces, and smaller rooms were all targets of exploration. While literally constructing each section, the paths of the visitor, the student, and the professor help design and define the necessary architectural elements.

Francisco Mangado, Spanish architect of the Archaeological Museum in Vitoria, Spain has a similar, poetic approach towards path and programmatic organization: “The interior couldn’t simply be a well-organized space or handsome play of forms. It had to be capable of suggesting places and people with, say, a small fragment of clay that speaks to us of fragility and time.”¹⁰

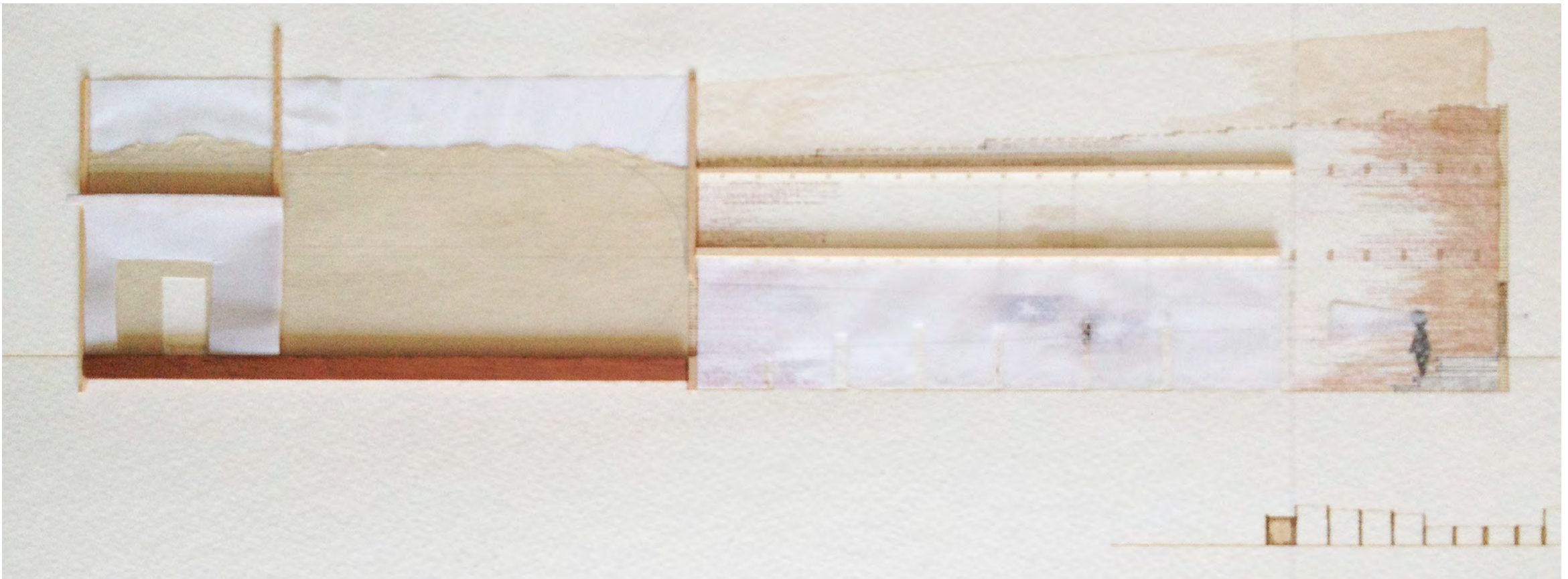
The Path of the Professor: A section through the academic offices

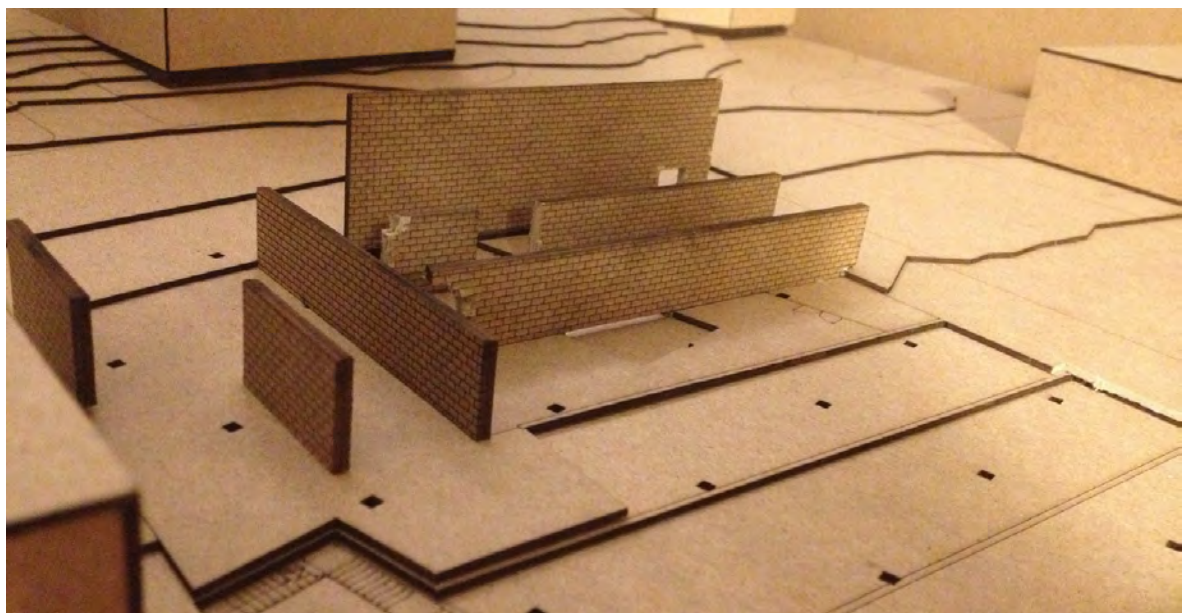
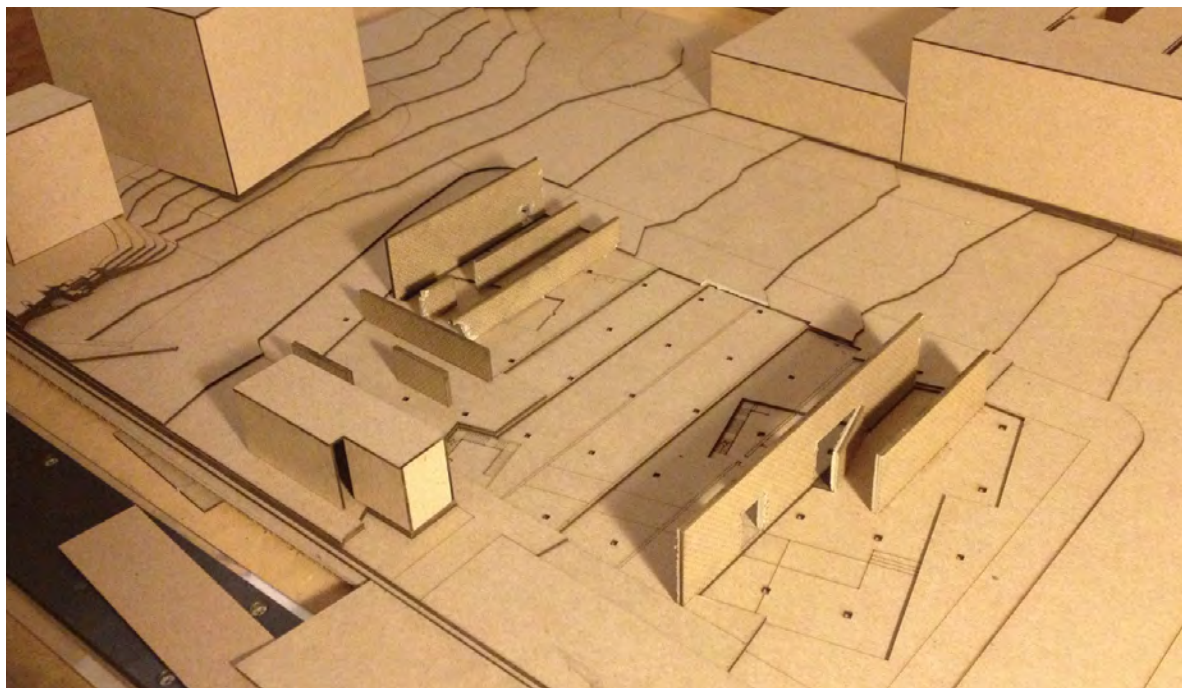
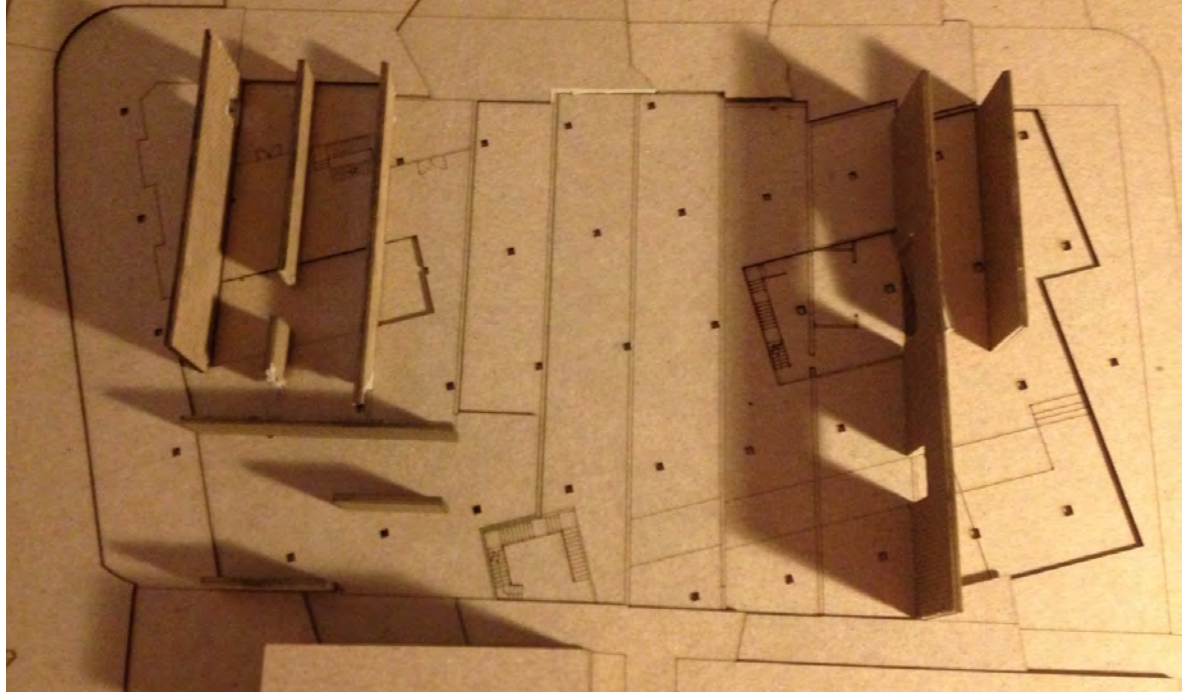




The Path of the Visitor: A section through the building's main entry hall

The Path of the Student: A section through the academic entrance







Imposing the Old with the New: Modeling Change

Placing the new structure over the existing allows old and new to coexist in one cohesive building. Being able to incorporate each element without confusing one for the other, or worse, declaring each unequally became the challenge. Another look at the article by Otero-Pailos was a vivid reminder of this necessary balance: “We had taken it as a given that the word ‘building’ stood for new construction. Now it is clear that contemporary architecture can also emerge by adapting an old construction. The old criterion that new architecture was only possible through a new building is dead.”¹¹ The acclamation of old and new should be considered as innovative as its new construction counterpart.

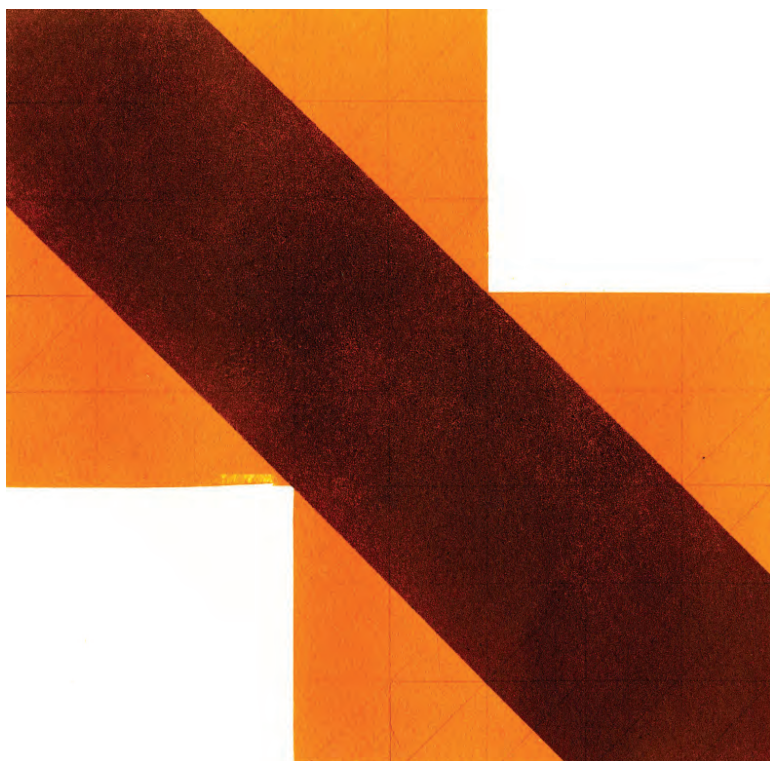
Building each individual brick wall in plan, section and elevation was as deliberate in process as in design. In the model, each individual wall is conceptualized in three-dimensions, making each erected structure more and more valuable. The careful removal of brick portions in each wall became a justification process in regards to circulation and structure. The site excavation became a reality, with each brick wall as a reason for the thesis.

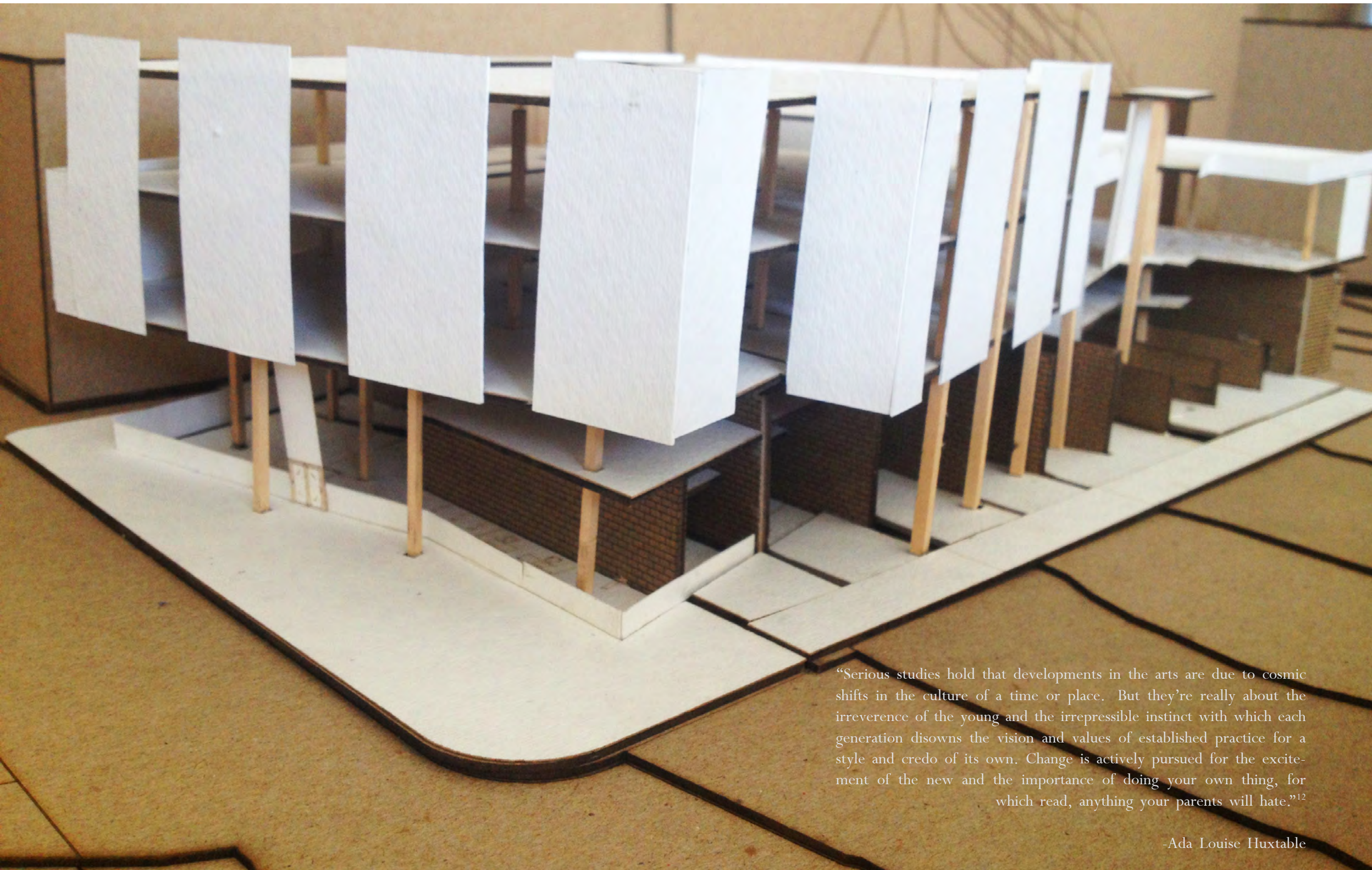
The new building was realized in plan by placing each floor plate against the series of walls. The east-west orientation of each wall is contrasted against the diagonal direction of each new floor and column layout. Symbolized by different paths, the new building represents the student realm while the old walls represent how the public may circulate. The visual contrast between the two elements not only reinforces this, but ultimately simulates a cohesive aesthetic and explicit relationship.



Determining Rules: Understanding Old + New Behavior

The inevitable structural relationship between brick wall, concrete column and floor slab is meant to be designed. The walls' locations are fixed by their 16' modular layout, while the systematic grid of concrete columns have their own exact module and location. What prevails when their locations cross paths? Much like the inevitable crossing paths of student and visitor, a rule must enforce their behavior. In theory, the walls prevail in historical significance, while the columns prevail in structural integrity. In the diagrammatic prints [shown above and below], this instance is realized with two solutions. The above condition shows two columns, replacing one, intersecting with the brick wall and allowing each to encapsulate and support the other. The other condition shows a non-supporting relationship between two columns and a brick wall, which interprets each as important but visibly separate.





“Serious studies hold that developments in the arts are due to cosmic shifts in the culture of a time or place. But they’re really about the irreverence of the young and the irrepressible instinct with which each generation disowns the vision and values of established practice for a style and credo of its own. Change is actively pursued for the excitement of the new and the importance of doing your own thing, for which read, anything your parents will hate.”¹²

-Ada Louise Huxtable

“Every new work of architecture intervenes in a specific historical situation. It is essential to the quality of the intervention that the new building should embrace qualities which can enter into a meaningful dialogue with the existing situation. For if the intervention is to find its place, it must make us see what already exists in a new light. We throw a stone into the water. Sand swirls up and settles again. The stir was necessary. The stone has found its place.

But the pond is no longer the same.”¹³

-Peter Zumthor





final thesis drawings

A BEGINNING TO AN END

One of the monumental tasks required of an architect is to produce legible graphic representations of their designs. In the final development of this thesis, once ink permanently set itself into paper, the design would ultimately obtain closure. No design is ever really finished, but documentation is a way to culminate one's attempt. The following pages represent the final thesis defense presentation and a year of design development, collaboration and implementation of its crucial architectural concepts.

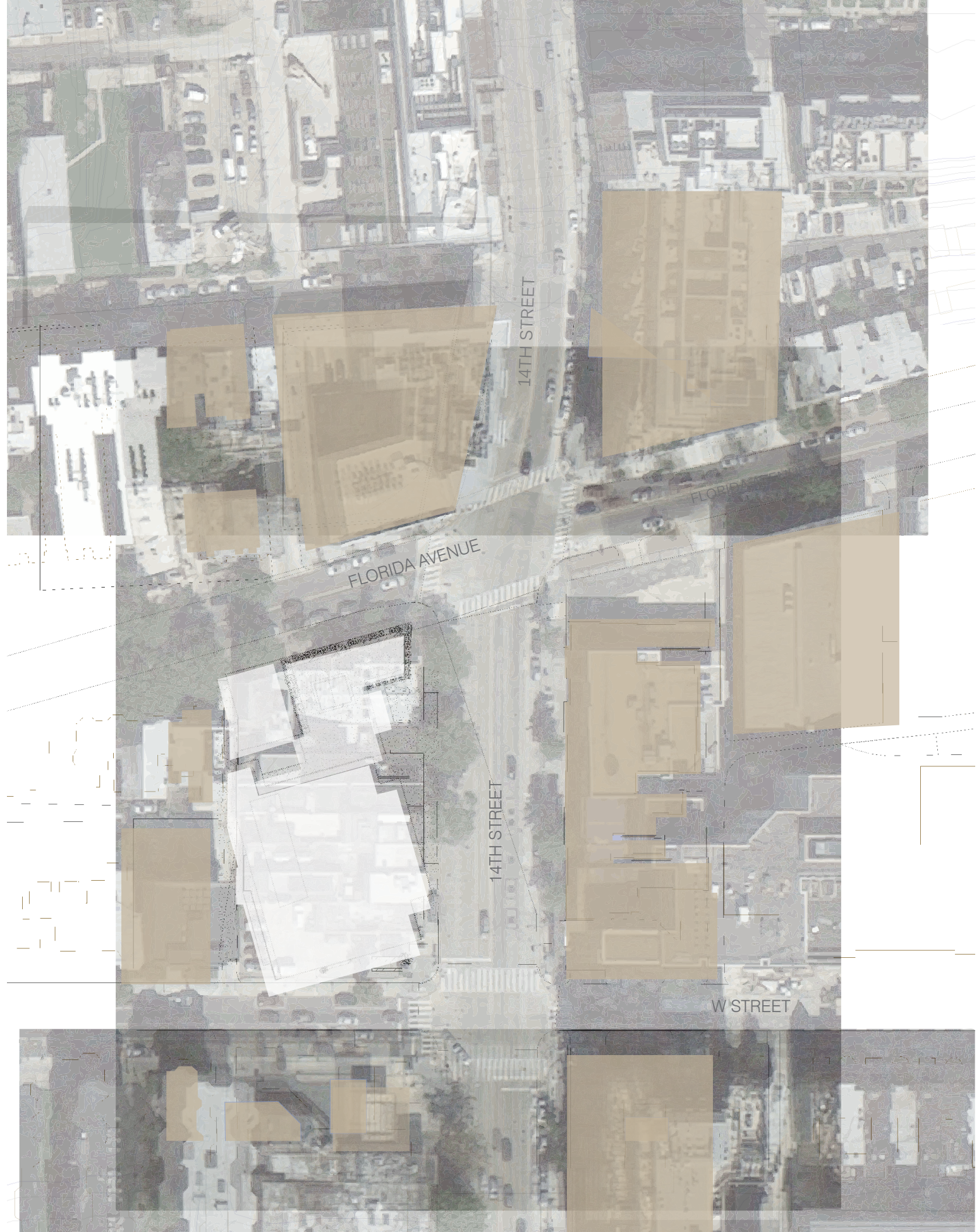


The Site plan

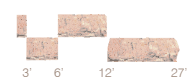
Tightly situated at the corner of the original Boundary Street and 14th, the new location for the Corcoran School of Art + Design exudes creativity, growth, and community. As a contextual response to the surrounding neighborhood, the building sensitively approaches mass, height, and relation to human scale.

Contact through experience between what is taking place in the public environment and what is taking place in the adjacent residences, shops, factories, workshops, and communal buildings can provide a marked extension and enrichment of possibilities for experiences, in both directions.¹⁴

Inevitable development, such as the spread of Columbia Heights, will continue to influence this site. The design of a cohesive building along the familiar scale of the rowhouse has not only recognized the need to maximize usability of land, but also defined historical value among a constantly changing city.



AN EMBEDDED URBAN FABRIC: SITE PLAN





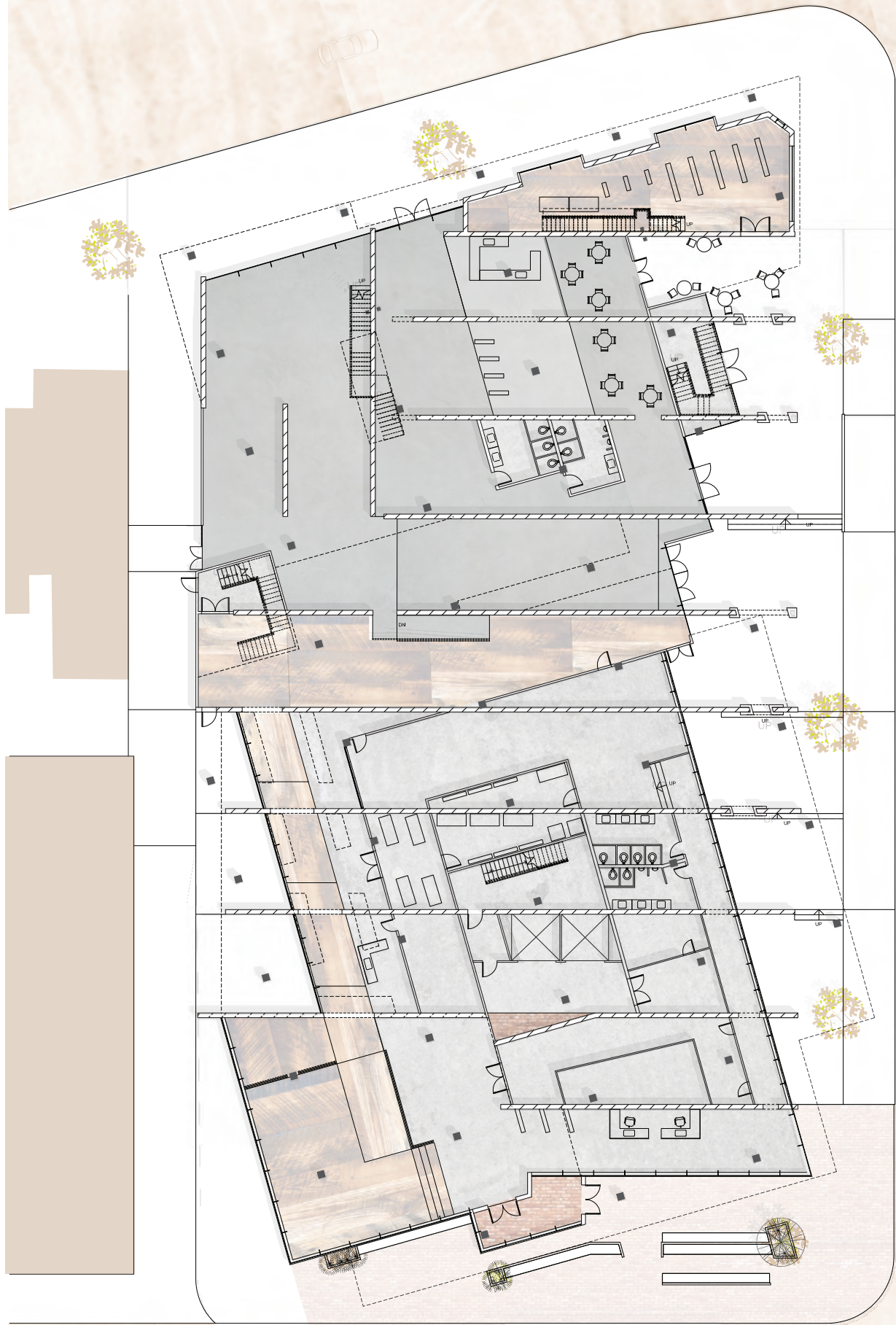
Ground floor plan

As one approaches the building, there are several different options for entry. The south entrance is the glorified student entry. The academic realm reigns here, with the exterior partition aligned with the diagonal form. A large, two-story high entrance vestibule, sunken gallery space for student use, and administration offices are visible to the public.

The east-facing, 14th Street entrance is meant for the public. With an interactive streetscape, brick walls and columns engage the sidewalk and visitors are brought in by the school's performance. Upon entering, they may follow the brick straight back as they view student work along the visitor's gallery.

The rendering shown [above] dictates an important connection between the public and the students. As a three-story space, visitors may view student work in the ground floor gallery while students transitioning above may see members of the public. An opening in the wall reveals a view into the student realm, but is also a visible threshold for the student realm. The columns here gracefully respect the brick walls while reinforcing its structure. The floor quietly ascends through the space, allowing an elevation shift to meet the dramatic change of the site's topography, as evident throughout the building. The glass ceiling towards the end of this procession provides a natural light element, intentionally leading the path of the visitor.

The dark grey color renders the public areas. The other public entrances are at the north corner of the site. A public cafe and supply store face the corner of 14th and Florida, bringing in visitors and allowing them to engage with the school differently.



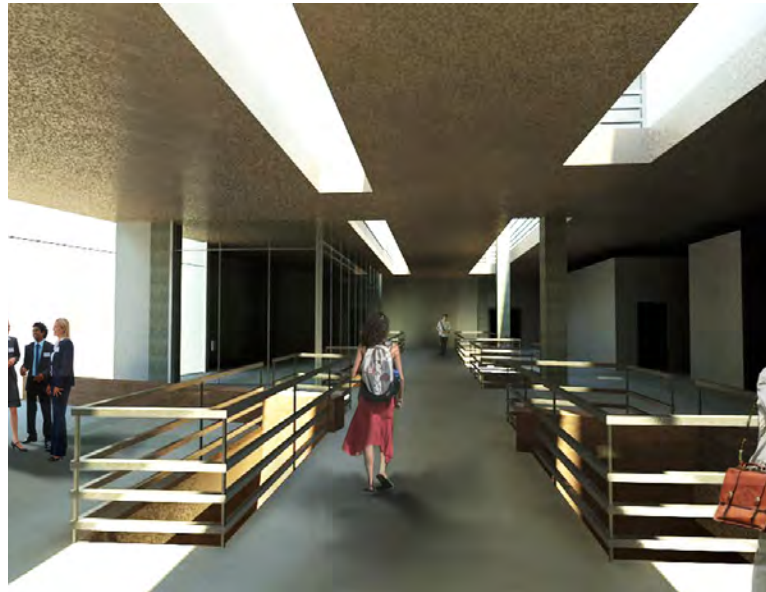


Mezzanine Floor Plan

The concrete rendered portion towards the south end of the building shows the mezzanine level. This floor is only accessible by the academic realm of the school for administration and professor use, only. Their walls share both the diagonal axis and share boundaries with the party walls. At the height of the mezzanine, the architecture will share space with the majority of the existing party walls with the intention of minimal pass-throughs.

The rest of the ground floor, shown as a lighter transparency, will be vertically confined by the second floor. The dashed lines represent the second floor above, which will share the diagonal axis of the student realm.



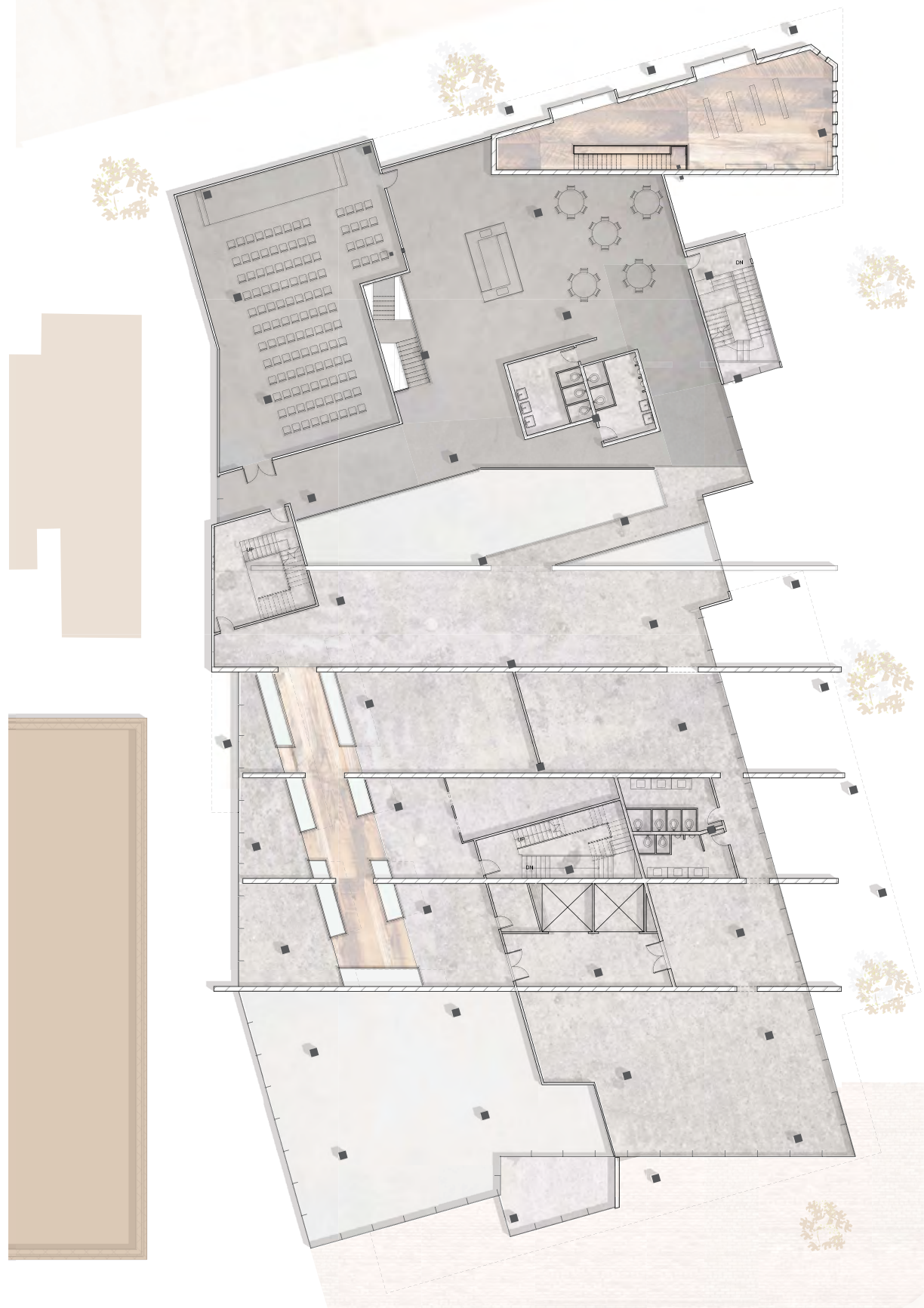


The Second Floor Plan

As you ascend the building, the paths of the student and the visitor become separate experiences, aligned by the architecture. The light grey concrete floor shows open student studio spaces and a tight utilitarian core. The wooden diagonal path in the student side is the 'main street' atrium space, connecting each floor of the student realm, vertically [above].

The dark grey concrete floor represents spaces that are open to the public, but semi-private to the school. The large event space, the upper level of the cafe, and second floor of the store all represents spaces that are crucial thresholds between public and private.

The brick walls are still present on this floor in the academic realm, but have quickly disappeared below the floor slab on the north end of the site.





The Third Floor Plan

The essence of the school is captured by the third floor. With open studio space, enclosed work areas and partitioned classrooms, the students have several options of work environments. This also allows for flexibility in plan and how the school (or future owner) uses the space.

The student circulation against the diagonal axis, as showcased by the main street atrium space, is also adopted by the pin-up gallery. This 'white halls, white walls' space is readapted from the original Corcoran campus. Students may not only use this space for critiques or exhibits, but as a beautiful transition space to the library. The tops of the tallest brick walls make their way through the floor slab at this level, signifying the final remnants of what is below.

In the library, students may interact with the occasional visitor. There are communal spaces for small gatherings and houses the major catalogue for books and materials. Glass exterior at this level hints to the desired visibility yet enigmatic presence of what lies beyond the walls.





The Fourth Floor Plan

The fourth and final floor is entirely new construction, without any hint to the brick below. With an open floor plan and continued main street atrium space, the ultimate level of student circulation ends. The consistently tight core is repetitive on each floor, and continues here.

At this level, intended for senior-year and graduate students, a sincere connection to outside is made. With a provocative terrace, used for events or simply student inspiration, the desire to inhabit this final level is achieved. A skylight imposes visibility to the third floor library, while also representing a hierarchy. The strategically placed plants and seating line the perimeter of the roof terrace. This allows for outdoor events and large gatherings.

The students may also find an outdoor space at the southwest corner, serving as a small retreat for long days or late nights.



The Roof Plan

The student axis of movement is ultimately displayed at the final level of the building. The complete absence of public realm at the highest point of the student facility enforces the angle of its form. The skylight of the student's main street atrium is also defined by this axis. The stairwell, otherwise known as the culminating endpoint of the student 'Main Street' is capped off by a skylight, allowing for natural light to flow down its vertical circulation. A concrete roof is preceded by the concrete floors of the academic sector. This uninhabited roof plane is the terminating element of the numerous paths, rules and structure beneath it.





PERPETUATE THE REVOLUTION: EAST-FACING ELEVATION





East-Facing Section: Perpetuate the Revolution

As the face of 14th Street, this elevation explores every idea of the thesis. The brick walls interact with the streetscape, as individual elements, as well as in conjunction with the new facade. The architecture of the building as a whole is defined by the dialogue of all the materials. Glass, concrete, steel, brick, and plants playfully dance across the face of the school, each exposing their own raw character. Students may exhibit their work across the LED art screens, which visitors may engage as they enter the building, or passersby may glance at as they walk by.

The height of this building responds to the surrounding context while preserving and acknowledging the height of the existing walls. While the scale of the new building has drastically changed, in comparison to the existing row home facades, it accurately represents present-day urban architecture.

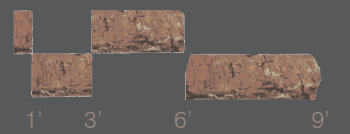


West-Facing Elevation

While this elevation faces an alley, it still stands taller than some of its neighboring buildings, which makes its appearance valuable to the city. The interior levels of the building are seen in this elevation while also depicting large spaces that span multiple levels. Students may find their own private outdoor spaces along this facade, which gives them space from the busy 14th Street corridor. Open air green space spans the 3rd floor roof, giving a wonderful view of the city. Vertical elements like concrete columns and exposed brick walls allow the horizontal nature of the building to be broken up while also revealing areas of circulation.



WEST-FACING ELEVATION



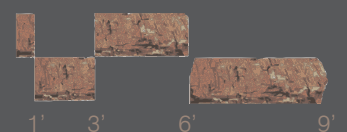


South-Facing Elevation

The proclaimed student entrance is embraced by this elevation. A two-story entry hall, revealing an informal gallery space and administration wing, faces the corner of 14th Street and W Street. The structured benches and landscaping elements capture the inviting essence of the school, provides an outdoor area for the students, and also symbolizes an outer threshold that separates the extreme public from the school.

Large glass panels create a visual module across the facade. A similar module is created by the cast-in-place concrete panels. Revealing the character of the building's materiality across its face exploits the learning process of how the building is constructed; a valuable and inspiring tool for art + design students. The columns protrude beneath the 3rd floor slab, pronouncing height in the public space. Structure is a vivid component, but somewhat intentionally neglects the brick walls. The student realm is about the path of the student, which should be intentionally absent of the path against the brick.

DESIGNING FOR CHANGE: SOUTH-FACING ELEVATION



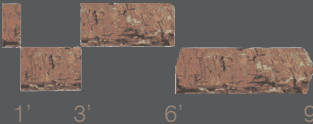


North-Facing Elevation

The Florida Avenue, facade is across the street from new residential high-rises which border the edge of the Columbia Heights neighborhood. This north-facing elevation has slowly transformed and adapted to the scale of the person, since the opposite side of the street so quickly neglects it. The column spacing and brick wall reveals along the glass becomes a truly valued threshold between public and private. The school store and event space entrance both sit at the ground floor of this elevation. This inclusion of the sidewalk into these semi-public interior spaces blur the boudary of the school, allowing perfectly feasible public interaction.

Another unique element of this elevation sits on the roof of the third floor: the terrace, or roof garden. This space is exclusive to students and faculty, but may host occasional events or celebrations. While a few floors from the sidewalk, the roof garden still provides a visibility from student to passerby. This distance, separated by the semi-public store and the semi-private library, keeps a hopeful interaction between student and potential visitor, and nods towards the school's mission of inspiring community.

REMEMBERING THE PAST: NORTH-FACING ELEVATION

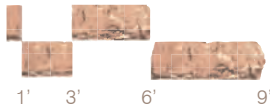




Student Entrance: North-Facing Section

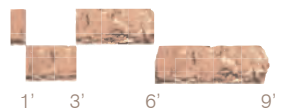
Stepping through the school’s main entrance doors places you within an abundant space. The messy brick wall poses as a rich element against the new building’s background. Students may informally exhibit their work in the sunken gallery space. Visitors of the school may check in with the receptionist. Professors may take the eastern route through the administration wing, while the students will tend to make their straight-shot way through the main street atrium. Administration at the mezzanine level peeks down, thoughtfully to the large entry space. Columns become an obvious walk-around element in the path towards main street, but necessary to its influence on the student realm of the building.

A glimpse into the alley to the west reveals a careful adjustment to the urban third landscape. Students may discard their artistic mistakes in the dumpsters situated here, or simply take a break. The upper levels in this section expose the open, interactive nature of the student’s spaces. The brick begins to fade away and the new takes over.





Public Entrance: South-Facing Section



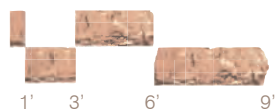
This complex view into the public-centric area of the building incorporates varied parts to make this whole. With the open entrance to the cafe, the visitor is keen to the idea of the existing brick walls against the new architecture. Interaction with the brick walls is intended to enforce path and boundaries for the public. Instances where they engage a column is a hint to the world above them: the school and the path of the students. The large event space allows the school to provide the community with entertainment, outside of their galleries. The third floor shown here is the library, which defines a celebrated space for the students across all disciplines.

The final floor shown here is the exclusive roof terrace. The architectural background to this space is a thoughtful nod to the school's importance between natural inspiration and the built environment.

Embracing the New: East-Facing Section

Students enter through their main thoroughfare, a high atrium space connecting all levels of student and professor daily life. Visitors can meander along the brick wall, defining the gallery of student work and the visual boundary of their realm. The newly erected building playfully dances in and out of the existing walls. This building section begins to define each and every possible path through the building, encouraging multi-level interaction.

Circulation contrary to the flow of the brick walls is shown here with the explicit and deliberate openings in the walls. Vertical circulation, while not celebrated, is an important element to the student's path. The stair shown is the vertical connection and path to ascend the main street atrium space.

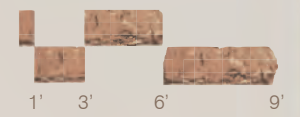






Embracing the Brick Walls: West-Facing Section

Deliberate decisions were made through the design process that inhibit any new floor slabs to rest immediately on top of any brick wall. This allows the brick parti walls to be supported through the lateral strength of the bisecting floor slabs without any additional, unneeded weight. Another important reason for doing this was so the existing walls could exist within each space on their own, and become unique partitions throughout the building. The concrete columns, walls, and glass enclosures define the new architecture, while the rough heaviness of the brick boast historic scale and strength.



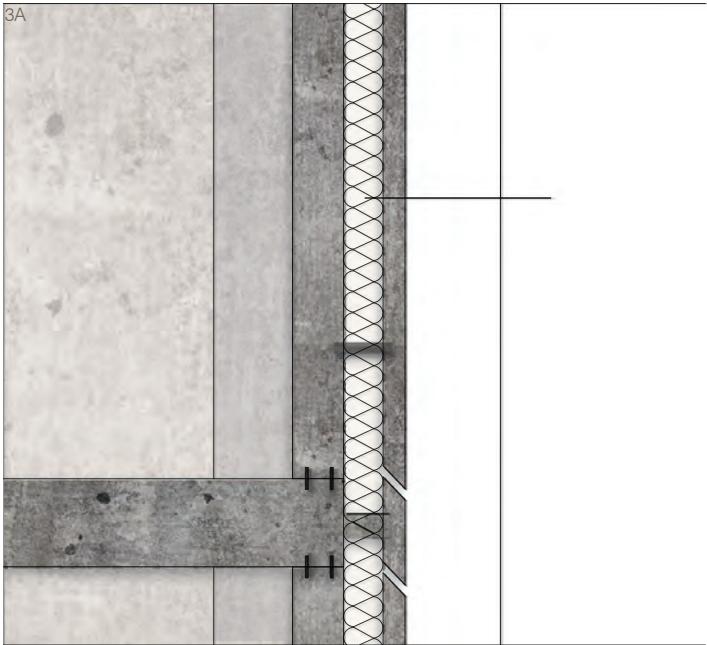
Detailing the Rules

The project-defining decision to keep the brick walls poses questions about how each material embraces, neglects, intersects, or meets the brick. The emphatic or lack of dialogue at each moment required consistency and rules. As shown in the details to the right, each moment has a specific location and value within the building.

At the public level, the passerby, visitor, or even the student, must confront each element separately, as a concrete column may not engage a brick wall. To reinforce the structure of a stand-alone brick wall, concrete will embrace the brick, but only disguise itself a threshold and not exist as a visible structural element. Another element available to the public is the digital art wall, composed by the students and embraced by the public. On the student and academic levels, columns reign. The brick is hardly a remnant as it breeches the surface of the third floor. New partition walls take over and learn that repetition is a thing of the past.



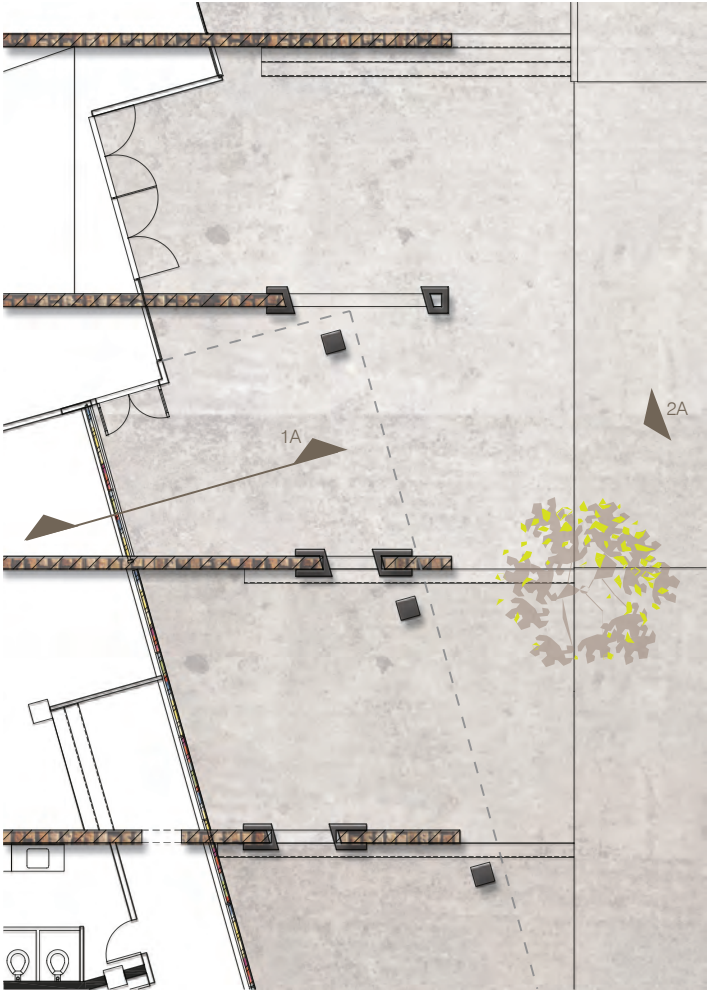
ENLARGED THIRD FLOOR DETAIL: EAST STUDIO PLAN



INSULATED PRECAST CONCRETE PANEL DETAIL: EXTERIOR WALL SECTION



ENLARGED DETAIL ELEVATION: DIGITAL WALL + CONCRETE PANELS



ENLARGED GROUND FLOOR DETAIL: ENTRY TERRACE PLAN



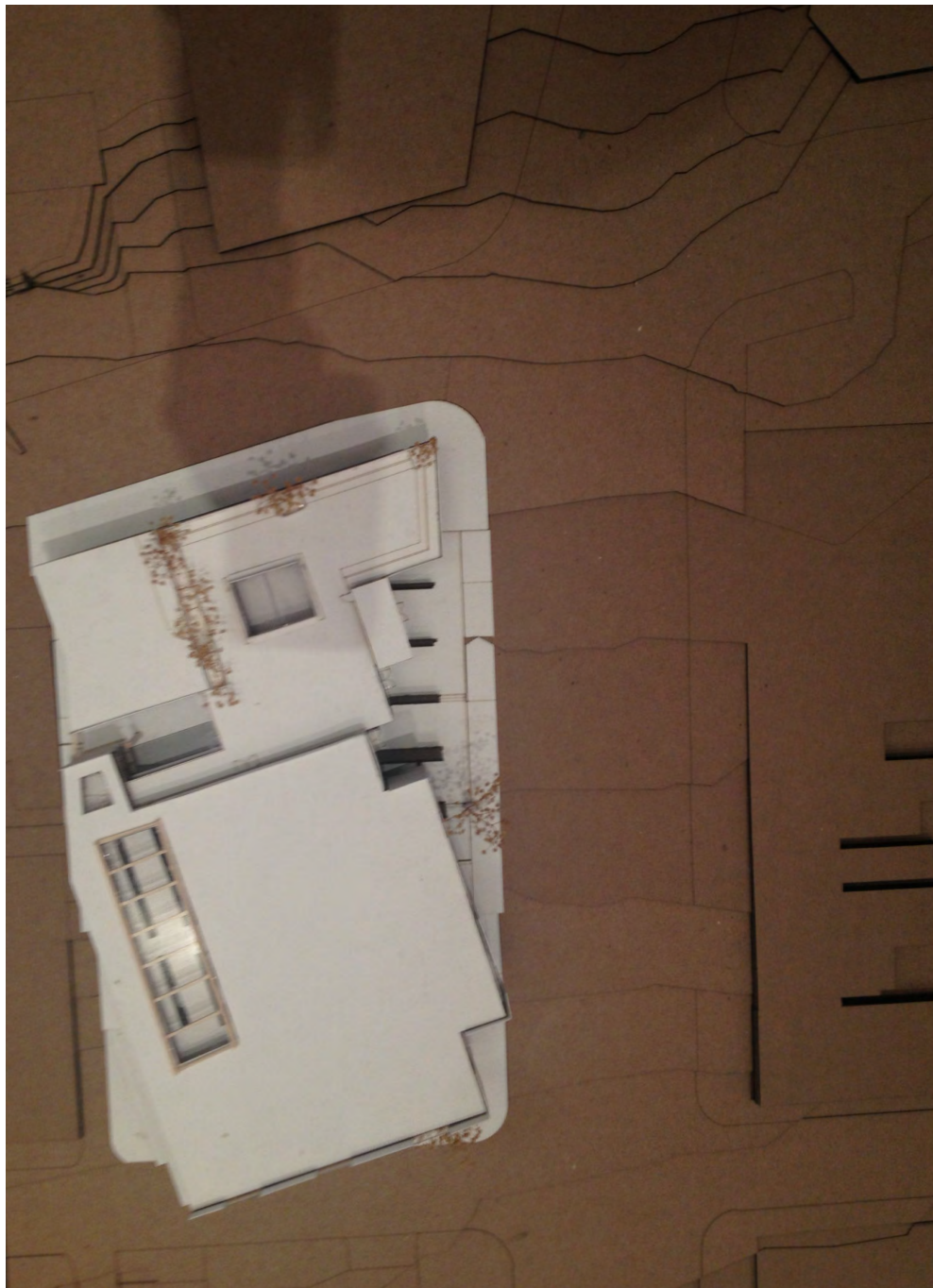
DIGITAL WALL AND CONCRETE KNEE WALL DETAIL: EXTERIOR WALL SECTION

Interpreting the Crevasse: An Intersection

The rendering shown [right] dictates an important connection between the public and student portions of the building. As a three-story space, visitors may view student work in the gallery space while students leaving class in the auditorium may see members of the public. An opening in the wall reveals a view into the student realm, but is also a threshold from one part of the school to another.

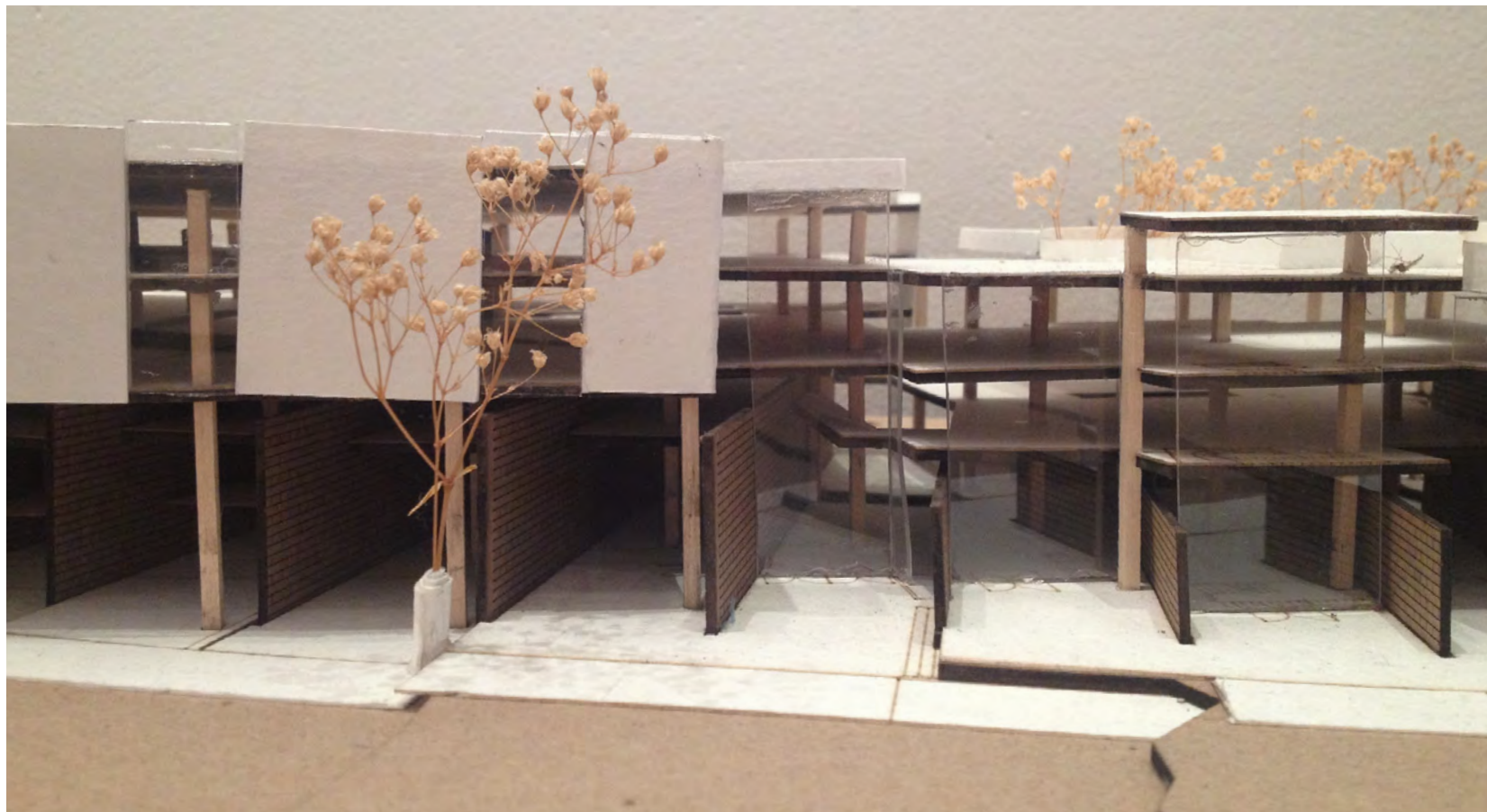
The columns here gracefully respect the brick walls while reinforcing its structure. The floor quietly ascends through the space, allowing an elevation shift to meet the dramatic change of the site's topography. The glass ceiling towards the end of this procession provides a natural light element, also leading the intentional path of the visitor.





The Final Model

The importance of expressing materiality through the model fell in the representation of old and new. The brick walls were constructed by the chipboard material throughout the process of the thesis, as such it is the existing element within the site. The site components and the brick walls, then, were made from the same material. The stark white museum board is a stately representation of the new building elements. The two materials contrast, developing an exquisite dialogue between old and new while clearly displaying the fundamental architecture of the thesis.



“Loved buildings are the ones that work well, that suit people in them, and that show their age and history...What makes a building learn is its physical connection to the people within. Finally, an adapted state is not an end state. A successful building has to be periodically changed and refreshed, or it will turn into a beautiful corpse.”¹⁵

-Stewart Brand

i n c l o s i n g

All things are in constant change, revision or development. Without this phenomenon, the world lacks innovation, curiosity, understanding and growth. The Architect can influence this change by recognizing the past and respecting the possibility of the future. A connection between old and new concepts in architecture provides a uniquely complex realm of understanding and appreciation for future design. Architecture is not only about building or demolishing, but adapting and revitalizing. A good architect builds for the future, a great architect influences it by honoring the past.

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2. Gerard Mack, “Jacques Herzog on Mixing Tenses,” *Architectural Record* (Feb. 2012): 59.
3. Jorge Otero-Pailos, “Restoration Redux,” *Architectural Record* (Feb. 2012): 42.
4. Jorge Otero-Pailos, “Restoration Redux,” *Architectural Record* (Feb. 2012): 42.
5. National Parks Service, “The L’Enfant and McMillan Plans,” (Jan. 30, 2014): <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/lenfant.htm>.
6. Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they’re built*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 18.
7. Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they’re built*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 17.
8. Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture*. (Berlin: Birkhauser, 1998), 18.
9. Jorge Otero-Pailos, “Restoration Redux,” *Architectural Record* (Feb. 2012): 43.
10. David Cohn, “Archaeology Museum of Alava, Vitoria, Spain,” *Architectural Record* (July 2011): 47.
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14. Jan Gehl, *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space*. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2011), 121.
15. Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they’re built*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 66.

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[all drawings and images produced by the author, unless noted otherwise]

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