

ANY LANDSCAPE IS A **CONDITION OF THE SPIRIT** & SO IS IMPROVISATION.

what do conditions on improvisation really say?

* DRAW qualities you understand / see

NOISE ORDERS

29 AUG. 14

SPEED TRANSFORMS **HARMONIC PROGRESSION** & **RHYTHMIC SEQUENCE** INTO A CHALLENGE OF DAUNTING **COMPLEXITY**.

HARMONY



YES, AND...

THE IMPROVISING LANDSCAPE OF THE DISPLACED

ELIANA JAVAHERIGILANI

RHYTHM



(rhythm vs. order)



(rhythm vs. repetition)

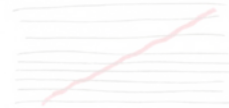
* jazz insists that order might not reside where u
↳ order might in fact reside in what that system p
noise.



(UN)

EXPECTED

* noise; it does not exist in itself, but only in relation
within the addition of a message in the process of
↳ it is a term for a signal that interferes w/ the
message by the receiver



ARCHITECTURE OF IMPROVISATION (WALTER HO)

REPETITION

NON OBJECTIVITY

CONTAMINATION

CHANGE



IN IMPROVISATION, SPACE OF PLAYING IS NOT ASSUMED TO BE UNIFORM



YES, AND...
THE IMPROVISING LANDSCAPE OF THE DISPLACED

ELIANA JAVAHERIGILANI

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
AND STATE UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF

MASTER
OF
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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OF BELONGING, SENSE OF PLACE, DESIGN, INDIVIDUALITY, ENVIRONMENTAL
PSYCHOLOGY, URBAN CAMPUS

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ABSTRACT

Yes, And... The Improvising Landscape of the Displaced

Eliana Javaherigilani

Immigration has continuously been an evident part of the human history. Throughout time, for one reason or another people have left the place they call home. Whether voluntarily seeking better opportunities in other cities/countries/continents, or forcefully being asked to leave due to political, social, or natural issues, resettlement continues to be a difficult challenge for those who are displaced.

The issue, human displacement, whether caused by natural disasters or political/social issues, is rather serious, especially in our world today. Whether the wildfires of California, the hurricanes of Louisiana, or political issues of Syria, there is a massive population who choose to or have to leave the place they call home. Despite many psychological and physical challenges, trauma, and difficulties that these individuals have to face, where they go next does not have to be a tough adjustment.

Restorative environments, namely landscapes, allow for recovery of these individuals through its components of mystery, coherence, complexity, and texture (Kaplan and Kaplan). In the case of immigrants and refugees, the time of adjustment and adaptation heightens the absence of sense of belonging and potential social injustice; however, design and very particularly throughout this thesis, landscape architecture can help.

Improvisation has one rule, "yes, and..." The notion of acceptance and addition allows for the involved individuals to not only be creative regarding their surroundings, but encourages them to become a part of evolving of the space. This increases the sense of belonging, and therefore, makes for a more positive experience in a given space.

This becomes specifically important for a displaced/detached group of individuals.

Not only this book, but this whole project, and my life, obviously, is dedicated to my mother. Without her daily motivation, inspiration, optimism, strength, dedication, and heart of gold, I wouldn't be where I am today.

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All of my friends and classmates, and specially Nahal Sharifi, Abi Kallushi, Lama Hasan, and Sahar Javaheri – thank you for being on this incredible journey with me. I admire each and every single one of you for being the incredibly talented and strong women you are.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Story: An Introduction	2
The Realization: Displacement	3
The Opportunity: Improvisation	5
Thesis Question	8
Project Inquiry + Investigation	10
Project Definition: The WAAC	11
The WAAC: History + Location	12
Site Selection	15
Collective Surveys	18
Individual Survey	19
Case Studies	24
George Washington University	25
Howard University	26
Alexandria City Hall Plaza	27
Site Analysis + Studies + Investigations	28
The Parking	29
The Front Porch	30
Inside Out	39
Design Inquiry + Investigation (a process)	41
Elevation Difference	43
Stormwater Management	44
Parking Matter	46
Movable Thresholds	50
WAAC Campus	54
The WAAC Campus	55
Water Theater	58
Hillside	66
Garden Room	71
East Wing	72
Conclusion	75
References	76

LIST OF IMAGES

World Map in Watercolor	2
Displacement- Context	3
Prospect & Refuge- Context	3
Improvisation- An Understanding	4
Improvisation- An Understanding II	4
Noise Orders- Study	5
Noise Orders- Study II, (UN)expected	5
Noise Orders- Study III, Architecture of Improvisation	5
Homeless Park- A Concept Study	9
High Line Park- Early Case Study	9
Paley Park- Early Case Study	9
World Map Consortium	11
Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center (WAAC)- Location Context	12
View of 1001 Prince Street	13
Student Working, and a brick wall project	14
Student and faculty working on laying the brick courtyard	14
Courtyard in the process of being built	14
Students and faculty setting up the design-build bookshelves at the library	14
Student placing the flooring of the library	14
WAAC Context	15
WAAC Buildings	15
Existing Sections	15
Sound and Smell Survey	16
Overlay of History	16
Public/Private Study	16
Sound and Smell Study	17
WAAC Boundary Investigation	18
WAAC Footprint Investigation	18
Result of Individual Survey -Where is the Boundary of the WAAC	19
WAAC Campus Survey	19
Why Do WAAC Students Walk?	20
Aerial of Site	21
Aerial of Site II	21
View of WAAC Parking Lot looking east	22
View of WAAC Parking Lot	22
View of WAAC Parking Lot looking east II	22

View of WAAC Parking Lot looking east III	22
View of City's Parking Lot looking west I	22
View of City's Parking Lot looking west II	22
View of City's Parking Lot looking west III	22
Parking Collage	23
George Washington University Location	25
Study of a GW Entrance	25
Study of a GW Entrance II	25
Study of Howard University I	26
Topographical Highlight	26
Vegetation Highlight	26
Study of Howard University II	26
Section of Alexandria City Hall Plaza	27
Study of Alexandria City Hall Plaza	27
Site Material Study	30
Diagrammatic Study- the two parking lots	30
A Wednesday Night	31
A Regular Monday Morning	31
Annual Picnic	31
Movie Night	31
Impromptu Chaharshanbesoori Celebration	32
Monthly Shadow Study	32
Year-Round Shadow Study	32
E.S.P. Killer Location	33
E.S.P. Killer Entrances	33
E.S.P. Killer Main Entrance	33
E.S.P. Killer Back-Door Entrance	33
Canopy and Material Study	33
Front Porch Location	34
Front Porch Plan	34
Front Porch Studies	35
North/South Section of Front Porch	36
North/South Section of Front Porch II	36
East/West Section of Front Porch	36
Students hang out on the front porch	37
Students on the front porch	37
WAAC Front Porch	37
Annual photo on the front porch	37

Students hang out on the front lawn	38
Students moving the chairs on the lawn	38
Students on the front lawn	38
Students rearrange the movable chairs on the lawn	38
Once Upon a Staircase	39
Stair Theater Story	40
Stair Theater Thresholds	40
Back Terrace	43
Hill Concept Investigation	43
Terrace Concept Investigation	43
Catch Basin Concept	44
Catch Basin as a Learning Space	44
Water Amphitheater Study	45
Water Amphitheater Concept I Perspective	45
Water Amphitheater Concept II Perspective	45
Existing vs Proposed Parking	46
Parking Section Study	47
Parking Topography Study	47
Parking Studies- Longitudinal Sections	47
Parking Uses Concept Study	48
Trees as Opportunities	49
Movable Trees Concept	50
Movable Trees Concept Development	50
Movable Trees as a Threshold	51
Movable Tree View	52
Movable Tree Detail	52
Movable Tree as a Threshold View	52
Movable Tree as a Threshold View II	52
Movable Garden Wall Section I	53
Movable Garden Wall Section II	53
Movable Garden Wall Concept and Details	53
WAAC Campus (in the context of its surroundings)	55
The WAAC Campus	56
Water Theater	57
Garden Room	57
Hillside	57
East Wing	57

The Water Theater	58
Just Another Day Plan	59
Just Another Day Perspective	59
Movie Night Plan	60
Movie Night Perspective	60
Graduation Day Plan	61
Graduation Day Perspective	61
Pinup Day Plan	62
Pinup Day Perspective	62
Stormwater Capture, Filtration, and Reuse Diagram	63
Stormwater Overflow Diagram	63
Rain in Alexandria	63
View of a 10-year Storm at the Water Theater	64
Stormwater Capacity	64
View of Waterwall	65
Water Theater East/West Section-Perspective	65
Water Theater North/South Section-Perspective	65
Hillside	66
Studio Meeting Plan	67
Studio Meeting Perspective	67
Just a Day Plan	68
Just a Day Perspective	68
WAACy Talk Plan	69
WAACy Talk Perspective	69
Hillside Perspective	70
Garden Room	71
A Day Perspective	71
Pinup Perspective	71
East Wing	72
Bioswale Plan & Section	72
East Wing Perspective	72
Chaharshanbesoori	72
The new WAAC Campus	74
The Water Theater and Hillside	74
The Hillside looking towards Patrick Street (1001 on the right)	74
The Water Theater	74



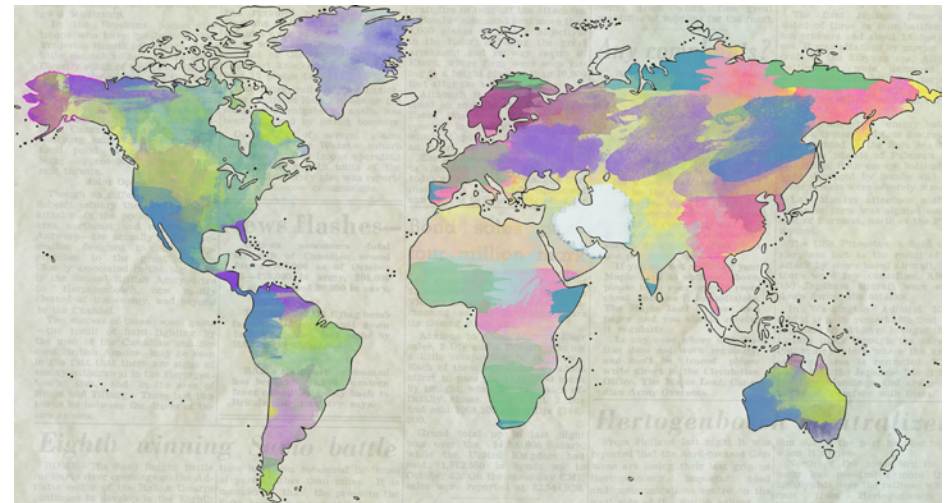
INTRODUCTION

T H E S T O R Y : A N I N T R O D U C T I O N

*“Wherever I am, let me be!
The Sky is mine
The windows, the mind, the air, love, earth, are all mine”
~Sohrab Sepehri, Persian poet*

Do you belong to a place? Have you ever felt a lack of said belonging? Is there a place you call home?

I am a transplant from Iran. By now – October 2015- I have been living in the United States for a decade. Growing up, however, I lived in two other continents, three countries, and four cities. Despite the culture shock, and as much as I like to think the transition into my new home had always been easy, that has not been the case. For one reason or another, some adjustments and adaption were more or less pleasant than others, and of course, no two journeys had been the same. One of my most clear memories I have, is from when I was 9 years old, and had to move to Holland. I was, for the very first time, surrounded by other 9 year-olds from all around the world. We all had very different backgrounds, upbringings, languages, cultures, and understanding of the world; however, we were all in the same space and used it to our advantage to feel more comfortable and at home. We seek opportunities to share our own views and takes on the world from what we had learned and known. These spaces brought us together, when we were worlds apart. I, a decade and a half later, found myself in a very similar situation. For the past three years, as a graduate student, I have been surrounded by many people from around the world, which I realized is not too uncommon in today’s world, and especially urban centers. Also, as a landscape architecture student, I began to wonder if my environmental surrounding, and particularly design, played a role in enhancing my experience, adaption, and adjustment to where I had to call home for the given time.

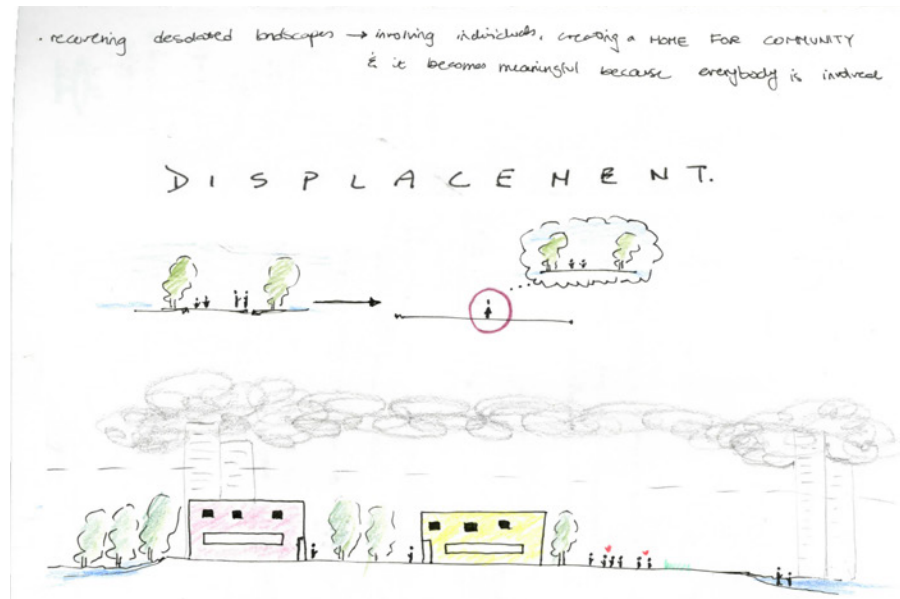


World Map in Watercolor

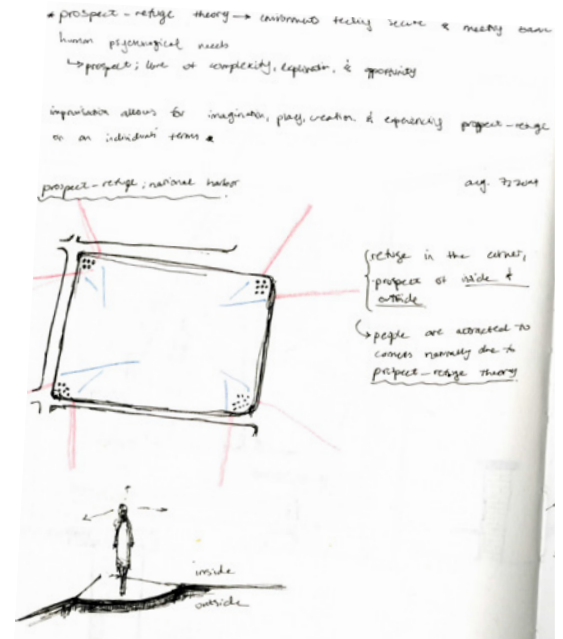
Immigration has continuously been an evident part of the human history. Throughout time, for one reason or another people have left the place they call home. Whether voluntarily seeking better opportunities in other cities/countries/continents, or forcefully being asked to leave due to political, social, or natural issues, resettlement continues to be a difficult challenge for those who are displaced.

THE REALIZATION: DISPLACEMENT

The issue, human displacement, whether caused by natural disasters or political/social issues, is rather serious, especially in our world today. Whether the wildfires of California, the hurricanes of Louisiana, or political issues of Syria, there is a massive population who choose to or have to leave the place they call home. Despite many psychological and physical challenges, trauma, and difficulties that these individuals have to face, where they go next does not have to be a tough adjustment. As of October 2015, there are more than 19.8 million refugees in the world. In the case of Syria, for instance, over 1 million refugees arrived to their camps in the first five months of 2013, with about half of them being children. Today, this number exceeds 3 million people. For immigrants and refugees alike, the culture shock, seasonal differences, emotional distances and issues such as stress and trauma are a part of the everyday life; however, the issue of human displacement tends to be dismissed as a design issue.



Displacement- context

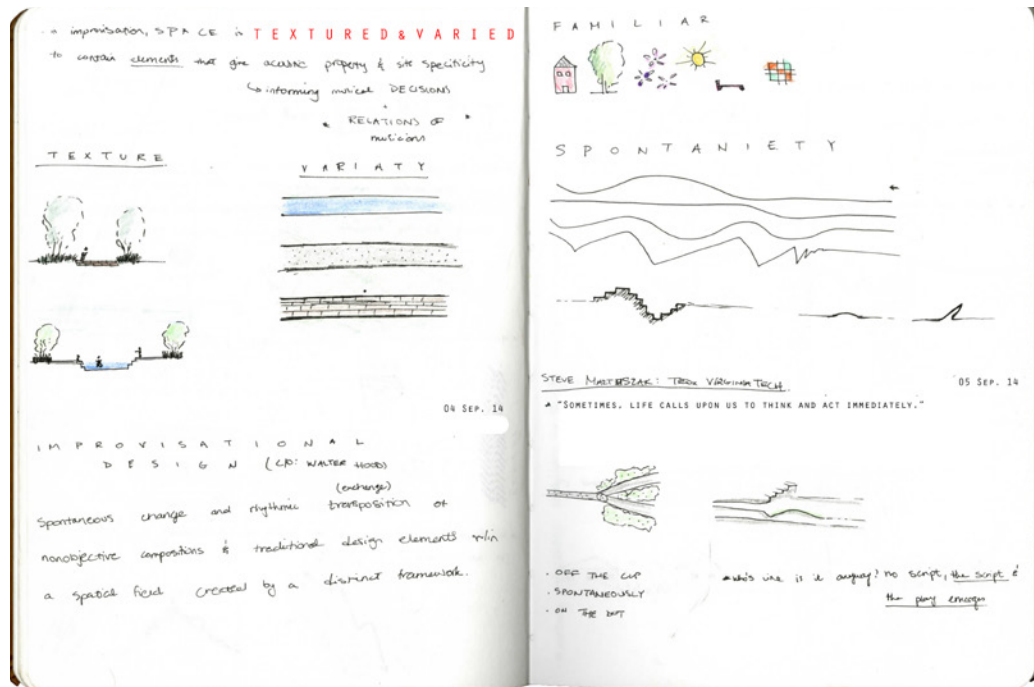


Prospect & Refuge - context

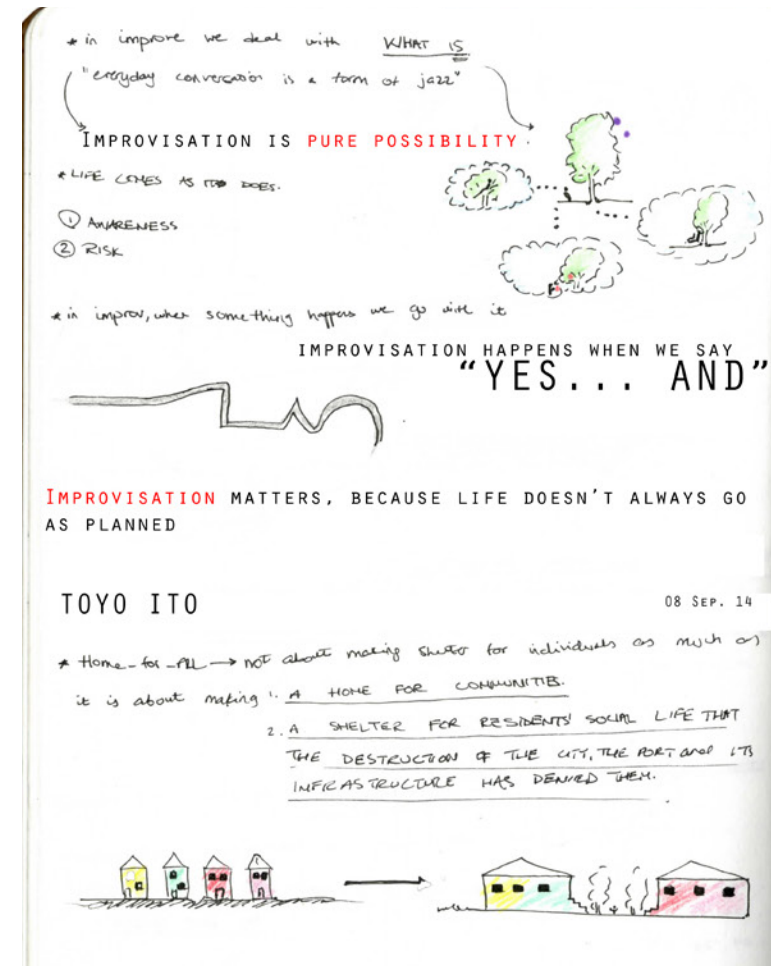
Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, two of the pioneers of environmental psychology have been working on the importance of environmental psychology for the past two decades. “Social injustices are created when certain uses are ignored or not provided for [...in the park], sometimes causing conflicts when unprogrammed uses occur.” . “Mental fatigue” as they continue, is a rather crucial issue faced by the frazzled, hassled, worn-out, stressed, or irritable individuals. Restorative environments, namely landscapes, allow for recovery of these individuals through its components of mystery, coherence, complexity, and texture. In the case of immigrants and refugees, the time of adjustment and adaptation heightens the absence of sense of belonging and potential social injustice; however, design and very particularly throughout this thesis, landscape architecture can help.

Garett Eckbo, one of the pioneers of modern landscape architecture in the U.S. believed in the importance of landscape architecture in the wellbeing, physically and psychologically, of migrant workers in California. This is a highly related and significant issue in our world today because many immigrants and refugees, regardless of their origins and backgrounds, will be an active part of the society they move to. Just as any other citizen of said society, it is only their rights to feel a sense of belonging and create an attachment to a place. Furthermore, stressing on the importance of environmental psychology, a given space could be a tremendous improvement to the physical as well as psychological wellbeing of these individuals, who will be active members of their new society.

The intention of this thesis study, investigation, and design was to look at landscape architecture as the means of the powerful design tool that it is, to allow for an easier, less stressful, and more engaging journey of adaption, adaptation, and adjustment for a diverse group of individuals who may be experiencing with displacement and detachment. It does so by looking at the issue of displacement and its possible design solutions through the lens of improvisation.



Improvisation- An Understanding



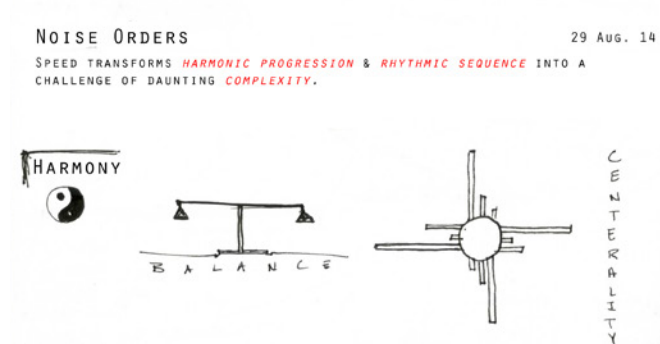
Improvisation- An Understanding II

T H E O P P O R T U N I T Y : I M P R O V I S A T I O N

Besides my personal interest in the improvisational comedy and arts, the concept of improvisation is something about its spontaneity, flexibility, and sense of personality I admired. The reason improvisation, in particular, could be a beneficial response to this issue, is its certain characteristics of spontaneity, imagination, and creation. Improvisation allows individuals, as well as groups, to use existing elements to make something unfamiliar, familiar. This is especially crucial to the lives of individuals who may be feeling out of place for one reason or another, since it will allow them to live in more comfort and peace of mind.

“Through layering of spaces and events an improvised landscape emerges which reflect the soul of the community, particular to place, extending the tradition of landscape design.” (Walter Hood, Noise Orders, Jazz, Page 7) Improvisation, he continues, is fundamental to imagination. When in a transitional space and time, providing the users of the landscape with opportunities to create and inspire to imagine, not only allows for an easier adaptation, due to caring, but also creates a sense of belonging. Improvisation is not ultimate freedom, in an improvisational design, a framework is provided, and within the framework there are opportunities for adjustments, imagination and creation. A significant part of improvisation is allowing and providing the users and visitors to see and discover possibilities of creation.

Improvisation, as Walter Hood suggests, “utilizes previous canons as a framework for departure, but demands individual responses”, providing them opportunities to make something of their own. This characteristic of improvisation – appropriation- reinforces the image of a community these individuals come from, making them a part of the new community they are a part of, while at the camps. One of the most important parts of improvisation is what is left over of it. Since it encourages and allows the next person, group, or generation to see that as a starting point and carry on, adding their own elements, points, and ideas to it. With that, something ordinary and unfamiliar can become unique and familiar.



Noise Orders- Study



Noise Orders- Study II, (UN)expected



Noise Orders- Study III, Architecture of Improvisation

QUALITIES OF IMPROVISATION include:

Spaces are available for activities but not only meant for certain activities
they are open-ended

Spaces *offering or suggesting* a variety of ways to be used, not prescribed
hints may be provided about potential use of spaces

Spaces are *activated in different ways* and at different times, based on the needs
they are not limited with or by specificity or time

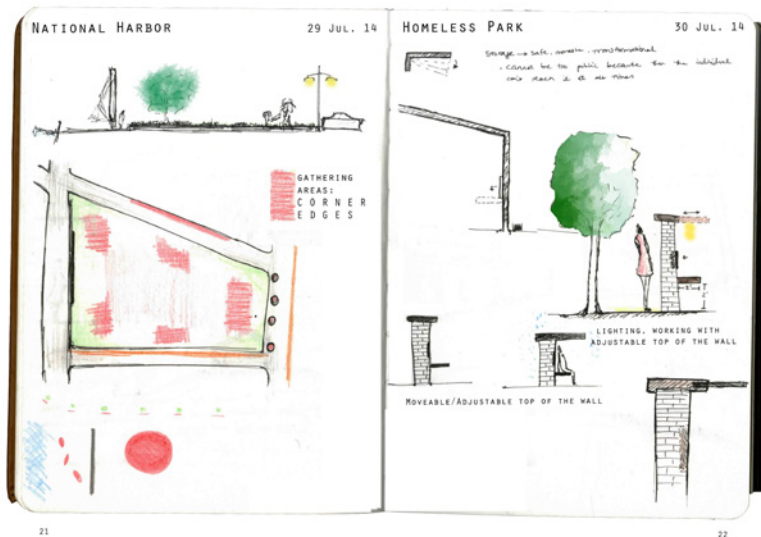
In improvisational spaces, one of the unique qualities is the integration and permeability of activities. In these, usually, urban spaces, activities, people, and **spaces flow and intertwine**

In improvisational spaces, individuals are provided with **flexibility and choices**

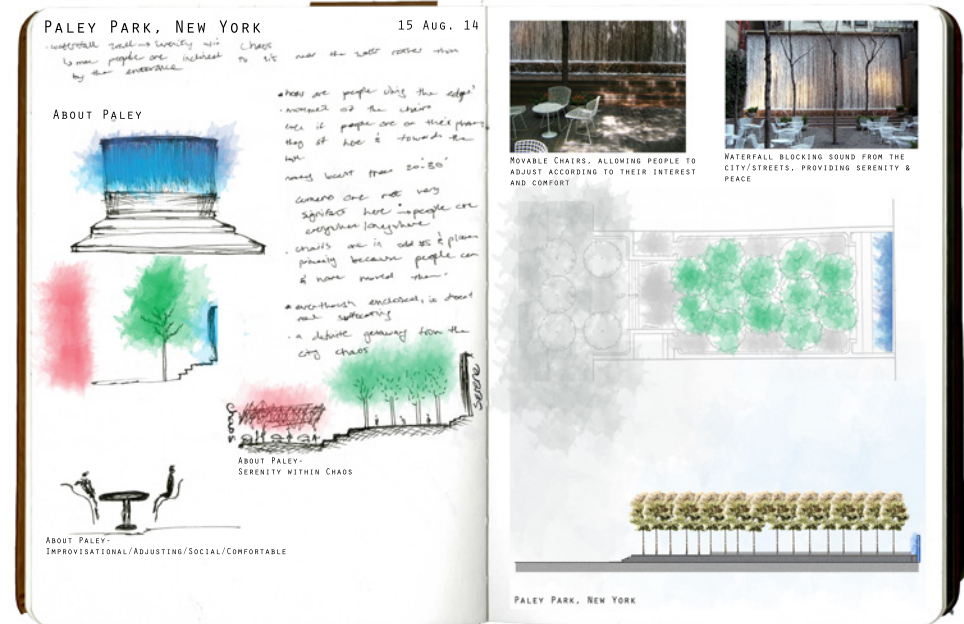
In improvisational spaces, individuals are welcomed and encouraged to say **YES, AND...**

Thesis Question:

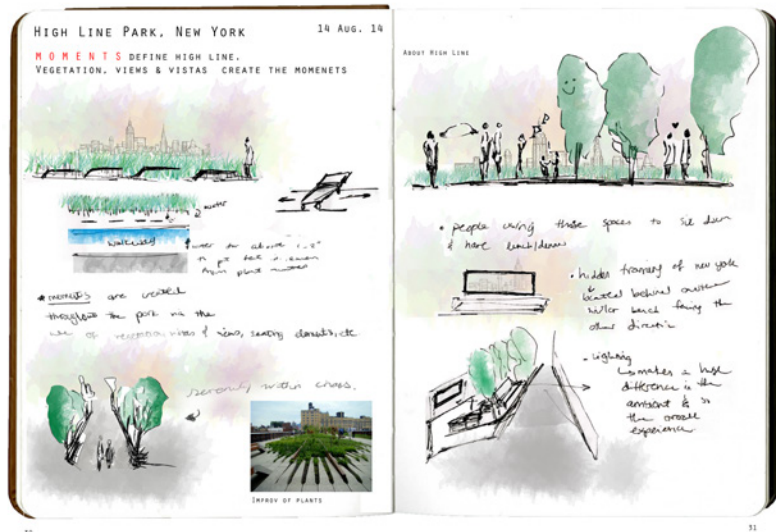
Can landscape architecture, through the lens of improvisation, design and create a place -however temporary or transitional- that makes the adaptation and adaption journey for a displaced individual easier, more pleasant, and engaging?



Homeless Park- A Concept Study



Paley Park- Early Case Study



High Line Park- Early Case Study



PROJECT: INQUIRY & INVESTIGATION

P R O J E C T D E F I N I T I O N : T H E W A A C

WAAC, Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center, is a satellite Virginia Tech campus located in the historic old town Alexandria, Virginia. The Center focuses on architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design. The population at the WAAC can vary, and in a given semester it could be home to nearly 200 students; however, for the most part many of the students are visiting from other states, countries, and continents. Furthermore, students tend to study at the WAAC anywhere from one semester (three months) to as long as a little over three years.

If you must know one thing about the WAAC, is that it is absolutely one of a kind. Since 1985, the Center has been a home to students from around the globe. Today, the school welcomes consortium students from 13 universities from Iran, Argentina, Chile, Israel, Turkey, Germany, Estonia, Australia, Bahrain, and the UK as well as visiting students from California Polytechnic State University, Mississippi State University, and Louisiana State University. So, as you can imagine, as a student, one is quite literally surrounded by the world at the WAAC.

I found the WAAC striking as a thesis investigation site. First and foremost, the WAAC has continuously been an ever-changing place, even throughout its history. Secondly, the majority of the students at this satellite location are coming together from a variety of personal, social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, languages, and interests, who have voluntarily detached themselves from where they call home, to be here for a given amount of time -anywhere between 3 months to 3 years- and are likely to face culture shock and an adaptation journey. Lastly, despite the need, the WAAC does not have a convenient campus. The daily meets and greets, classes, gatherings, and discoveries take place within the building and between studio spaces; however, its surrounding spaces offer opportunities, and challenges, to make a more prominent campus.



"World Map Consortium" - a map indicating the diversity of consortium students at the WAAC
<http://www.waac.vt.edu/#!consortium/c12gt>

T H E W A A C : H I S T O R Y + L O C A T I O N

The WAAC, as an institution, has been an extension of Virginia Tech's College of Architecture and Urban Studies since 1980. Jaan Holt, the director of the Center has continuously welcomed students from all around the world with his motto, "construction and design are inclusive of all cultures, originating in the common unity of the human condition and, like all endeavors, are the product of desire and reason, of dream and detail."

The Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center is located in old town Alexandria, Virginia, just south of Washington D.C. The Center, over the years, has resided in a variety of locations, primarily located on Prince Street. Today, there are a total of four buildings that allow for students and faculty to challenge, engage, and grow. The efforts began from "1001 Prince Street" (referred to, by students and faculty, as 1001 [ten-oh-one]) as stable heart of the WAAC.

Today, the WAAC consists of 2 academic buildings -1001 Prince Street and 601 Prince Street-, dedicated to architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design, as well as a residential building known as The Gallery.



Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center (WAAC)- Location Context

Improvisation has been an evident part of WAAC's process of becoming what it is, has been, and will continue to be.

As the first effort to begin the Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center, the Virginia Tech Foundation purchased, what is now referred to many as 1001 (ten-oh-one) in 1990. After two decades of tireless efforts of many faculty and students, this main building has become a true multi-disciplinary architecture school, offering architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design.

The 1001 building was originally built in 1909 as the Robert E. Lee School for Girls. The structure is brick walls, heavy wood joints, and wooden floors. The school was a part of the City of Alexandria's public system; however, following a decline in the school-age population, the school closed in the early 80's. (WAAC, Virginia Tech) The building was then sold to private interest, renovated to be used as an office space in the mid-80's.

"There are many and complex reasons why its life as an office building was brief, but one of them surely derives from the typology of the building itself. Now, as in its beginning, the building seeks to inspire the activity of learning and pursuit of architecture."

As a design school the building and the surrounding grounds have themselves become a kind of laboratory for learning and building. Through this collective endeavor, for the betterment of the school and through a desire to shape their own environment - each year students propose, continue and complete design-build projects and architecture interventions of various scales within the space. Some of the most notable projects have been the design and construction of a 2-story WAAC Library and circular stair, the brick cylinder, the cantilevered piano platform with glass handrail, the pivoting movie screen panels, the photography studio, the meeting bench, the "secret room" and the brick courtyard.

The 601 Prince Street building, similarly, has a history of adaptation and reuse through its history. Having been the house of EDAW (Eckbo, Dean, Austin, and

Williams), a very prestigious and progressive landscape architecture firm for many years, this recycled church located 3 blocks east of 1001 Prince, became home to many students and faculty at the WAAC in the first half of 2013.



View of 1001 Prince Street, the main building of the WAAC (www.waac.vt.edu)

Due to the ever-changing nature of the WAAC, and opportunities it continues to provide students and faculty to explore and experience with architecture within the building, the culture at the WAAC is already improvisational.

The understanding of improvisation and its vivid and active residence at the WAAC encouraged the investigation of this thesis to design an urban campus for this institution.



Student working, and a brick wall project (www.waac.vt.edu)



Student and faculty working on laying the brick courtyard (<http://arch-design.vt.edu/programs/waac>)



Courtyard in process of being built
Photo Credit: WAAC Archives



Students and faculty setting up the design-build bookshelves at the library
Photo Credit: WAAC Archives



Student placing the flooring of the library
Photo Credit: WAAC Archives

Yes, and...

The grid system of Alexandria, density of WAAC's immediate surroundings, as well as the existing and acceptable zoning, limited the choice of sites for this campus. Considering the linearity of WAAC's boundary, as well as a given four possible sites that were frequented by students, a series of studies and investigations, at a variety of scales took place to further look into the use and reasons that students were using the spaces between and around 1001, 601, and The Gallery.

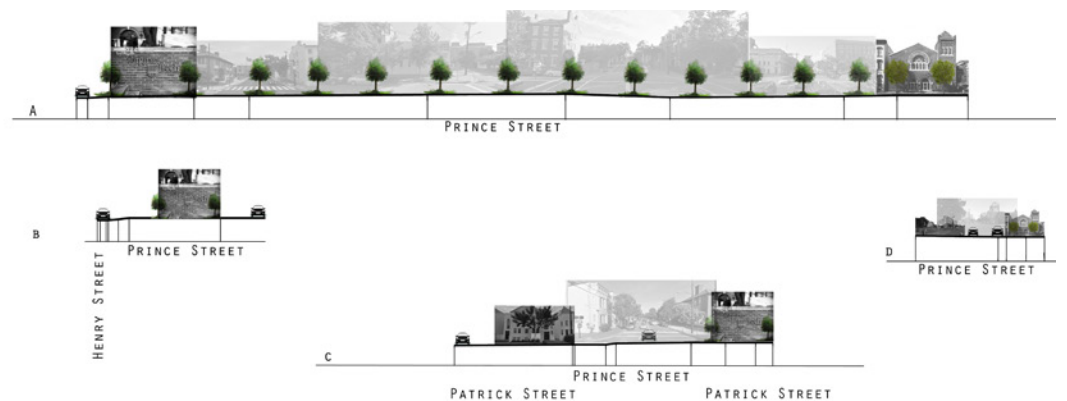
Frequency of use and easy accessibility for students and faculty were two of the main criteria for site selection. The green spaces in the 'WAAC Context' drawing (right) indicate the open public spaces as the possible campus sites. An in-depth series of studies were conducted to gain a better understanding of the site conditions, movement, public/private ownership, size, accessibility, and most importantly, the frequency of uses by the WAAC student and faculty.



WAAC Context- A study of WAAC buildings, their general context, the walk and vegetation on a typical walk from one end to another



WAAC Buildings

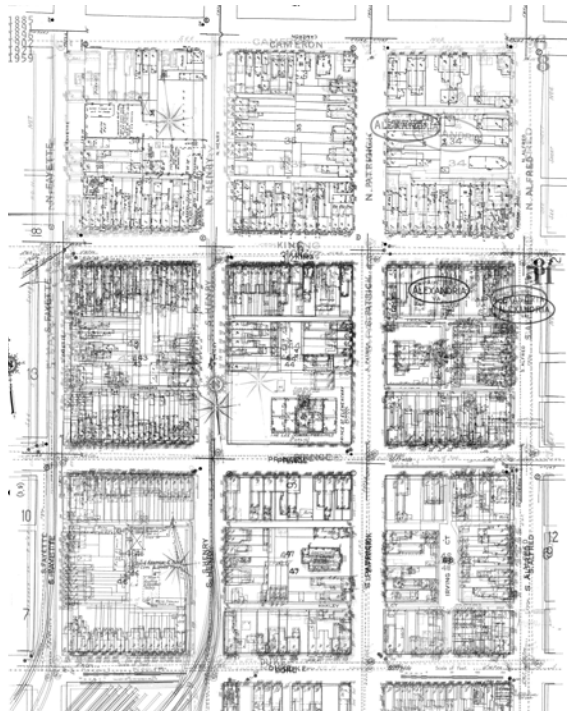


Existing Sections- of 1001, 601, the Gallery, and Prince Street between 1001 and 601

Many of the neighboring businesses around the WAAC are food related. There are two coffeehouses that the faculty and students tend to frequent. One is located on the same block, just to the east of 1001, and the other directly to the north.

The buildings are also located just north of a busy route, so traffic and its related noises are to be considered for. A sound and smell study was conducted over a week, consecutively, at various times to record the intensity and maximum of their occurrence. (right, and opposite page)

As evident by these drawings, there tends to be a heavy sound and smell graph at the intersection of Prince Street and Patrick Street (corner of 1001), which indicated any activities regarding pinups and meetings would have to be focused more centrally to avoid traffic noises as much as possible.



Overlay of History

To be considerate of the neighboring buildings, a study of public and private entities was conducted. This study also investigated a typical movement route of a WAAC resident (right). This study suggested that almost all the surrounding buildings were residential or small businesses; therefore, the future campus design could potentially be used by the neighbors as well. The movement study suggested that the foot traffic tends to be concentrated around 1001, and more specifically the WAAC parking lot.

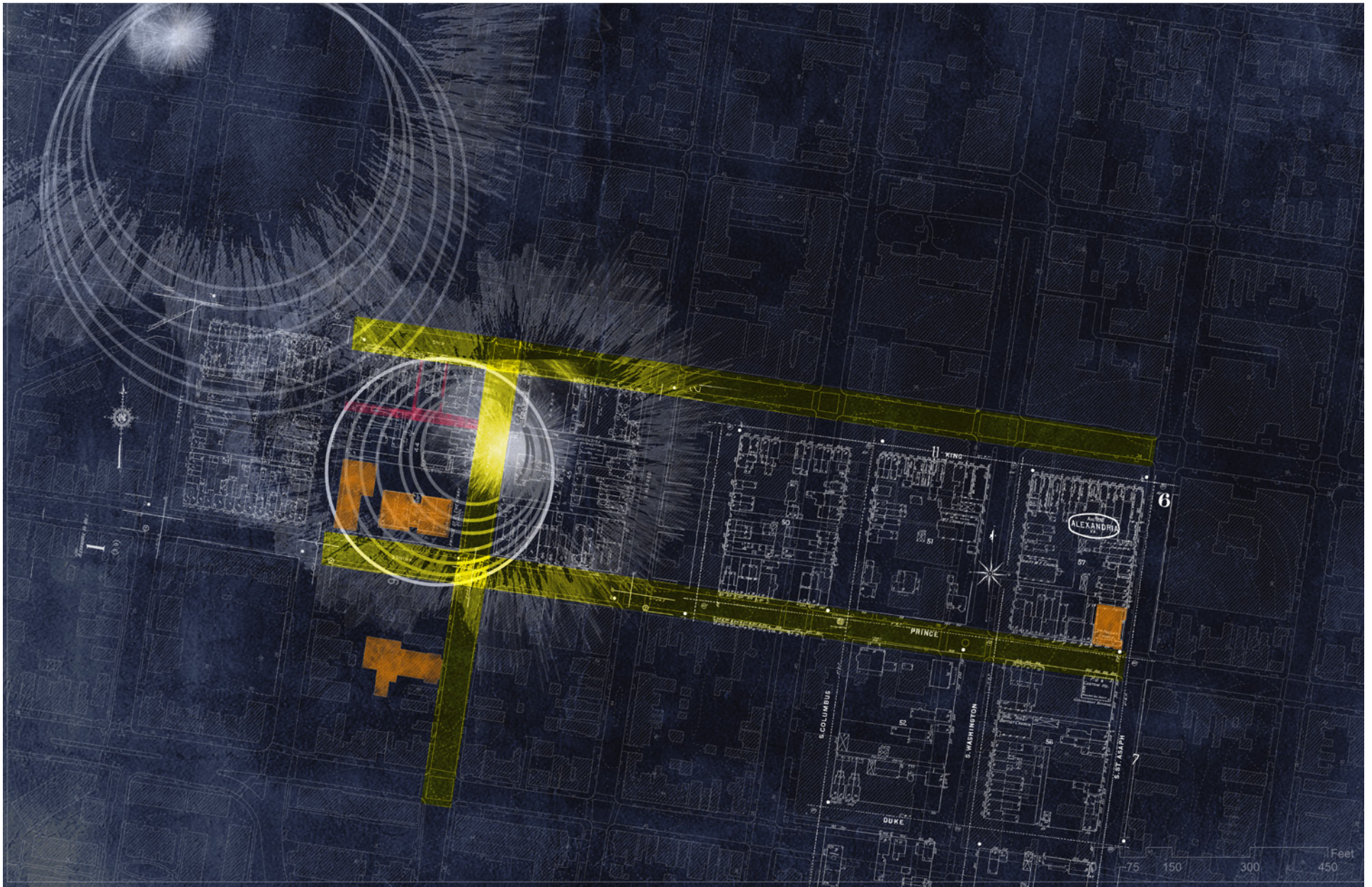


Sound & Smell Survey- process

Considering the history of the WAAC and old town Alexandria, a study regarding the history of these parking lots was conducted to be aware of any previous uses related to campus design. Both spaces have continuously been public spaces since 1820s. (left) This study encouraged the thinking about this space to also be considerate of possible public uses, by a less prescribed design, to allow for events such as lunch breaks for non-students and events such as a farmers market.



Public/Private Study



Sound & Smell Study- the result of consecutive surveys studying the sounds and smells on-site, for even consecutive days, at different times of the day

COLLECTIVE SURVEYS



WAAC Boundary investigation, a student survey



WAAC Footprint investigation, a student survey

Considering the importance of participatory design and engagement, a portion of the investigation called for student surveys to identify where they saw the boundaries of the WAAC, where they felt their footprints, and most importantly, why did they walk.

'WAAC Boundary' (above left) and 'WAAC Footprint' (above right) investigations are the original student participation exercise to understand the overlaps, as well as, differences of how these boundaries and footprints were defined.

These surveys were done publicly and collectively, where students also discussed these questions with one another, while presenting their perspectives of WAAC's boundaries and footprints.

Furthermore, a written survey (below) was conducted at random to find out, in more detail, why students walk. The survey also included a map, asking individuals to indicate the boundaries of the WAAC. The purpose of the second mapping exercise was to, again, investigate the overlays as well as differences of boundary definition and frequency of uses of where students defined as the WAAC. “why do WAAC students walk?” The intention of this study was to understand, in more detail, about the ways and whys people were leaving their desks and stepping into the outside world. This was crucial in understanding the spaces to be designed for the future campus.

The results of 20 responses were analyzed and summarized in “Why Do WAAC Students Walk?” (next page) The responses are categorized based on answers, and are in the order of frequency, food being on top of the list.

WAAC Campus
--A Thesis--

This survey has been created by Elyana Javaheri, an MLA thesis student at Virginia Tech's satellite campus, the Washington-Alexandria Architecture Centre (WAAC), as a complementary study to better understand her thesis; The Improvising Landscape of the Displaced.

This thesis research and design focuses on creating a landscape providing a diverse group of individuals who have been -voluntarily or otherwise- removed from their homes to once again feel at home. Considering the WAAC's location, unique assets, and creative populations and activities, it is a one of a kind opportunity to further study this thesis question: How might landscape architecture, as a creative field and especially through improvisation, create a place—a temporary (transitional), yet meaningful place- for a displaced group of individuals?

The questions below are a way to understand WAAC students' footprints beyond the designated buildings (1001, 601, The Gallery). Keep in mind that your responses do not have to be limited to the WAAC. Please feel free to be as elaborate as you would like:

1. Where are you from?
2. How long have you been at the WAAC?
 One Semester Two Semesters Two Years Three Years Three Years+
3. What takes you out into the landscape and beyond the WAAC Buildings?
4. Is walking important to your daily life at the WAAC?
 Yes
 No
If yes, how?
5. Where do you walk?
6. When are you most likely to walk?
7. Why do you walk? In other words, what prompts you to move through the nearby urban landscape food, supplies, inspiration, study, frustration, relaxation, exercise, clear your mind? Where do you go to satisfy these needs?
8. Are there frequented routes or places, what are they?
9. When you want to get away from your desk, where do you go?

Other Comments/suggestions:

WAAC Campus survey



Result of individual survey responses to “where is the boundary of the WAAC?”

The map above is the overlay of responses given by students to “where is the boundary of the WAAC?” Many seemed to be comfortable with the WAAC’s parking lot, directly behind 1001, as well as the adjacent city parking lot. Considering a large number of restaurants that students and faculty frequent are located directly to the north of 1001, on King Street, these two parking lots were often the shortcut. However, they are currently divided via a brick wall.

Although many mapped their frequent walks to and from 1001, 601, and The Gallery, most felt strongly that those are indeed a part of the city for the most part.

WHY DO WAAC STUDENTS WALK?

FOOD



TAKE A BREAK



WORK

FREEDOM

QUIT SPACE, AWAY FROM SCHOOL

RELAXATION

GET COFFEE

PEACE

MEET FRINDS

NATURAL LANDSCAPE

REFRESH

GET TIRED OF SITTING AT DESK ALL DAY LONG

GET AWAY FROM DESK AND COMPUTER



CLEAR MIND



EXERCISE

URBAN ENVIRONMENT EVOKES DESIRES TO EXPLORE

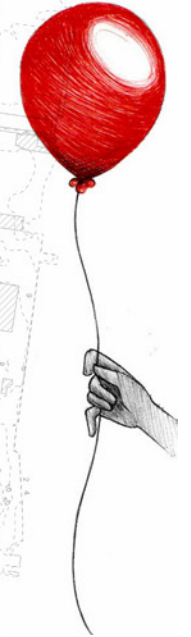
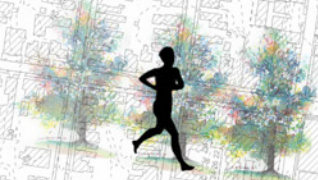
ACTIVITY

ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT SURROUNDINGS

SHORT WALKING TRIP WITH FRIENDS

VIEWPOINTS OTHER THAN DESK

MENTAL BREAK



Why Do WAAC Students Walk? The results of student surveys, taken in written form, and analyzed and summarized to this format. The drawing speaks for the frequency of responses.

The investigations and studies, as well as the conducted surveys suggested that the spaces behind 1001 were used much more than the other possible spaces. Furthermore, there had been numerous occasions in which the WAAC parking lot had been used for events and gatherings.

The building to the left of 1001 is also a part of Virginia Tech's satellite campus, with a focus on urban planning and public policy. Since the two buildings share a public space, the selected site allows and encourages more engagement and collaboration between the programs.

Furthermore, the building adjacent to 1001 is currently a residential building, which would be an ideal location and use for a second dormitory. Considering the increasing number of students attending the WAAC, a student residential building, located on campus would be ideal.

The City's parking lot is also a major connection between the WAAC and the restaurants that the faculty and students frequent on King Street. Considering the new urban campus would also benefit the public due to its location and proximity, the two spaces joined to become the site for the WAAC Campus.



Aerial of Site



Aerial of Site II

The City parking lot is located just north of the back of 1001, providing a shortcut access to the desirable restaurants and coffeeshops on King Street. It is a 24/7 pay parking lot.

The Parking Collage (opposite page) indicates that the City's parking lot is not in the best shape and though a transit space, it does not welcome visitors to stop and stay. The collage is also what a typical walk from 1001 to E.S.P. Killer would look like.

WAAC Parking Lot



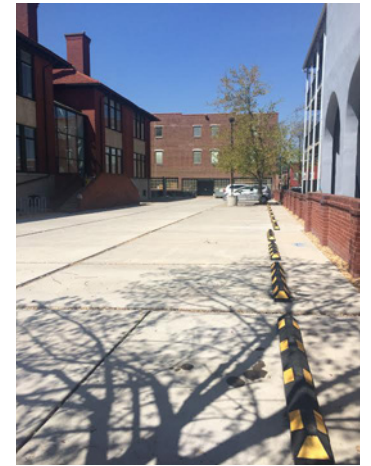
View of WAAC parking lot looking east (1001 on left) (Photo by Elyana Javaheri)



View of WAAC parking lot (Photo by Elyana Javaheri)



View of WAAC parking lot looking east (1001 on left) (Photo by Elyana Javaheri)



View of WAAC parking lot looking east (1001 on left) (Photo by Elyana Javaheri)

City Parking Lot



View of City's parking lot looking west (Photo by Elyana Javaheri)




View of City's parking lot looking south west (Photo by Elyana Javaheri)



View of City's Parking Lot looking west (Photo by Elyana Javaheri)



Parking Lot Study- investigation of the City's parking lot conditions

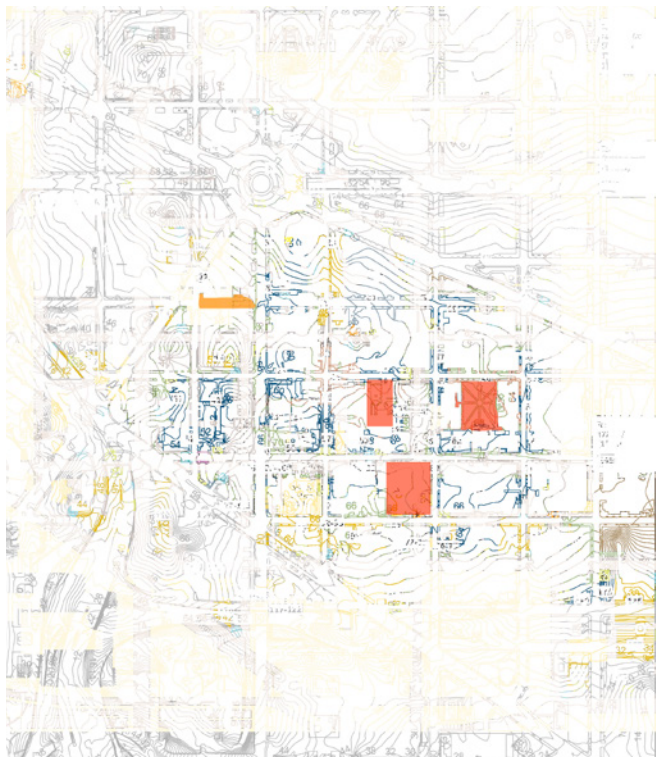


CASE STUDIES

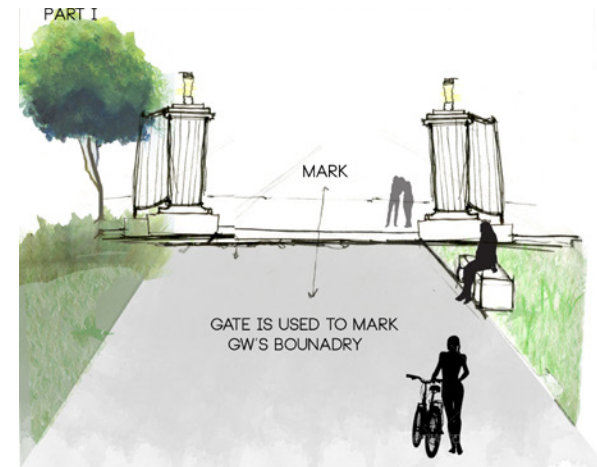
George Washington University is located in a busy neighborhood in Washington D.C. The campus extends out into the city with over 100 academic and residential buildings. The campus, inevitably, has quite a few entrances. This study clearly indicated that topographical change as well as using planting can mark thresholds and boundaries.

Due to its nature of being a quite large university, GW has used its signature flag, as well as iconic statues to mark its boundaries and some entrances. However, besides that, they have used landscape elements such as topography and vegetation to also mark their boundaries and thresholds.

Walking around the campus, it becomes evident that one has stepped off of a City street into campus with material changes as well.

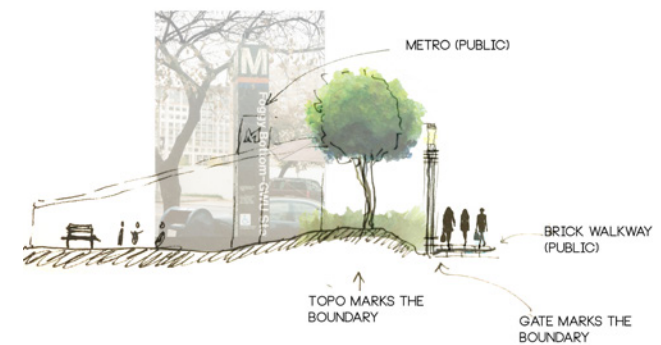


George Washington University Location



BOUNDARY: PUBLIC VS. LESSER PUBLIC (USE FOR A MORE IDENTIFIED GROUP)

Study of a GW Entrance - a gate and tree are marking a threshold



Study of a GW Entrance II- topographical change and tree mark the threshold

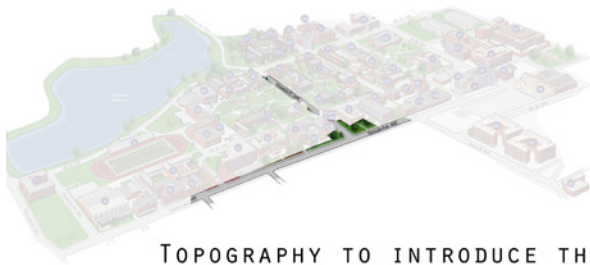
HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Howard University, also located in Washington D.C. has a slightly different characteristic to it, in a sense that despite being in an urban area is a relatively enclosed campus. The main entrance to Howard University slopes up from the street elevation, accompanied by a 'Howard University' sign to indicate claim its boundaries.

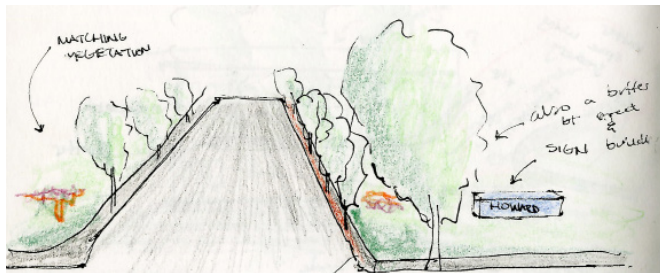
This study, also indicated that the use of topography and vegetation are two ways in which landscape elements can mark boundaries and declare thresholds.

The entrance slope has been enclosed by a variety of planting arrangements to further distinguish the University's land from the City's.

Though this campus is more vehicle-friendly in comparison with George Washington University, elements such as vegetation and topography is still being used to mark boundaries and thresholds.



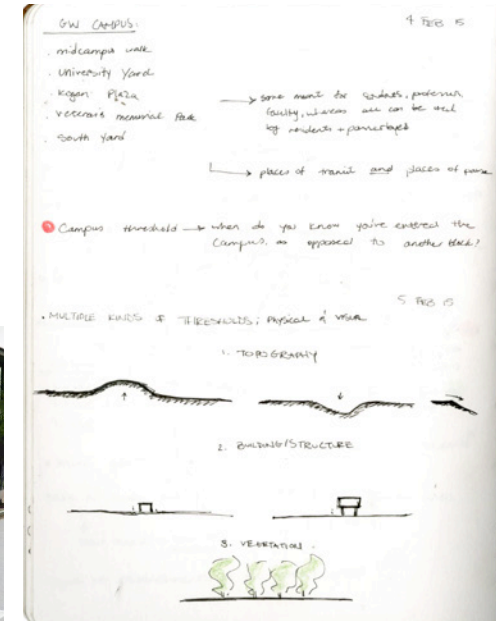
Study of Howard University I



Topographical Highlight - Campus entrance



Vegetation Highlight - Campus entrance



Study of Howard University II

ALEXANDRIA CITY HALL

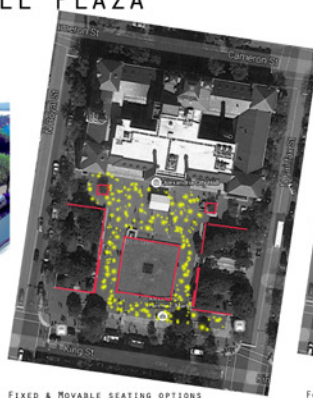
Considering the location and existing context of the selected site, it is likely that it would be used as a public gathering space by the visitors and residents of Alexandria as well; therefore, studying the Alexandria City Hall Plaza was a glimpse into the public gathering culture in the city.

The plaza holds events, including the weekly farmers market, as well as its frequent lunchtime visitors. Studying how this space opened itself, via landscape and design elements, to a variety of possibilities was one of the important takeaways.

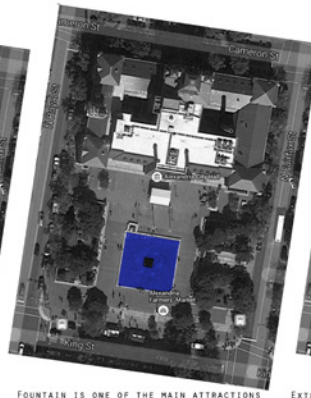
This popular public space also uses vegetation and topography to its advantage to be a rather more private space within the very public streets of Alexandria. Surrounded by lush trees all around, the plaza provides the prospect-refuge concept by placing its visitors at a higher elevation than street-level.

Furthermore, the plaza is open to interpretation of uses by the users. Although there are built-in chairs throughout the plaza, the space itself is not prescribed to a certain type of activity. It is rather open-ended, which encourages a variety of uses, as it has portrayed for the past few decades.

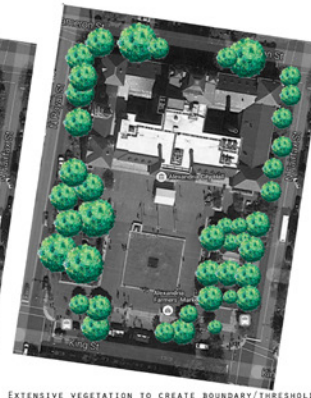
ALEXANDRIA CITY HALL PLAZA



FIXED & MOVABLE SEATING OPTIONS



FOUNTAIN IS ONE OF THE MAIN ATTRACTIONS



EXTENSIVE VEGETATION TO CREATE BOUNDARY/THRESHOLD FROM CITY CHAOS



Section of Alexandria City Hall Plaza

Study of Alexandria City Hall Plaza

Left images from:

<http://www.localharvest.org/alexandria-farmers-market-M10191>



S I T E

A N A L Y S I S : S T U D I E S : I N V E S T I G A T I O N

The WAAC has evolved throughout the years. To best understand how some of its most used spaces function and are used on a daily basis, an analysis investigation of these spaces took place.

These analyses particularly look into the parking lot, front porch, and the stair theater. Each of these spaces serve a different purposes, and some are more used than others. The purpose of these studies were to further understand the hang-out culture at the WAAC, the story behind some of its improvisational projects, and why certain spaces tend to be more used than others.

T H E P A R K I N G



Site Material Study



Diagrammatic Study- the two parking lots

To best understand the existing conditions, a study of materials and existing use was undertaken. This investigation led to the understanding that the majority of WAAC thresholds were highlighted via material changes, and especially red brick. Furthermore, for sustainability and stormwater management reasons, WAAC's parking lot has been replaced with pervious concrete plates, whereas the City's parking lot is asphalt, which is in need of repair.

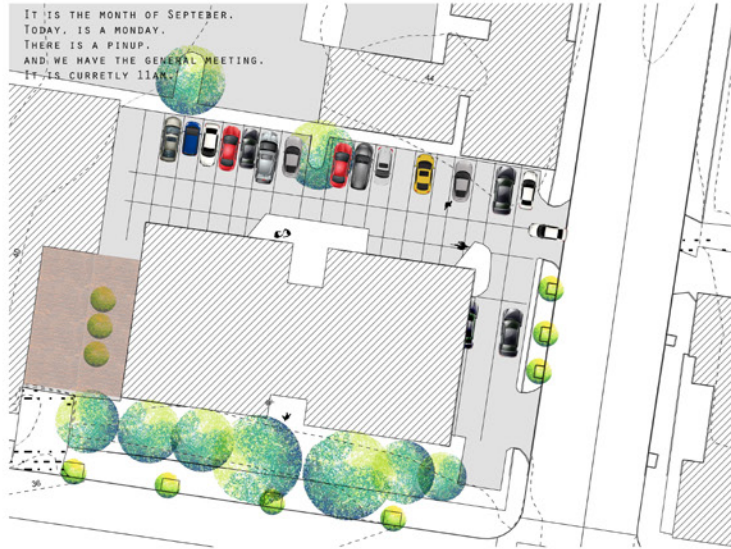
The WAAC parking lot is most frequently used just for parking by the faculty. There have been times, where food trucks or trucks related to the work-shop drive through. There has also been impromptu student gatherings in the parking lot. It has often become a fast greeting spot between students and faculty. It is the shared ground between the WAAC and the urban planning building. It is also the main connection between 1001 and King Street, for those who choose to exit from the back-door of 1001. As evident, there is an existing life at this parking lot; however, it has much more capacity.

To best understand the capacities and possibilities of this space, a series of studies were conducted including monthly and year-round shadow study (see below), and current uses (See The Parking Story, next page).

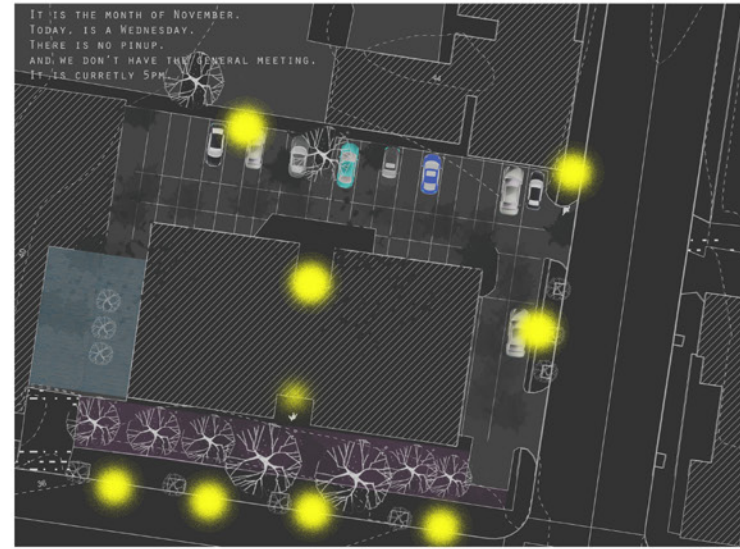
One of the most popular cafes frequented by the faculty and student is E.S.P. Killer, located just north of 1001. The shortcut to this coffeehouse is through the City's parking lot; however, this shortcut is currently blocked by a brick wall. Due to the improvisational characteristic of the WAAC, there has been a concrete step/block placed directly at the bottom of the wall, allowing the users to reach their destinations, while overcoming the obstacle. (See Diagrammatic Study, above right)

THE PARKING STORY

THE WAAC PARKING IS AN UNUSUAL AND INFORMAL MEETING SPACE. IT IS NOT ESTABLISHED AS A SOCIAL SPACE; HOWEVER, IT IS USED FOR QUITE A FEW EVENTS INCLUDING EVERYDAY WALKS TO RANDOM HELLOS TO CONCRETE TRUCKS TO DESIGN-BUILD STUDIO. THIS, IS A SHORT STORY ABOUT THE PARKING.



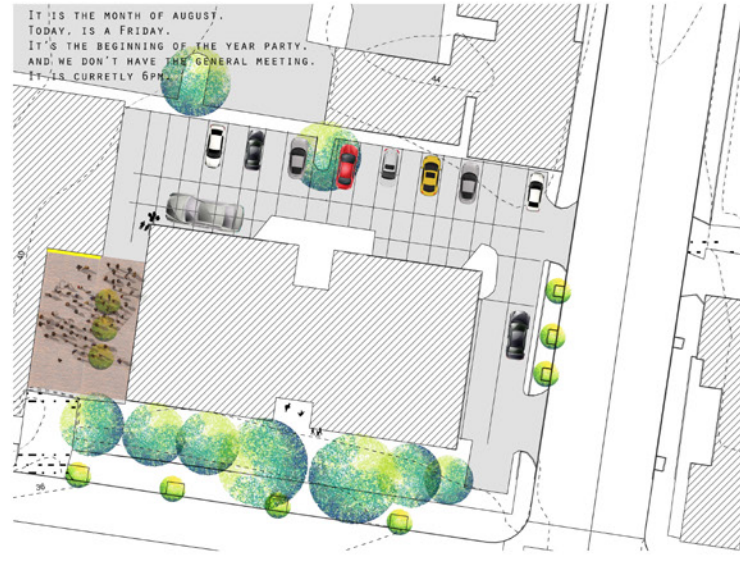
A Regular Monday Morning- most of the parking spots are taken, students and faculty are walking across to get coffee at Misha's or enter 1001



A Wednesday Night- it is after studio pinups, it is winter, and there are less cars in the parking lot



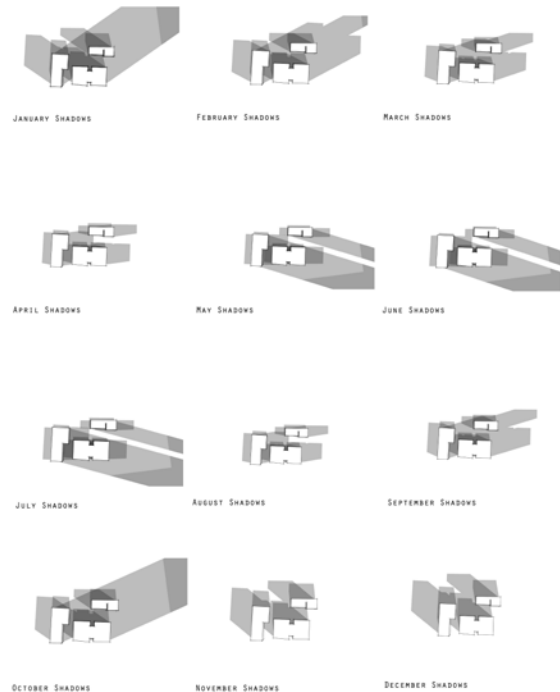
Annual Picnic- students and faculty walking towards the courtyard for the annual photo



Movie Night- students and faculty gather in the courtyard, awaiting the sunset to begin the movie

The northern edge of the site takes students and faculty to E.S.P. Killer; however, it is not currently in the best and most welcoming states. (See next page) Improvements of this campus would also make this connection more pleasant and safe for those who choose to take the shortcut.

The shadow study was to investigate the spaces that are sunnier than others. The importance of this study was to help locate spaces that could use more sun in the winter, as well as to allocate where shading trees were needed most on-campus.



Monthly Shadow Study

CHARSHANBESOORI IN THE WAAC PARKING LOT

CHA-HAR-SHANBE-SOORI, AN ANNUAL IRANIAN CELEBRATION THAT TAKES PLACE ON THE LAST TUESDAY NIGHT OF THE YEAR ASKS INDIVIDUALS TO GO OUTSIDE AND JUMP OVER SMALL FIRES. THE REASON FOR THIS UNIQUE CELEBRATION IS TO WELCOME THE NEW YEAR WITH OPEN ARMS AND AN OPEN MIND. WHEN SOMEONE JUMPS OVER THE FIRE, THEY SAY "ZARDIE TO AZ MAN, SORKHIE MAN AZ TO", IN SHORT MEANING LEAVING ALL THE BADNESS BEHIND AND INTO THE FIRE, AND ASKING FOR ALL THE GOODNESS IN THE NEW YEAR. LAST YEAR, A FEW OF US WERE NOT ABLE TO JOIN THE CELEBRATIONS IN DC SO WE GATHERED AND CREATED FIRE BY USING IKEA CANDELS AND JUMPING OVER THEM. SIMPLE CULTURAL CELEBRATION. IRANIANS AND NON-IRANINANS JOINED THE CELEBRATIONS AND IT BECAME A NIGHT TO REMEMBER. THE EVENT WAS IMPROVISED.



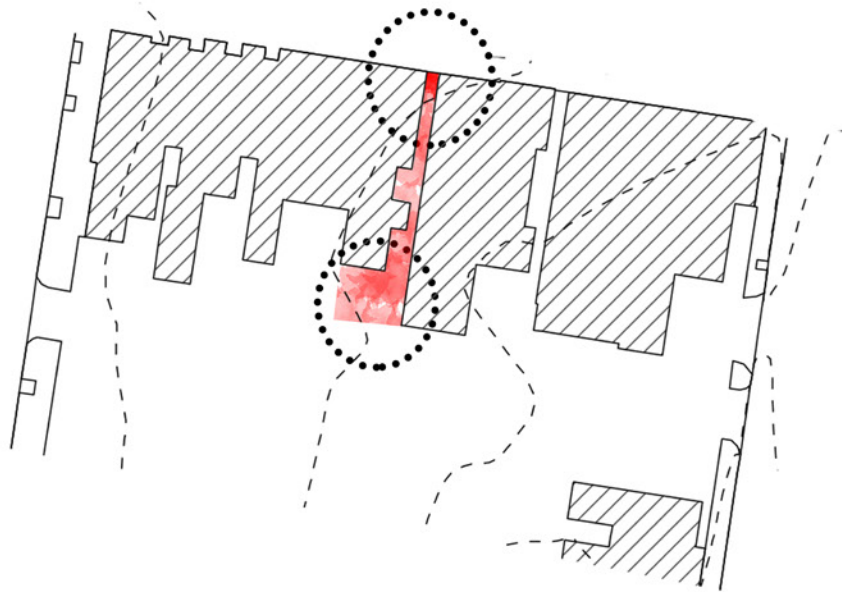
Impromptu Chaharshanbe-soori Celebration- Persian students gather to celebrate the last Tuesday night of the year as a part of the culture, by jumping over small batches of fire



E.S.P. Killer Location in relation to the WAAC



E.S.P. Killer Main Entrance



E.S.P. Killer Entrances

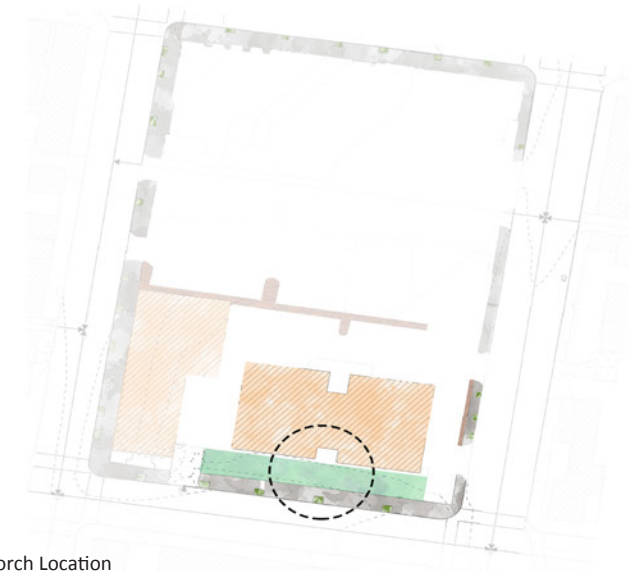
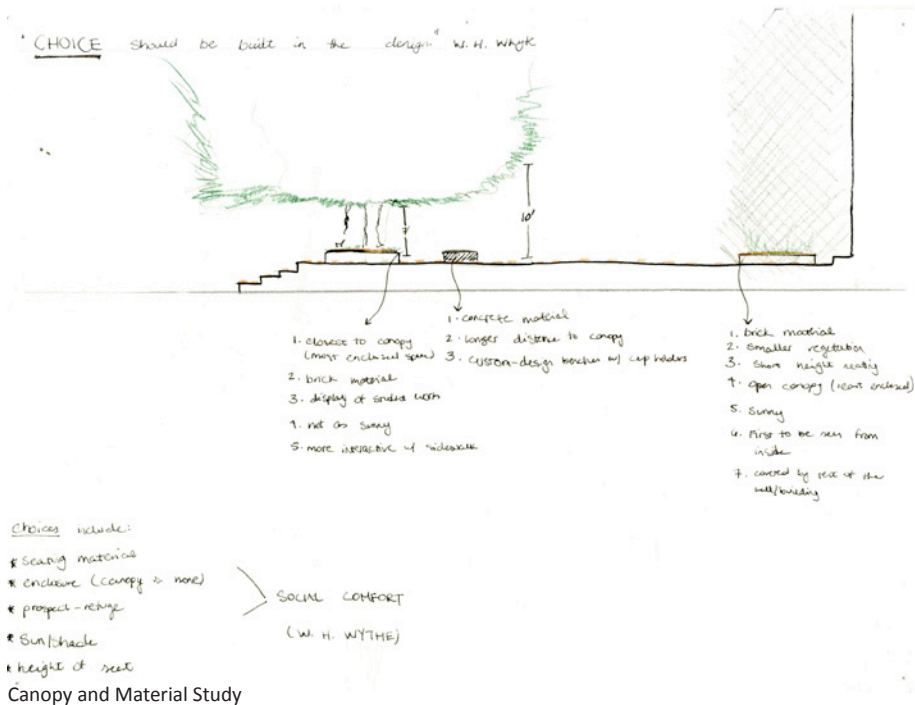


E.S.P. Killer Back-door Entrance often used by students

T H E F R O N T P O R C H

The main entrance of 1001, which I refer to as the front porch, is arguably the most popular outdoor hang-out space on-campus. A study of this space would further deepen the understanding of WAAC's gathering hang-outs. This investigation looked at the materials of this space, ways of use, and time of use.

The steps create a sense of privacy from the street-level, allowing students to feel more at ease, and have a sense of belonging of the space they are in. The two ever-green American Hollies create a lower ceiling, stressing the feeling of enclosure, making the space more desirable year-round.



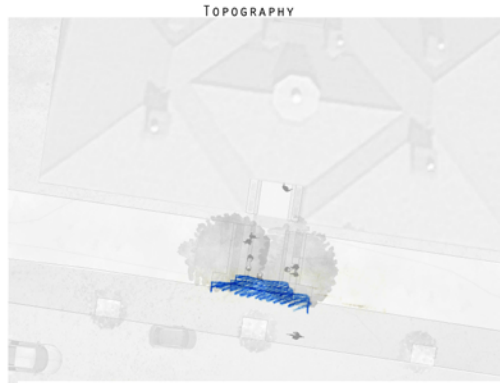
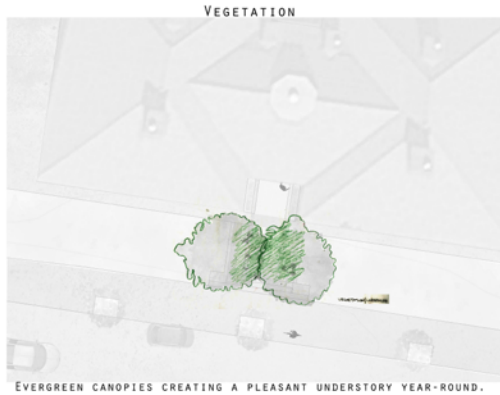
Front Porch Location



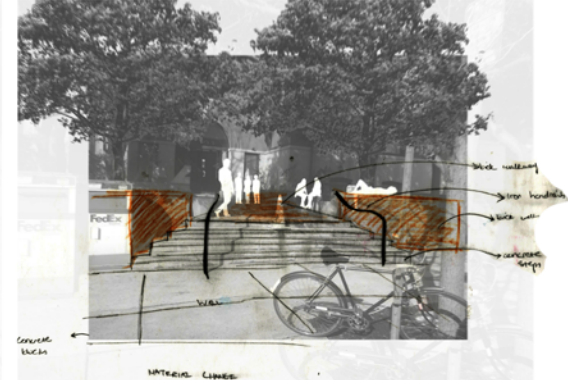
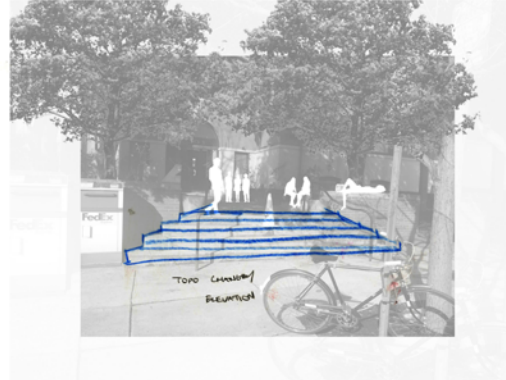
Front Porch Plan

LAYERS OF THRESHOLDS: WAAC'S FRONT PORCH

PLAN



PERSPECTIVE



SECTION



CANOPY IS MUCH CLOSER TO THE SURFACE ON THE PORCH AS OPPOSED TO THE STREET LEVEL, CREATING A MORE INTIMATE UNDERSTORY



North/South Section of Front Porch



North/South Section of Front Porch II



East/West Section of Front Porch II



Students hang out on the front porch

“People will sit where there is a place to sit” William H. Whyte has concluded from his studies on *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. This is one of the only open spaces on-campus, where seating is provided. Individuals, small groups, and even the entire WAAC has gathered here in the recent years to exchange stories, create memories and capture annual photos.



Students on the front porch



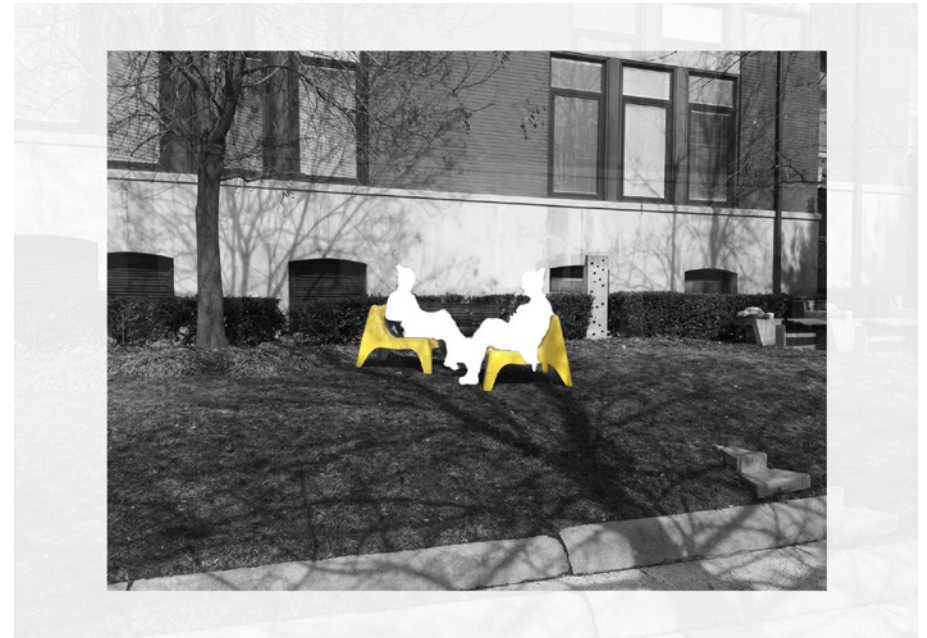
WAAC front porch



Annual photo on the front porch

The lawn directly to the left of the main steps is another open public space; however, it is not often used. It appears that due to its distance, size, and direct visibility from the sidewalk and Prince Street, many people stay away. There is, however, the occasion uses of the movable yellow plastic chairs that encourages students to use this space.

The movability of these chairs tends to be the popular reason for using this space instead of the front porch.



Students hang out on the front lawn



Students moving the chairs on the lawn



Students on the front lawn



Students rearranging movable chairs on the lawn

The improvisational notion of the WAAC, as discussed previously, has created a collective dynamic space. Almost every part has, is, or will be improvised to some extent. There are some great student design-build projects that are the true indication of acceptance and addition, in order to provide an even more dynamic experience.

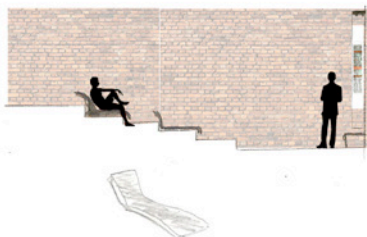
The Stair Theater is one of the most prominent and extensive of these projects. Arguably, as one of the most improvised and improvisational spaces of 1001, it was inevitable to be carefully studied in terms of design elements and variety of uses. This space resembles WAAC quite well, it is iconic in its flexibility, freedom, and function.



JUST A SET OF STAIRS. WITH THE FUNCTION OF, WELL, STAIRS.

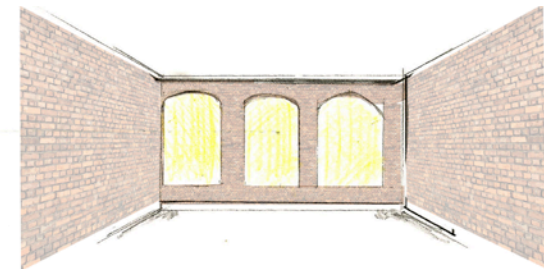


ONE DAY, SOMEONE REALIZED IT WOULD A BE GREAT PLACE FOR AWKWARD PUBLIC PINUPS. SO, AFTER A LOT OF TRIES, THEY MADE AN AWESOME MOVABLE SCREEN, THAT WOULD BE IN FRONT OF THE STAIRS, BE FUNCTIONAL AS A PINUP SPACE, AND A SCREEN. WELL, THE WALL, NOW CAN BE USED FOR MORE THAN ONE THING.

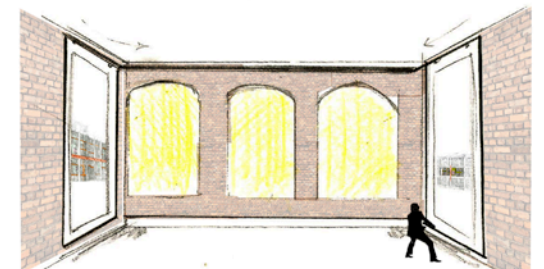


YEARS LATER, A GROUP OF STUDENTS DECIDED THAT THE STAIRS WERE NOT THE MOST COMFORTABLE PLACE TO SIT ON, SO THEY WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND TO DESIGN AND MAKE MOVABLE CHAIRS TO FIT THE STAIRS, ALLOWING FOR A MORE COMFORTABLE SETTING.

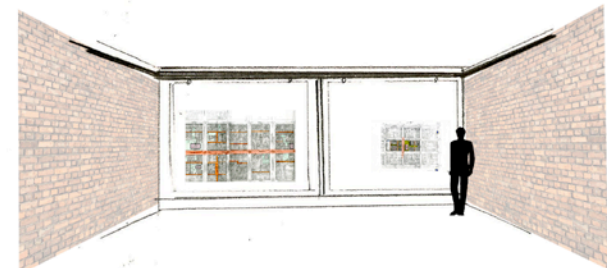
Once Upon a Staircase



BRICK WALLS, BEING BRICK WALLS, WINDOWS SHEDDING LIGHT.



REALIZING MOVABLE WALLS COULD ALLOW FOR THE SPACE DIFFERENTLY



TRANSFORMING THE STAIR THEATER INTO AN IMPROVISATIONAL SPACE FOR PINUPS AND MOVIE NIGHTS

The notion of acceptance and addition at the Stair Theater has given the space the flexibility of use and the invitation to imagine. Despite being a fixed and concrete element at the core of 1001, it continues to provide individuals the opportunity to use it in a variety of ways.

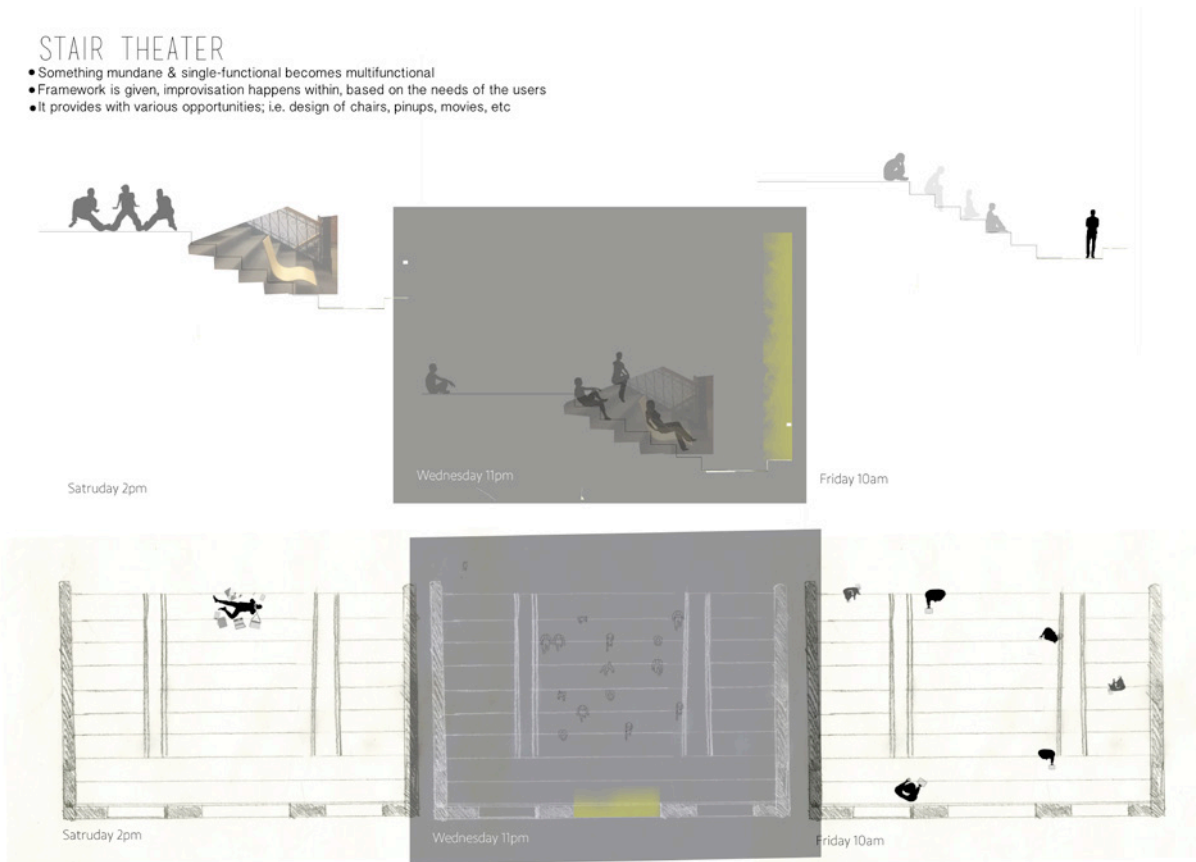
Everyone at the WAAC is welcomed to propose an addition to the Stair Theater. Regardless of where they come from and how long they will be here for, and that it the power of improvisation, which allows people to leave a footprint behind, and therefore feel the sense of belonging to a place.

The space that once had a singular function, is one of the most diverse places in the building. Today, there are meetings, pinups, movie nights, and even a wedding have taken place at the Stair Theater. Its future continues to be envisioned.

One of the main reasons this has been possible is its movable screens.

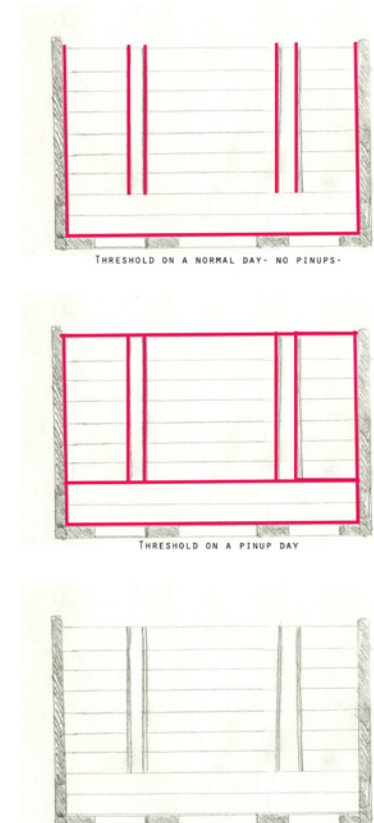
STAIR THEATER

- Something mundane & single-functional becomes multifunctional
- Framework is given, improvisation happens within, based on the needs of the users
- It provides with various opportunities; i.e. design of chairs, pinups, movies, etc



Stair Theater Story

MOVABLE THRESHOLD OF THE STAIRTHEATER



Stair Theater Thresholds



DESIGN :
INQUIRY : INVESTIGATION
: A PROCESS :

The design inquires are the design processes for this thesis. This chapter focuses on the design challenges and opportunities, which led to the final results. The work in this chapter is the result of the studies conducted to further investigate the thesis question.

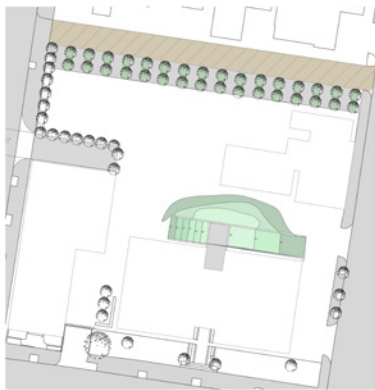
ELEVATION DIFFERENCE



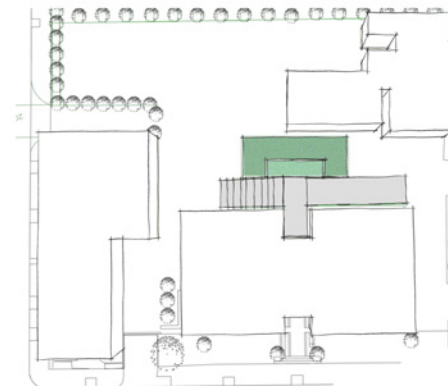
Back Terrace- the finished floor elevation (F.F.E.) of the terrace at 4 feet higher than the parking level Photo by (Elyana Javaheri)

Stepping out of the back of 1001, one is immediately placed on a small terrace which is 4 feet higher than the parking level. Considering that finished elevation, one of the challenges was not only meet that elevation at a reasonable slope, but to make it welcoming and most importantly improvisational. Since this is one of the two entrances into the building, it was crucial to create a sense of privacy, while remaining welcoming to the public and the occasional visitors of the WAAC. Furthermore, this investigation studied the opportunities to solve this challenge, while creating improvisational space/spaces.

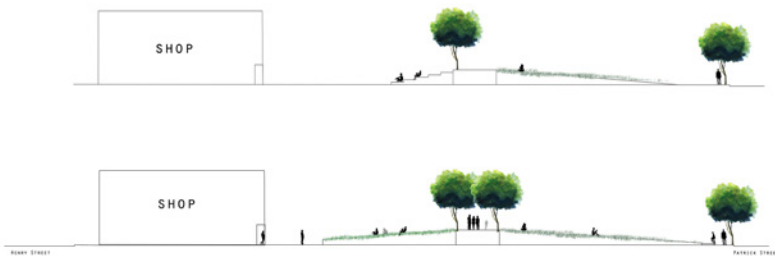
Two of the concepts investigated for this challenge were a hill and a series of terraces. Considering slopes, accessibility, material, stormwater management, and usability, one would seem more improvisational than the other. Which would it be?



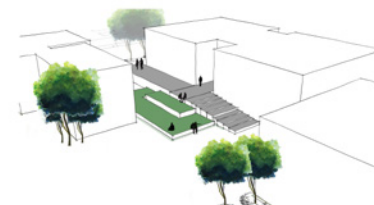
HILL:
THE HILL, AS AN EXTENSION OF THE EXISTING TERRACE, ALLOWS FOR AN INTRODUCTION OF TOPOGRAPHY AS A THRESHOLD OF THE CAMPUS AS WELL AS AN AMPHITHEATRICAL ELEMENT FOR PRESENTATIONS, ETC.S



TERRACES:
ALLOWING FOR MULTIPLE LAYERS OF EVENTS TO HAPPEN SIMULTANEOUSLY



Hill Concept Investigation



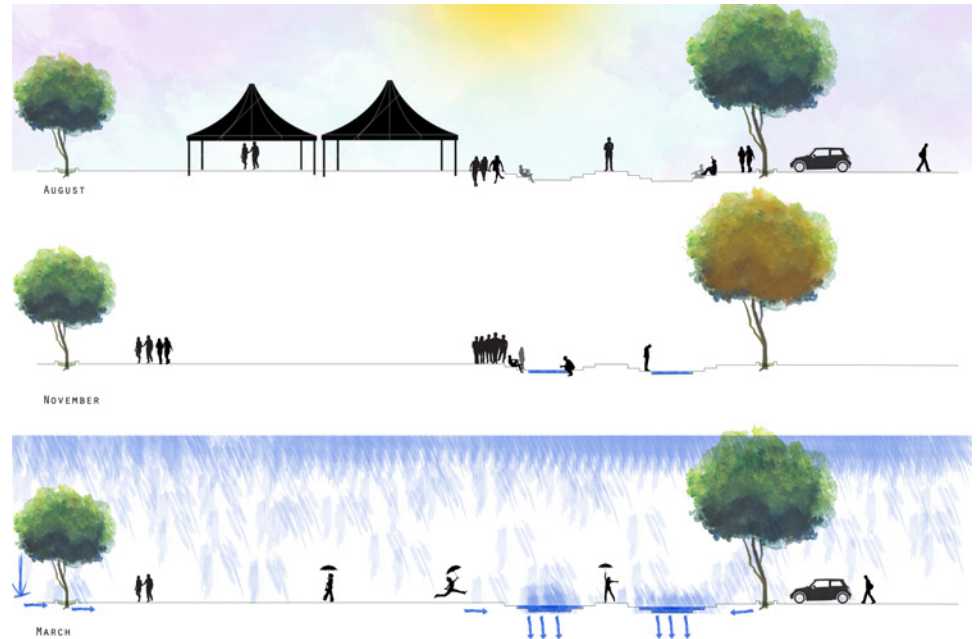
Terrace Concept Investigation

S T O R M W A T E R M A N A G E M E N T

Sustainability is one of the main educational and practical focuses at the WAAC. Besides constantly being encouraged, and sometimes required, to design sustainably, many of the on-site student design-build projects are based on sustainability. Some of the most recent of these projects, which took place on the parking lot, were designed to respond to stormwater runoffs.

The surface of the WAAC parking lot is a series of concrete plates with a 3" gap in between, filled with gravel and crushed brick, to reduce stormwater runoff to the street.

Reducing the stormwater runoff, as well as reuse, if possible, was one of the goals of this project.

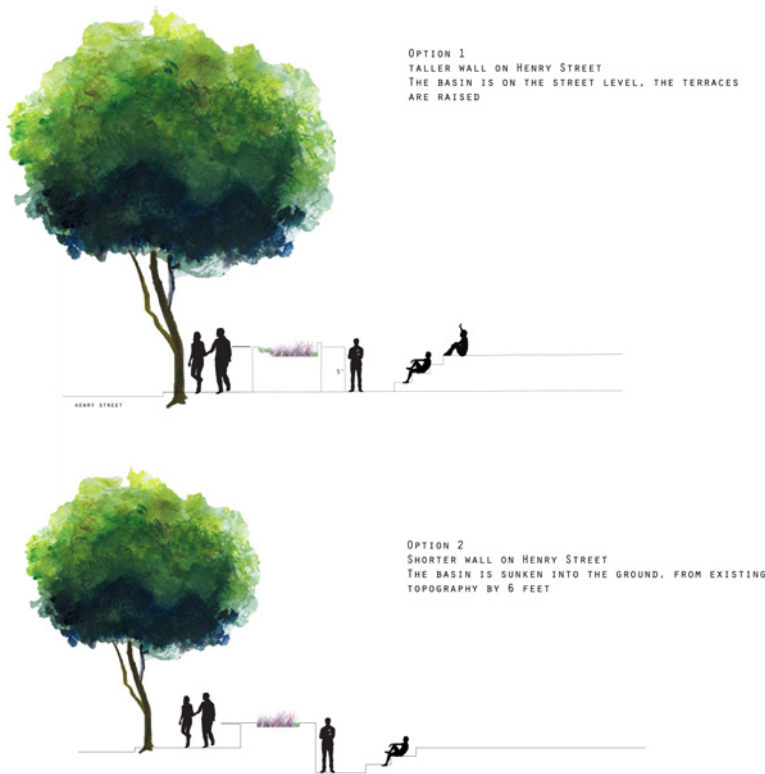


Catch Basin Concept

The site's low point is located on the northwest edge, which then directly runs into the public sidewalk and street. The concept of a catch basin was to not only capture as much as possible from the entire site, but to also create a learning space, as landscape architecture is one of the majors at the WAAC.

Since there was a slight slope leading to the low point, a major concept was to use the elevation difference, and through highlighting that, create an amphitheater to create a gathering space. Depending on the amount and intensity of rain, parts would become unavailable, which expresses improvisational opportunities, namely educational, and can be experienced differently compared to no rain.

Furthermore, this concept would also allow for a reuse of the captured water by planting irrigation.

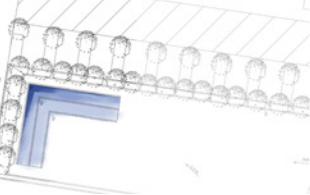
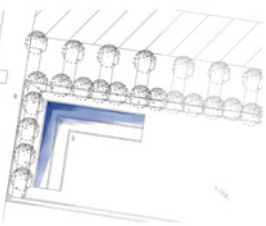
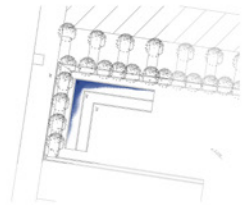
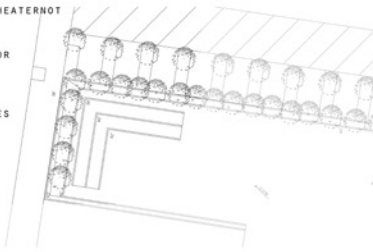


Catch Basin as a Learning Space

**BIO AMPHITHEATER
SECTION STUDY**

THE WALL OF THE AMPHITHEATER NOT ONLY PROVIDES A PINUP/PRESENTATION SPACE, BUT ALSO A WATERWALL FOR STORMWATER RUNOFF.

THE OUTER WALL PROVIDES FOR A THRESHOLD BETWEEN HENRY STREET/ TRAFFIC/PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC AND THE CAMPUS ACTIVITIES.



NO RAIN



LITTLE RAIN



MUCH RAIN

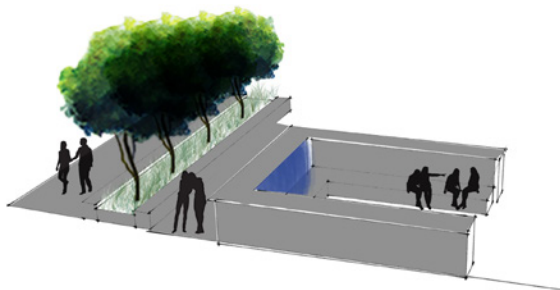


ALL THE RAIN

The Water Amphitheater would be improvisational in a sense that the experience of the visitors would differ based on the intensity, time, and amount of rain. This investigation was to study how this space could be used differently within the context of a campus.

Besides serving educational purposes, namely stormwater management, the amphitheater adds to the poetic aura of the campus as well, while adding a playful element of collecting rainwater during different seasons.

Water Amphitheater Study



Water Amphitheater Concept I Perspective



Water Amphitheater Concept II Perspective

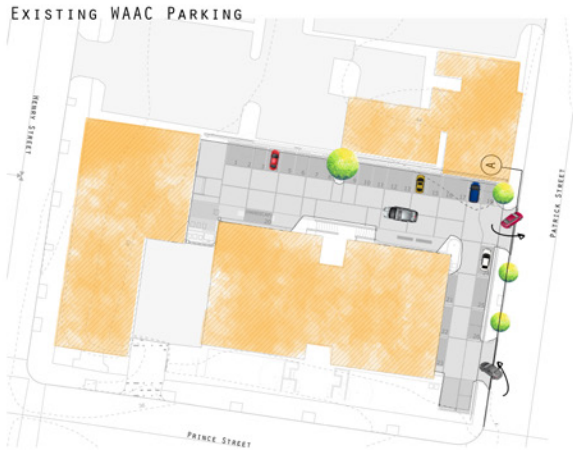
P A R K I N G M A T T E R S

The existing WAAC parking lot holds 26 parking spots, designated for faculty and staff. Students occasionally park there after 5pm on weekdays, and some weekends. One of the challenges of the existing parking lot is its current location. Considering the size of the lot (50 ft by 150 ft), keeping the parking at its location would not be beneficial to campus functionality and aesthetics.

The farthest row in the City's parking lot, just north of 1001, has the same number of parking spots; therefore, moving the on-campus parking would not

only open up the space for more activities, but also create a larger campus from entrance to entrance.

A series of studies and investigations were conducted to further understand the opportunities possible at the parking lot. The studies looked at the lessons learned from the case studies to understand two things: 1- how can the parking space continue to be improvisational? 2- how can topography and vegetation be used in this case to mark the boundary of the WAAC?

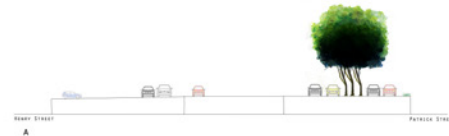


SKETCHBOOK 18 APRIL 23, 2008



- 26 PARKING SPOTS
- FACULTY PARKING STRICTLY UNTIL 5PM. STUDENTS PARK AFTER
- 4SHANEBSOORI WAS HELD HERE
- RANDOM SPONTANEOUS HANG OUT WAS HELD HERE
- PEOPLE MEANDER HERE FOR A MORE QUIET ATMOSPHERE AFTER END-OF-YEAR PARTIES IN THE COURTYARD

NEW WAAC PARKING; EXISTING CONDITIONS



EXISTING CONDITION: CURRENTLY A CITY PARKING LOT LANE, 26 SPOTS, LITTLE VEGETATION

The section studies were intended to investigate the possibilities of improvisation in the new parking space, through vegetation and topography. Considering there has been events where students have had impromptu gatherings, or occasional food truck stops at the parking, it was fair to study in detail how the proposed parking space could still provide that and more.



Parking Section Study



THE TREES ARE POSITIONED AT A LOWER ELEVATION, CREATING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR STORMWATER COLLECTION, WHILE ACTING AS A THRESHOLD TO THE CAMPUS, WHILE INDICATING PARKING SPACES FROM ONE ANOTHER



THE TREES ARE POSITIONED AT A HIGHER ELEVATION, CREATING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ANOTHER LAYER OF THRESHOLD IN BETWEEN CARS, AND POTENTIAL SEATING SPACES IF NEEDED (MORE SEATING COULD BE PROVIDED, DEPENDING)



Parking Studies- Longitudinal Sections



WITH NO TOPOGRAPHICAL CHANGES AT ALL, THE TREE IS THE ULTIMATE DIVISION/THRESHOLD BETWEEN PARKING AND PUBLIC SPACE



THE ELEVATION OF PARKING SPOT AND THE REST OF THE PLACE IS THE SAME; HOWEVER, THE SLOPE PROVIDES FOR A BARRIER, ACTING LIKE A TREE (IN THE CASE OF NEW NAAC PARKING, THE SLOPE WOULD BE TOO STEEP -10%)



PARKING SPOT AND THE REST OF THE PLACE DIFFER IN ELEVATION, AND THE STEPS ALLOW FOR A THRESHOLD BETWEEN PARKING AND PUBLIC SPACE THE STEPS, HOWEVER, DO NOT ALLOW ADA ACCESSIBILITY



COMPLETE LEVEL CHANGE, THROUGH A SLOPE LEADING TO THE PARKING, THE PARKING SPACE HERE IS AT A LOWER TOPOGRAPHY THAN THE REST OF THE PLACE, THE GREEN SPACE ALLOWS FOR A RAINGARDEN OPPORTUNITY AS ANOTHER LEVEL OF THRESHOLD



PARKING AND PUBLIC SPACE ARE ON THE SAME ELEVATION; HOWEVER, THE RAINGARDEN IN BETWEEN, COMPLETE WITH TREES AND VEGETATION ACT AS A

Parking Topography Study

PARKING STUDIES
 --LONGITUDINAL SECTIONS--



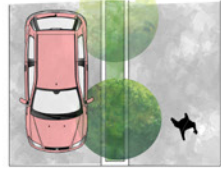
THE TREES ARE POSITIONED AT A HIGHER ELEVATION, CREATING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ANOTHER LAYER OF THRESHOLD IN BETWEEN CARS, AND POTENTIAL SEATING SPACES IF NEEDED (MORE SEATING COULD BE PROVIDED, DEPENDING)



THE TREES ARE POSITIONED AT A LOWER ELEVATION, CREATING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR STORMWATER COLLECTION, WHILE ACTING AS A THRESHOLD TO THE CAMPUS, WHILE INDICATING PARKING SPACES FROM ONE ANOTHER



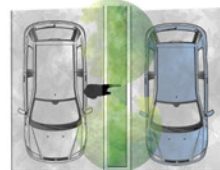
A- SECTION



A- PLAN



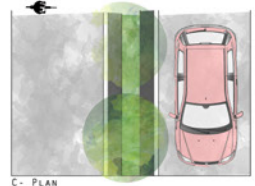
B- SECTION



B- PLAN



C- SECTION



C- PLAN



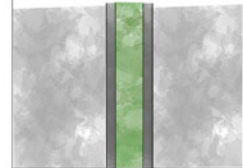
D- SECTION



D- PLAN



E-SECTION



E-PLAN

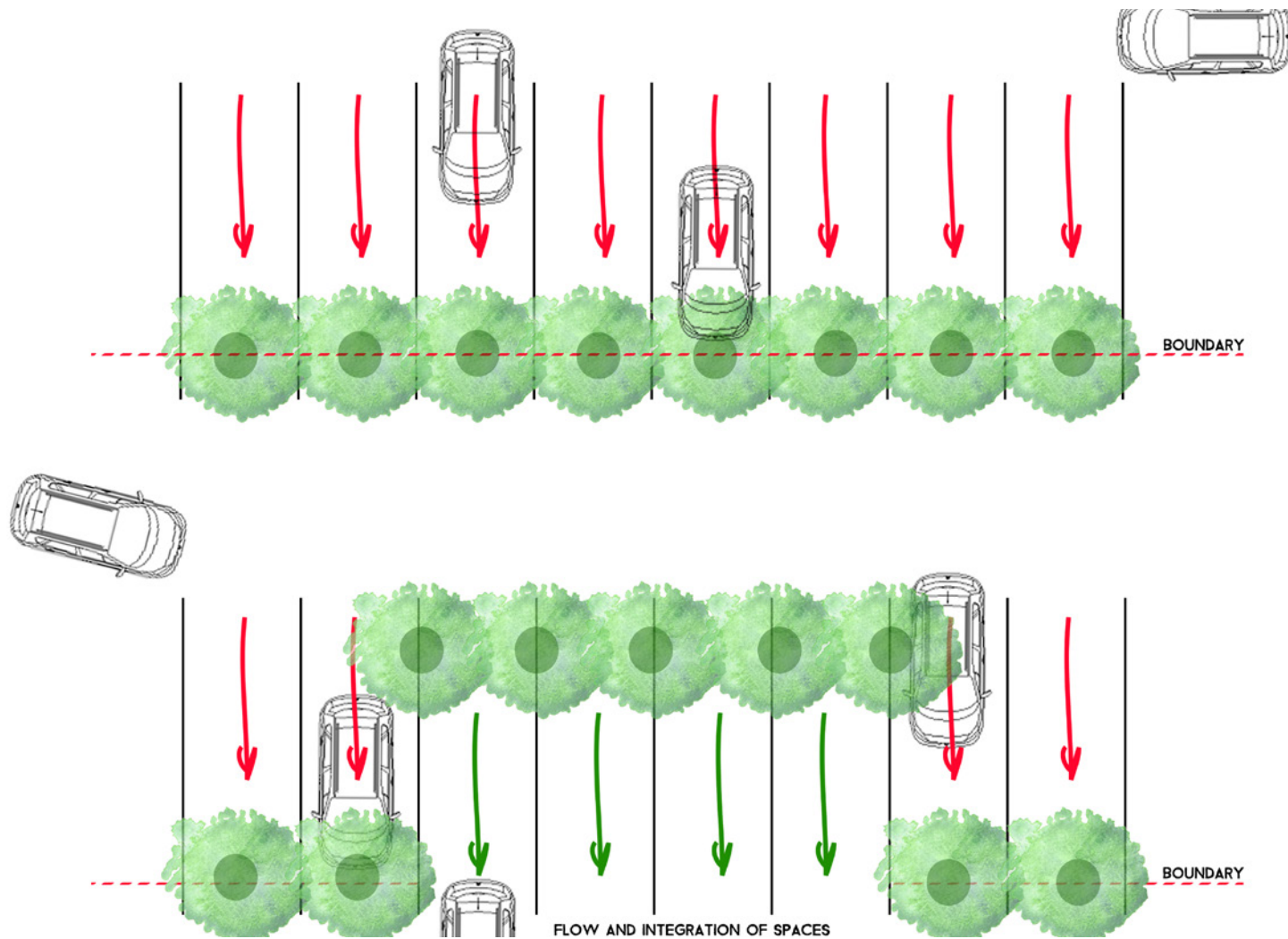
Parking Uses Concept Study

Case studies had suggested plantings, and specifically, trees to be a significant landscape element to act as a boundary creator. Considering the northern edge of the site is much more public, and the only entrance accessible via cars, trees were chosen as singular element to mark the campus boundary.

Tree placements are also important in highlighting the thresholds. Besides marking the actual parking spots, trees are also capable of unofficially labeling an area more private than another.

The notion of privacy being possible solely based on tree placements sparked an idea of movability, and if thresholds were to be movable within a landscape.

What if trees could move?

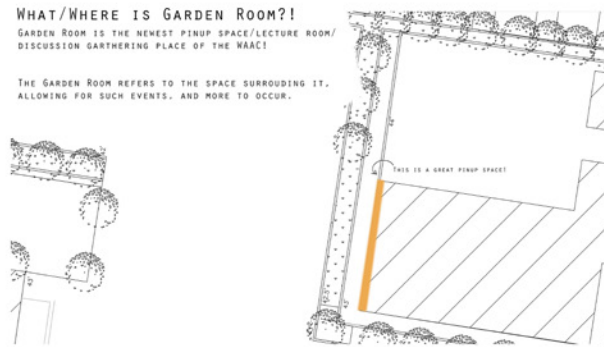
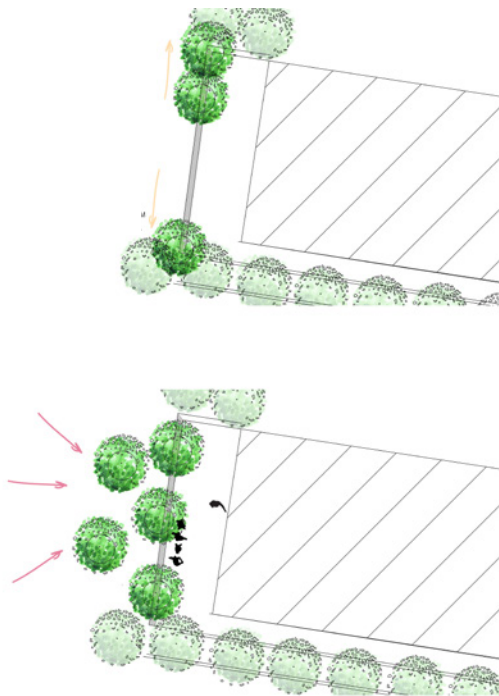


M O V A B L E T H R E S H O L D S

The notion of movability allows for a variety of events to take place simultaneously. Thresholds, in landscape, as discussed, are often marked via vegetation, material change, signs, or topographical changes.

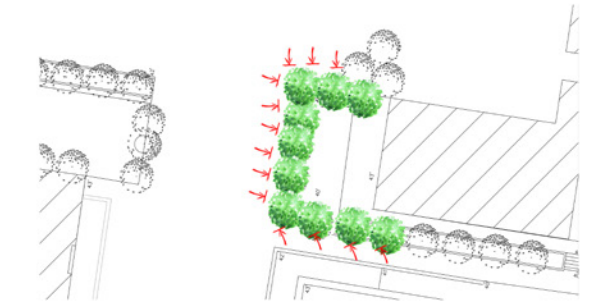
By adding the concept of movability to some landscape elements, it is possible to create movable thresholds, providing a freedom of creation to the users of the space.

By doing so, the designer is providing the user the ability to create a space within a space, based on their needs and interests. One large space, for instance could be broken off into two or three, allowing a variety of events to occur simultaneously. Furthermore, by doing so, an improvisational characteristic would be added to the quality of space.

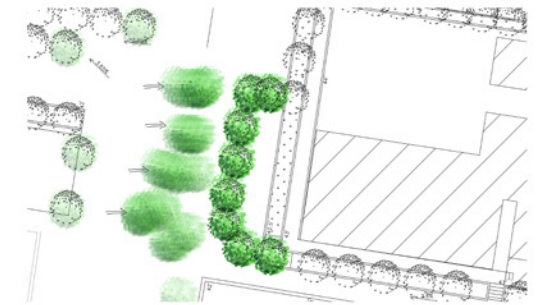


IN ORDER TO BEST USE THE SPACE AS A PINUP SPACE, IT NEEDED THE FOLLOWING:

- 1- BE NOTICED
- 2- A WALL/BARRIER OF SOME SORT TO MARK ITS BOUNDARY AT THE TIME OF USE

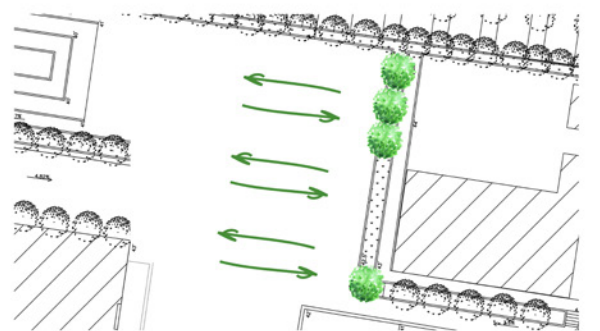


1- PLACE PERMANENT TREES >> DESPITE CREATING A WALL, WHICH PROVIDES PRIVACY, SHADE, A SENSE OF BOUNDARY, AND MAYBE SOME QUIET, IT ALSO DISABLES THE SPACE FOR BEING A PART OF THE LARGER CAMPUS FOR OTHER EVENTS.



2- PROVIDE MOVABLE TREES >> THE MOVABILITY OF THE TREES STILL ALLOWS FOR THE CREATION OF WALLS/BOUNDARIES WHEN NEEDED; HOWEVER, IT PROVIDES THE FLEXIBILITY

THE ROOMS COULD MADE SMALL OR BIG, DEPENDING ON THE USE



THE MOVABLE TREES ALLOWS FOR GARDEN ROOM TO BE A PART OF THE CAMPUS WHEN DESIRED, AND SECTIONED OFF INTO ITS OWN ROOM AT OTHER TIMES.

Movable Trees Concept

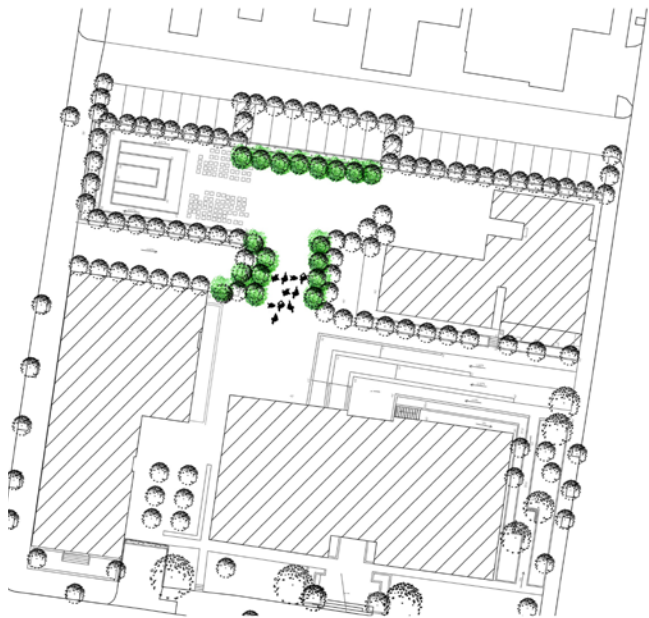
Movable Trees Concept Development



PINUP IN GARDEN ROOM & MEETING IN WAVE ROOM



PINUP IN WAVE ROOM & MEETING IN GREEN ROOM



RADUATION CEREMONY

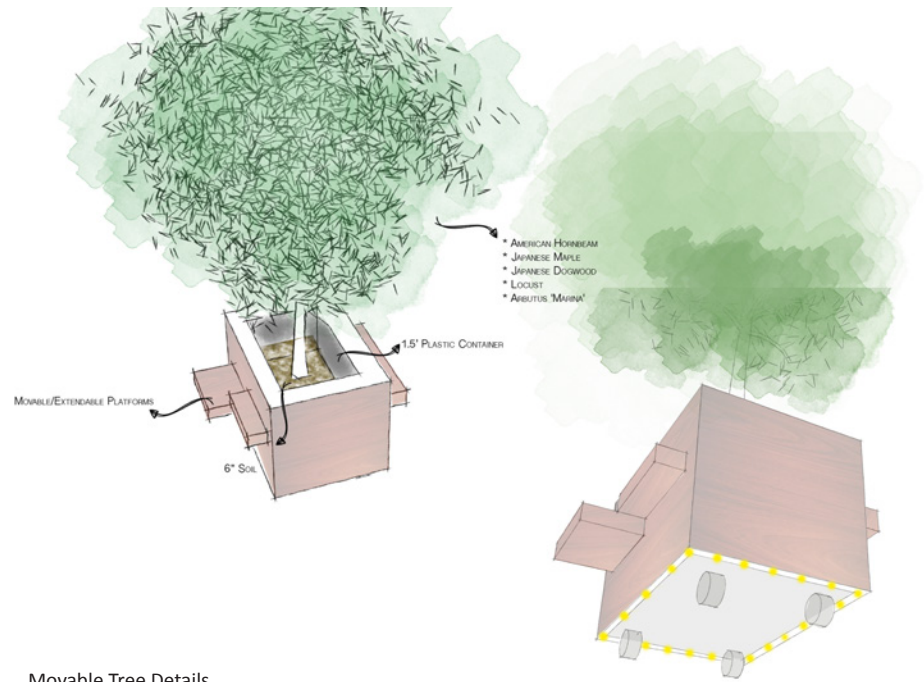


JUST ANOTHER DAY

Movable Trees as Threshold

Although it is technically possible to move trees, and select trees that are more resilient than others, the soil itself would be very heavy to move.

The following drawings are conceptual studies of the movable trees.



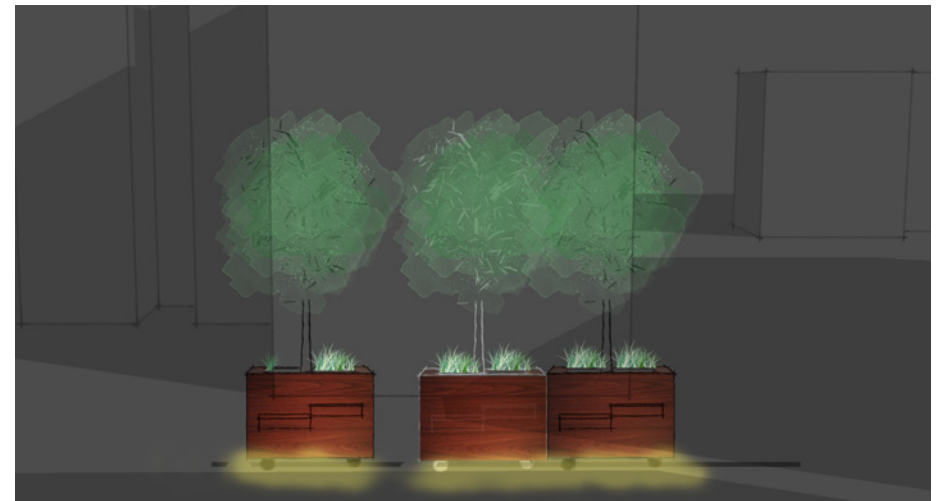
Movable Tree Details



Movable Tree View



Movable Tree as a Threshold View



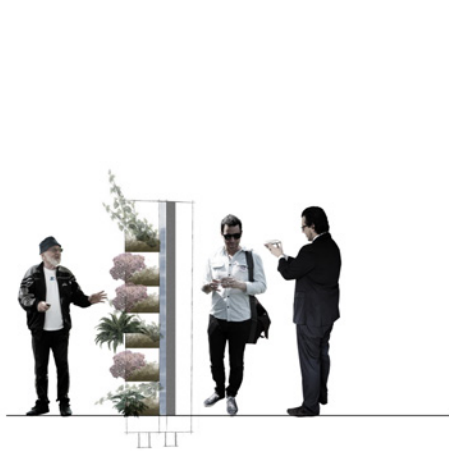
Movable Tree as a Threshold View II

An alternative to the very heavy movable tree is a garden wall. The garden wall is also movable, and its lush diverse plant selection would not only create a movable threshold, but also a layer of sound-proof wall, which is also an advantage over trees.

The vertical essence of the garden wall, as opposed to the movable tree is that it acts more as a barrier, so privacy on one side is more likely. Furthermore, it is a suggestion, which welcomes additions and iterations to better meet the needs and desires of the coming WAAC generations. A variety of plants, in a number of ways could be placed in the wall overtime, allowing for seasonal characteristics, visuals, and smells.



Movable Garden Wall Section I

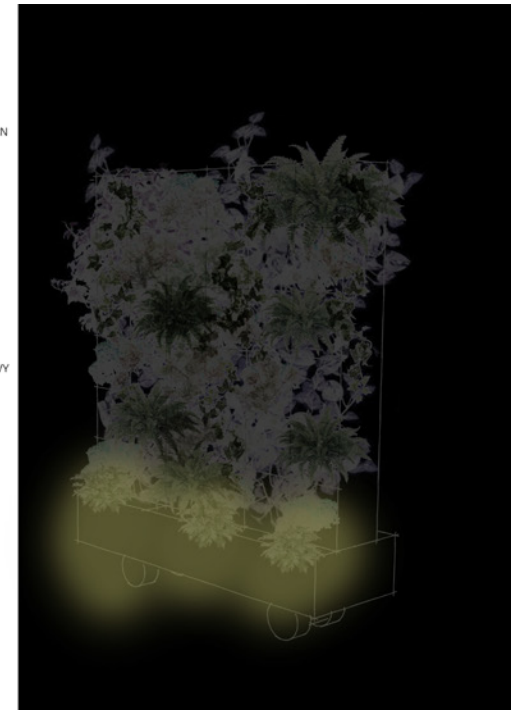
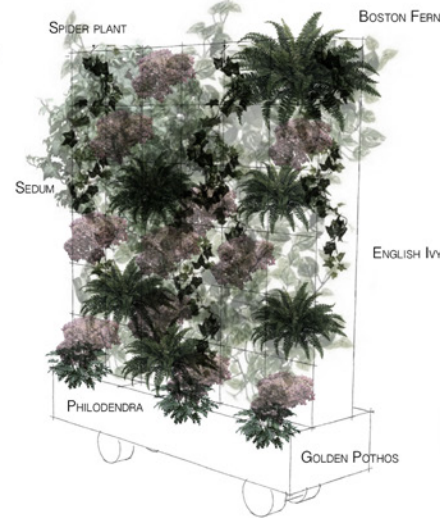


Movable Garden Wall Section II

GARDEN WALL



Movable Garden Wall Concept & Details





THE W A A C C A M P U S

: THE PROPOSAL :

This is the WAAC campus. The design of this place is to reflect the understanding and functionality of the WAAC as a unique and improvisational institution, and provide the necessary outdoor space for students and faculty.

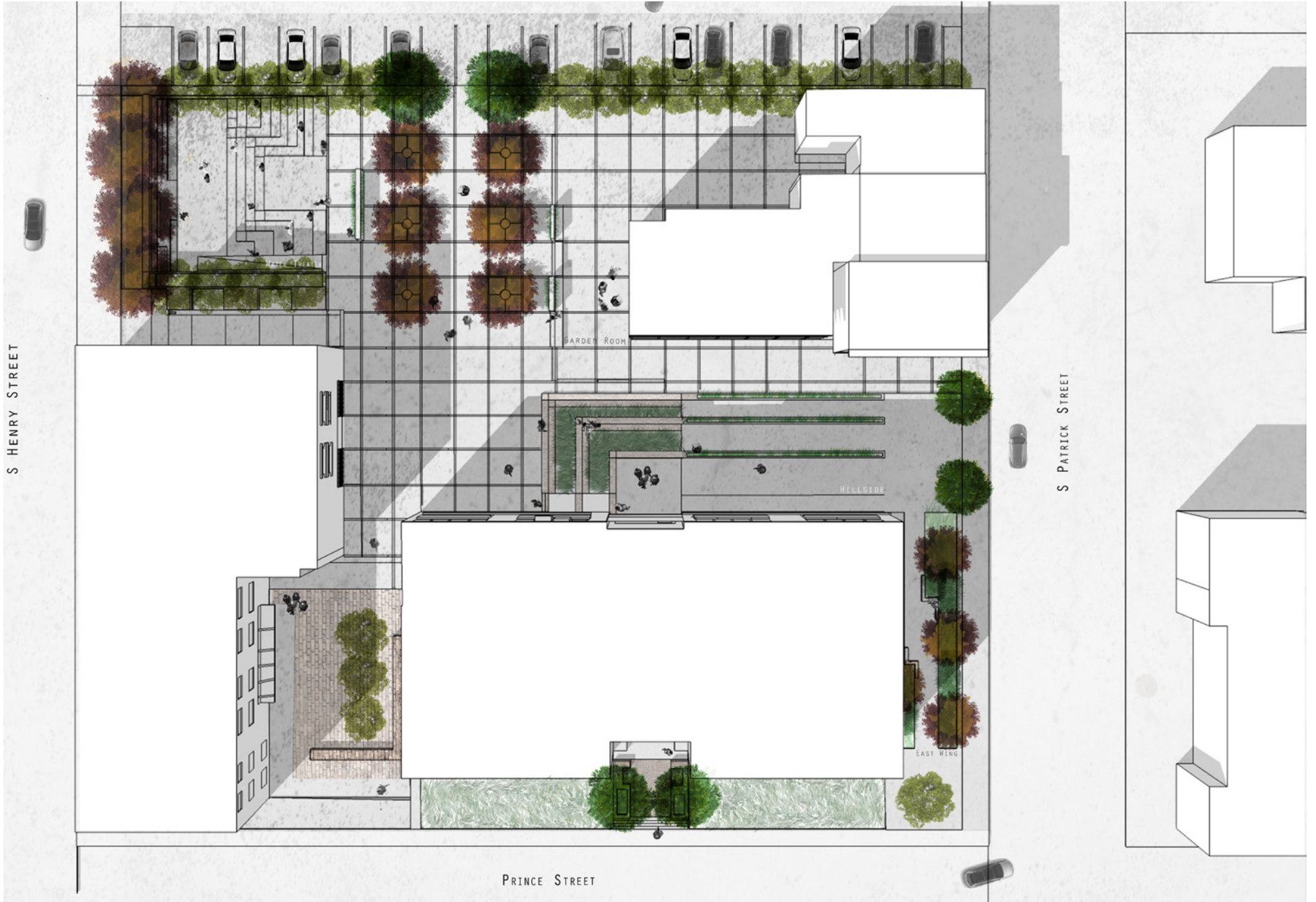
The final design of this campus is the result of the studies regarding improvisation, urban campus design, and conducted surveys.

This campus speaks to the uses already existing within the WAAC. The main elements of the design offer opportunities to be activated based on the uses frequented at the WAAC, without dictating them. It has also been designed, studied, and investigated so it deliberately encourages further creative thinking, design, and construction addition.

Much like the WAAC itself, this campus is a work in progress. As demonstrated through the studies, the WAAC and its grounds have been the canvas of exploration by the previous generation. As a continuation, this new campus invites the incoming students and faculty to experience, experiment, and explore their concepts of design. It is where their ideas could become a reality, and their contributions becoming the next layer of inspiration.



WAAC Campus in the context of its surroundings



The WAAC Campus

The new campus consists of a few areas of focus: the Water Theater, the Garden Room, the Hillside, and the East Wing.

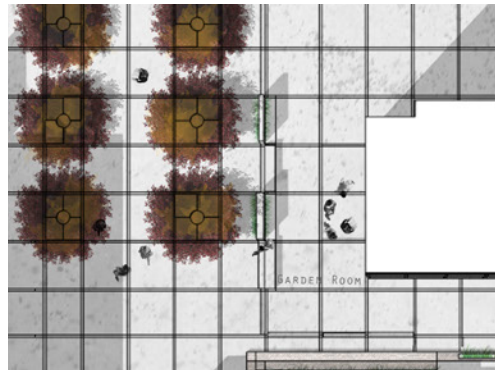
Some of these spaces, namely the Water Theater and the Hillside are intended for larger events, such as movie nights, a lecture, and even the graduation. The smaller room, namely the Garden Room, and East Wing, are designed for smaller gatherings and pinups. The movable garden walls, however, allow for activities to take place at anytime and at any place.

Furthermore, the open-endedness of area-specific designs encourages students and faculty to accept and add, making the campus an ever-changing landscape, reflecting the unique essence of the WAAC.

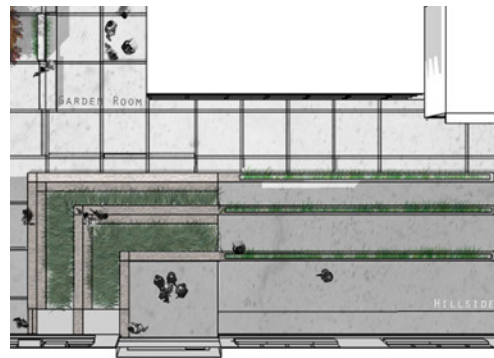
Sustainability, flexibility, and conversations are a part of WAAC's approach. It is often that the three are combined. The following pages are the study of how the campus is responding to those ideals, while leaving much room for addition and improvisation



Water Theater



Garden Room



Hillside



East Wing

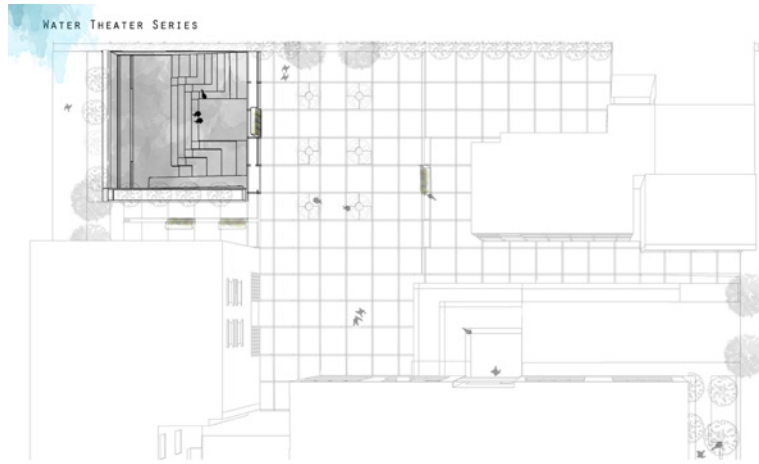
T H E W A T E R T H E A T E R

The Water Theater is one of the signature improvisational spaces on the new campus. It can hold the most number of people at a given time, and therefore would be ideal for events such as graduation or a large lecture. It is, however, also suitable for smaller events.

One of the main aspects of the Water Theater is stormwater management. As the lowest point on site, the majority of the stormwater runoff from the campus gathers here to be reused for irrigation and the periodic waterwall feature. This Theater can hold more than a 100-year storm, collected from throughout the site, and specifically the raingardens surrounding it, as indicated in a few drawings below.

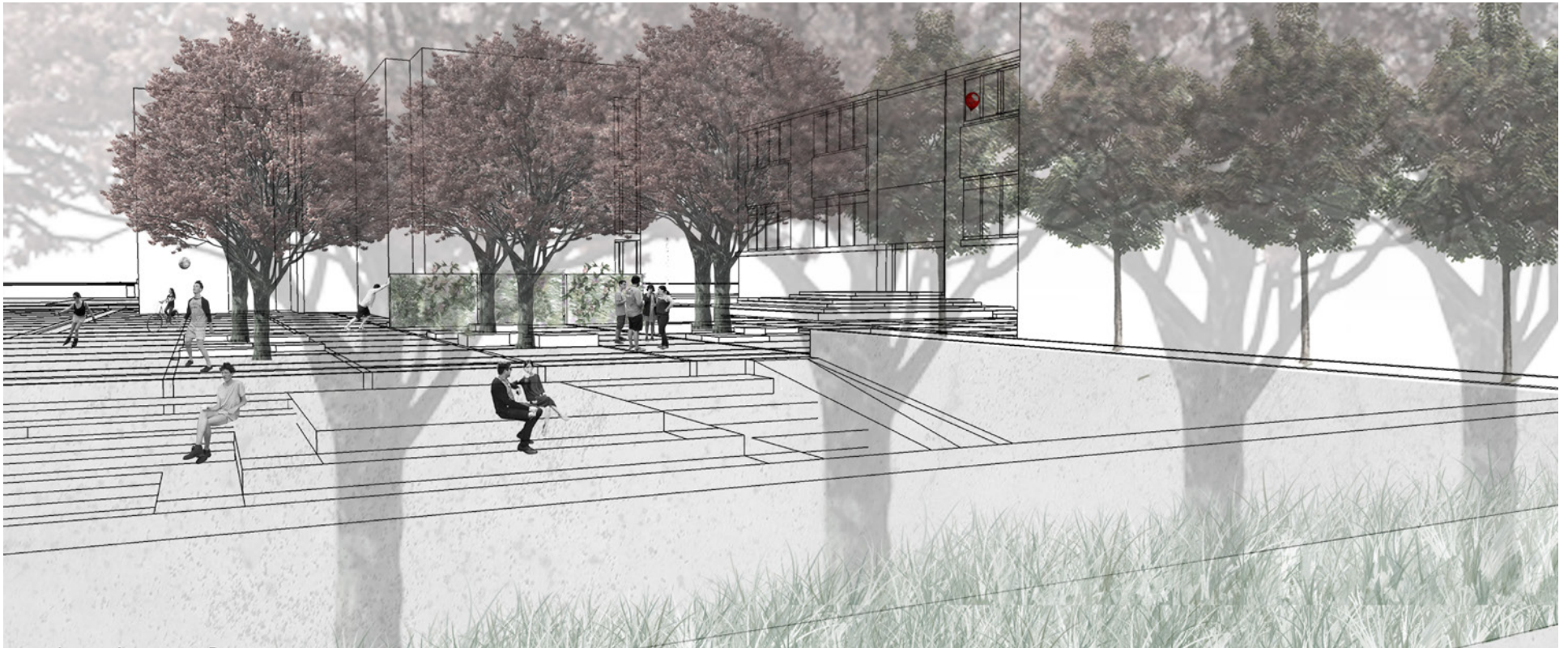


Water Theater



Just Another Day Plan

On a given day, the Water Theater could be used as a hang-out spot, a lunch space, or a gathering space. The place is open to interpretations and improvisational uses.



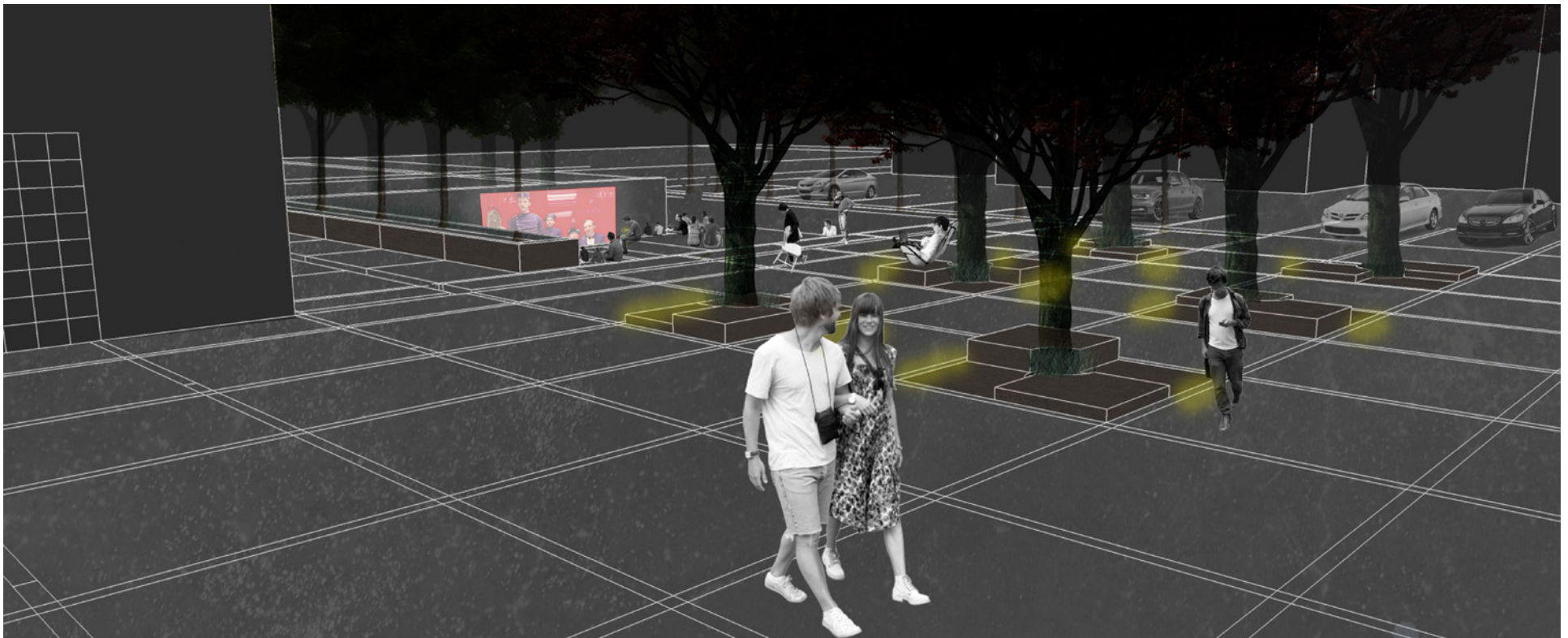
Just Another Day Perspective

Movie Nights are a tradition at the WAAC. Currently the movie nights take place at the Stair Theater. Considering this events is a weekly event, and at times, weather permitting, there could be an interest in watching the movie outdoors.

The Water Theater would be a great spot for such an event. The wall itself is suitable for movie projection, and the steps make a comfortable space for sitting.



Movie Night Plan



Movie Night Perspective



Graduation Day Plan

The graduation at the WAAC is an annual event, where about three dozen students graduate from their masters in architecture and landscape architecture. Currently, however, the graduation takes place at a different university due to a lack of space and location at the WAAC.

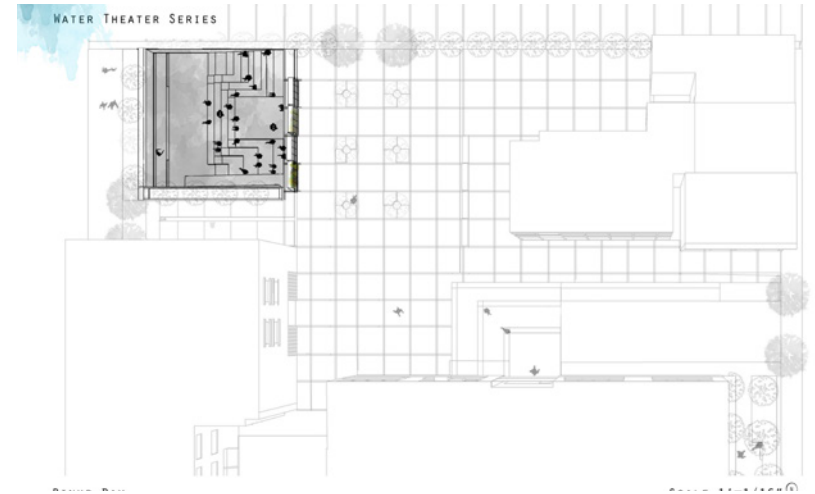
The Water Theater has been designed to hold the capacity at graduation. The space creates a one of a kind experience due to its size and location.



Graduation Day Perspective

One of the Water Theater's main goals is to create a pinup space for a large group. The water wall on the bottom of the theater at 8' wall creates an ideal space for an outdoor pinup.

The garden walls allow the users to create a more private and enclosed space at the Water Theater.



Pinup Day Plan



Pinup Day Perspective

The city of Alexandria has had an average of 43" of rain in 2014. Much of that water becomes stormwater runoff, which causes much trouble for the residents, but also for the City. One of the intentions of the Water Theater is to not only capture the campus stormwater, but to also reuse it. The pervious concrete surface intakes the stormwater at a 2-year storm. With a larger storm event, the excess water will not only infiltrate through the pervious concrete, it would go through a micro-filter system to purify the water. That water would then pump to irrigate the trees planted on the edge of the sidewalk, which is still a part of the campus (See stormwater capture, filtration, and reuse diagram)

At the event of a 10-year storm, the water captured by the raingardens will overflow to create waterwalls of the Theater. In this case, a partial amount of collected and saved water will also pump for an additional waterwall feature at the main wall (See Stormwater Calculations, next page)

Considering that stormwater management and sustainability are two of the major topics in landscape architecture, and especially at the WAAC, this space allows for educational opportunities of not only observing stormwater collection, but reuse, recycle, and irrigation, as well as the characteristics of pervious materials.

RAIN IN ALEXANDRIA

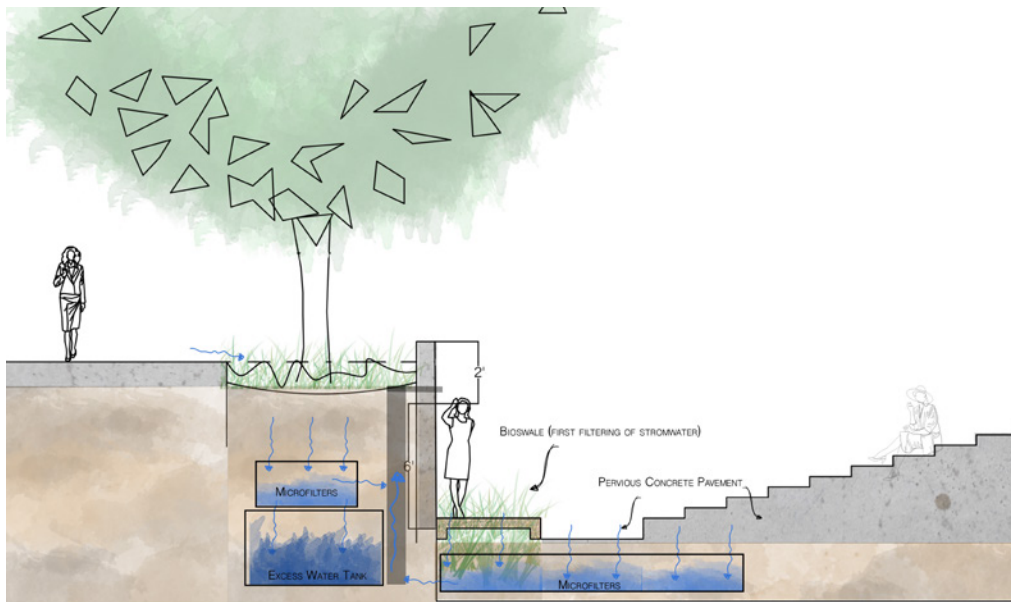
PRECIPITATION AVERAGE OF A YEAR 43.32" (3 FEET 6.1 INCHES)



109 DAYS (ALMOST ONE THIRD OF THE YEAR)



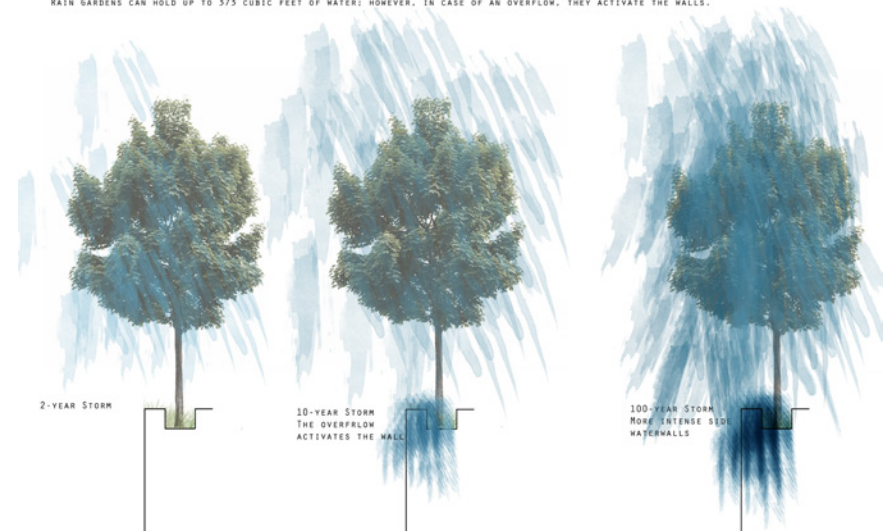
Rain in Alexandria



Stormwater capture, filtration, and reuse diagram

SIDE MALL ACTIVATION, DUE TO STORM INTENSITY

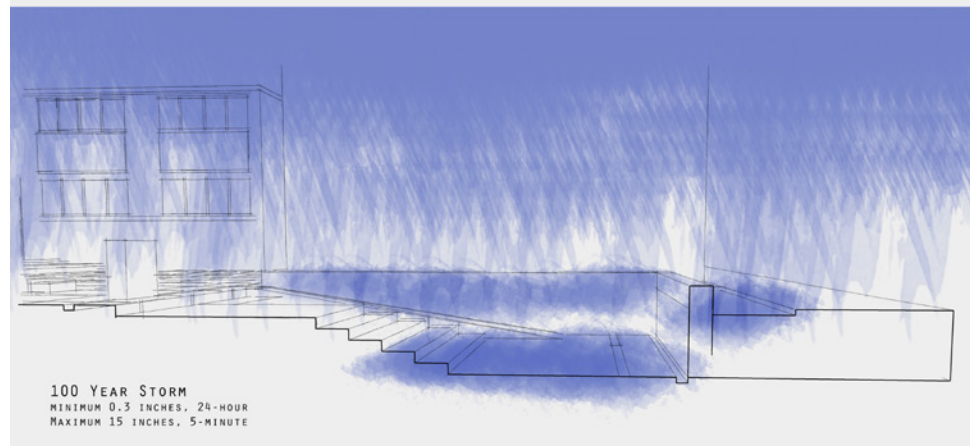
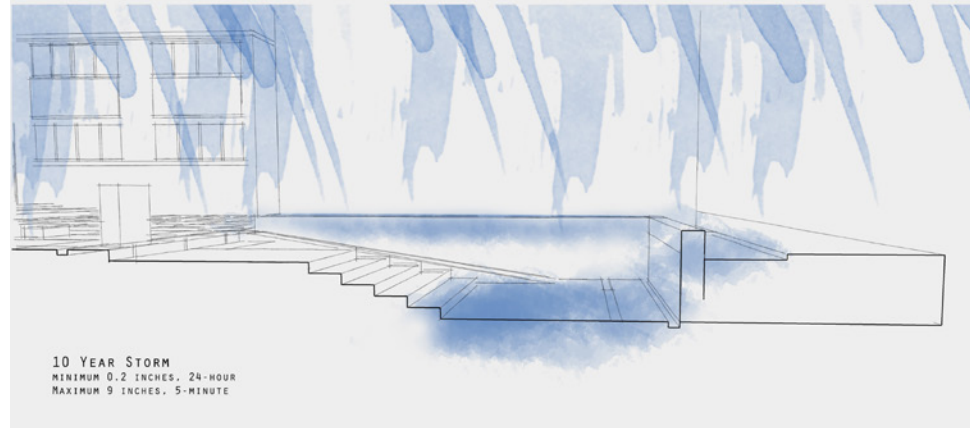
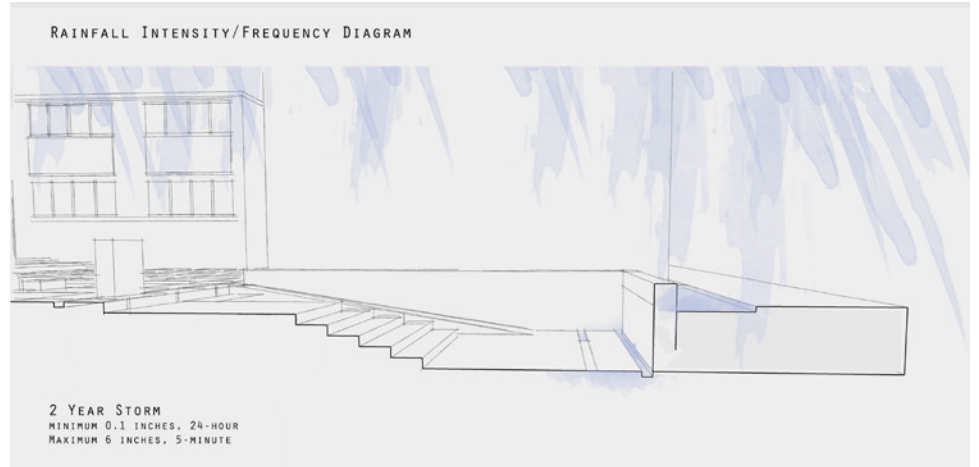
RAIN GARDENS CAN HOLD UP TO 375 CUBIC FEET OF WATER; HOWEVER, IN CASE OF AN OVERFLOW, THEY ACTIVATE THE WALLS.



Stormwater Overflow Diagram



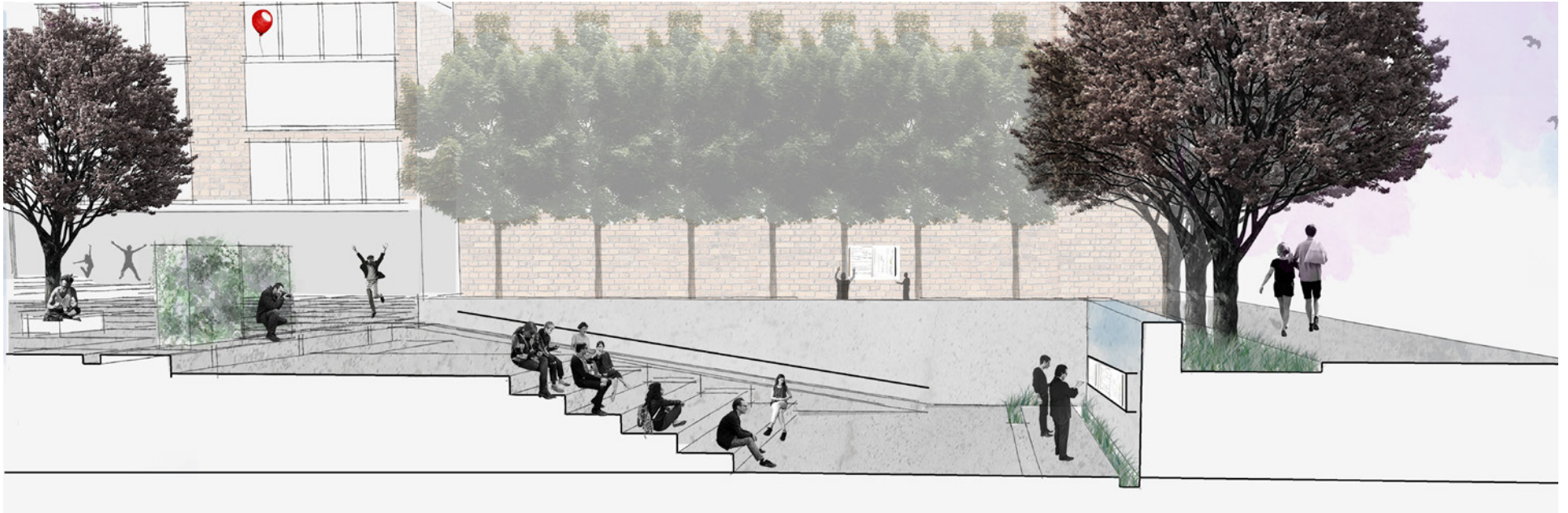
View of a 10-year Storm at the Water Theater



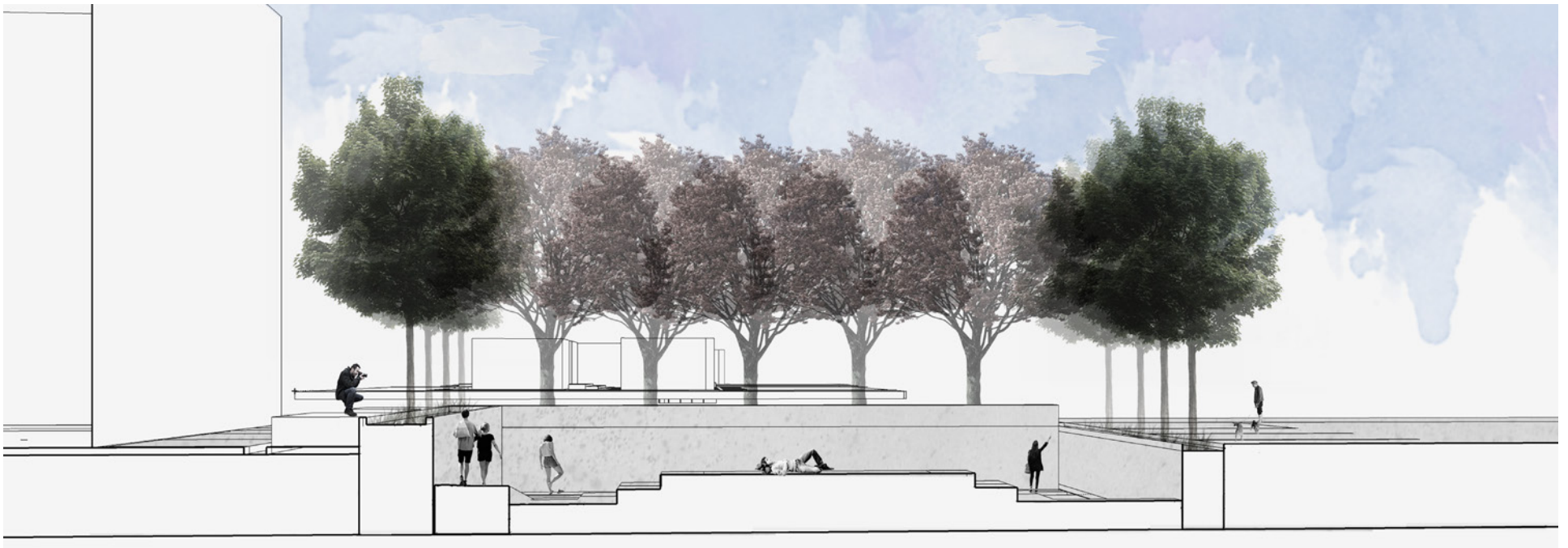
Stormwater Capacity



View of Waterwall



Water Theater East/West Section-Perspective



Water Theater North/South Section-Perspective

H I L L S I D E

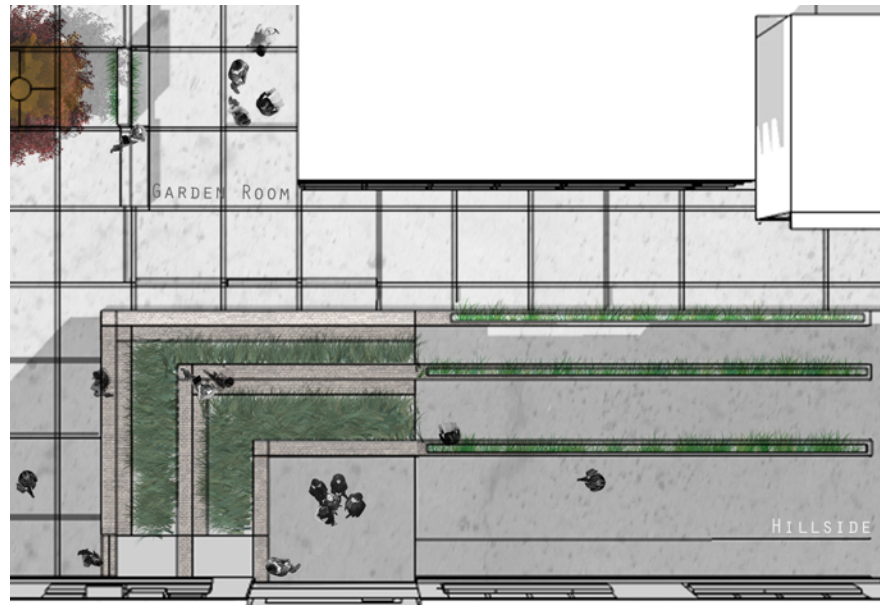
The Hillside is not only one of the main elements on campus, but also a boundary marker when approached from Patrick Street.

To maximize opportunities and possibilities for users, a combination of ramp and terraces has been designed to meet the existing back-door terrace, which is 4 feet higher than the ground level.

Three ramps, at different slopes, rise to meet the terraces at different elevations. The steepest being at 7% and the least steep at 3%. The material is pervious concrete to reduce the volume and speed of any stormwater runoff.

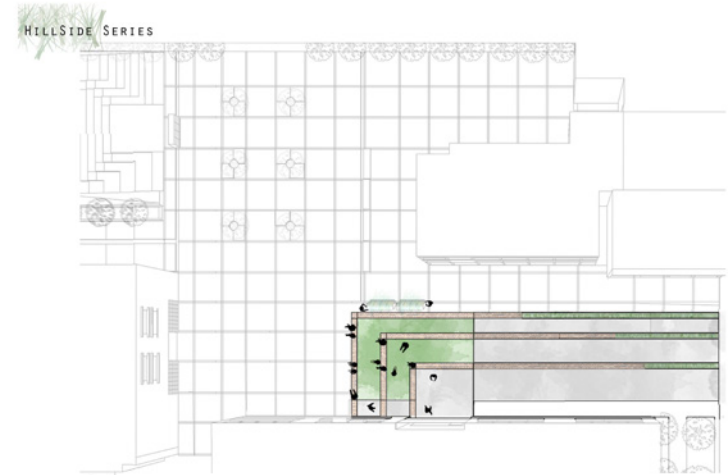
The two new flat terraces are covered with grass to allow for a diversity of materials, as well as a more casual feel. The combination of flat grass terraces and brick seating walls allows for a number of ways for this space to be used. While one person may lay down on the grass, another might want to sit on the brick wall. The choices provided allows individuals to feel more comfortable, similar to that sense of belonging in the WAAC itself. Furthermore, the softer material is suitable for placing picnic chairs and tables as well, which is a bi-annual event at the WAAC.

The terraces are also large enough to hold graduation, should that be a decision made at a future date.



Hillside

The green terraces at Hillside create for a pleasant group meeting on a nice day. By moving the garden walls, a more private aesthetic could be created, where a small studio meeting or a group gathering can take place.

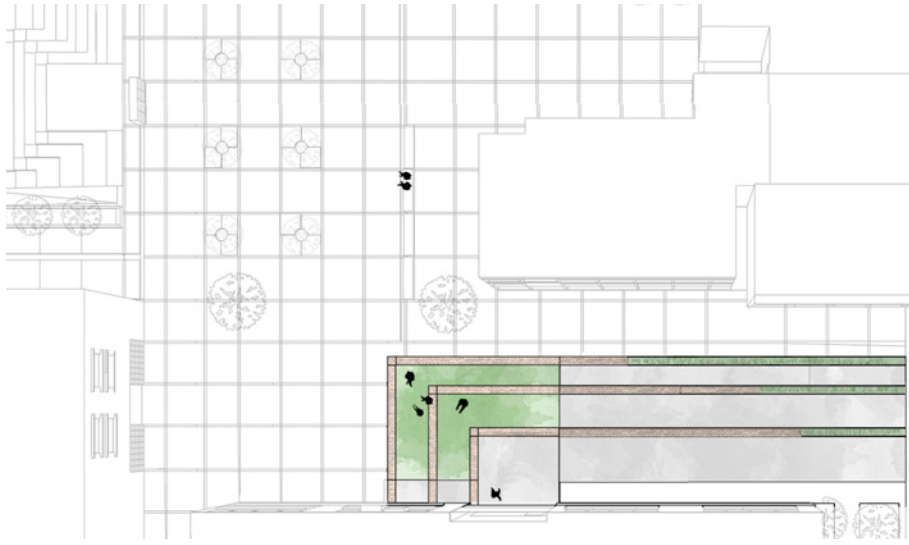


Studio Meeting Plan

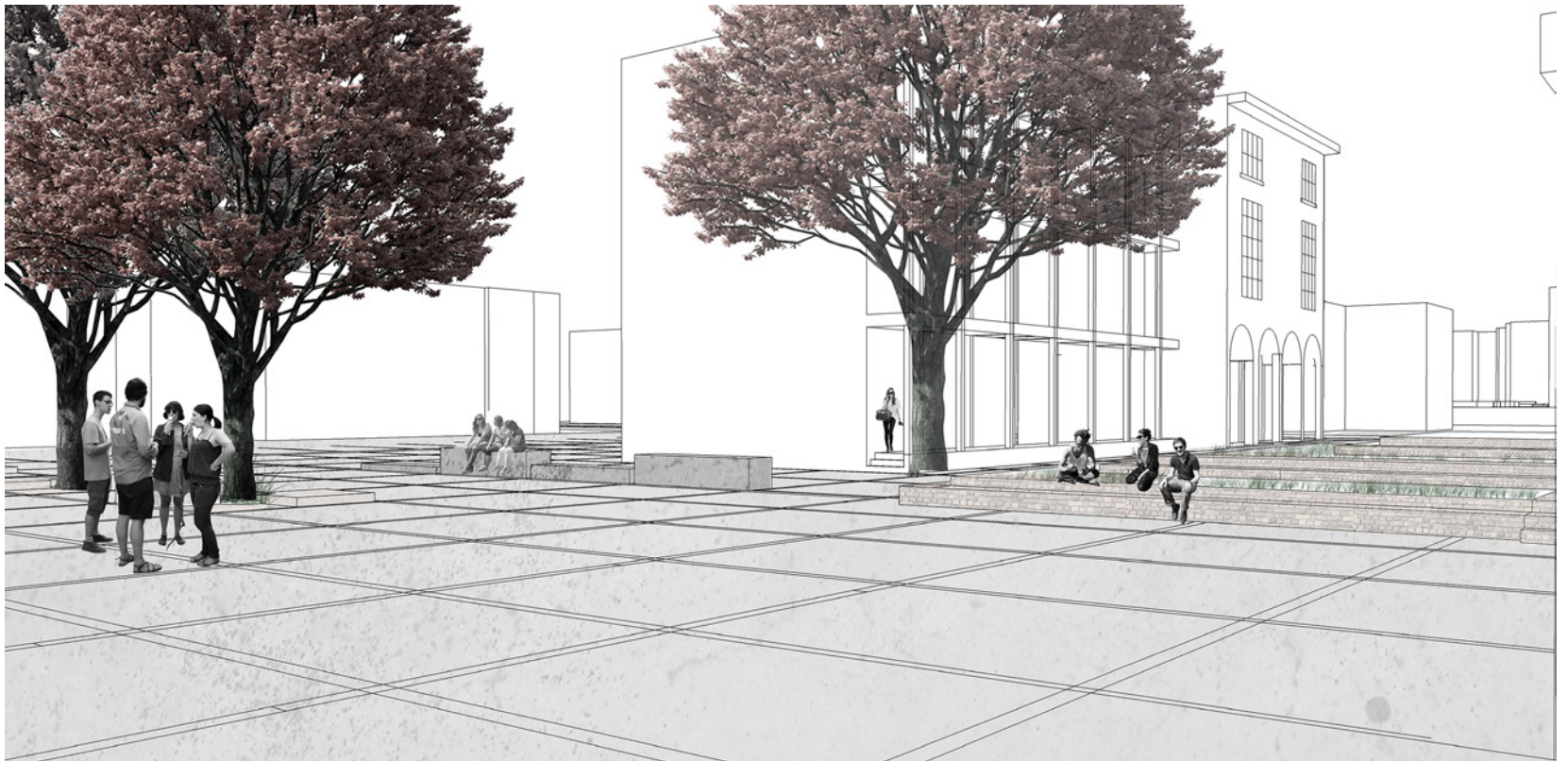


Studio Meeting Perspective

The Hillside makes for a great space for small groups to gather.

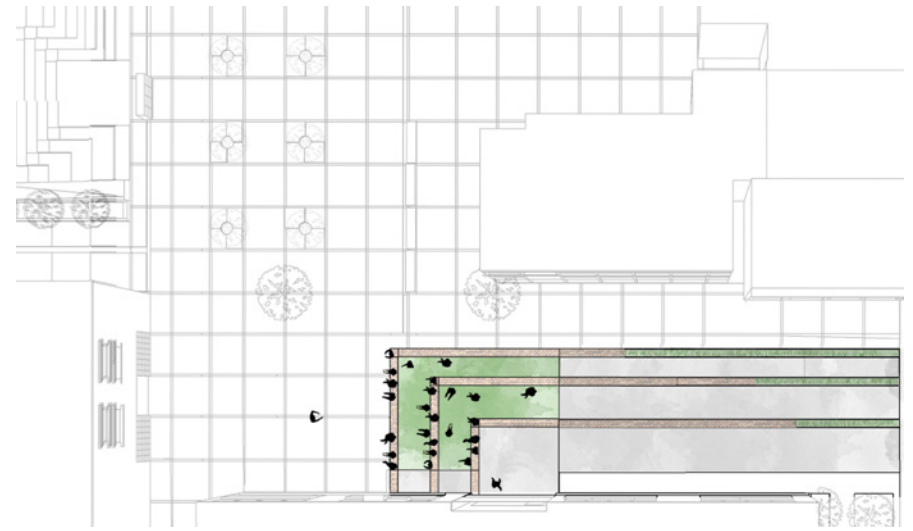


Just Another Day Plan



The scale, placement, and location of the Hillside suggests for class gatherings and lectures. The improvisational characteristic of this space speaks for William H. Whyte's comfort of use within a space. If a space can provide for a variety of events and scales, it is more likely to be used.

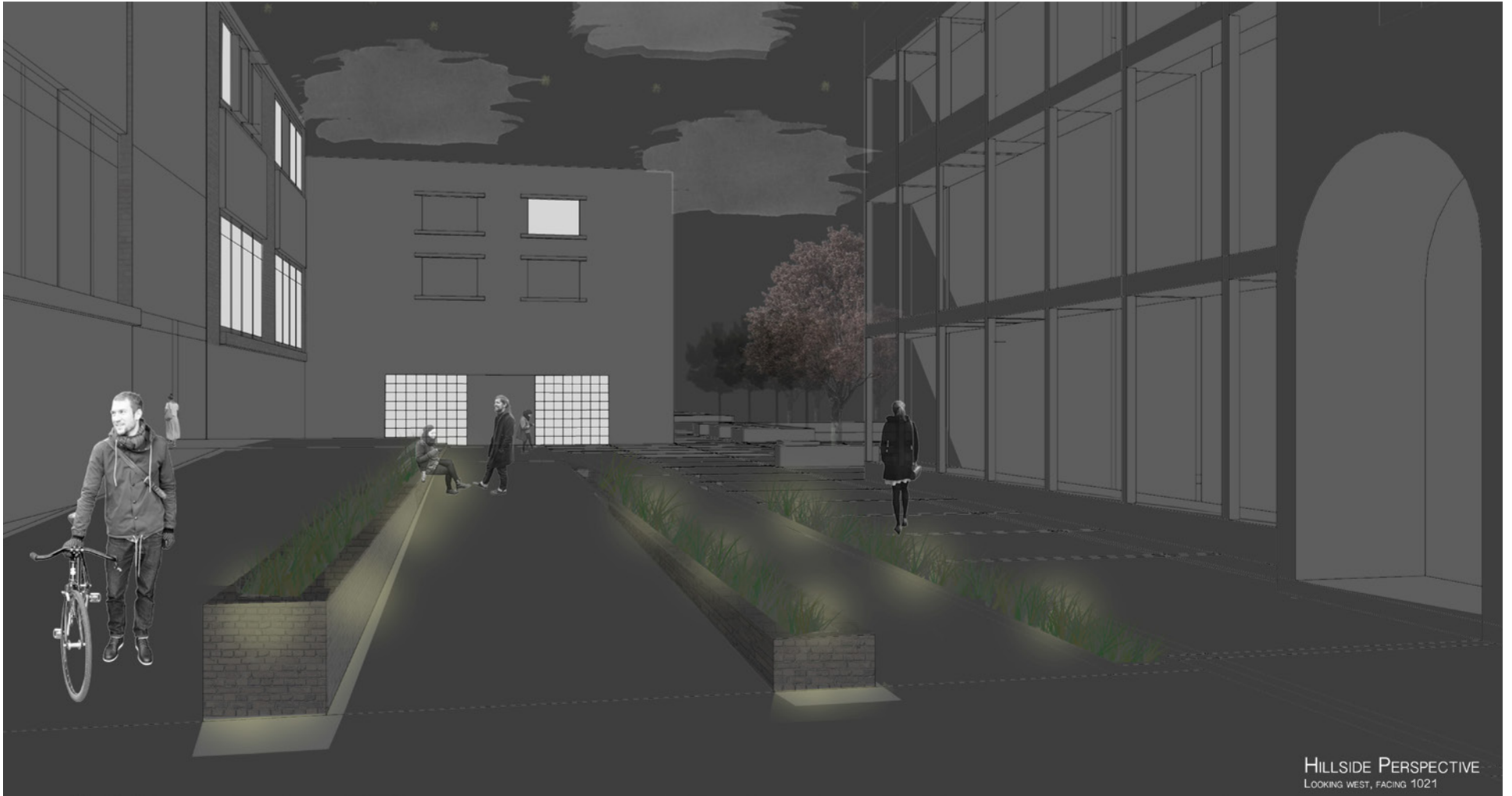
The Hillside also makes a great space for reading and sketching individually or group settings.



WAACy Talk Plan



WAACy Talk Perspective

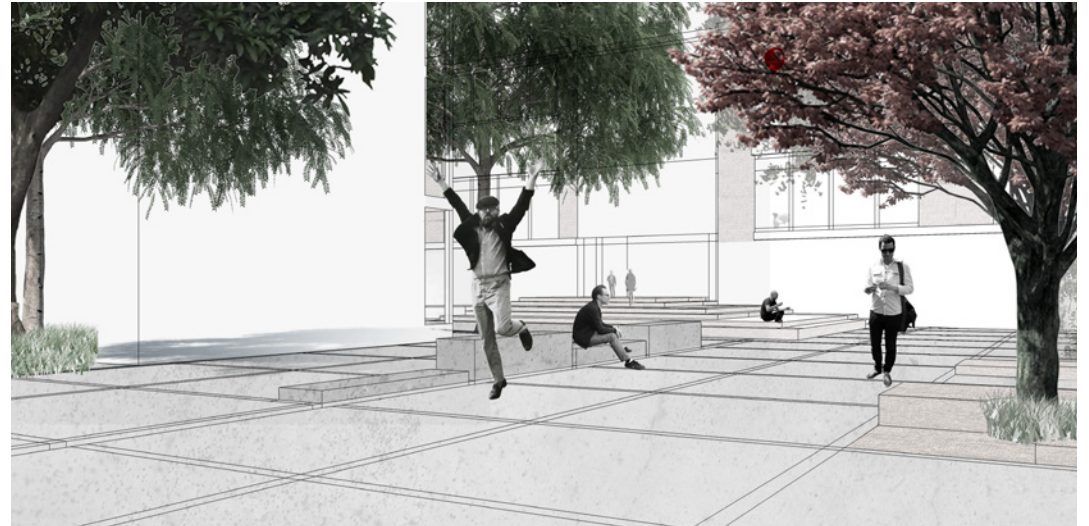


HILLSIDE PERSPECTIVE
LOOKING WEST, FACING 1021

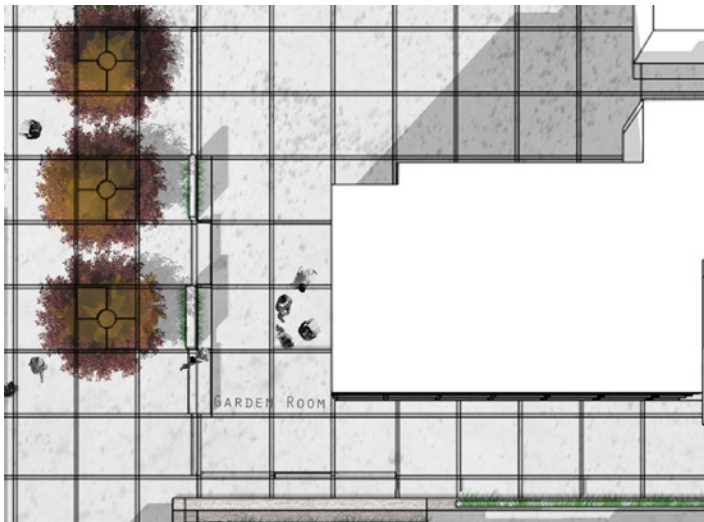
Nighttime Perspective

One of the advantages of the Garden Wall is its ability to transform spaces. The wall could create an instant room within spaces, allowing for a regular blank wall to become a pinup space.

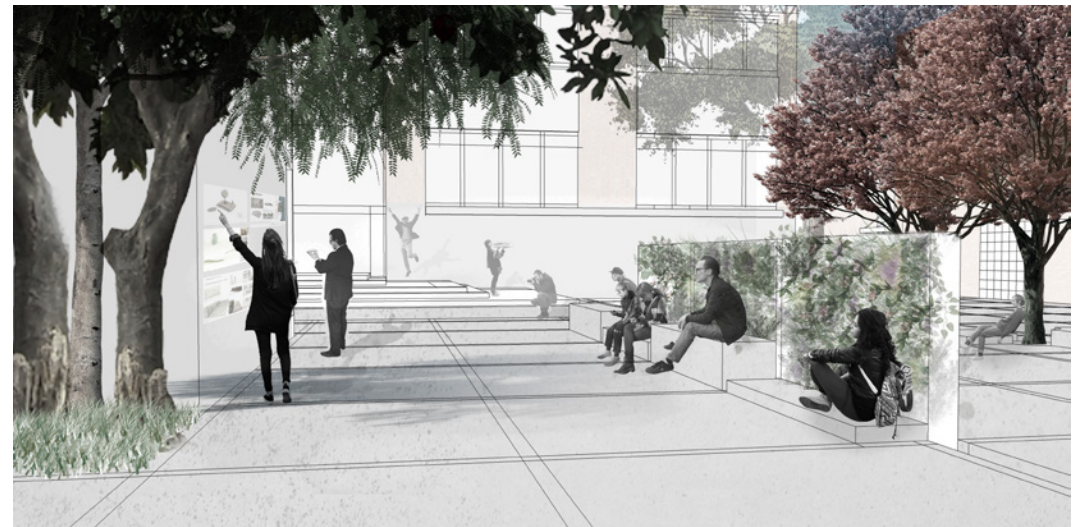
The Garden Room, located directly in front of the Hillside invites small groups to gather and discuss projects, sit and have lunch or just listen to music. With the use of a few garden walls, the Garden Room could become a space for pinups and class discussions as well.



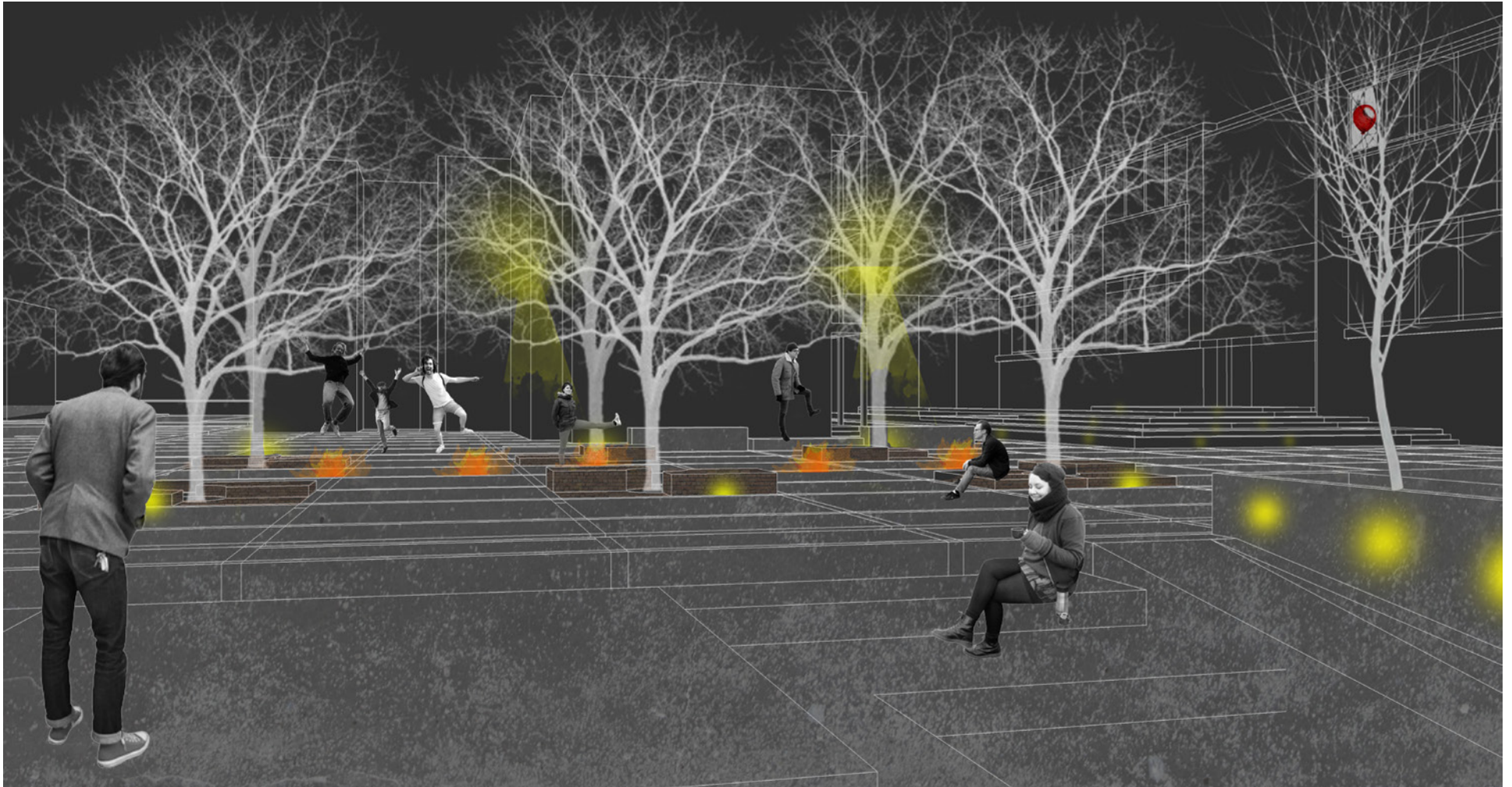
Just Another Day View



Garden Room



Pinup View



Chaharshanbesoori Celebration in the new campus, looking from the Water Theater towards the Garden Room and Hillside

The space located directly to the east of 1001, currently captures the stormwater from the roof of 1001, through the pervious concrete surface and diverts it from running onto Patrick Street. East Wing builds upon the great functionality of that space to enhance stormwater runoff, as well as to create educational opportunities to learn about stormwater management, while being a gathering space as well as a newly defined boundary of the WAAC.

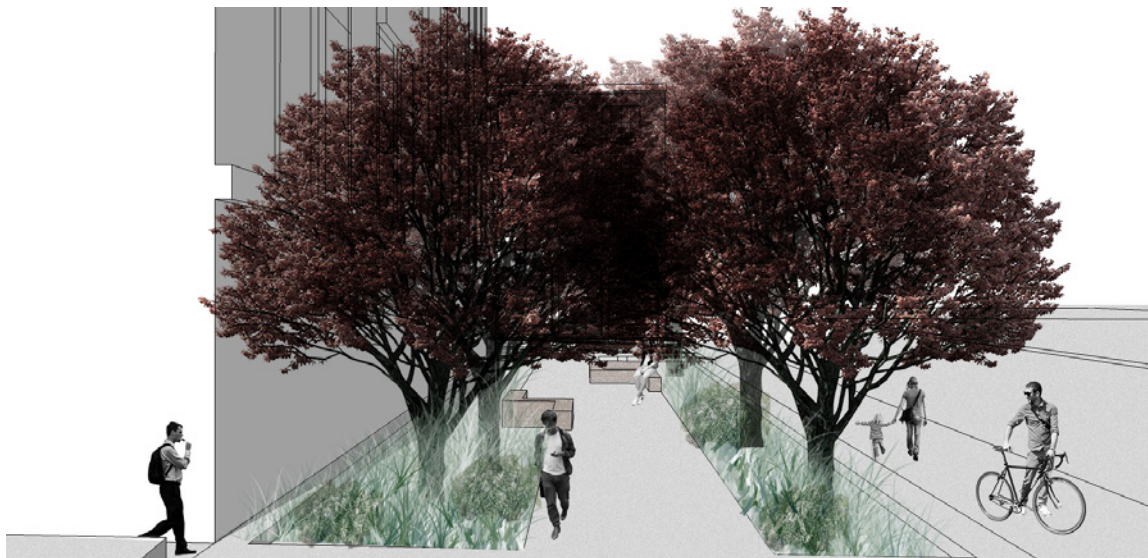
The new design uses the existing pipe and captures the water into the two bioswales. Besides their stormwater management benefits, it creates a teaching and learning opportunity through improvisation in response to rain. At the time of rain, the bioswales respond differently as opposed to no rain, creating a point of conversation.

Similar to the Water Theater, this space allows for educational purposes. The bioswales are learning opportunities to follow the paths of rainwater from the roof of 1001 onto the grounds of campus.

The Japanese Maples alongside brick seating walls mark the threshold of the WAAC from the sidewalk and the street.



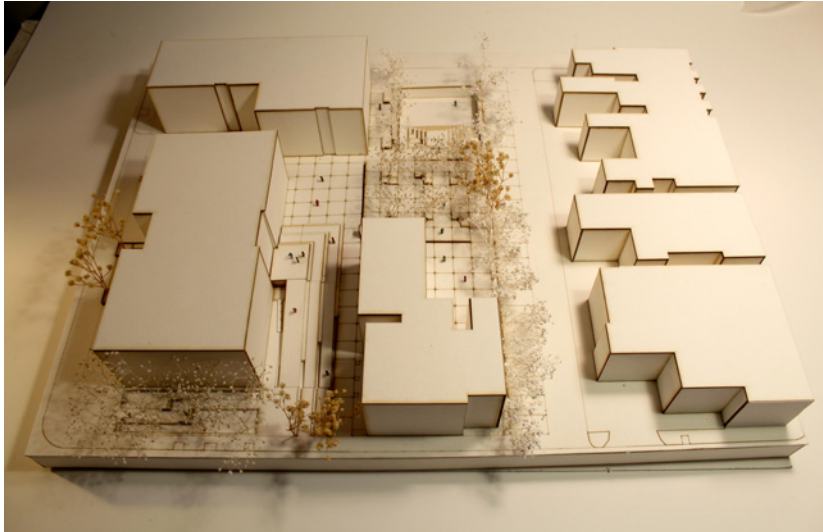
East Wing



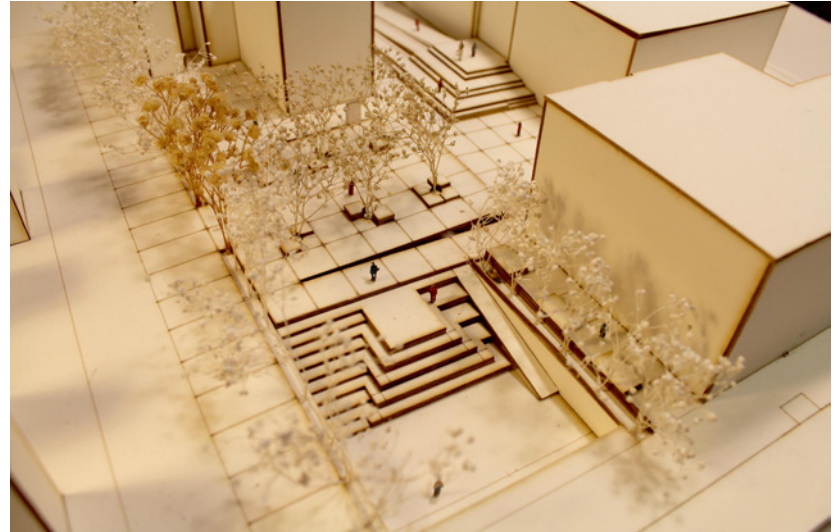
East Wing Perspective



East Wing Bioswale Study



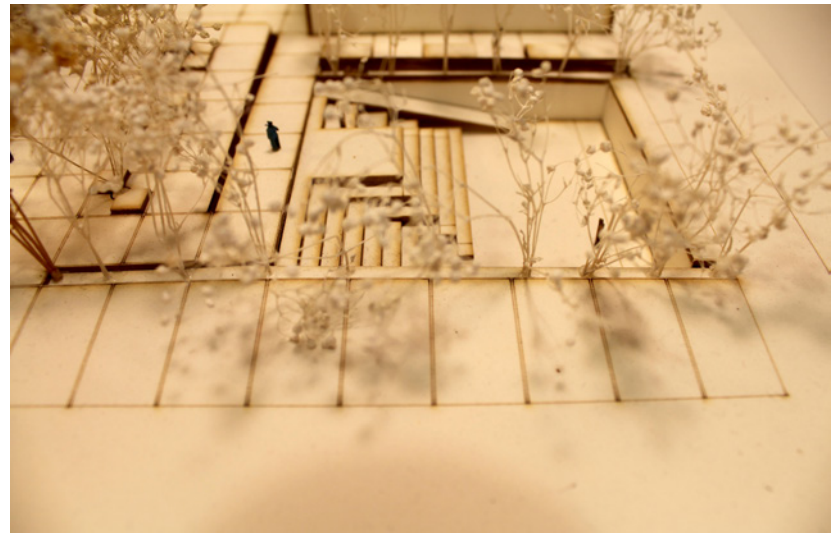
The New WAAC Campus



The Water Theater and Hillside



The Hillside looking towards Patrick Street (1001 on the right)



The Water Theater

C O N C L U S I O N

Walter Hood once said, “the improv process expresses particular attributes about place and culture from an insiders’ point of view.” (Urban Diaries) This allows for improvisation to be a significantly powerful tool to use in design, especially when dealing with diversity and possible sense of being left out.

This campus is the result of a variety of studies about the physicality of the WAAC, its current grounds, but more importantly its culture within and the characteristics that truly make it the unique place it is. Regardless of where students are from, they tend to immediately create an attachment to the place and continue to speak highly of it, and their experience long after they have left. They also leave a part of themselves here for the next generation to aspire by.

There is one rule to improvisation, “yes, and...”. By abiding this rule, one promises to continue remaining curious and creative. By pledging to accept and add, one becomes inspired to understand more deeply, get involved, and be a part of something bigger. That, is very crucial to a group of individuals who, voluntarily or forcefully, are displaced at a given time.

There has been much to learn from the WAAC. The flexibility and freedom it has created within its fixed context of a full-functioning building has created a comfortable zone for everyone here, despite their languages, cultures, background, or beliefs. Everyone here is a part of something, and they actually can make a difference.

The WAAC campus is designed to allow this unique culture to take itself to the outside world. By adopting these grounds, there will be more opportunities for innovation, creation, and learning. The various rooms are designed to accommodate a variety of events at different scales, yet nothing is prescribed. There are option and exploration, investigation, additions, and adaptations are a part of what will this campus as unique as the WAAC.

Improvisation welcomes individuals to take part in making the place feel more like home to them. The WAAC has done so successfully over the years, by providing frameworks, yet allowing individuals to express themselves and form their surroundings to an extent.

This approach has not only added to the unique development of its character, but an increasing admiration and sense of belonging to many individuals who have studied here over the course of its life. The WAAC has become an on-going story exchanged between the many people who may have never met in person. The welcoming of improvisation at this campus will allow for that exchange to move beyond the walls, expanding the canvas on which we dream on, while still accommodating to the needs and interests of students.

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