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In
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Creating the Idea of Home

By: Corey S. Mack

Home is something which is not easily defined. It cannot simply be described as a place, or a building, but as an idea of a place.

The place is different for everyone. For some it is the place they grew up, for others it is where they currently live. The idea of that place is similar for everyone. When thinking of that place, everyone is reminded of the people they met, the things they learned, and the memories which made it their home.

This thesis aims to define home, and how the idea of home can be created into Architecture. The Architecture is not meant to be reminiscent of a home, in the sense of a dwelling, but have the aspects which create the idea of home.

These aspects include the concepts of community, education, and memory. Using these concepts, the Shaw Community and Recreation center was developed, which embodies the idea of home.

Abstract



Photography Assemblage, Photographs of apartment in Washington, DC.

Thank you,

To my thesis committee. For the valuable input, guidance, and motivation. The quality of education which you have provided me is unmatched.

To KCCT architects. For providing me the opportunity to receive my Master’s degree.

To my friends. For always being there to pick me up when I’m down.

To Mom and Kirsten. For your patience and support over the past two years. Without your love and encouragement, I would have never been able to accomplish any of this.

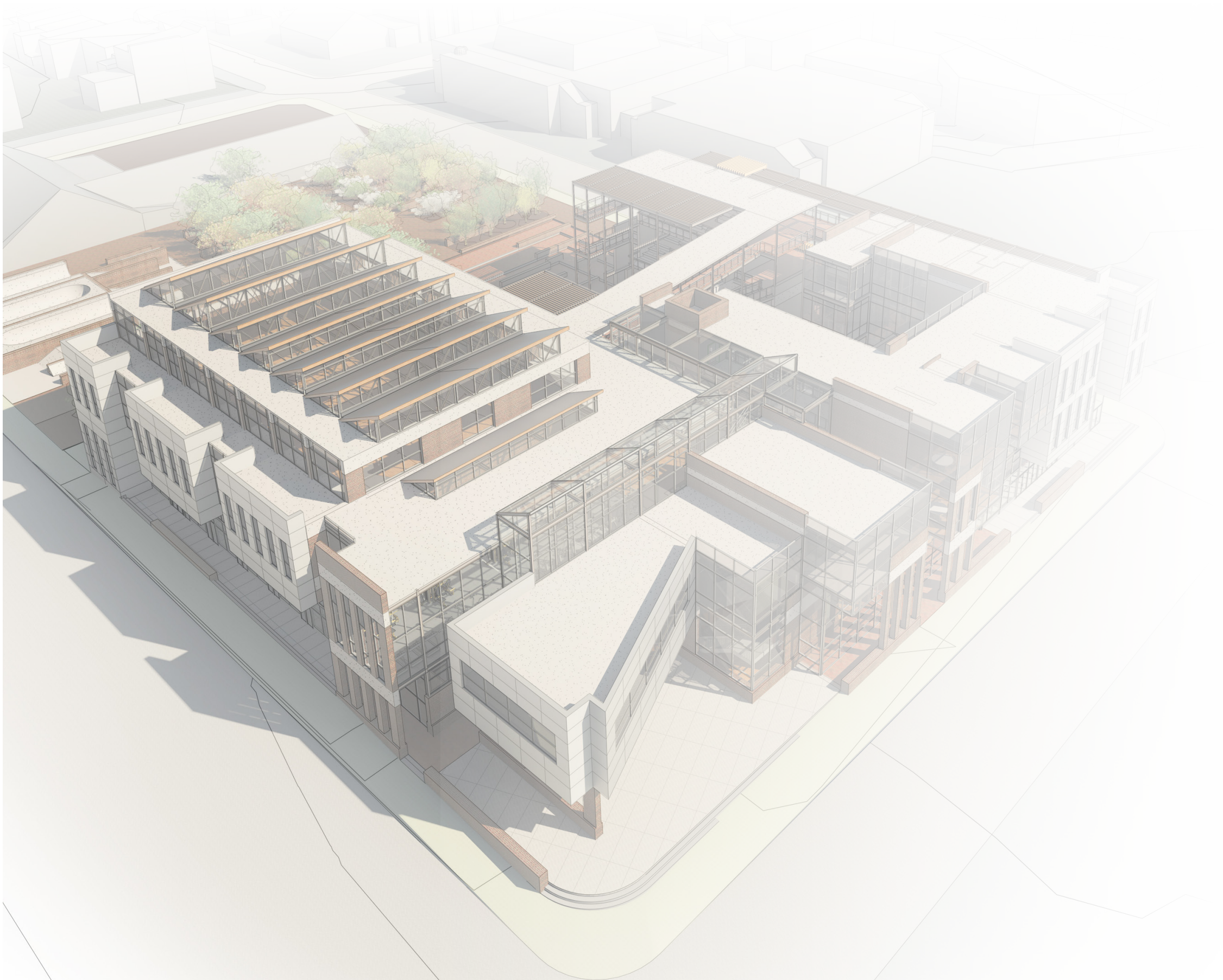
And, to Dad. This is for you. We miss you every day.

Acknowledgments

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*“Perhaps home is not a place, but simply
an irrevocable condition.”*

James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*

What is home? Is it simply the place that we grew up? Or currently live?

Home is something which cannot be easily defined. It is different for everyone. It cannot be interpreted as a place, or building, but as an idea of a place. Everyone has different thoughts about what it is that creates this place. Whether it’s a feeling that they get when entering their home, or the memories they’ve shared with their families in a particular room, or house; Home is different for everyone.

I chose this thesis based on personal experiences of moving away from, what I still consider home, in the suburbs (Severna Park, MD), where I knew all of my neighbors, friends, family, and there was a strong sense of community within my neighborhood. All of my friends, most of whom I still talk to today, were met while going to grade school. It isn’t necessarily the house which I grew up in, which I regard as home, but the whole area.

I moved to the city (Washington, DC) about 6 years ago, where I live in an apartment building, and I’m lucky to meet my neighbors, let alone get to know them. This is mostly due to the fact that where I live is temporary. Not just for me, but for everyone living around me. Yes, there are houses with permanent residents, but for the most part, the encounters I have are temporary.

Photography Collage, Community Beach in Severna Park, MD, and the 10th Street Park in Washington, DC

Home

After moving to the city, the strong sense of community, and permanence which I shared with my neighbors, friends, and family in Severna Park was lost. But it is more than just the sense of community, and the ties to family and friends which made Severna park my home. These ties could be recreated elsewhere, but it is the memories of my original home which will stick, and still allow me to call Severna Park as my home.

“There is no place like home. What is home? It is the old homestead, the old neighborhood, hometown, or motherland.”

Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*

The definition of home, can vary depending on where one looks. According to the Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, home is defined as:

- 1 (n) one’s place of residence
- 2 (n) the social unit formed by a family living together
- 3 (n) a familiar or usual setting
- 4 (n) a place of origin



Community Beach, Severna Park, MD

Home

Depending on how it is interpreted, home can be a number of things; simply a place one lives; where they are from; or a group of people which inhabit a place. Perhaps it is a combination of all of these definitions.

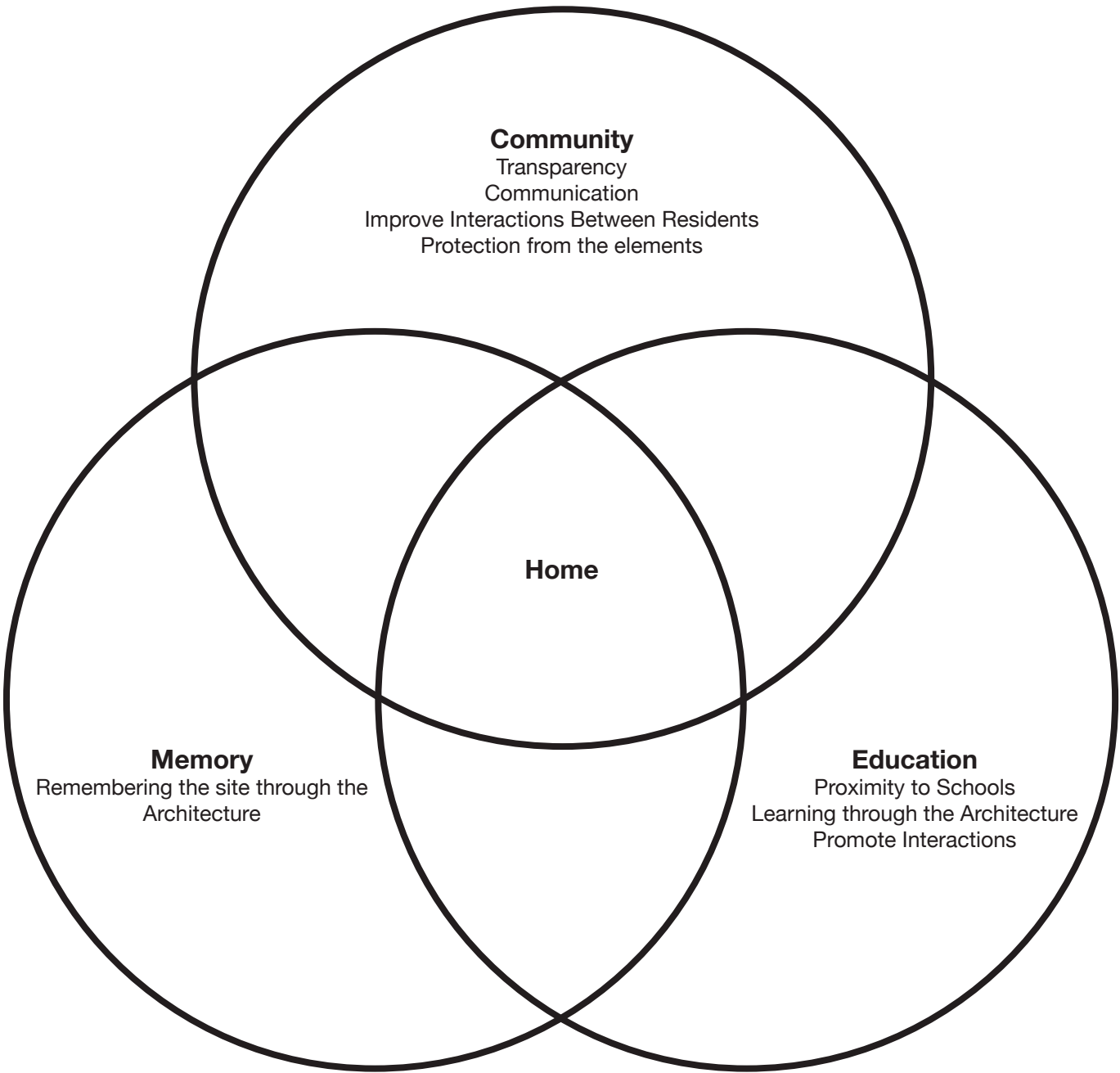
Yi-Fu Tuan is a Chinese-U.S. Geographer, who has published extensively in the subject of home. In his lecture, Home as Elsewhere, Tuan attempts to identify the conditions that “make home, real home, so important to our sense of well being.” :

“Home, to give it a slightly fuller definition, is the locale of human warmth, and material sustenance; moral property, and spiritual comfort.”

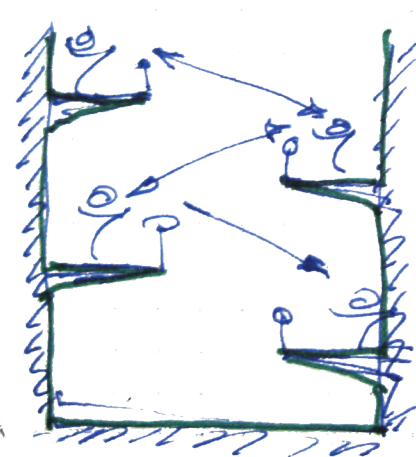
Home, according to Tuan’s definition, is simply a place where people are (which we can presume are family, friends, etc.) where one is cared for, and one is comfortable. He then goes on to describe the culture of people which best fit this description.



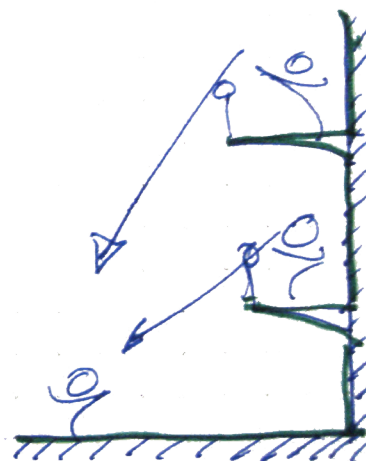
10th Street Park, Washington, DC



Home Concept Diagram



Community Concept Sketch



Structural Concept Sketch

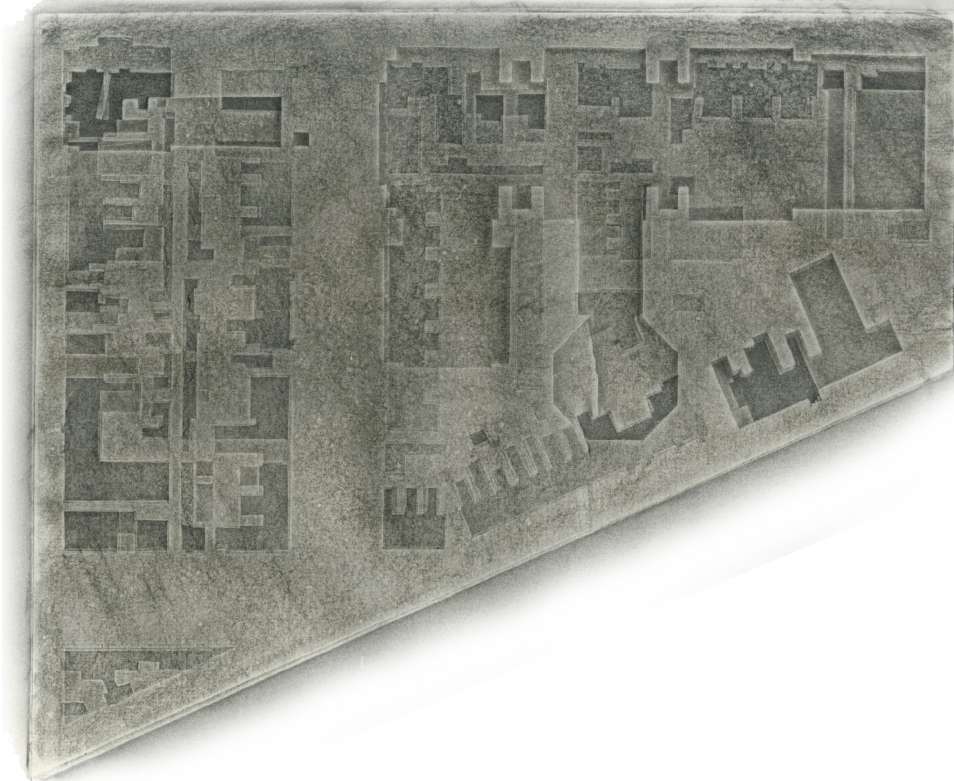
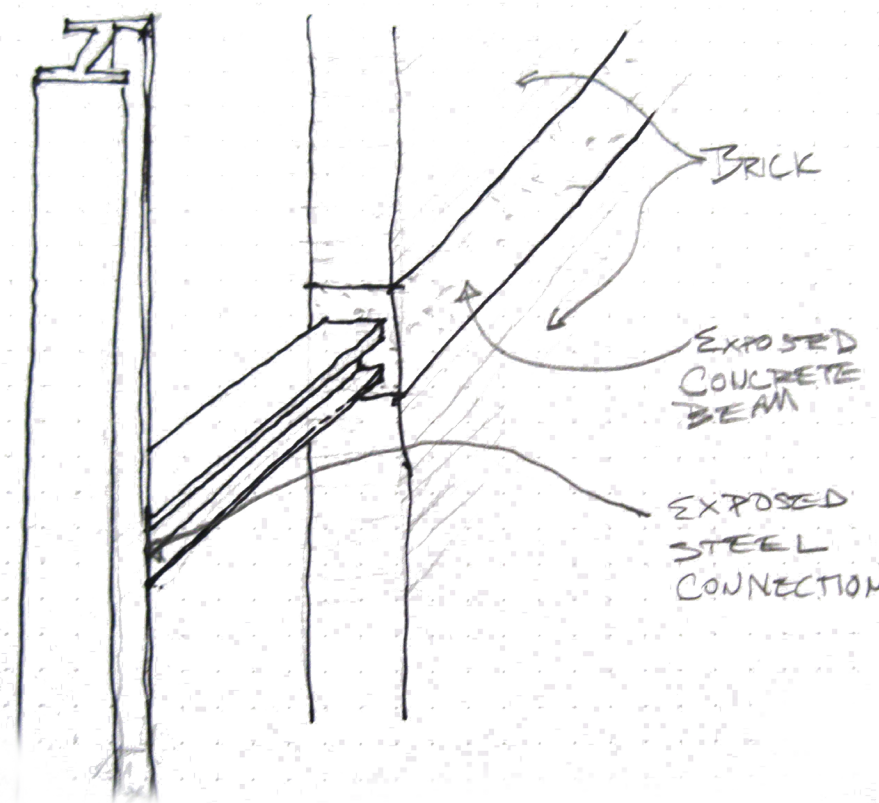


Fig. 1 - Historical Site Analysis Embossing (DC GIS)



“So, understood, which people best meet the criteria? Ethnographic evidence points to the hunter gatherers. Their way of life is so intimately interwoven into land and it’s resources, that the possibility of moving elsewhere, or adopting another’s way of life, never seems to have crossed their minds. Should they be forced to move, or adopt, they suffer severe demoralization, from which they seldom fully recover.”

While it would seem fruitful to compare myself, or anyone of a similar culture, to “hunter gatherers”, it is interesting to note the similarities between their ties to their home-land and my own. To them, it is not just a place, but “a way of life”. Therefore, the term home takes on a much broader definition, and should be interpreted, not as a single place, but as an idea of a place, which everyone holds in their minds. It is an ideal place, where one lives (or has lived), in which they are comfortable, and familiar with their surroundings.

To clarify these assumptions which I propose about the idea of home, I’ve created my own definition which is divided into 3 parts; community, education, and home. These 3 concepts are the driving ideas behind the Shaw community and Recreation center.

A **community** is defined as a group of people with common interests living in a particular area. This could include, but is not limited to a family, friends, neighbors, teachers, students, etc. The area does not have to be a neighborhood, in the literal sense, with defined edges, but a home should be an area that has a strong sense of community within it.

Within this community, the residents all share a common bond with the area, and with each other. In order to do this, there is a sense of trust, and transparency, between each other.

“We seek to belong. Belonging to a group makes the individual feel less vulnerable and more self-confident. As for the group, its collective sense of self is typically one of confidence, provided it is isolated from more advanced neighbors.”

Yi-Fu Tuan, *How Not To Be a Minority Person*



Shaw Junior High School

Community

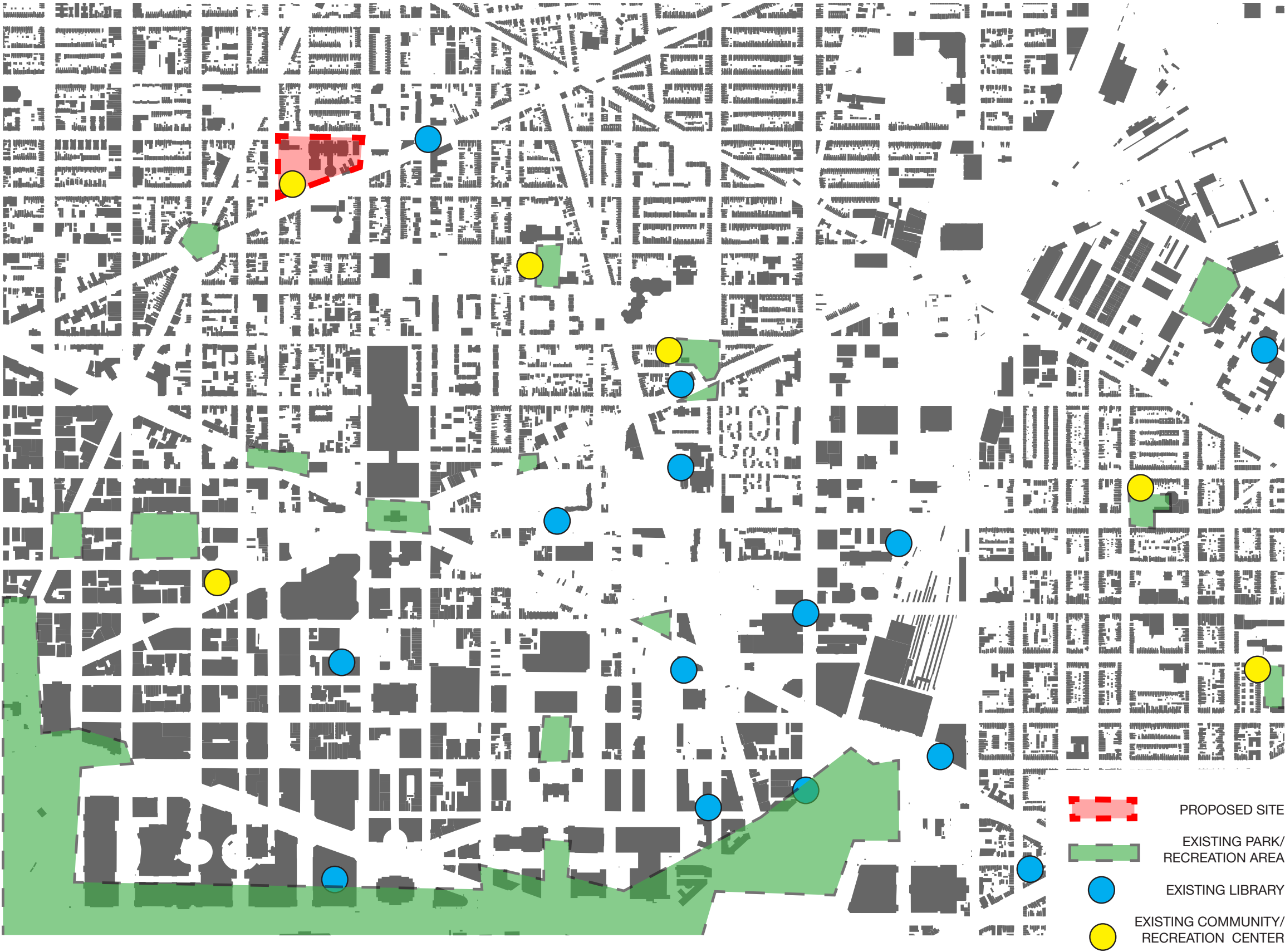


Fig. 2 - Proposed Site Map (DC GIS)



Fig. 3 - Existing Conditions Map (DC GIS / Google Earth)

In searching for a site, the prerequisites were for one which had a need for a public building, had potential to create strong ties to the surrounding areas, and was in close proximity to existing recreation areas and/ or education facilities.

The site for this project is one which is in desperate need of a stronger sense of community. Located in the heart of the Shaw district at 11th Street and Rhode Island Avenues, the site sits primarily vacant, with a skate park, basketball court, playing field, and closed middle school.

The recreation areas are well used, however the education facilities are closed, which creates a sense of disparity in the surrounding areas.

To aid the idea of community, the Architecture should be transparent, and allow for maximum communication between spaces to allow for interactions to occur.



Shaw Skate Park

Community

A home provides **education** for the inhabitants. To most people, their first home is where they grew up, and went to school. Learned to walk and talk and learned to develop the social skills needed to succeed in life. A place for education is important for creating the idea of home in a place. It can be provided by not only creating spaces dedicated to education, but by teaching through the Architecture itself.

“What is home? A roof to keep out the rain? Four walls to keep out the wind? Floors to keep out the cold? Yes, but home is more than that. Home is first school and first church for young ones, where they learn what is right, what is good, and what is kind, where they go for comfort when they are hurt or sick; where joy is shared and sorrow eased; where fathers and mothers are respected and loved, where children are wanted; where money is not as important as loving-kindness; where even the tea kettle sings from happiness. That is home.”

Ernestine Schumann-Heink, German born, American opera singer

The Architecture can promote education, by promoting interactions between people to improve their social skills. However, the building can also teach through the Architecture itself. By exposing the structure of the building, people can see, understand, and learn how the building is held together, and realize that it is not just 4 walls and a roof.

The existing educational facilities adjacent to the site, as well as the other existing site uses, influence the overall programming of the proposed community and recreation center.

Education

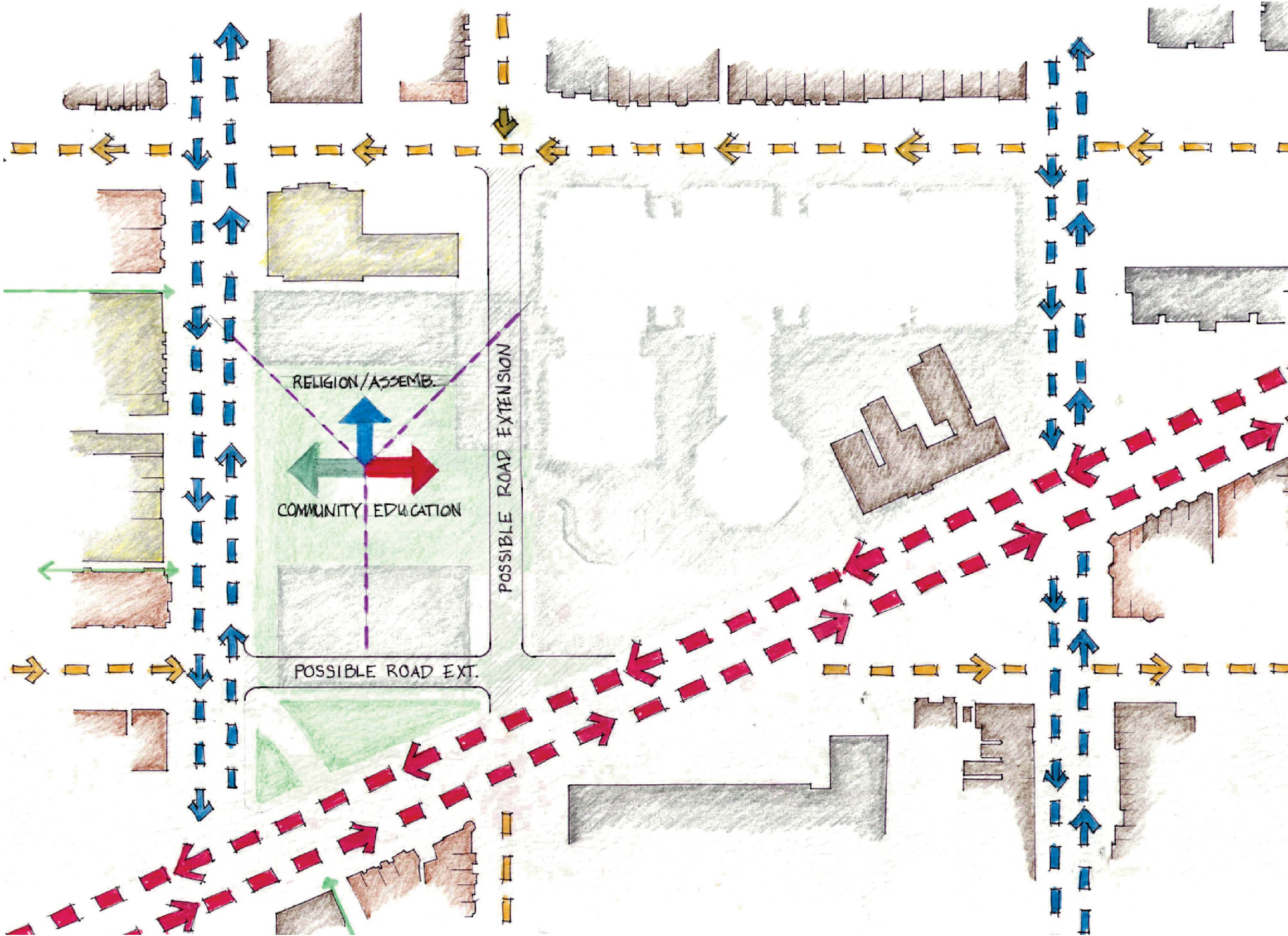


Fig. 4 - Site Analysis (DC GIS)

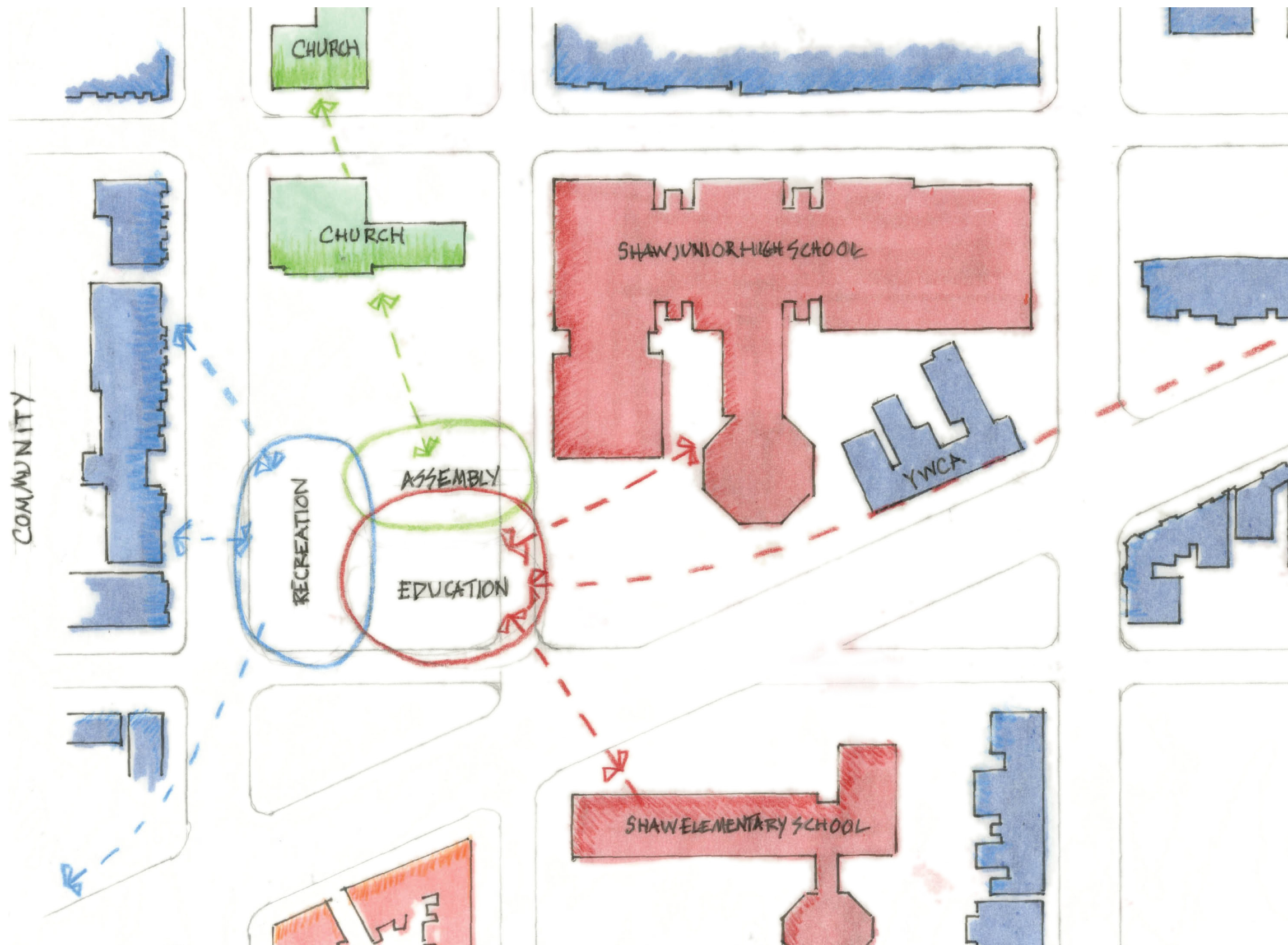


Fig. 5 - Program Analysis (DC GIS)

The eastern half of the site is dedicated to educational uses, with an outdoor theatre to the north to serve the existing church, and community center to the south. The community center would include classrooms, counseling center, restaurant, and general meeting areas. The western half of the building is devoted to recreational uses, which would include a basketball court and skate park (to replace the existing site uses), indoor pool, gym, performance studio, and rock climbing gym.

Within, and between these uses, the concepts of literal and phenomenal transparency are introduced in order to create a stronger sense of community, and to promote interactions between the residents.

“Transparency may be an inherent quality of substance, as in a glass wall; or it may be an inherent quality of organization. One can, for this reason, distinguish between a literal and a phenomenal transparency.”

Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky *Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal*

Literal transparency, is simply the material quality of being able to see through an object. Glass is, therefore, extensively used in order to make the building literally transparent.

Phenomenal Transparency, as defined by Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky: is “an inherent quality of organization.” By staggering levels, and enhancing the communication between spaces, the building itself becomes more transparent and encourages inhabitants to converse. The facades also are designed with this idea in mind. By breaking the up the facades, ones initial reaction would be that there are individual spaces on the interior, when, in fact, the building acts as a whole.

Education

A **memory** is essentially something which one remembers from the past. A home always provides deep roots and memories. By recalling what was once on the site, the Architecture can recall these memories and reinforce itself as a home.

Shaw has a deep and rich history. Being part of the original L'Enfant plan, the Shaw neighborhood dates back to the 1800's. The area was initially a residential neighborhood, and the proposed site was covered in houses. 10th street traversed through the site and over the years, the site was built up, and filled in until the 1968 civil rights riots. The areas in and around the proposed site were devastated, and a need for new schools and facilities brought about the Shaw School Urban renewal plan, which proposed in filling 10th street and demolishing the historic homes. This is also when the Shaw Junior High School, which is now closed, was proposed.

In order to comprehend and view the history and evolution of the site, a composite drawing of historical maps was created. This drawing amalgamates four periods of time (1888,1928, 1973, and today) into one image, showing where the site has been built upon the most over time. Four stencils were created from the historic maps, which then were embossed into the same piece of paper, which was then covered in charcoal, to show the areas which were most impressed upon (most built upon).

This drawing was then traced over to show more clearly the areas which were least impressed upon (the historic circulation patterns) and the historic party walls. These two findings were used to influence the circulation path(s) and structural grid of the Shaw Community and Recreation Center.

Memory

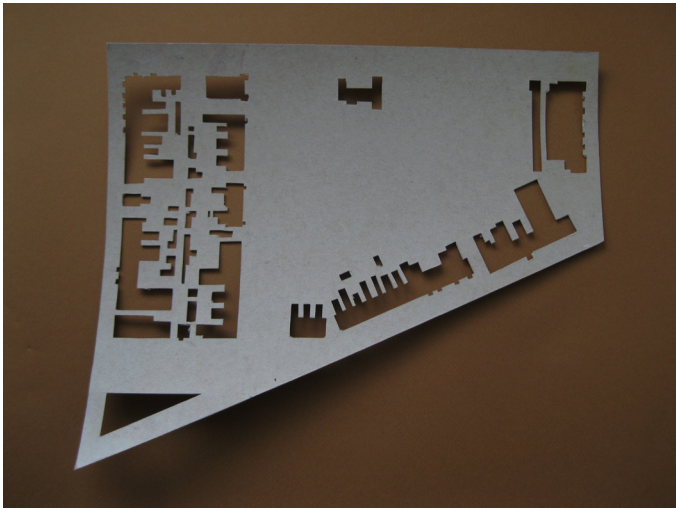


Fig. 6 - Historical Analysis Stencil - 1888 (Sanborne Maps Co.)

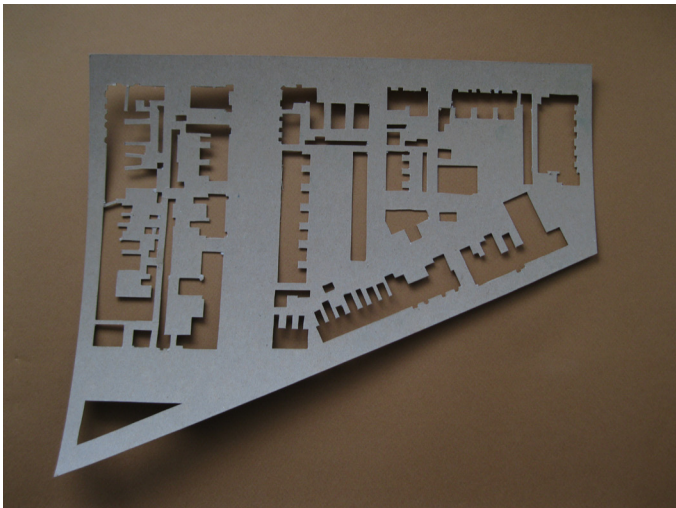


Fig. 7 - Historical Analysis Stencil - 1928 (Sanborne Maps Co.)

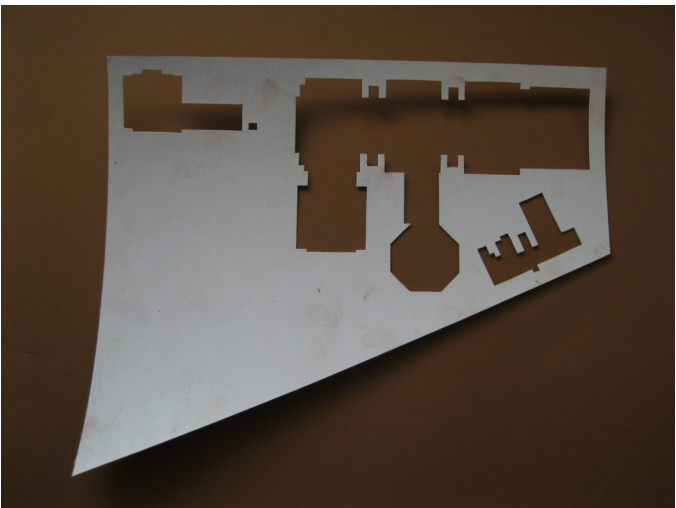


Fig. 8 - Historical Analysis Stencil - Today (DC GIS)

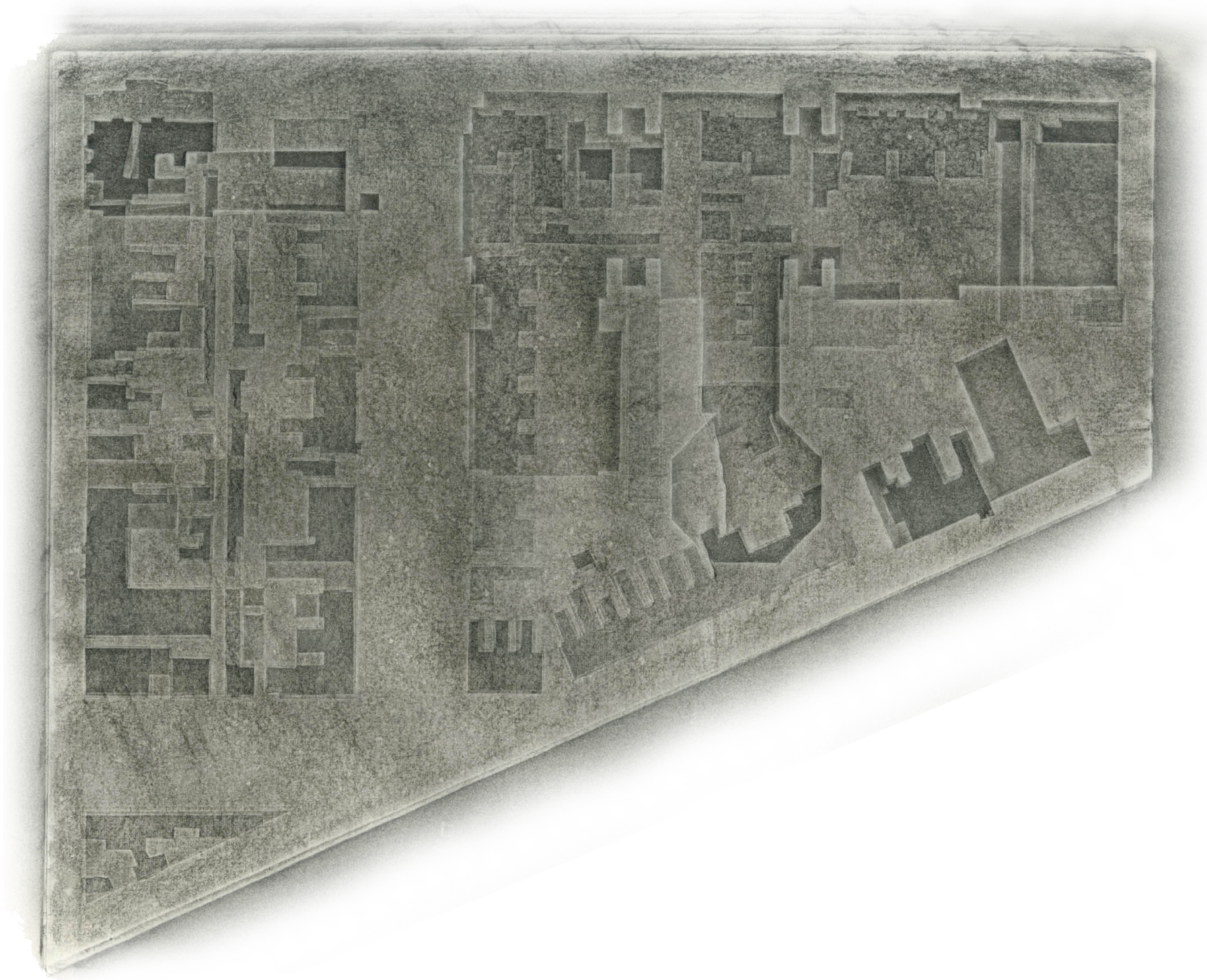


Fig. 9 - Historical Site Analysis Embossing (Sanborne Maps Co. / DC GIS)

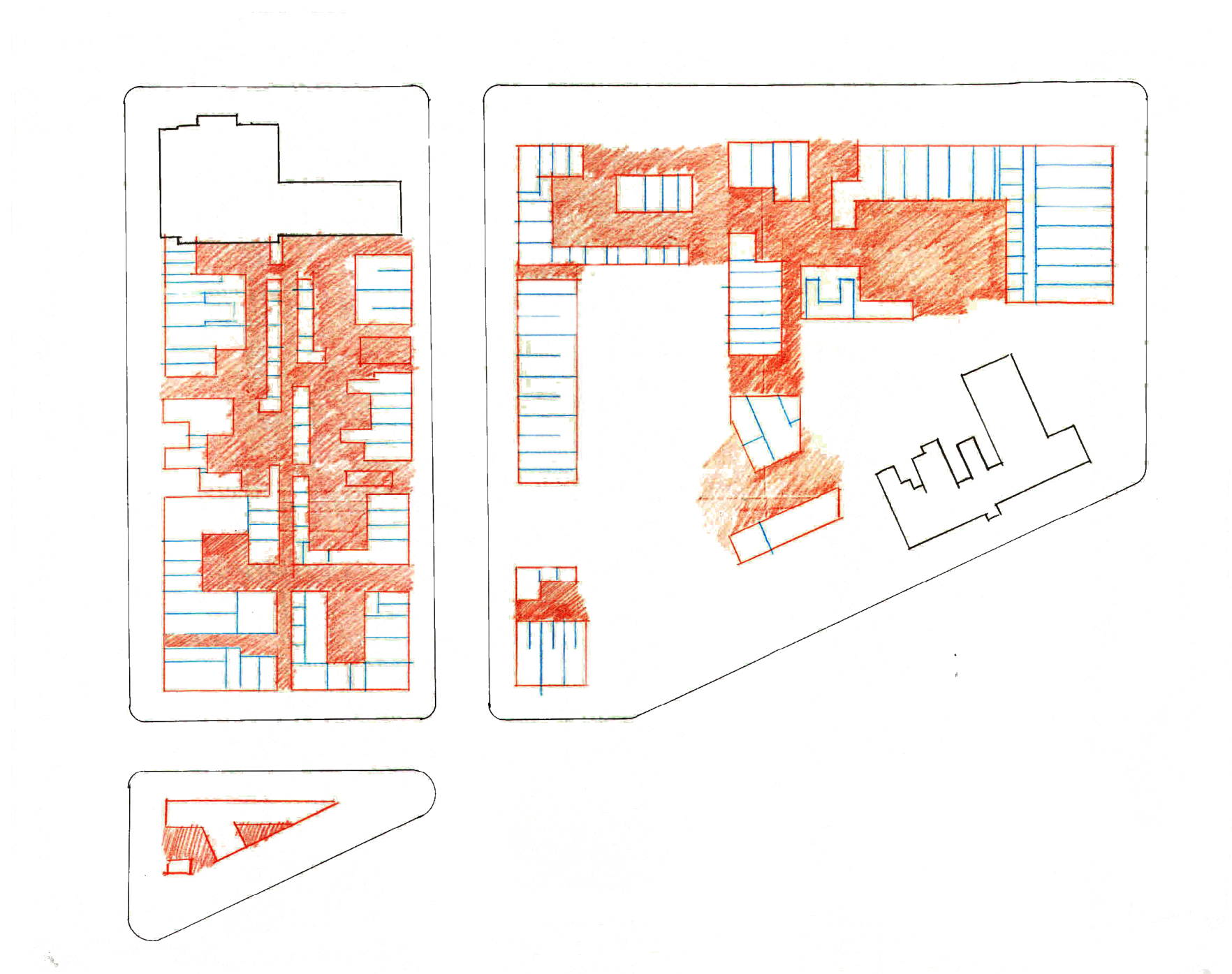


Fig. 10 - Historical Structure Analysis (Sanborne Maps Co. / DC GIS)

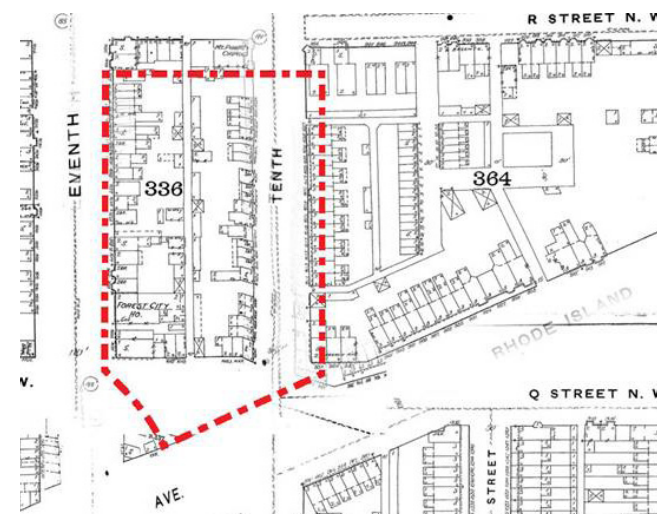


Fig. 11 - Site Conditions - 1903 (Sanborne Maps Co.)



Fig. 12 - Site Conditions - 1928 (Sanborne Maps Co.)

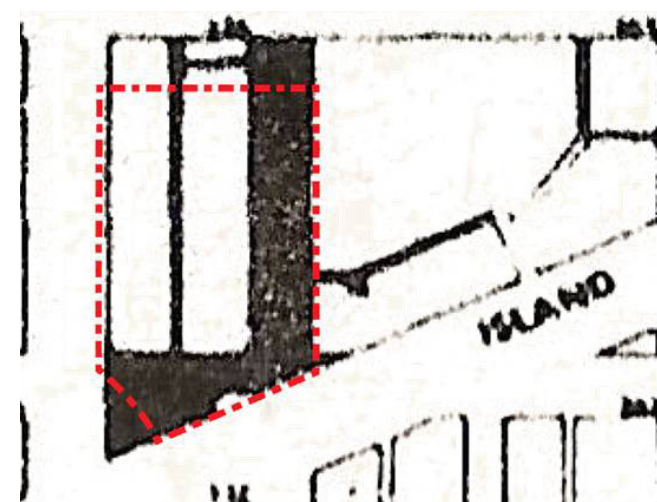
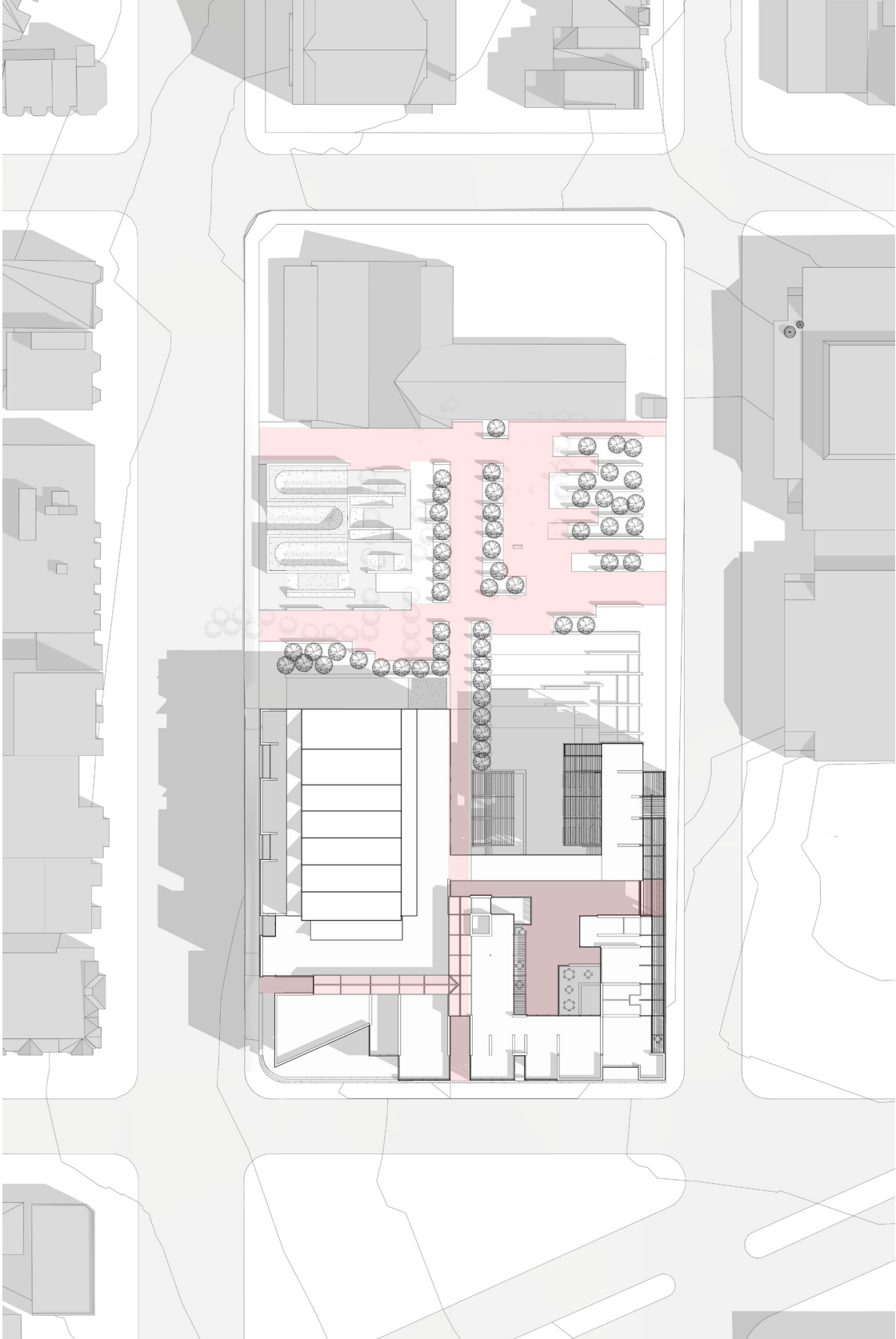


Fig. 13 - Site Conditions - 1973 (Shaw School Urban Renewal Plan)

Memory

The concept of memory is clearly seen in the circulation pattern, which is derived from the composite historical analysis. Within the recreation and community center, the main entry ways begin to remember what was once on the site; alley ways between homes. Above these alley ways is either open space, or glass roofs and floors, which is meant to further give the sense that one is entering into an alleyway.

To the north of the building, in the park area, the historic circulation pattern is created with planters, which are divided by low brick walls. This creates an effect of continuity between the building and park area, and further reconnects the entire site with the history of Shaw.

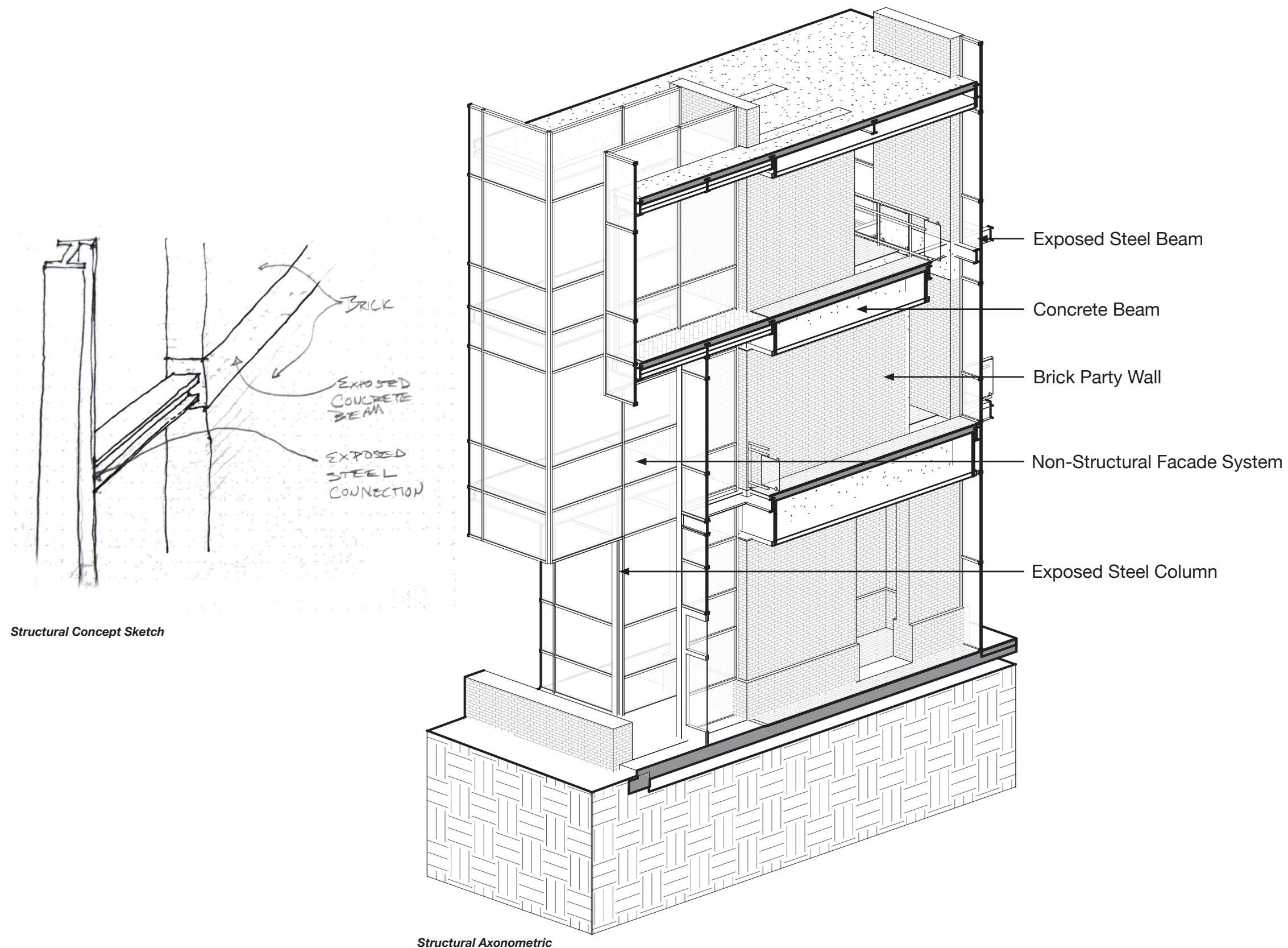


Site Plan



Western Entry View

Memory



The structure of the Community and Recreation center is based on the location of the historic party walls, discovered in the composite historical analysis. Within the historical structural grid resides structural brick walls which are divided with concrete beams at the intersections of floors.

The structure of the non-bearing facades is pulled away from the brick walls by steel beams, which are inserted into the concrete beams. This helps to respect the historic nature of the main structural system, and allows for inhabitants to view the structural connections and learn from them.

“Giving meaning to individual lives through the arrangement and preservation of things is an intrinsically valuable and irreplaceable aspect of homemaking”

Marion Iris Young, *Intersecting Voices*

Another study was conducted in order to relate the exterior facades of the proposed building to the surrounding sites, and further reconnect the building to the memories of the site. The age of the adjacent buildings, facing the site, was determined based on when they appeared on the historical maps. The buildings were divided into for time periods: Pre-1900, Post-1900, Post-1950, and Post-1980.

Because the building is itself changing history, the South-West corner of the building turns it’s facade inward at the same angle as Rhode Island Avenue, to pay homage to the fact that the corner was once there.

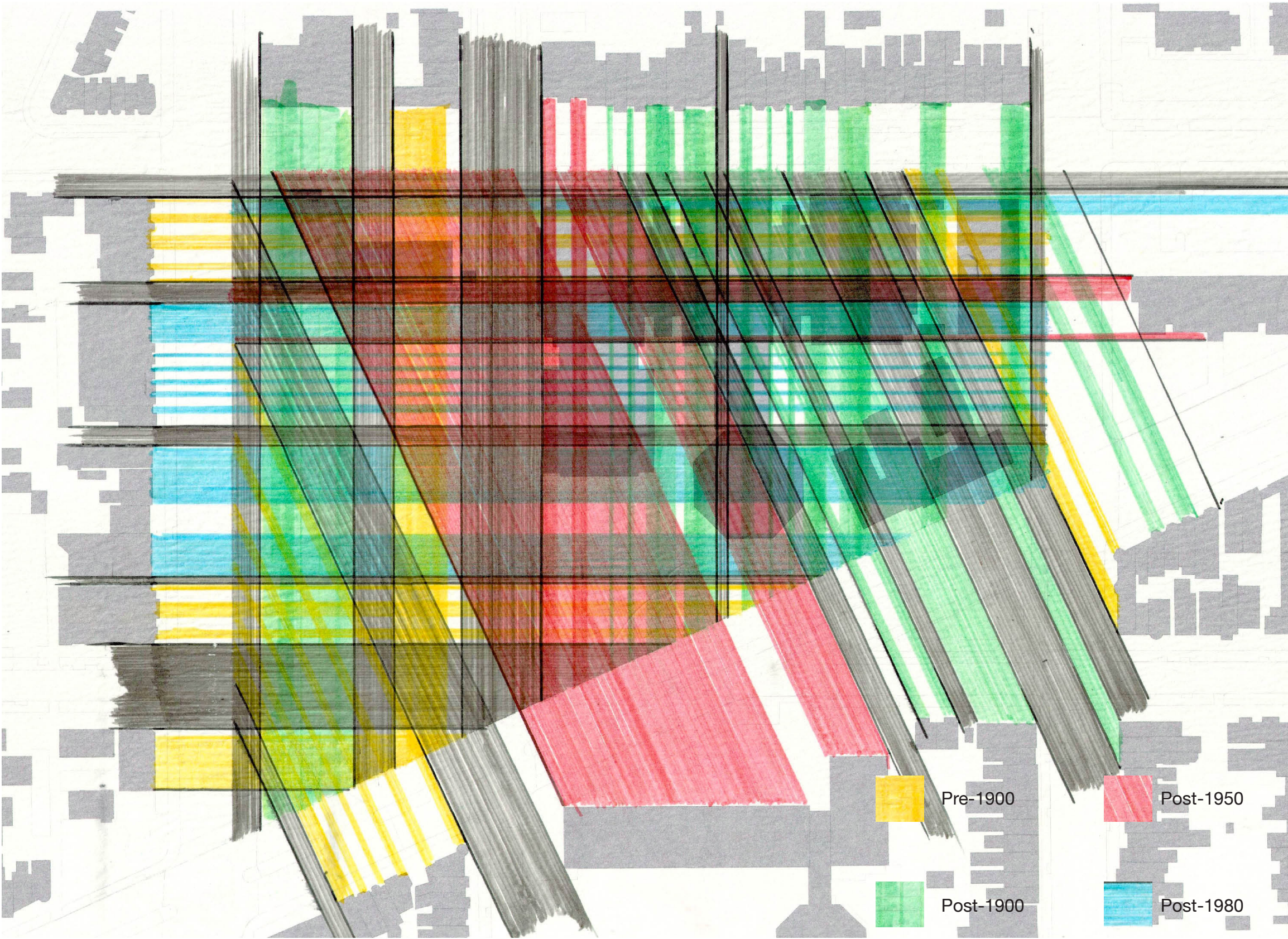
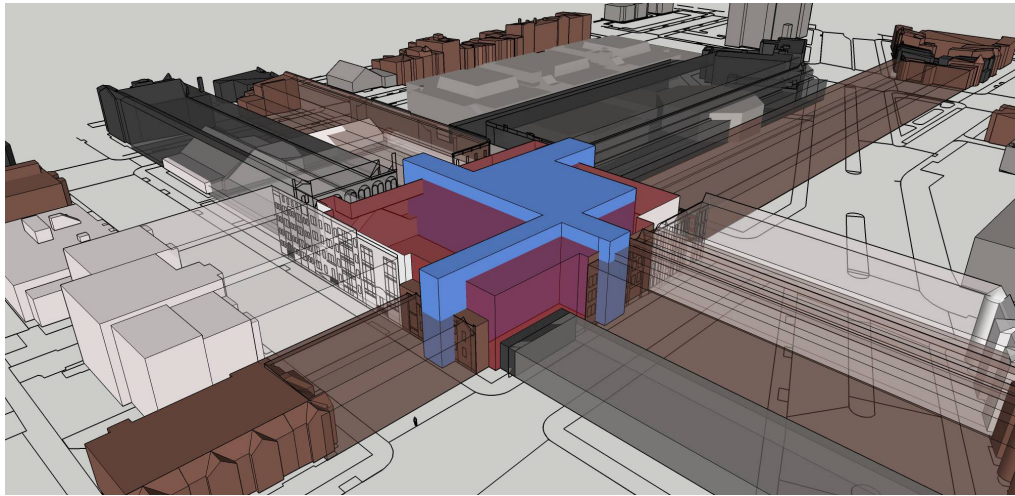


Fig. 14 - Site Projections Study (DC GIS)

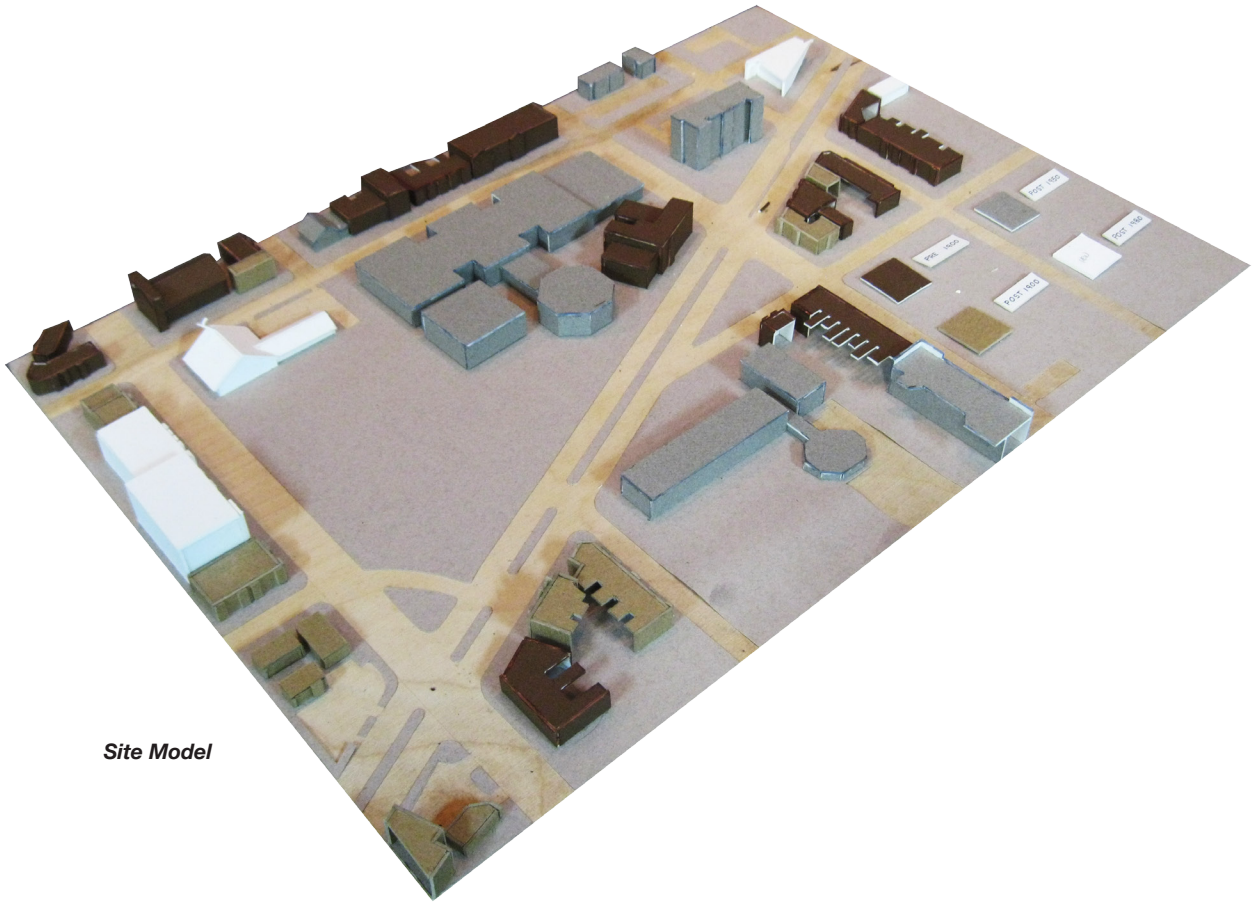
Memory






Site Projections Study

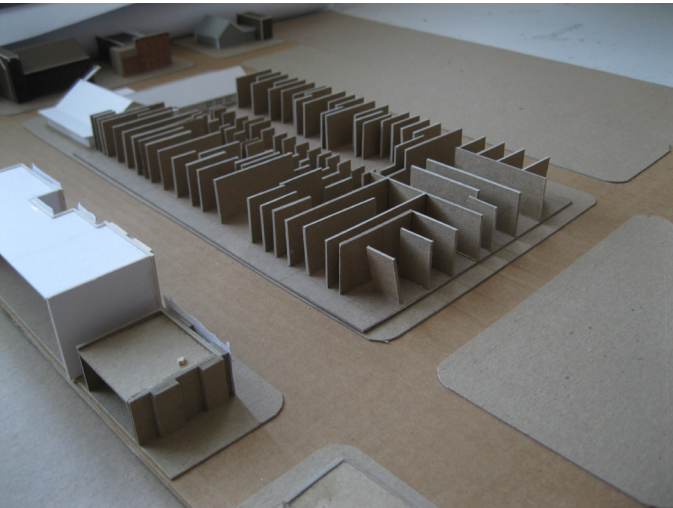


South-West Aerial View

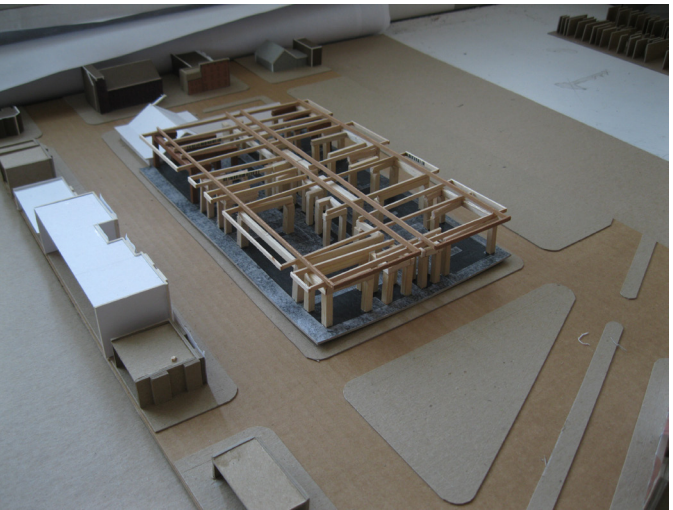


Site Model

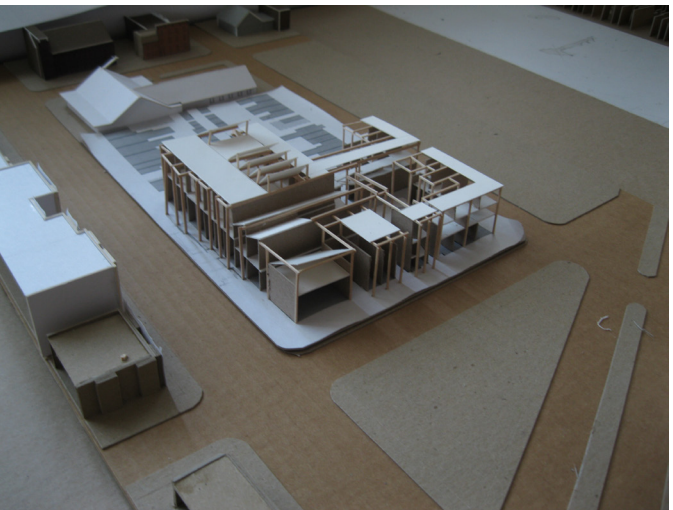
	Pre-1900		Post-1950
	Post-1900		Post-1980



Historic Party Walls Structural Analysis - Study Model



historic Structural Analysis - Study Model



Structural Analysis - Study Model

Memory

The projections of the surrounding buildings influence the material of the facades and floor(s) of the Community and Recreation center.

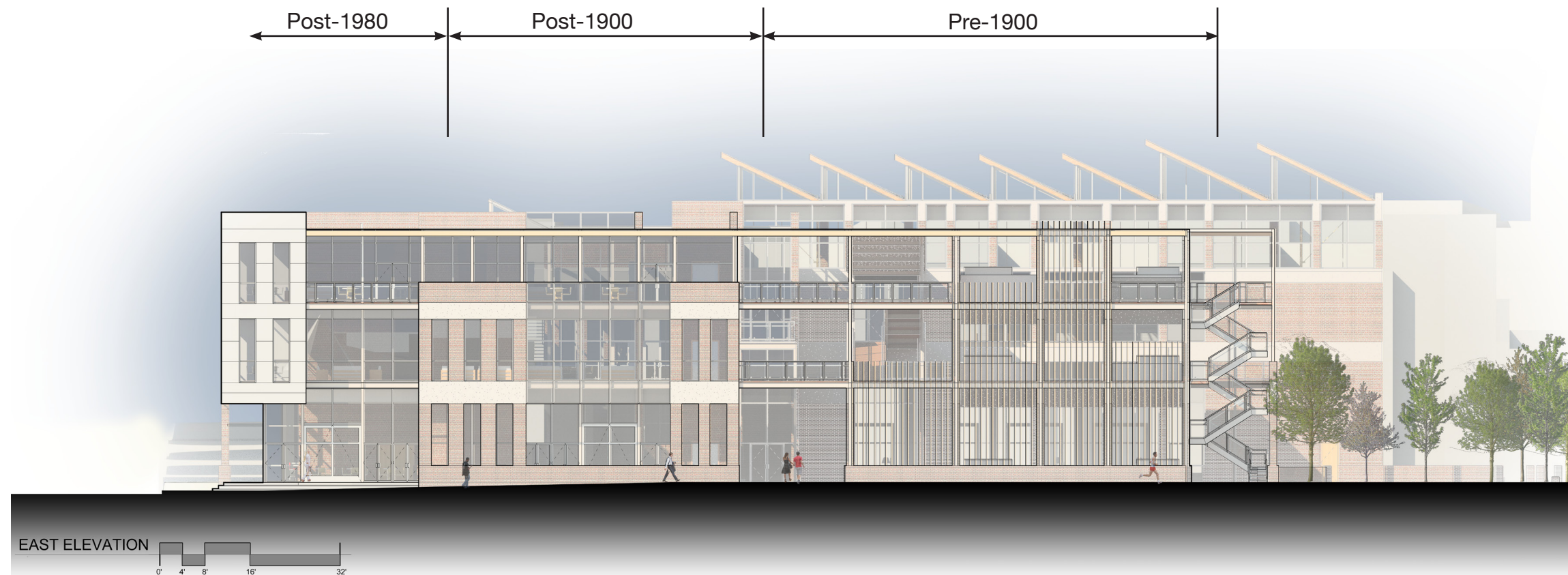
Age	Facade Material	Floor Material
Pre 1900	Wood Louvers	Brick Pavers
Post 1900	Brick and Concrete	Unpolished Stone
Post 1950	Brick, Concrete, and Metal Panels	Concrete Pavers
Post 1980	Metal Panels	Polished Stone

The general age of the facade and floor material (when it was developed or commonly used) relates to the age of the projected building. By doing so, the building reflects the age of the surrounding area, further reconnecting it to the history of Shaw.

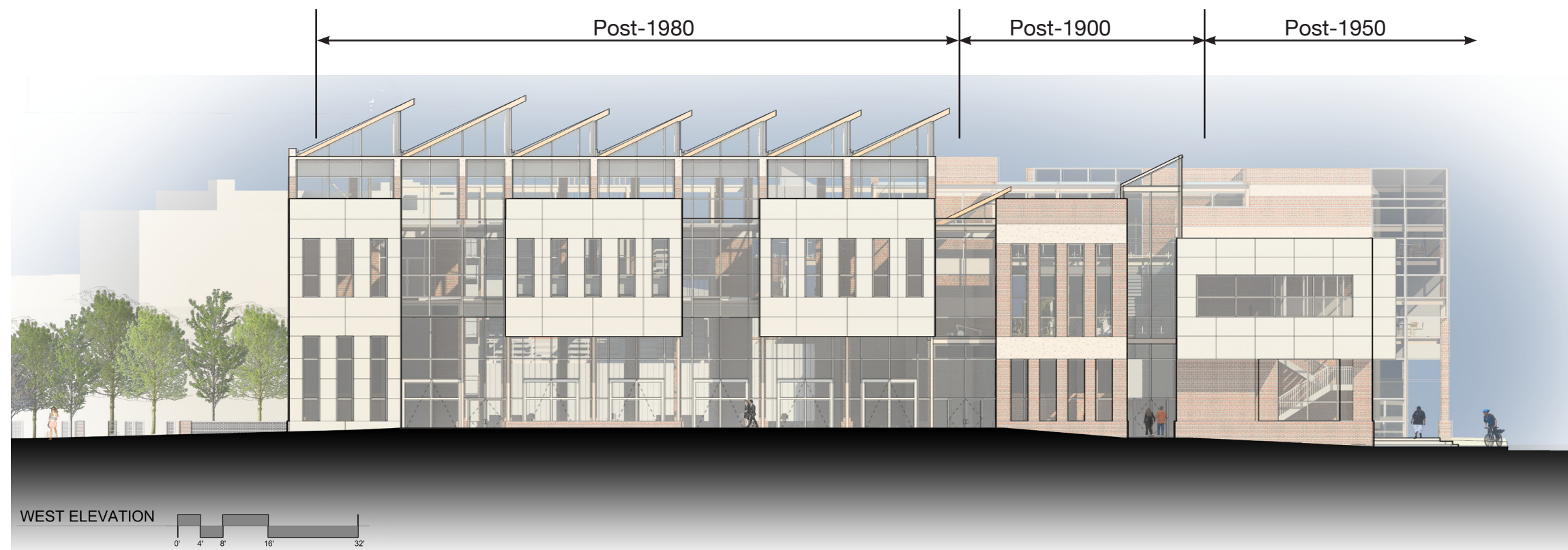
Memory



Level 1 Floor Plan



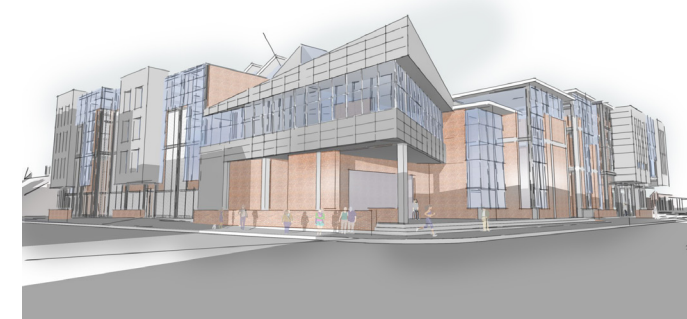
East Elevation



West Elevation



South-East Entry View - Facade Study



South-West Entry View - Facade Study

Memory

The **hearth**, in a historical sense, is considered the center of every home. It was, and still remains, the central gathering place for families, and center of warmth in a home. A hearth, in its purest form, is the floor of a fire place which extends into a room.

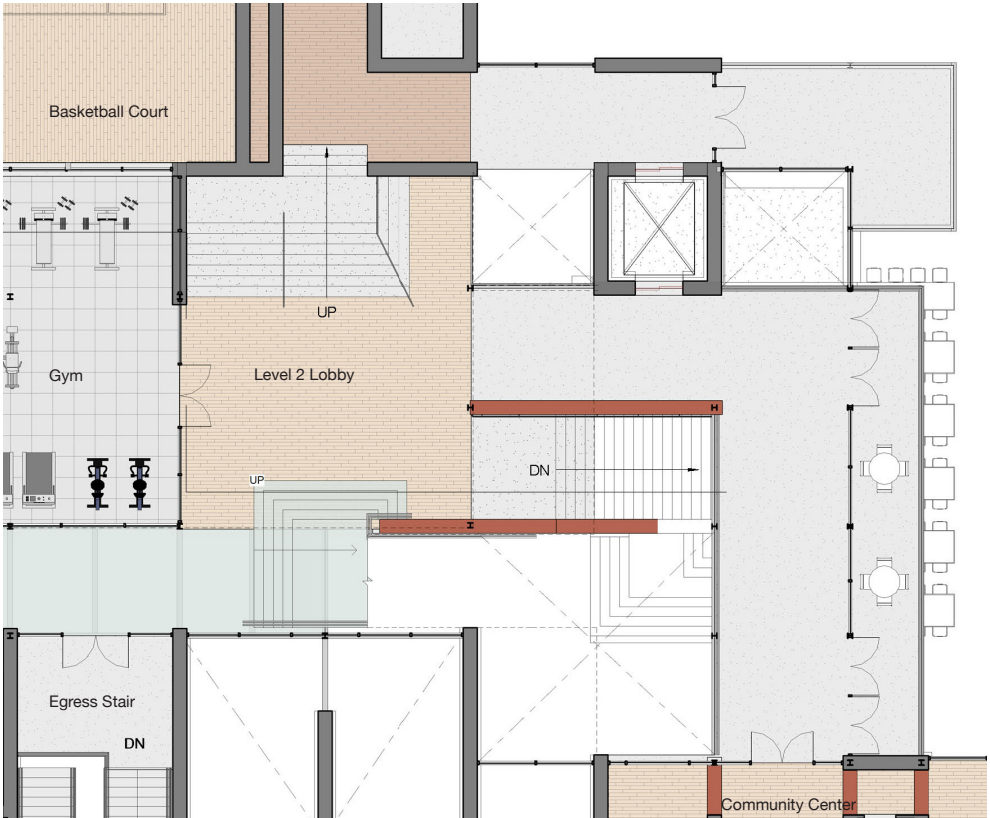
The central vertical circulation space in the Shaw Community and Recreation Center is modeled after the concept of a hearth. The central stair wraps around the primary elevator, and extends itself in three directions out into the historic circulation space.

The main entries into the building, which follow the historic alleyways, provide a small glimpse of the stairs from each direction, allowing visitors an indication of how to move throughout the spaces. The stairs also allow for residents to sit and converse with one another, improving their social skills.

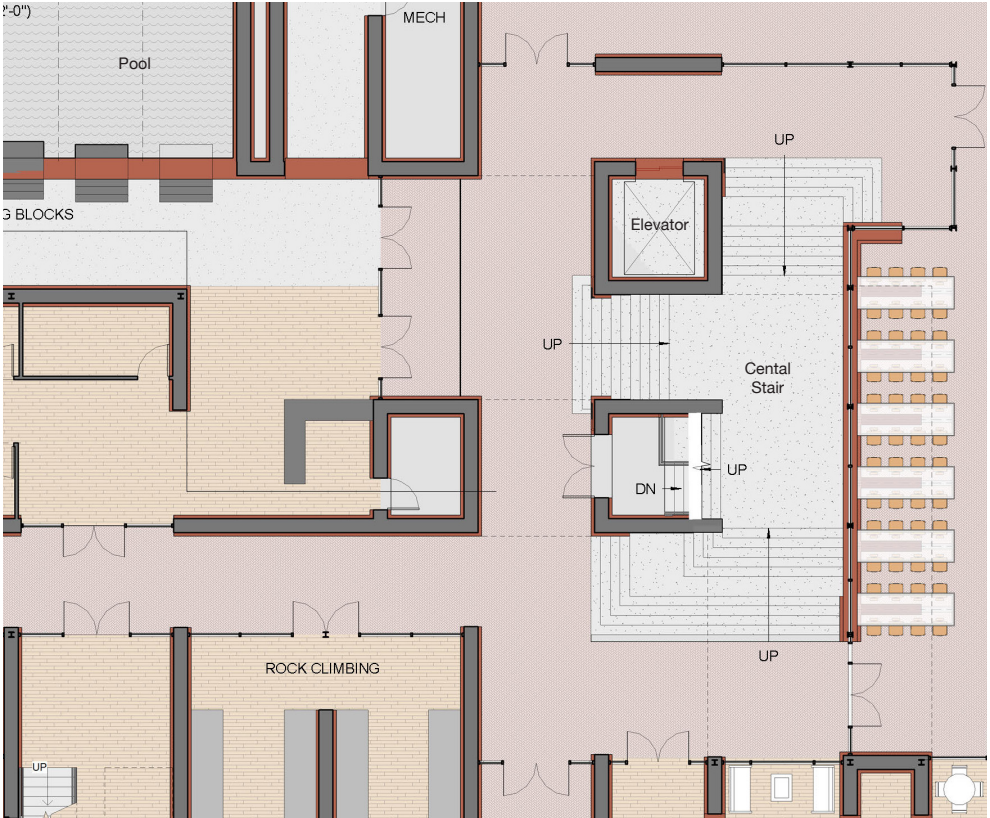
At the second floor, visitors are greeted with a similar monolithic stair, which takes them to the basketball courts and outdoor theatre. A third glass stair, which resides on top of the historic circulation path, takes visitors to the third floor of the Community center.

In addition to the main vertical circulation space, there are 4 other stairs for egress requirements and an additional elevator which serves the community center and theatre.

Hearth



Level 2 - Central Vertical Circulation Plan



Level 1 - Central Vertical Circulation Plan



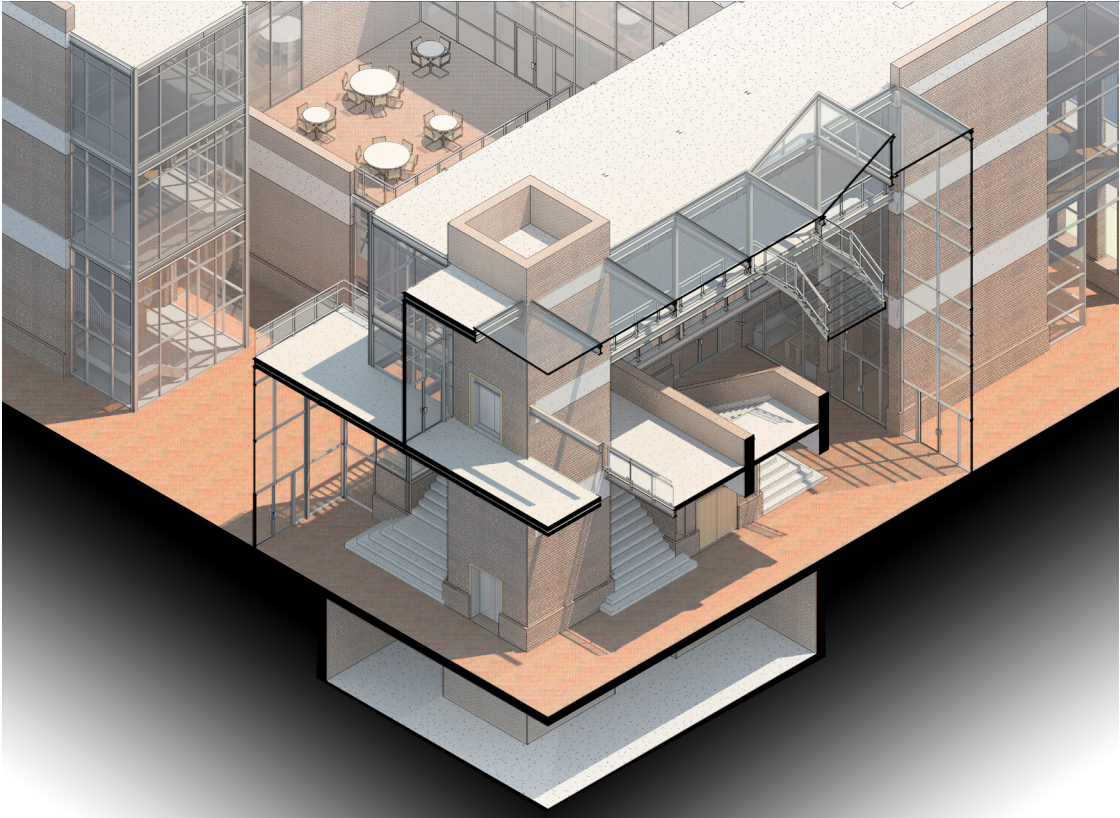
Level 2 Lobby View



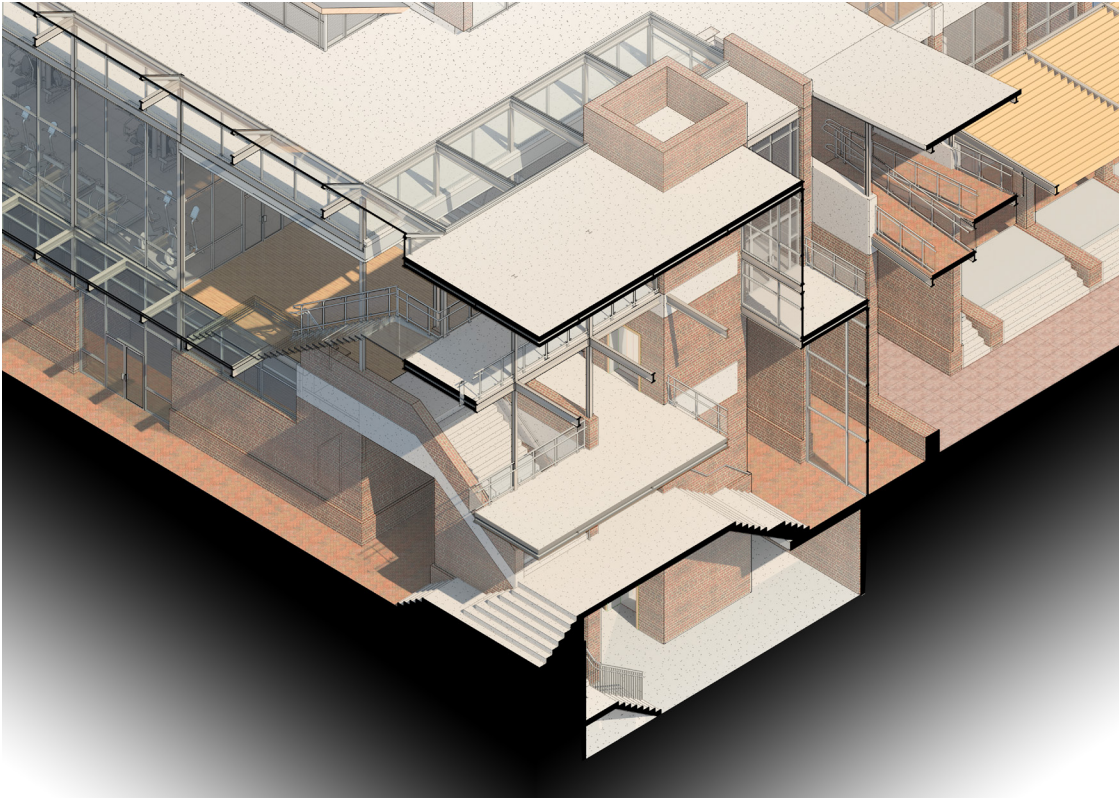
Courtyard Entry View



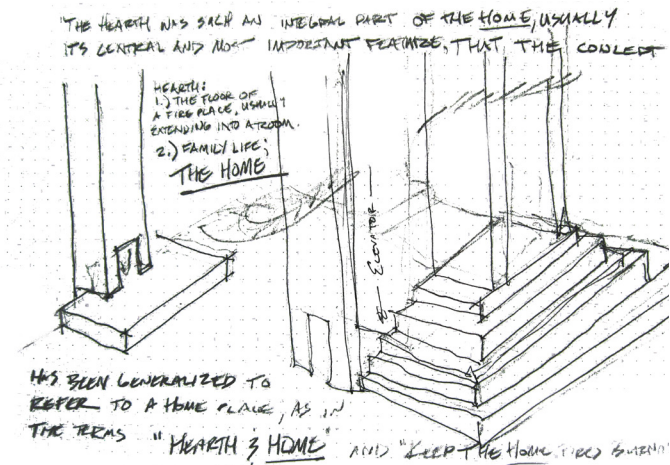
Southern Entry View



Central Vertical Circulation - North-West Axonometric View



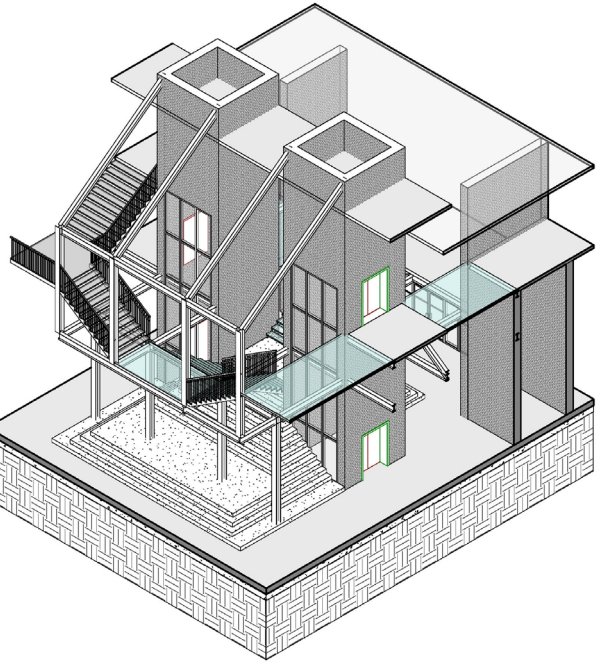
Central Vertical Circulation - South-East Axonometric View



Hearth Stair - Concept Sketch



Hearth Stair - Concept Rendering



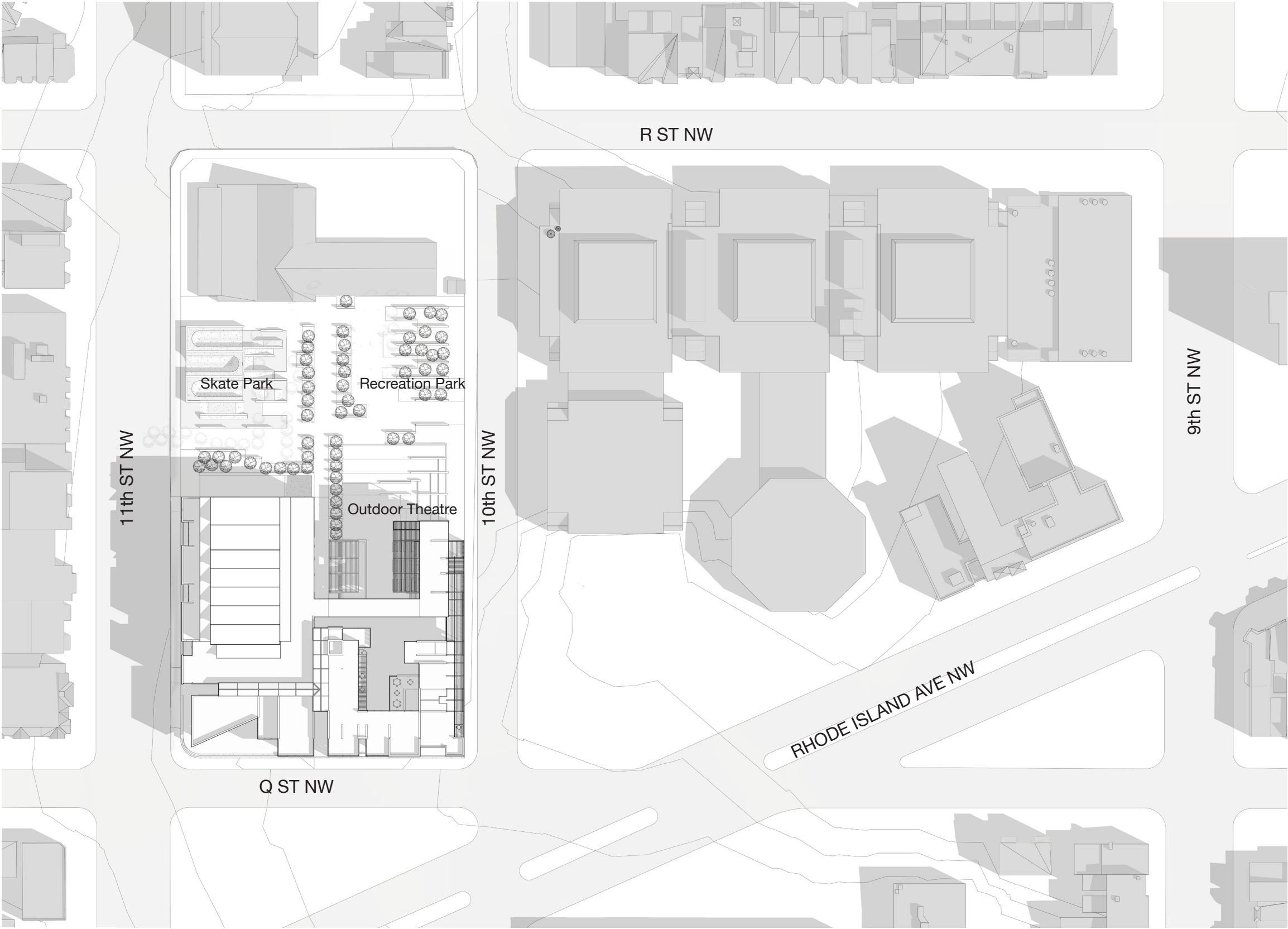
Hearth Stair - Preliminary Model

Hearth

Site Programmatic Uses:

- Recreation
- Skate Park
 - Recreation Park

- Education/ Community
- Outdoor Theatre



Site Plan

Final Presentation
Plans

Level One Programmatic Uses:

- Recreation
- 25 M Indoor Swimming Pool
 - Rock climbing gym
- Community/ Education
- Community meeting spaces
 - Restaurant/ bar



Final Presentation
Plans

Level Two Programmatic Uses:

- Recreation
- Basketball Court

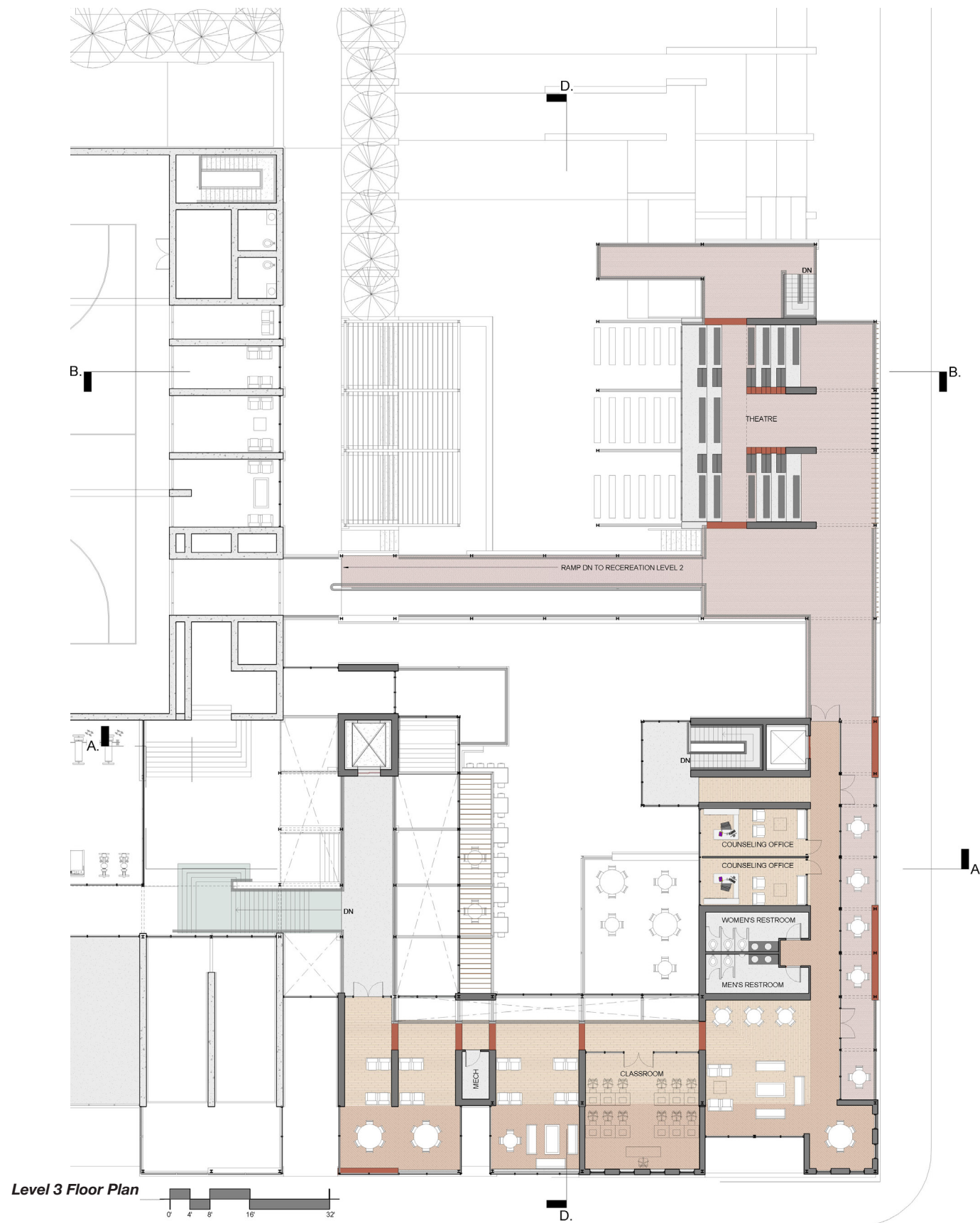
-Gym

-Performance Studio
- Community/ Education
- Classroom

-Counseling Offices

-Community meeting spaces



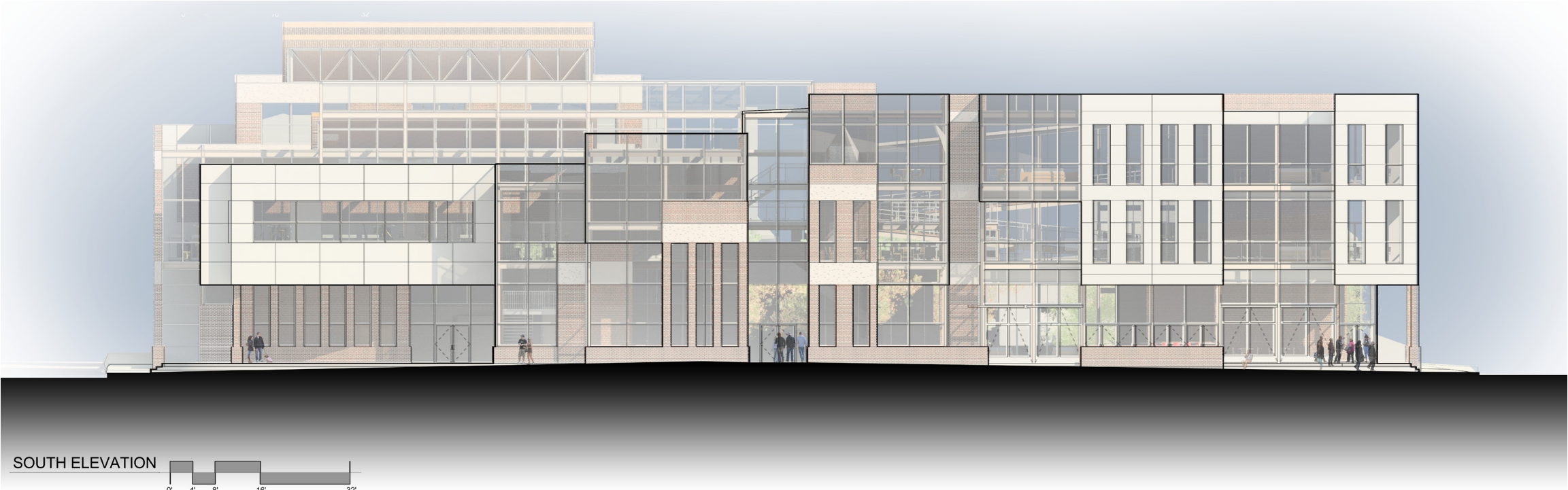


Level Three Programmatic Uses:

Community/ Education

- Classroom
- Counseling Offices
- Community meeting spaces

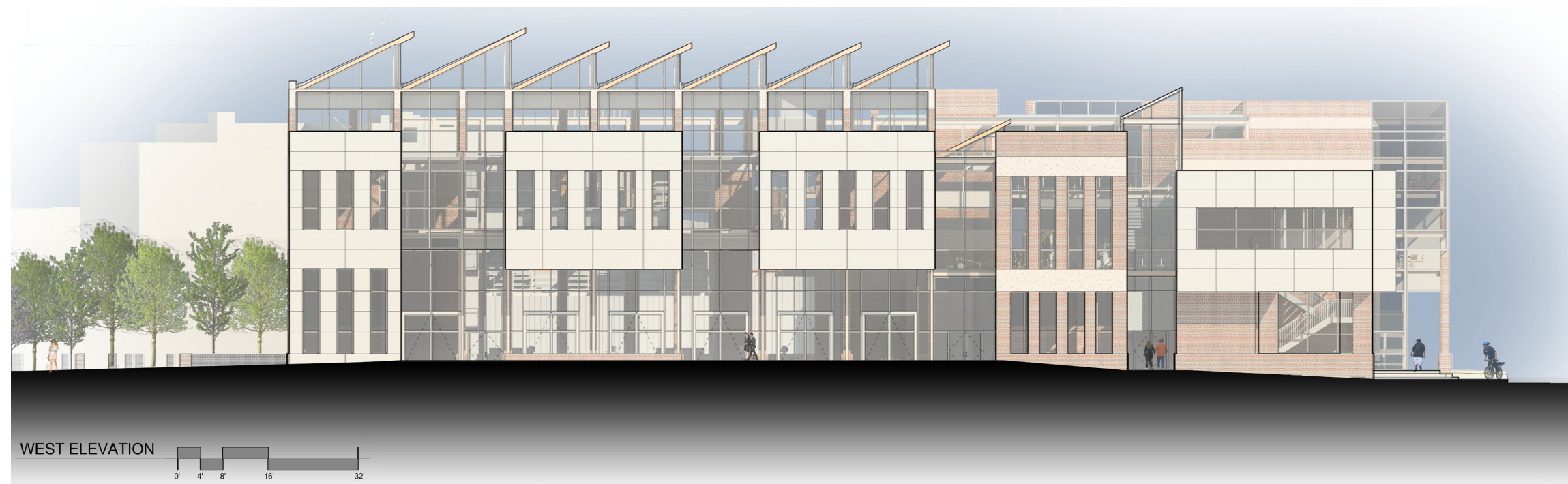
Facades are designed to reflect the historical aspects of the surrounding buildings.



Sectionally, the building is designed to promote interactions between residents, by staggering levels.

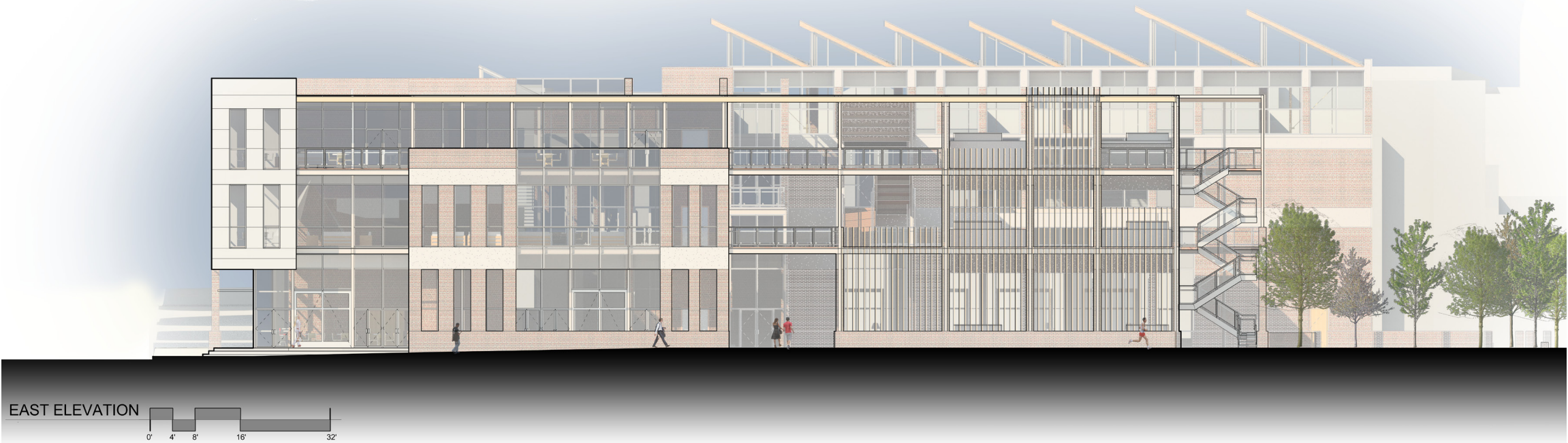


**Final Presentation
Sections & Elevations**



Final Presentation Sections & Elevations

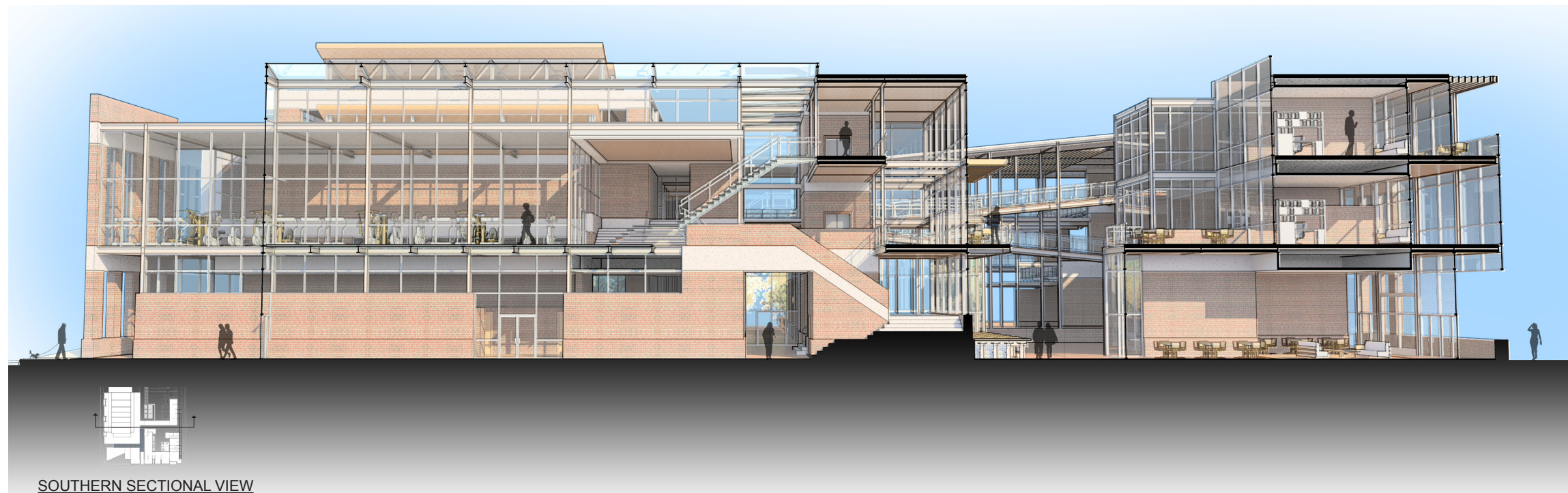
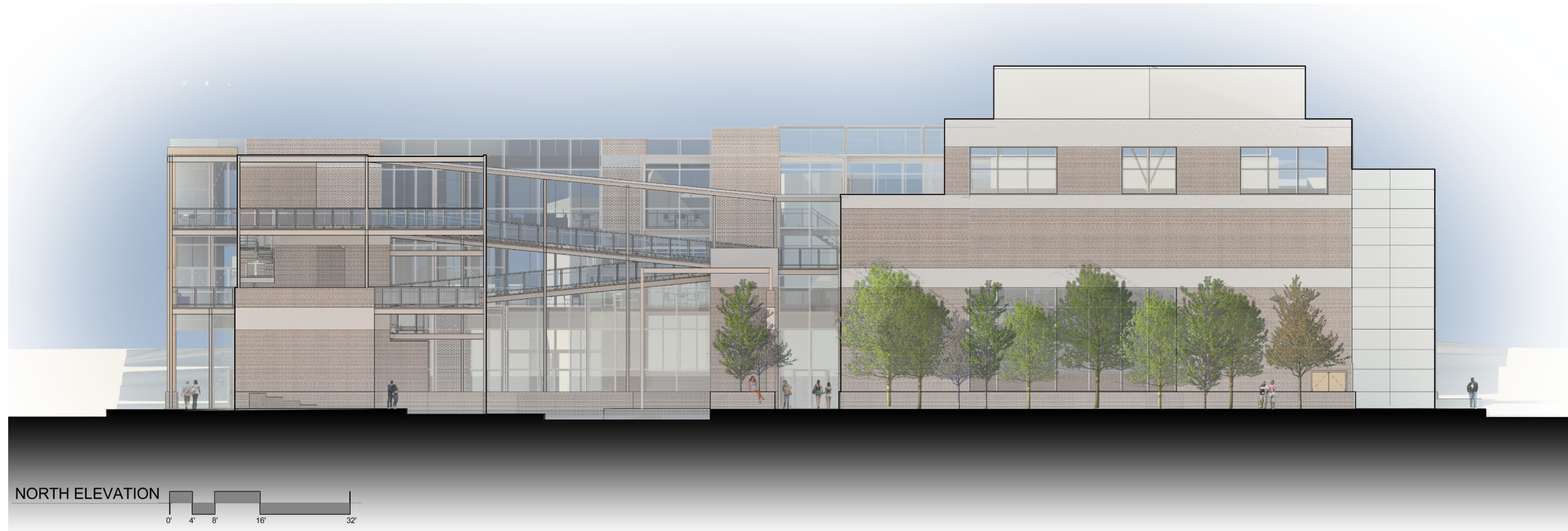
Facades are designed to reflect the historical aspects of the surrounding buildings.



Sectionally, the building is designed to promote interactions between residents, by staggering levels.



**Final Presentation
Sections & Elevations**



Final Presentation Sections & Elevations

The basketball court is designed to allow in maximum daylight. The floor is designed to show the location of the historic party walls through changes in the wood flooring material.

**Final Presentation
Perspectives & Models**



Basketball Court View



Restaurant/ Bar View

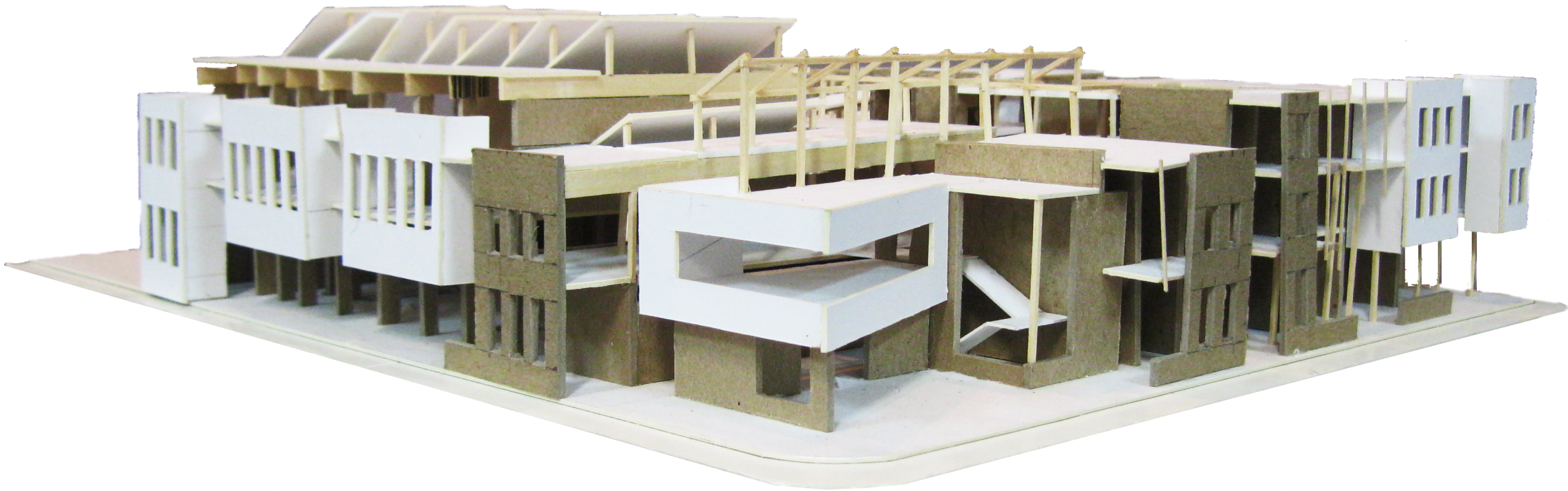
The restaurant/ bar area is designed to feel as welcoming as possible. Large retractable doors can be open when weather permits to allow residents to move freely from inside to out. The facades above over hang to provide shelter and security for residents passing on the streets.

Final Presentation Perspectives & Models

A small staircase acts as the threshold to the secondary entrances which line the faces of the building. These small staircases are reminiscent of the typical town homes found in the Shaw neighborhood.



South-West Entry View



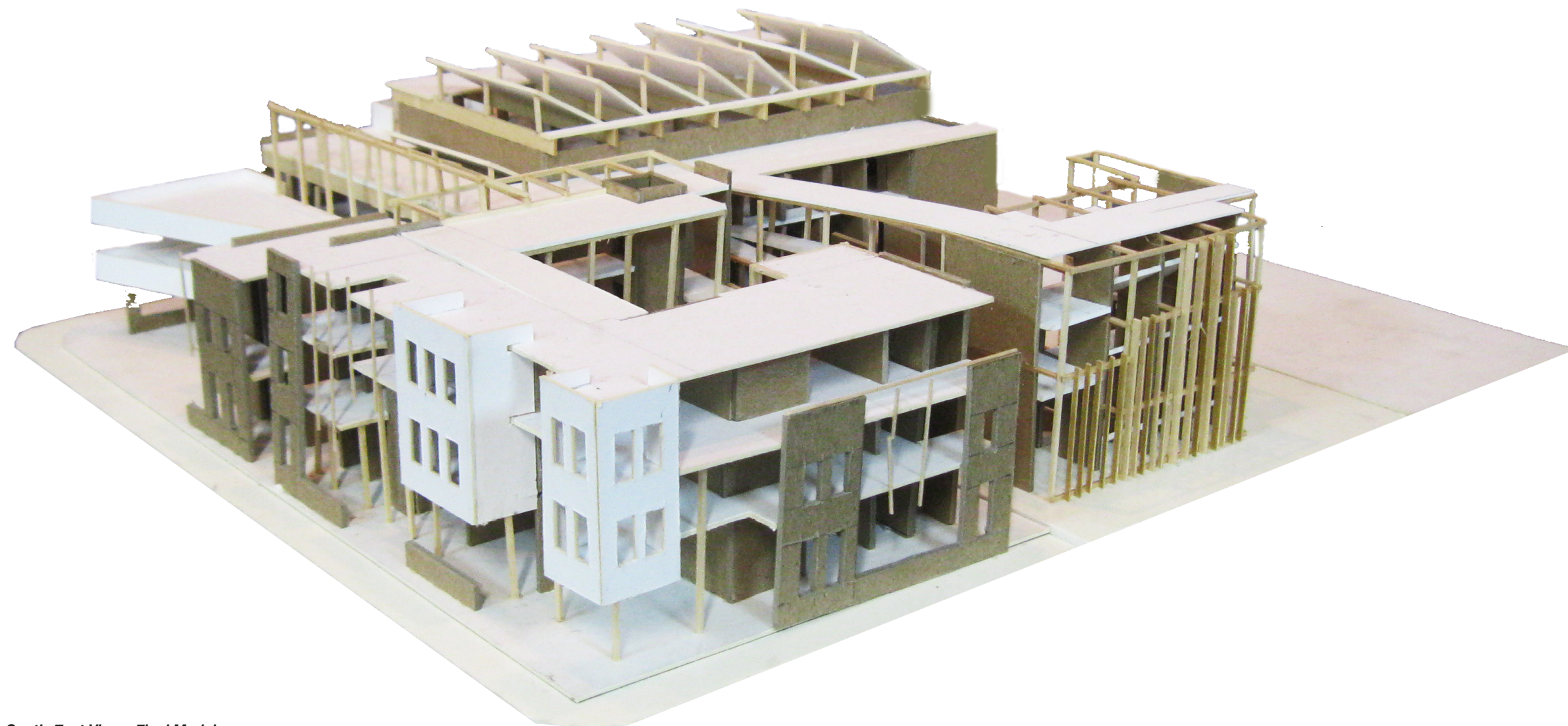
South-West View - Final Model

**Final Presentation
Perspectives & Models**



South-East Entry View

The secondary entries, which permeate each side of the building, allow residents to enter from virtually any point on the street.



South-East View - Final Model

Final Presentation Perspectives & Models



Outdoor Theatre View

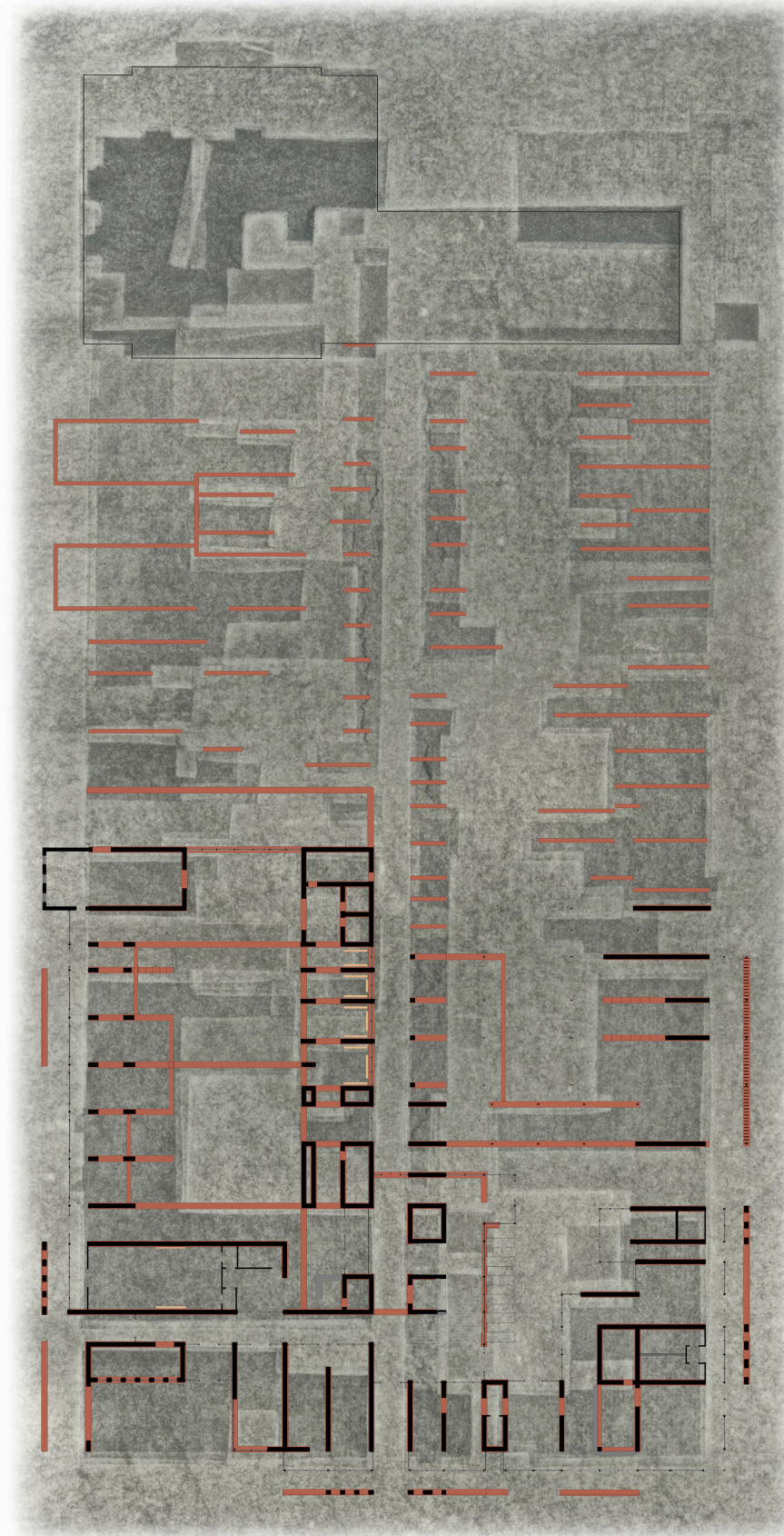


Fig. 15 - Historical Analysis & Floor Plan Collage (Sanborne Maps Co. / DC GIS)

This project focused on creating the idea of home, within a public building, in the urban environment. It was important to realize early on that I was not creating a home in the literal sense, but the idea of home. Through my research, I discovered that this idea can be broken into three main concepts; Community, Education, and Memory.

I used a wide variety of methods during the development of this project. Early on, I used hands-on methods, including physical study models, abstract drawings, and embossing. These methods helped me to view the site in different ways, and allowed me to discover the rich historical aspects of Shaw which was used to influence the majority of the design.

These findings set-forth unforeseen constraints, which impeded my process at first. There was a constant struggle between the free programmatic elements and the rigid structural elements, which I had conceptualized out of the historic studies. After the structure and program were discovered, 3D modeling programs were used to analyze and develop the program and structure simultaneously.

The idea of home is different for everyone. No one can truly understand someone's idea of home, unless it is explained. The image to the left is an amalgamated image of this thesis. It is simply the final plan of the Shaw Community and Recreation center imposed upon the historical structural analysis. Without an explanation, one cannot understand it, just like someone's idea of home.

Creating the Idea of Home

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