

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: From Overlooked to Overlap:
Designing for Intergenerational Connectedness
Through Adaptive Reuse

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From Overlooked to Overlap explores how adaptive reuse can promote intergenerational connectedness and community well-being. Contemporary infrastructure often prioritizes the middle generation, leaving the very young and the very old spatially and socially siloed. This thesis challenges that condition by asking: How can obsolete typologies be adapted to bridge marginalized age groups, promote intergenerational connectedness, improve health and well-being, and foster community cohesion? The project is situated in South Silver Spring, an area marked by demographic aging, underutilized buildings, and emerging civic networks. It adapts a vacant former department store, most recently used as office space, into a hybrid wellness and daycare facility serving all ages. Through carving, overlapping volumes, and porous circulation, the existing structure supports both goal-oriented programming and informal encounters. Shared routines around health, wellness, and learning generate moments of connection across generations. Retaining much of the original structure and envelope, the design prioritizes light, air, and accessibility. Collectively, these strategies position the building as a neighborhood anchor that strengthens intergenerational connectivity and supports long-term community resilience, health, and well-being.

From Overlooked to Overlap:
Designing for Intergenerational Connectedness through Adaptive Reuse

by

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Dedication

To my grandparents, especially Mr. Hi, who embodied the value of hard work and paved the path for my family and all the generations that followed.

To my parents, thank you for your endless confidence in me and for encouraging me to find my voice.

To Vince: thank you for championing me daily, keeping me fed, and being the steady rock who was always there for me throughout this journey.

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To my chair, Lindsey: to think that the first project I designed in your studio was a simple box, and now I have designed a much more meaningful "box." Thank you for your unwavering support and the invaluable lessons you taught me along this journey. You have been the ultimate coach and mentor, and I am deeply grateful for your guidance every step of the way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the United States, age segregation is embedded not only in our social systems but in the physical environments we occupy every day. People, particularly the very young and the very old, move through distinct and hyper-specialized spaces such as schools and senior centers, rarely encountering one another in meaningful ways. These groups, who are often the most vulnerable to social isolation, remain the most spatially and socially distanced. This separation weakens community bonds and contributes to loneliness, declining mental health, and the loss of cultural and generational unification. Architecture has historically played a significant role in sustaining these divides, often reflecting a cultural preference for individual independence over shared responsibility. The danger of this condition is that during vital life transitions, individuals may lose their sense of purpose as they are siloed into environments that prioritize efficiency over mutual care.

This thesis, *From Overlooked to Overlap*, challenges this status quo by reimagining the "in-between" spaces of our built environment as catalytic zones of intergenerational connectedness. The research asserts that architecture can move beyond the middle-generation bias to create a hybridized hub that acts as a routine homebase for populations that are usually spatially siloed. More specifically, architecture can help to choreograph these contact zones that transcend generational boundaries. By shifting the focus from rigid, age-segregated programming to a model of overlapping volumes and shared routines, the built environment can begin to foster a sense of collective ownership and long-term community resilience.

The project grounds these theoretical inquiries in the specific context of South Silver Spring, an area currently defined by demographic aging, underutilized buildings, and emerging civic networks. The design utilizes adaptive reuse to transform a vacant former department store, a relic of a previous era of commerce, into a hybrid wellness and daycare

facility. By retaining the original structure and envelope, the project emphasizes a commitment to both environmental and social sustainability. The intervention focuses on the internal logic of the building, utilizing strategies of carving and porous circulation to break down the barriers of the existing office-style floor plates.

Through these architectural moves, the building supports both goal-oriented programming, and the informal, spontaneous encounters that are vital for social health. Shared routines around wellness and learning are leveraged to generate moments of connection across generations that would otherwise never occur. Additionally, the building can act as a backdrop, a shared public space that anchors surrounding community members and residents. Ultimately, this thesis positions adaptive reuse as a tool for social repair between distant generations, transforming a neglected structure into an intergenerational hub.

Research Question

How can obsolete typologies be adapted to bridge marginalized age groups, promote intergenerational connectedness, improve health and well-being, and foster community cohesion?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Dimensions of Human Connection

The term “intergenerational” refers to the relationships between individuals or groups from different generations or cohorts. More specifically, intergenerational relationships often describe nonfamilial connections that occur across generations within a broader sociocultural context. Thang emphasizes the need for intentional efforts to link generations; a process she terms “generational reengagement”. She introduces Japanese concepts like *fureai* which means openhearted encounters and *daikazoku* which translates to “big family”. These ideals, however, highlight a disconnect between ideology and contemporary practice. Thang points out the underlying irony, “how can the ‘spontaneous’ be encouraged to happen?” and “How can an ideology almost obsolete in society be created and structured inside an institution?”¹ These tensions reveal the complexity of fostering meaningful intergenerational relationships in today’s contexts. The thesis examines why these connections matter, what they offer across societal and developmental dimensions, and how they might be meaningfully cultivated within today’s fragmented social landscapes.

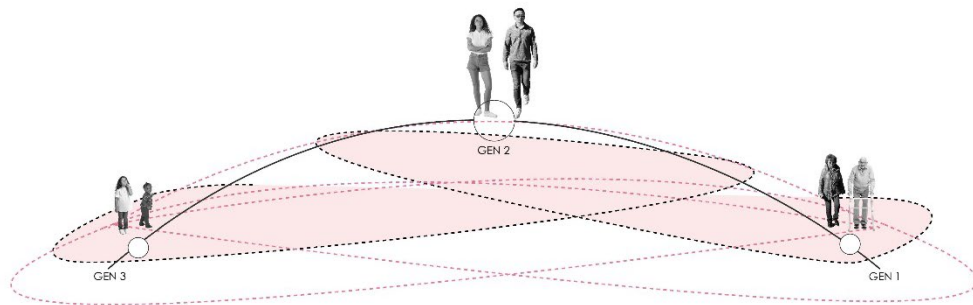


Figure 1: The Social & Physical Problem (Source: Author)

¹ Leng Leng Thang, *Generations in Touch: Linking the Old and Young in a Tokyo Neighborhood*, 9.

Thang's research draws on theories of activity, disengagement, social exchange, and person-environment fit theories which give a deeper understanding of how intergenerational engagement is shaped by culture. Her unique cross-cultural lens shaped by a Confucian upbringing and Western academic training offers a valuable perspective on generational reengagement. Although this thesis does not seek to compare Eastern versus Western cultures, it uses those differences to ask deeper questions. For instance, concepts like relational thinking and the idea of the phenomenology of place help us to understand how individuals experience their environments not as static backdrops but as extensions of oneself. That is, built environments are not just occupied and used, but rather they are deeply symbolic spaces that reflect our own values. This reframe helps explain broader societal shifts in how human connections within environments are defined and experienced, exemplifying how space can either help or hurt intergenerational connections.

Building on these cultural and environmental perspectives, philosopher Martin Buber criticizes the modern tendency of objectifying relationships. His distinction between attitudes of "I" towards "it" versus "thou" suggests that our relationships reflect how we view ourselves in the world. The I-It stance treats others as objects within a segmented life context, while I-Thou requires mutual presence and acknowledges a living relationship. The I-Thou attitude requires a mental or spiritual bond to sustain connection.² Similarly, Juhani Pallasmaa critiques the dominance of vision and the resulting disembodiment in contemporary culture, noting that modern life increasingly privileges distant and passive forms of engagement.³ Their concern that we have replaced active, multi-sensory encounters with detached visual consumption echoes Buber's worry about relational fragmentation. Pallasmaa's analysis of architecture extends this critique by arguing that the spaces we

² Martin Buber, *I and Thou*.

³ Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*.

inhabit often fail to support genuine interaction. Together, Buber and Pallasmaa point toward the necessity of spaces, both physical and relational, that foster presence, dialogue, and shared meaning. In this light, cultivating spaces that support embodied, reciprocal engagement becomes essential not just for meaningful relationships with others, but also for sustaining a coherent and healthy sense of self.

Demographic Shifts and Concepts of Dependency

Attention to both younger and older cohorts in America stems in part from impending demographic shifts and growing concerns about intergenerational dependency. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the baby boomer generation is going to cause changes in the overall age structure, with over 20% of the total U.S. population being over the age of 65 by 2030.⁴ While the baby boomer generation (76 million U.S. births) will see losses due to aging and mortality, the overall pattern of population aging is expected to endure. That is, Gen X and Millennial populations follow closely behind with the number of U.S. births at 55 million and 62 million, respectively, cited by the Pew Research Center.⁵ Peaks in U.S. birth cohorts, such as the Baby Boom and Millennial generations, correspond to later increases in dependency ratios, underscoring the cyclical nature of generational support needs. As aging and youth populations grow in parallel, the idea of dependency becomes more than just a statistical ratio; it opens questions about how society defines support, purpose, and responsibility across generations.

The trend of aging populations is not unique to the U.S. but is being anticipated globally. The United Nations for Youth highlights the importance of intergenerational solidarity in response to demographic shifts as global life expectancy increases to 75 years

⁴ Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, “Baby Boom Cohort in the United States: 2012 to 2060 - Content Details -,” 1.

⁵ Fry, “Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America’s Largest Generation.”

old. They notice challenges such as pension stability, youth unemployment, housing shortages, and the need for education and social protection measures to bridge generational divides.⁶ Retirement income across different generations in the United States show social security and employer sponsored pension amounts are decreasing as employment income and personal savings/investments make up a larger portion of the pie, according to 2014 data.

At the same time, traditional views of retirement are shifting as older adults want to keep working after they retire. One factor that drives this desire is that older generations are seeking greater purpose, stimulation, social engagement, and fulfillment in retirement. This also goes against some of the most common myths about retirement which associate retirement with decline, working for the sake of financial necessity, and that career ambitions are only for young people.⁷ Rather than thinking of retirement as a time of decline, we can redraw ideas about later life phases and support generations in reengagement.

To better understand the implications of these demographic patterns, it's important to examine what we mean by “dependency”, both in measurable terms and symbolic or cultural dimensions. The concept of dependency carries both statistical significance and metaphorical weight. From a demographic perspective, it is assessed through ratios that measure the dependent population - those too young or too old to work - to the working-age group.⁸ These generational breakdowns of “old age” and “youth” are helpful in visualizing population structure, but more importantly, they reveal the demographic forces that shape how bodies are distributed and perceived in shared spaces. That is, the population groups classified as “dependent” are often framed as peripheral in social and economic life, even though they

⁶ “Intergenerational Issues Factsheet | United Nations For Youth.”

⁷ A Merrill Lynch Retirement Study Conducted in Partnership with Age Wave, “UVA Darden School of Business - MBA, EMBA, PTMBA, Executive Education, MSBA | UVA Darden School of Business.”

⁸ Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, “Baby Boom Cohort in the United States: 2012 to 2060 - Content Details -.”

occupy and co-construct the same environments as the working-age majority. With measures such as dependency, we should ask ourselves about our cultural perceptions of space, especially who belongs in space and how space is imagined.

Haim Hazan's observation is that these peripheral generations are in "social categories for which the common denominator is dependency".⁹ Perhaps it is not dependency that we should be concerned with, but rather liminality, or how one encounters disruptions within their course of life. In the book, *Disrupted Lives: How People Create Meaning in A Chaotic World*, author Gay Becker captures the notions of chaos and order within the perspective of a person's life course experiences. The concept of mediating disruption in periods of limbo is underscored by the process by which people create links to the past during times of disruptive changes, whether it be societal, individual, at the onset of illness, etc.

People's efforts to create continuity in times of change can be situated in Becker's anthropological perspective that each culture has an expected cultural life course, in the collective sense. He goes on to mention that "chaos has been negatively valued in the western tradition because of the predominance of binary logic: if order is good, chaos must be bad because it is viewed as the opposite of order".¹⁰ These interpretations of dependency as both a social condition and a symbolic state of liminality reveal the importance of how individuals and cultures make meaning out of life transitions - and how such meaning may be disrupted or reinforced by generational dynamics.

Anthropological perspectives further contextualize these symbolic views of dependency and disruption. Victor Turner's concept of liminality (the "in between" stage of life transitions) helps frame aging and adolescence as socially uncertain periods. These

⁹ Hazan, *The Limbo People*, 16.

¹⁰ Gay Becker, *Disrupted Lives : How People Create Meaning in a Chaotic World*, 9.

stages, while different in context, share a condition of as being suspended in social space.¹¹ Additionally, Thang's reference to prefigurative culture shows how generational authority is no longer fixed but reshaped by social change and progress, where children lead the way in learning as they navigate a world unknown to older generations.¹² These insights offer a way to understand how intergenerational roles are interpreted within specific cultural narratives.

Developing and Aging: Theories and Proposals for Civic Reengagement

There are various theories about aging and development within the fields of gerontology, sociology, psychology, neurology, public health, and anthropology, to name a few. This literature review focuses on a select few of those theories to draw hypotheses concerning intergenerational relationships and implications on community health and well-being within the context of the built environment. While these theories pertain to their respective cohorts, they also reveal shared themes regarding engagement. How do people engage in the environment from an individual level, a group level, at the community scale, and within society as a whole? How does this impact mental health and well-being? To begin, it is helpful to consider how aging shapes engagement patterns and how social and physical environments can either support or hinder that process.

Many elderly adults undergo a transition when they exit the workforce or retire from their day-to-day responsibilities. The Disengagement Theory of Aging speculates on the social-psychological changes that occur in the aging process. Authors Cumming et al. describe the “disengaging process, which may be primarily intrinsic, and secondarily responsive”, in which “the individual is pictured as participating with others in his social

¹¹ Clifford Geertz, *Making Experience, Authoring Selves*.

¹² Leng Leng Thang, *Generations in Touch: Linking the Old and Young in a Tokyo Neighborhood*, 6.

systems in a process of mutual withdrawal”.¹³ In other words, as individuals begin to process changes in self-perception, their social involvement often changes too. Subsequently, the realm just outside of oneself notices this departure thus beginning the process of mutual withdrawal. Kurt Lewin's Behavior Equation¹⁴ states that human behavior is a function of both the person and their environment which reinforces this idea. This raises an important question: what if, at this critical point of disengagement, the built environment and the social structures embedded within it could actively support aging populations? Just as older adults navigate transitions in social roles and engagement, adolescents experience developmental changes that also impact their sense of connection and responsibility within their environments.

Another way to understand this behavioral science is through Lawton's ecological model of aging. The diagram shows an individual's adaptation level from comfort to maximum performance in terms of competence and environmental press. Environmental presses are described as “stimuli possessing some motivating quality to activate ... some demand quality for the individual.”¹⁵ This helps to understand the experience or aspects of aging as it relates to one's surroundings (environmental pressors), process/perceptions, and resultant competence.

While older adults face disengagement, adolescents undergo their own developmental transitions. These can be described with the framework of their developmental ecologies. While the previous discussion focused on the social disengagement of aging adults relative to broader society, this discussion looks at age-related declines in social responsibility values in adolescents based on the availability of ecological assets. A 3-year

¹³ Cumming et al., “Disengagement--A Tentative Theory of Aging,” 14.

¹⁴ ResearchGate, “Figure 1. Conceptual Model Elaboration on Lewin's Equation. The Figure...”

¹⁵ Lawton et al., *Aging and the Environment*, 35.

study of U.S. adolescents found that social responsibility values decreased between ages 9-16.¹⁶ Social responsibility is defined as a set of prosocial values that represent personal commitments to contribute to community and society. Supportive ecological assets like democratic climates of respect and positive peer and family relationships can help counteract these declines.¹⁷ These transitional phases in both age groups suggest a shared vulnerability, one that may open up opportunities for reciprocal support across generations.

Despite differences in age, both adolescents and older adults occupy liminal stages which are periods marked by transition, vulnerability, and potential transformation. This so-called entry or exit comes with its lingering effects regarding social networks, opportunities to engage in relation with the environment, and mental and emotional stability. Yet their limited or even absent relationships with one another are reinforced by the segmented structures and environments that surround them. Contact Theory offers a meaningful intervention: when conditions are met, intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and stereotypes, increase empathy and understanding, and improve intergroup relations.¹⁸ Given that both adolescents and elderly face heightened mental health risks during these life stages, their connections with each other could serve as a protective factor for their psychological well-being. In a study involving a contact theory group and a traditional group, observers noticed that when conditions of contact theory were met, interactive behaviors between generations were observed. To address these parallel challenges, we'll consider a model that moves beyond age-segmented thinking and considers the life course as a continuous journey.

¹⁶ Wray-Lake et al., "Developmental Change in Social Responsibility during Adolescence."

¹⁷ Wray-Lake et al., "Developmental Change in Social Responsibility during Adolescence."

¹⁸ Jarrott and Smith, "The Complement of Research and Theory in Practice."

The Life Course Model provides this integrative perspective as it offers a way to examine generational experiences not in isolation, but in dynamic relation to each other.¹⁹ Rather than interpreting data and behavior from a segmented age-based perspective, this model broadens the analysis of generational relations through a cross-temporal and cultural lens. Thus, the study of generational relations requires a multidimensional approach. Externally, the interaction of individuals is examined alongside the social institutions and the historical processes affecting them, and internally, individuals are examined within the family and the wider kin group. This model helps explain how social changes can impact multiple generations at once, or how they are experienced and understood differently depending on their stage of life. If traditional assets like material or property are no longer central to intergenerational relationships, how can experiences have a greater emphasis on “social-emotional ties, companionship, intimacy, and love” instead?²⁰ The Life Course Model not only reframes dependency on a larger scale, but it sets a foundation for intergenerational relationships built on empathy, shared experience, and civic reengagement.

Health and Well-Being

Health Disparities & Social Determinants of Health

Health outcomes across the lifespan are influenced by a range of interconnected factors, often referred to as the social determinants of health. Health is determined by many factors, including but not limited to, social, healthcare, behavioral, biological, environmental, policy-related, access-related influences. Social determinants of health encompass socioeconomic status, employment and working conditions, education and literacy, childhood experiences, physical environments, social support, and coping skills. For young children,

¹⁹ Tamara K. Hareven, *Aging and Generational Relations Over the Life Course : A Historical and Cross-Cultural Perspective*.

²⁰ Tamara K. Hareven, *Aging and Generational Relations Over the Life Course : A Historical and Cross-Cultural Perspective*, 531.

their developmental ecology, defined as their proximal social environment including distinct interpersonal interactions and experiences, plays a critical role in shaping mediators that influence children's social behaviors and individual traits.²¹ That is, children's health and school readiness are influenced by the broader context of their developmental environments. This broader ecological lens helps explain how early environments shape long-term health and learning outcomes and sets the foundation for understanding health disparities that emerge early in life.

Professor of Sociology at University of Colorado Boulder, Stephanie Mollborn builds on this ecological framework by categorizing young children into distinct developmental ecology classes. They are I Advantaged, II Vulnerable, III Traditional, and IV Nontraditional. The developmental ecology latent classes are further described by their available assets. Interestingly, the traditional and nontraditional groups differ by the type of childcare. In traditional groups, "one-half the children had nonworking mothers and did not attend preschool or childcare" while nontraditional groups "lived in extended households and attended center-based preschool, and 85% of their mothers worked". The "traditional" children had the lowest overall health of the classes and had significantly lower early reading and math skills. A critical finding in the nontraditional ecologies was that they "experienced the most partner, grandparent, material work, and childcare hours transitions" yet scored the second-highest reading, math, and overall health scores in the study.²² This finding suggests the importance of looking beyond isolated variables to consider how clusters of ecological factors interact. That is, high levels of transition don't necessarily predict poorer outcomes, but when paired with certain assets, they can still yield strong health outcomes. This

²¹ Mollborn, "Young Children's Developmental Ecologies and Kindergarten Readiness."

²² Mollborn, "Young Children's Developmental Ecologies and Kindergarten Readiness," 11.

complexity emphasizes the need for early interventions that are not singular but instead cohesive in shaping children's social-emotional development.

In response to developmental risks, early childhood interventions aim to cultivate psychological resilience, prosocial behavior, and long-term emotional well-being. Some research on childhood interventions focuses on strategies to prevent behavioral issues and delinquency. For a child to develop in positive ways, their psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence must be supported by a motivational climate.²³ In terms of prosocial behavior, interventions have been shown to enhance a child's perseverance, task persistence, and self-esteem, which are all factors that have lasting effects on psychological well-being.²⁴ These interventions, including intergenerational programming, aim to equip children with key emotional skills such as empathy, acceptance, and emotional self-regulation.²⁵ In one study, third graders who participated in intergenerational programming showed reduced behavioral incidents in the classroom.²⁶ These findings suggest that intergenerational programs not only benefit children's development but also create compounding effects that may influence mental health outcomes over time.

Just as children benefit from intergenerational interaction, older adults also experience significant physical and emotional gains from meaningful social engagement. In later stages of life, social nurturance and community connection are critical for promoting health and preventing cognitive decline. For older adults, it is also important to develop a sense of belonging and community, but sometimes these desires aren't supported for various reasons. Studies have shown that volunteers in intergenerational programs have experienced

²³ Hodge et al., "Life Skills and Basic Psychological Needs."

²⁴ Reynolds et al., "Paths of Effects of Early Childhood Intervention on Educational Attainment and Delinquency."

²⁵ Femia et al., "Intergenerational Preschool Experiences and the Young Child."

²⁶ Carlson et al., "Exploring the Effects of an 'Everyday' Activity Program on Executive Function and Memory in Older Adults."

health benefits such as lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, healthy weight loss, and faster walking speeds.²⁷ Moreover, institutionalized older adults without remaining support networks showed increased happiness levels after just 60-minute weekly sessions centered around storytelling, games, riddles, action songs, artwork, craftwork, and festivals with children who had positive attitudes toward aging.²⁸ Beyond these health outcomes, intergenerational interactions improved self-esteem and social competence, shown by enhanced expressions of care, affection, and relational reciprocity.²⁹ These findings point to the therapeutic potential of sustained, cross-generational engagement, particularly for older adults at risk of isolation and health decline.

Studies show that participation in intergenerational programming can improve executive function and memory, particularly among those at risk for cognitive decline. Carlson et al found that “short-term findings among the individuals at risk for cognitive impairment suggest that this type of high-impact activity intervention may offer immediate benefit to those at highest risk and may be a successful approach to help ameliorate the life-long accumulation of risk factors that promote health disparities.”³⁰ These structured activities lead to enhanced mental stimulation, social interaction, and physical movement. The research underscores the potential of intergenerational participation programs as a public health intervention to mitigate disparities among aging adults. Cognitive reserve, for example, suggests that mental stimulation buffers against cognitive decline. That is, individuals with higher levels of social engagement maintain better cognitive function in later years.³¹ This research highlights the importance of creating intergenerational spaces that

²⁷ Marci Alboher and Eunice Lin Nichols, “Rebuilding an Age-Integrated Society (SSIR).”

²⁸ Dsouza et al., “Effectiveness of Interaction with Children on Happiness among the Elderly.”

²⁹ Kocarnik and Ponzetti, “The Advantages and Challenges of Intergenerational Programs in Long Term Care Facilities.”

³⁰ Carlson et al., “Exploring the Effects of an ‘Everyday’ Activity Program on Executive Function and Memory in Older Adults.”

³¹ Sommerlad et al., “Association of Social Contact with Dementia and Cognition.”

support inclusive social environments of older adults. Taken together, this research demonstrates that intergenerational connection is not only socially meaningful but also a critical component of public health strategies across the lifespan.

Types of Interaction

The literature supports the notion that ecological assets and intervention at vulnerable stages of life indeed have long-term impacts. Intergenerational formats reem benefits that can positively facilitate these assets and interventions by providing greater opportunities for positive interactions and socialization at a community scale. Researchers have identified themes concerning “the importance of respect and equality for participants and co-operation with reciprocal meaningful and goal-directed collaboration”.³² That is, for productive intergenerational interaction and experiences, there should be some elements of formalized programming that focuses on shared goals. Implementation is further reinforced with key recommendations “focusing on the use of team-building techniques, provision of advanced biographical information (age, sex, likes, dislikes, life history, co-design of activities, provision of sufficient staff support, and geographical proximity to the community”.³³ These findings are rooted in more theoretical based and qualitative outcomes, and they support the argument for more formalized programming that facilitates team building to engage with individuals. However, what it lacks is an empirical or observational understanding of what intergenerational could mean.

Other types of interaction include spontaneous, unformalized encounters. But as mentioned before, Leng Leng Thang highlights the irony of “how do you encourage the

³² Peters et al., “Intergenerational Programmes Bringing Together Community Dwelling Non-Familial Older Adults and Children,” 3.

³³ Peters et al., “Intergenerational Programmes Bringing Together Community Dwelling Non-Familial Older Adults and Children,” 3.

spontaneous?”. Perhaps there is a combination of these formal and spontaneous interactions that can foster harmonious intergenerational relationships. Observational findings from an intergenerational program in the Long Island Region revealed a gradual transformation in interactions between older adults and children over multiple sessions. In the initial two sessions, there was very little vocal or verbal interaction amongst the elderly and children. After the first three group sessions, there was a significant increase in verbal exchanges where both sides would ask for help in completing a task or function. After five group sessions, evaluators noticed an increase in displays of generational empathy which included assisting and providing support without being encouraged by a staff member. After eight sessions, six pairs were routinely seen embracing one another before and after a session, showing how “touch” was employed as a “silent communicative tool to demonstrate acceptance”.³⁴ The research shows the importance of sustained engagement in fostering meaningful interactions and relationships. This also reinforces the idea about formalized aspects of the built environment being an incubator for spontaneous, everyday interactions that can enhance social connectedness and mutual understanding between generations.

Intergenerational Connectedness in the Built Environment

Human and Environment

As previously discussed by Buber and Pallasmaa, deeper connections require moving beyond surface level engagement with one’s environment. This philosophy is complemented by concepts in environmental psychology known as person-environment relationships, also known as man-environment relationships (MER), which speculates on the phenomenological separation of self and environment. That is, where “the attainment of a fully autonomous sense of self is one of the significant features of at least the early stages of development. The

³⁴ Hayes, “An Observational Study in Developing an Intergenerational Shared Site Program,” 123.

mature adult sees himself as being separate from, although interdependent with, a surrounding world”.³⁵ Furthermore, anthropological perspectives can demonstrate how individuals and communities navigate through shared rituals with each other.

Anthropologist Victor Turner contributes to this conversation through his concept of liminality - a transitional state where individuals are “in between” roles, spaces, or identities. In these liminal moments, people are suspended in social space, neither fully integrated nor entirely separate.³⁶ Turner drew from van Gennep’s Rites of Passage identifying three phases: separation, liminality, and reaggregation which structure life transitions and reflect collective human experiences. Importantly, Turner’s notion of *communitas* emphasizes the potential for deep social bonding and solidarity during these in-between phases.³⁷

Additionally, Thang’s explanation of cultural models helps to frame how generational roles shift across societies. In post figurative cultures, elders traditionally held authority and guided younger generations; in cfigurative cultures, peers gained more influence; and in today’s prefigurative cultures, youth increasingly shape the future in ways unfamiliar to older generations.³⁸ These cultural models show how space - social and physical - can reflect shifting power dynamics across generations. They also affirm that environments are not neutral but rather infused with symbolic meaning tied to generational transitions and roles. These concepts of intergenerational culture, space, and liminality help contextualize how built environments can either reinforce generational separation or foster shared identity and intergenerational connectedness.

³⁵ Lawton et al., *Aging and the Environment*, 8.

³⁶ Clifford Geertz, *Making Experience, Authoring Selves*.

³⁷ Gay Becker, *Disrupted Lives : How People Create Meaning in a Chaotic World*, 234.

³⁸ Leng Leng Thang, *Generations in Touch: Linking the Old and Young in a Tokyo Neighborhood*, 6.

Intergenerational Stigmas

Historical narratives of aging before the existence of long-term care facilities were often negative towards older people. Almshouses, which typically housed the communities most disadvantaged individuals such as the unhoused and those with mental illnesses³⁹, became the place where older people who had health difficulties sought refuge. By the early 20th century, elderly residents were the primary residents of these facilities, and they were changed to the name “Home for the Aged and Infirm”. In the mid-20th century, Social Security Programs were established in attempts to rid of these “poor houses” and by 1954, the Medical Facilities Survey and Construction Act allowed for the development of public institutions for disadvantaged older adults. Still though, by the late 20th century, the facilities were still seen negatively, perceived as “warehouses ... for the old and dying”. This historical understanding of caring for the elderly reveals underlying threatens in the persistent social perceptions of elder care in the United States.

While intergenerational programs are generally supported, they are still new and we are beginning to understand differences in perceived benefits. In the literature, there appear to be biases in recruitment for programs since those who are more socially active are more likely to self-enroll. Additionally, negative attitudes towards social activity and engagement were seen as “being a chore” or “distressing” on the parent side. Parents often viewed that their children’s participation benefited older adults, quoting that “[we’re] doing it for the poor old folk, I don’t think she’ll get anything out of it, really”.⁴⁰ Despite these concerns, most people felt that intergenerational programs have positive potential across generations.

³⁹ Smaldon, “Exploring Multigenerational Care Facilities,” 14.

⁴⁰ Gail Kenning et al., “Intergenerational Practice in the Community—What Does the Community Think?,” 11.

Universal Design

Building on the theoretical framework of intergenerational connection, this section examines how universal design can serve as a spatial and social strategy for fostering these relationships across age groups. As physical and social changes begin to become more apparent to an individual, the ability and willingness to travel are largely reduced, which may result in increased isolation. According to Lawton, “the less competent the individual, the greater the impact of environmental factors on that individual” which means that the external factors like stimuli, access, and programming matter a great deal. Also to note, “across all settings, the aggregate exposure time for the aged approximated that of the preschool child” which brings into perspective the overlap between these age groups in terms of time and place.”⁴¹ The ability to cope through life transitions and the process of aging and developing is largely dependent on feeling secure. So in order for the opportunity for interaction to play out, environments should be designed to help make individuals feel secure.

In addition to environmental factors, an individual's willingness to participate and engage is also a matter at hand. When asked about the types of facilities people felt “comfortable” using, most respondents preferred community halls, while only half expressed comfort in research or educational institutions.⁴² This brings to light the way that individuals perceive space as they are tied to the preconceived notions about their institutional typology and meanings. In universal design, these invisible ties to space should be considered in terms of access and cultural perceptions of place.

Education could be applied as the formal agent in shaping some of these intergenerational spaces that could allow for spontaneous interaction. Trotter et al. examine

⁴¹ Lawton et al., *Aging and the Environment*.

⁴² Gail Kenning et al., “Intergenerational Practice in the Community—What Does the Community Think?”

the feasibility and potential benefits of co-locating retirement villages with secondary schools, a concept known as GrandSchools. Ultimately, concerns about elder vulnerability, student safety, and the emotional impact of frequent deaths in the senior community were the summarized challenges of implementation. Despite these obstacles, the study concludes that GrandSchools can positively influence youth perceptions of aging and optimize public space utilization, ultimately benefiting the broader community.⁴³

Thesis Research Chart

The research synthesis integrates key insights from diverse fields of study, organizing these takeaways into five continuums that form a unified analytical spectrum. This framework establishes a foundational understanding of the project's core problem by first examining the arc of human development, from early childhood through late adulthood, through the lens of intergenerational connectivity. Within the continuum of social space, the research identifies a universal human search for purpose and belonging as a baseline requirement for development. Central to this growth is the cultivation of adaptability and resilience. Findings suggest that intergenerational relationships significantly bolster these traits; younger participants exposed to diverse role models beyond their immediate guardians exhibit markedly higher levels of social resilience and emotional adaptability.

Expanding into the realms of health and wellness, the research discerns that while "activities of daily living" and "school readiness" are essential baselines, higher-order outcomes such as social competence, mental stability, and emotional health correlate strongly with frequent intergenerational interaction. These findings necessitated a critical analysis of existing real-world precedents and architectural modalities. These precedents range from

⁴³ Trotter et al., "Intergenerational Living and Learning."

"proximal" experiences, where groups merely inhabit the same vicinity, to "collaborative" approaches involving shared making and collective goals.

The data indicates that goal-oriented interaction is significantly more effective at improving developmental and wellness outcomes than passive co-location. Consequently, the research concludes that the most successful environments for such exchange are not siloed or neutral spaces, but rather "catalytic zones" where daily routines naturally overlap and memorable occasions can be collectively experienced. This shift from proximity to partnership serves as the primary architectural agenda for the project, moving away from segregated programming toward a model of integrated, routine-based design.

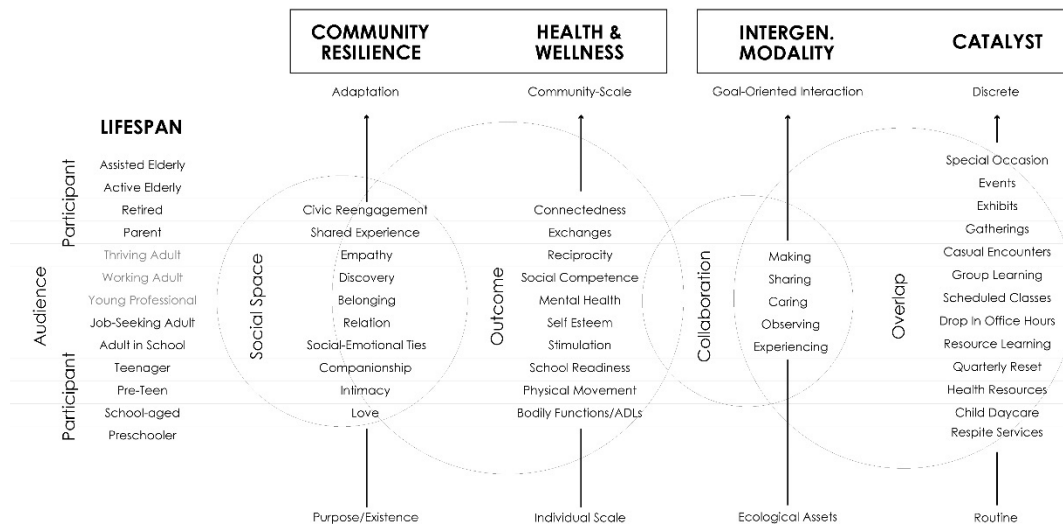


Figure 2. Research Chart (Source: Author)

In conclusion, the literature on aging, design, social infrastructure, and intergenerational programming highlights an opportunity and responsibility for architecture to act as a bridge between isolated generations. Scholars like Lawton, Buber, and Pallasmaa emphasize the sensory, emotional, and relational dynamics of space, revealing that

environments can either alienate or connect people depending on how they are shaped. While previous research has explored co-located care models and educational programs, there remains a gap in understanding how more common civic, public, and institutional spaces might be reimagined for spontaneous, sustained intergenerational engagement.

This thesis builds on these insights to propose an architecture that fosters purpose, belonging, and meaningful interaction for overlooked generations through the adaptive reuse of underutilized spaces. The accompanying research chart serves as a guiding framework, synthesizing key ideas into five interconnected continuums: participants, social space, wellness, interaction, and overlap which together shape how individuals across life stages can engage with one another and with their environments. This framework grounds the design strategy and helps identify where architecture can intervene to support resilience, connection, and shared experience.

Chapter 3: Methodologies

Methodological Framework

This thesis operates at the intersection of architecture, social health, and cultural critique. It not only investigates how space can shape behavior, but also how it can challenge inherited systems and propose new frameworks for care, learning, and connection. To support this inquiry, two primary methodologies guide the research: critical discourse analysis and practice-based research. Together, these approaches allow the thesis to both interrogate the existing built environment and propose alternative spatial futures grounded in lived experience and reflective design thinking.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis⁴⁴ starts with examining the ways in which architectural norms, institutional typologies, and policy-driven design have contributed to age segregation and social isolation. By questioning the narratives embedded in conventional environments like schools, care facilities, and single-use civic infrastructure, the research highlights how spatial practices have mirrored broader cultural values that marginalize both older and younger populations. Rather than treating these conditions as inevitable, the thesis frames them as designed problems, open to rethinking and redesign. The thesis seeks to use adaptive reuse as an opportunity to harness an intergenerational civic common rooted in shared making and mentorship. This dialectical approach positions architecture as a discursive practice, capable of synthesizing critique into spatial propositions that actively reconfigure relationships between generations, institutions, and communities.

⁴⁴ Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture*.

Practice Based Research and the Reflective Practitioner

Complementing this critical stance is a methodology rooted in practice-based research. Following Lucas's description of the reflective practitioner, the thesis treats design not only as an outcome but as a form of research. Through iterative modeling, spatial testing, and programmatic exploration, the work seeks to provoke new understandings of how underutilized urban buildings can be reimagined to support care, creativity, and intergenerational exchanges. The design process becomes a reflective dialogue, one in which emerging ideas are constantly evaluated against observed needs, theoretical frameworks, and interdisciplinary inputs.

Research Process

Literature Review

The literature review serves as both a foundation and a navigational tool for the thesis. It maps the intersections between intergenerational theory, mental health and well-being, architectural design, and adaptive reuse. The goal is not only to establish precedents but to identify conceptual gaps where architecture can intervene meaningfully. In fact, identified gaps in the literature include empirical evidence of intergenerational use and programming. This literature review draws from a range of disciplines - architecture, sociology, gerontology, public health, and education - to understand how social isolation affects emotional development, cognitive health, and community resilience across age groups. Particular focus is given to topics of mental and emotional impacts of disconnection, the role of intergenerational relationships in shaping identity and memory, and the use of making and skill-sharing as mechanisms for healing and empowerment.

Precedent and Case Study Analysis

Precedent and case study analysis play a supportive role in shaping the thesis proposal. They serve as tools to evaluate how other architectural projects that evoke civic generosity, spatial porosity, and interstitial systems of movement and gathering. Projects are studied through drawings, photographs, user narratives, and other reviews or critiques of the work. Attention to how space is communally used and whether it supports intergenerational exchange will inform the thesis strategy. The findings from this research will inform both the spatial logic and design vocabulary of the proposal and will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Site Selection, Visit, and Analysis

Site analysis serves as a crucial component of the thesis methodology, particularly as it relates to the interdisciplinary goal of connecting community networks. The selection and study of a specific underutilized building or site will consider not only architectural and urban conditions but also its proximity to potential collaborators. These networks are essential in supporting the thesis's vision of transforming overlooked spaces into intergenerational commons of civic participation, sharing, and mentorship,

Chapter 4: Precedent Studies

The following precedents help reveal how buildings operate as cultural agents as they shape relationships across time, age, and context. This chapter presents five preliminary precedent studies that inform the thesis across a range of lenses: typological hybridity, civic programming, material and spatial expression, and communal use over time.

Each precedent has been selected intentionally for its relevance to specific questions within the thesis. Some challenge traditional civic or residential typologies and others demonstrate how architecture can act as a catalyst for social cohesion, intergenerational coexistence, or cultural memory. Several of the initial thought precedents were analyzed through drawing, diagramming, and literature review as part of the thesis' initial conceptual formation. As the thesis evolved to focus on adaptive reuse and intergenerational use and programming, further precedents and case studies were considered.

In the sections that follow, each precedent is examined for its architectural intent, cultural context, material logic, and community function. The goal is to identify design strategies and programmatic logics that can inform the development of an intergenerational civic hub—one that is responsive, adaptable, and rooted in the passing down of values, skills, and knowledge.

Throughout the thesis exploration, additional precedents were studied. These will be discussed at the end of this section.

Summary of Preliminary Precedents

Type	Name	Location/Time	Themes/Keywords
Civic-Center w Residences and Community Functions	Säynätsalo Town Hall	Jyväskylä, Finland (1949-1952)	Duality, opposites, grandeur/humility
Civic-Education Monument Building	Seattle Public Library	Seattle, Washington, USA (2003)	Programmatic clusters. Full flexibility
Residential-Urban Affordable Housing	Broadway-Sansome Apartments	San Francisco, CA (2015)	Affordability, family living
Residential-Village Communal Living	Fujian Tulou - Hakka Walled Villages	Fujian Province, China, (12th C.)	Harmony, vernacular, community life
Religious-Spiritual Materiality & Light	First Church of Christ, Scientist	2619 Dwight Way, Berkeley, CA, USA (1910)	Spiritual healing, ornament

Säynätsalo Town Hall



Figure 3 Säynätsalo Town Hall (Source: ArchDaily)

Säynätsalo Town Hall was designed as a municipal community building for 3000 citizens in 1949.⁴⁵ Located in Jyväskylä, Finland, the building follows the traditional European court and tower model. The town started a design competition for the building, which was to include a council chamber, local government offices, a community library, staff apartments, and retail space. Aalto was influenced by Renaissance and Medieval Italian architecture, viewing his buildings as living organisms. While he took a modern approach, he rejected the ‘Machine Aesthetic’.⁴⁶

The construction consists of two wood-framed brick buildings and consists of a library bar and the U-shaped government building. The two pieces behave as a retaining wall and was infilled with a central courtyard that sits one story above the surrounding topography. Aalto played with duality in the design, whereby the elevation and height of the building changed based on where you are in or around the building.

⁴⁵ ArchDaily, “AD Classics.”

⁴⁶ Team, “The Säynätsalo Town Hall by Alvar Aalto.”

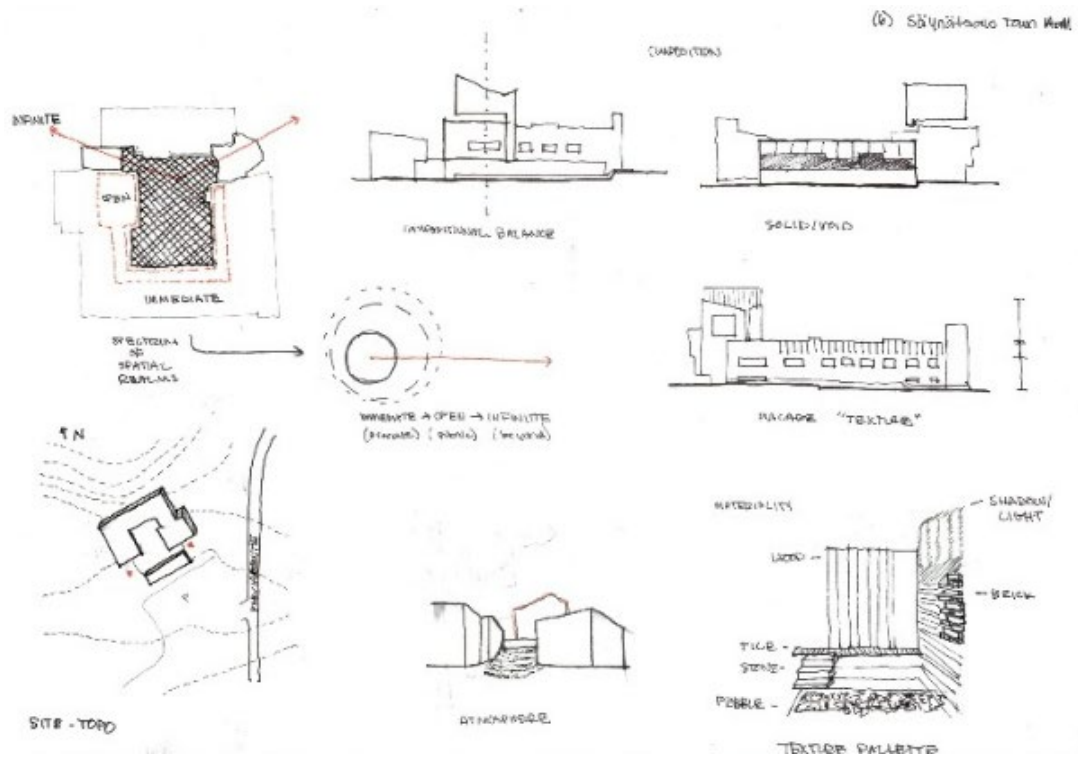


Figure 4 Säynätsalo Town Hall Site Analysis (Source: Author)

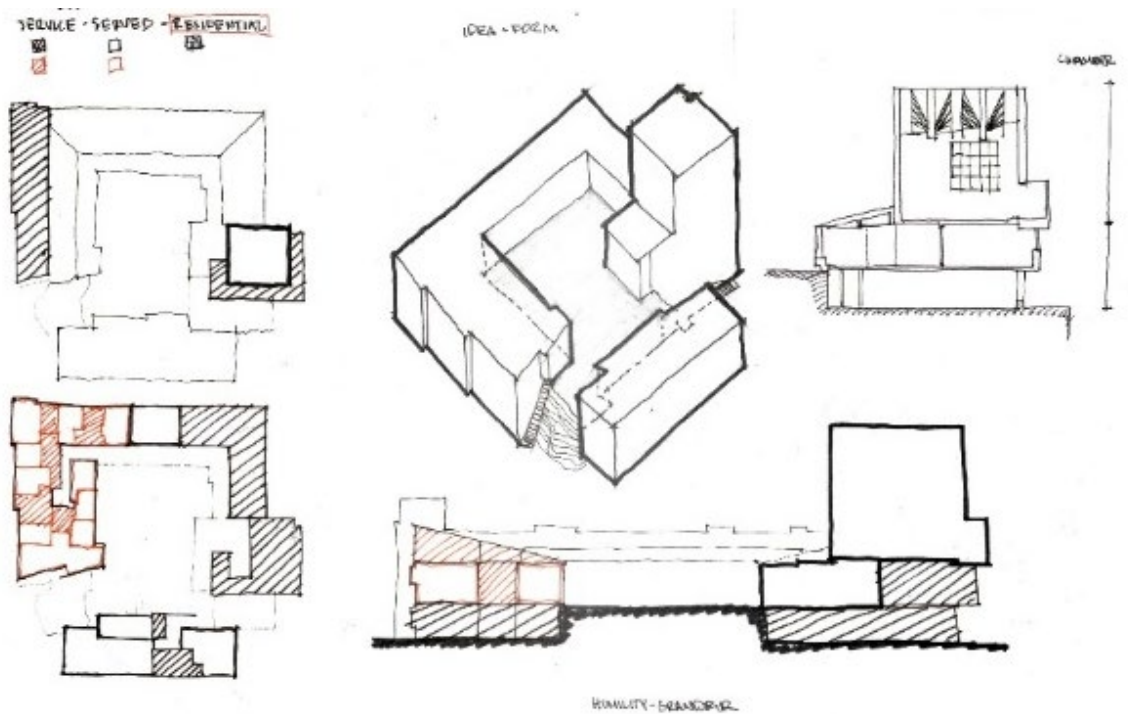


Figure 5 Säynätsalo Idea + Form (Source: Author)

Säynätsalo Town Hall serves as a living monument to community life and democratic ideals. Its civic grandeur, however, is blended with intimacy tied to the place and time of inhabitants. The architecture may also be referred to as a “confluence of opposite” which is where architectural grandeur interfaces democratic humility.⁴⁷ This human-centric approach often led to designs that incorporated organic forms, natural light, and versatile spaces.

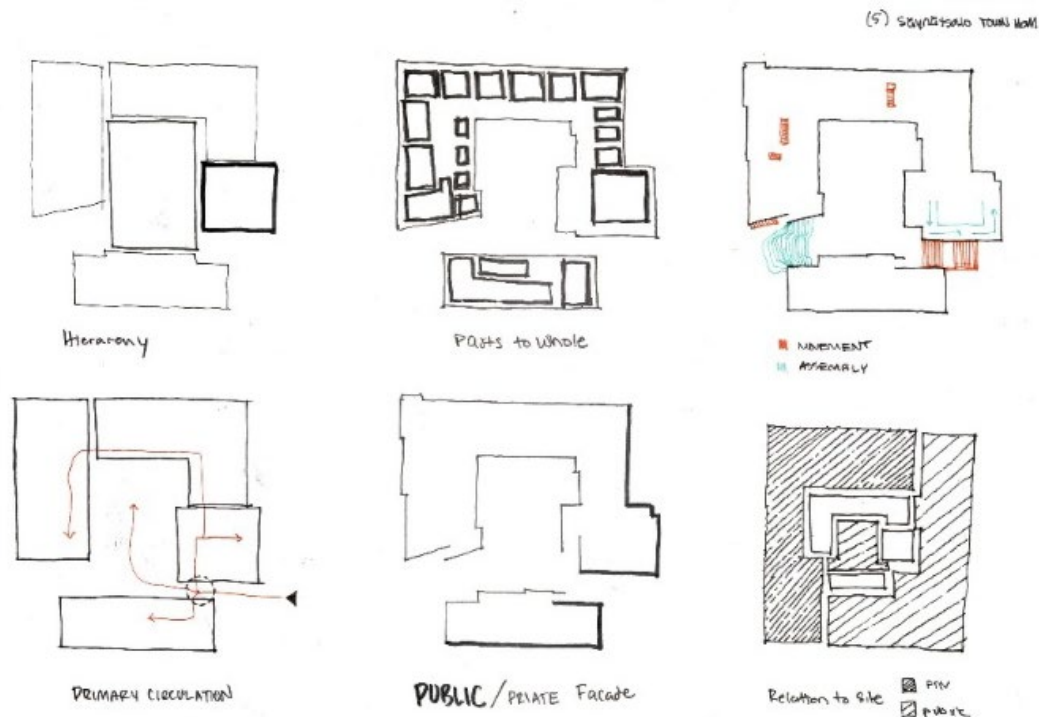


Figure 6 Säynätsalo (Source: Author)

Säynätsalo Town Hall is a key precedent for this thesis due to its typological hybridity, civic symbolism, and community orientation. Its nature in showing a duality of opposites, or grandeur and/vs humility make it a strong case for designing for intergenerational exchange. Most notably, the project’s approach to spatial form demonstrates how space is both symbolic and functional.

⁴⁷ Team, “The Säynätsalo Town Hall by Alvar Aalto.”

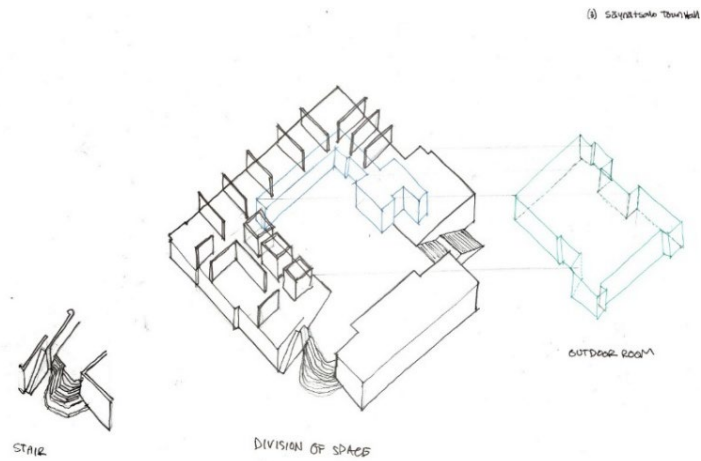


Figure 7 Säynätsalo Division of Spaces (Source: Author)

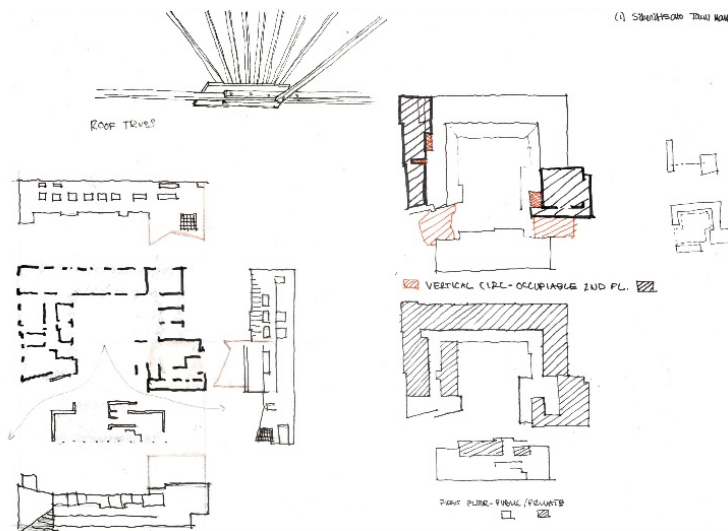


Figure 8 Säynätsalo Circulation and Roof Truss (Source: Author)

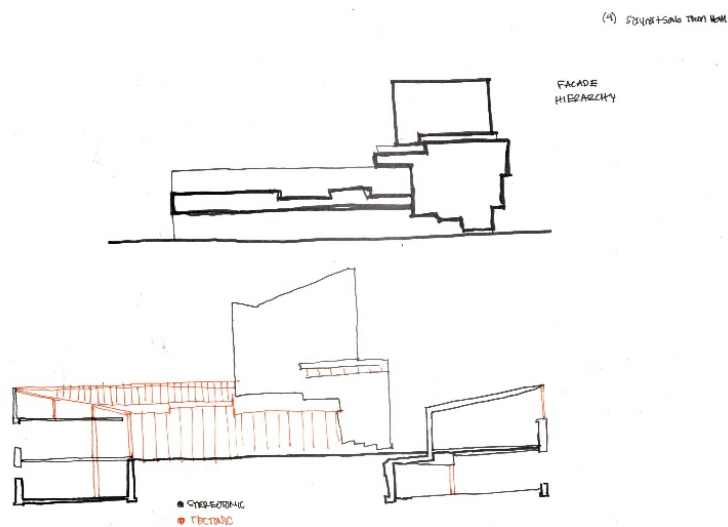


Figure 9 Säynätsalo Tectonic - Stereotomic (Source: Author)

Seattle Central Public Library



Figure 10 Image of Seattle Central Library (Source: OMA)

The Seattle Central Library is a civic space for the circulation of knowledge in all media. The concept is a response to the library as an institution and goes beyond books and is instead an agglomeration of information, old and new. The design was led by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas and Seattle-based Joshua Prince-Ramus.⁴⁸ The building critiques the traditional form of a library. That is, where spaces are not uniquely defined for the function in which they're intended, which leads to full flexibility such that any activity can occur. The design aimed to refine the spatial compartments so that each would be dedicated to and equipped for specific duties. The architects identified programmatic clusters, five of stability and four of instability.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ ArchDaily, "Seattle Central Library / OMA + LMN."

⁴⁹ OMA, "Seattle Central Library."

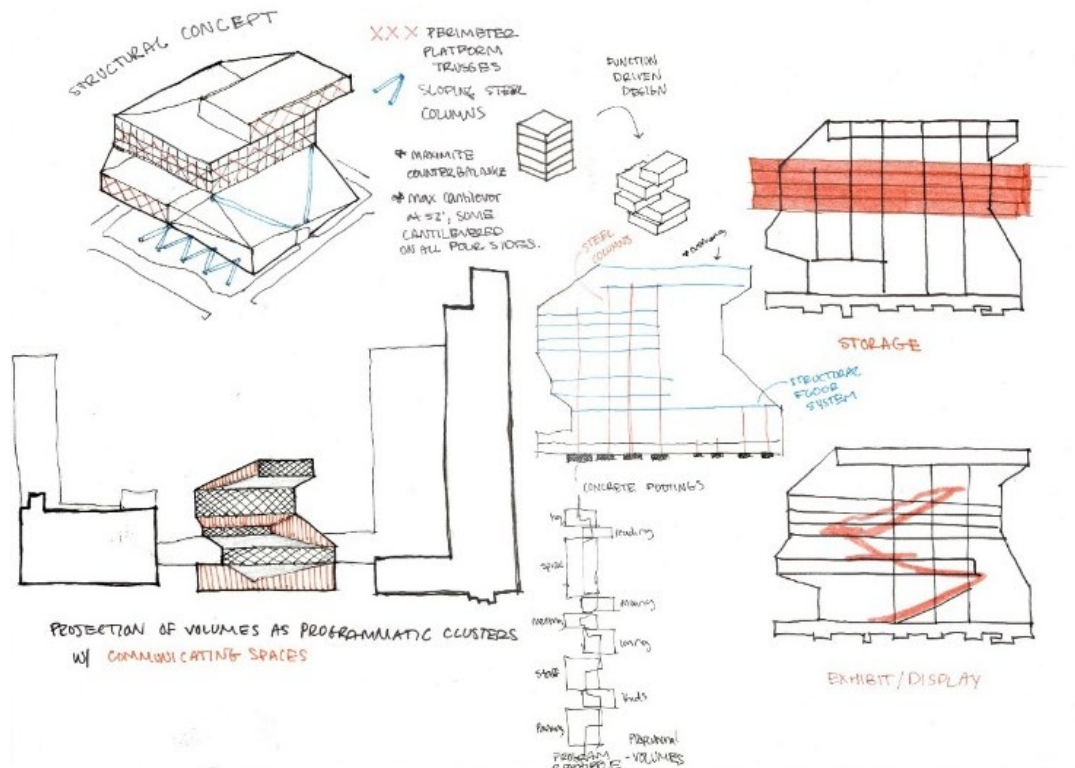


Figure 11 Seattle Central Library Structure and Circulation (Source: Author)

The building's metaphorical form emerges from the platforms of programmatic clusters that spiral upwards, like a book spiral. The interstitial spaces between are for communications and trading, where librarians operate and where in-between spaces for work and play are found. Regarding context, the building's geometry provides shade and daylight and reacts to its urban surroundings based on views and urban conditions.

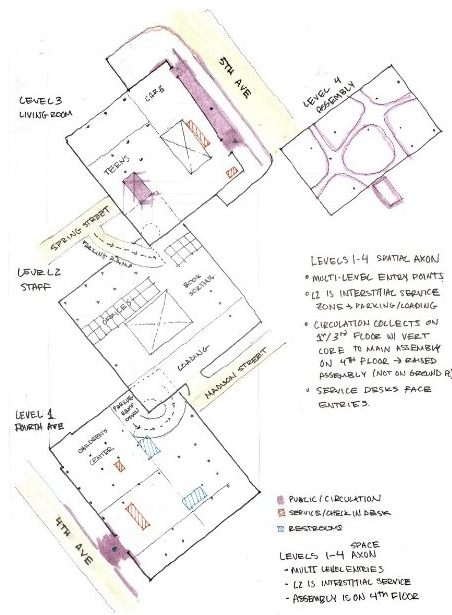


Figure 12 Seattle Central Library Diagrammatic Circulation and Program Axon (Source: Author)

Seattle Central Library is relevant to this thesis for its reinterpretation of the traditional meaning of a library. Its metaphorical and formal experimentation raises questions about how architecture can act as a vessel for knowledge transmission which ties into the thesis's focus on passing down knowledge, stories, and skills across generations. The project's approach to naming, organizing, and spatializing knowledge offers insight into how architecture can scaffold learning beyond formal education. While the building does not explicitly target intergenerational use, it's openness to interpretation, movement, and exchange points toward strategies for designing civic infrastructure that accommodates variability, curiosity, and cross-generational presence.

Ultimately, Seattle Central Library is a precedent based in programmatic innovation and institutional critique as it challenges architects to reconsider the boundaries of learning, storytelling, and civic participation. These strategies are critical as the thesis seeks to reframe adaptive reuse as a tool not just for sustainability, but for redefining who belongs in civic spaces including how they connect, teach, and learn.

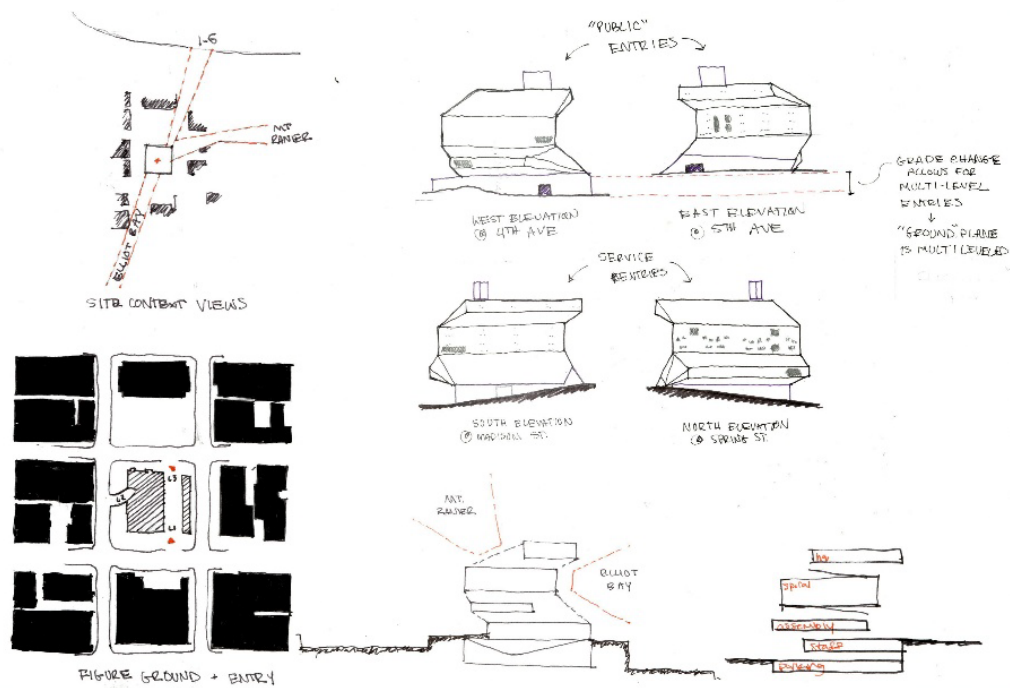


Figure 13 Seattle Central Library Site Analysis (Source: Author)

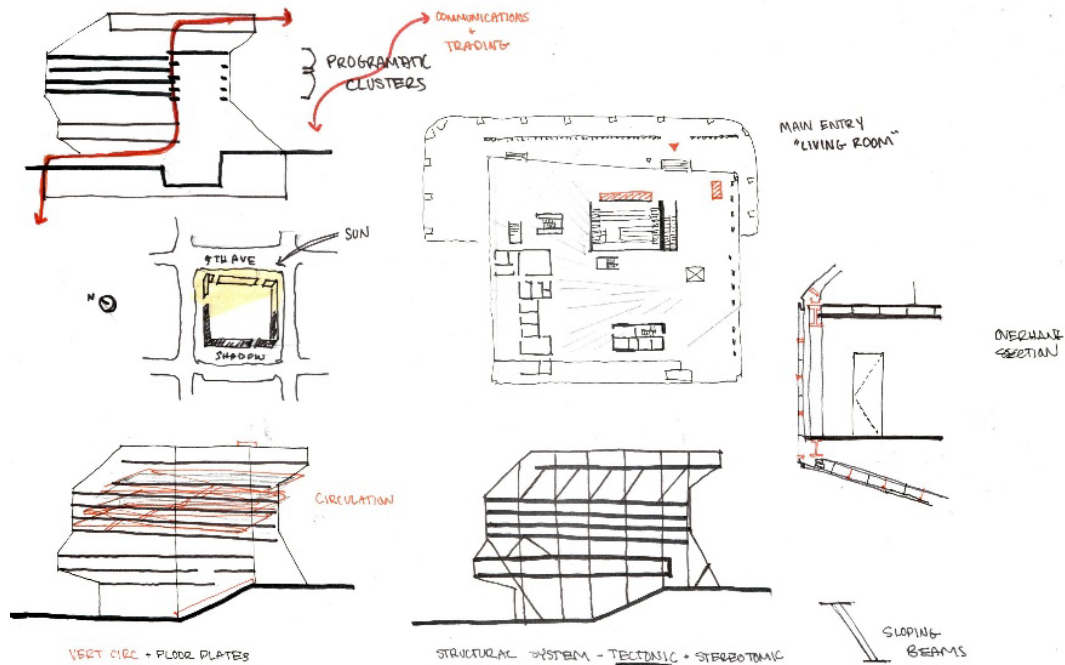


Figure 14 Seattle Central Library Program (Source: Author)

Broadway Sansome Apartments



Figure 15 Broadway Sansome Apartments Aerial Image (Source: Mithun)

The Broadway Sansome Apartments is a 65,800 square foot affordable housing development located in San Francisco's Jackson Square district. Commissioned by the Chinatown Community Development Center, the project was built on a formerly underutilized and historically contentious site, the remnants of a demolished freeway on-ramp made obsolete after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. The city ultimately designated the parcel for community benefit, and the resulting project provides permanent housing for low-income and formerly homeless families, along with supportive services and amenities.⁵⁰

The building includes a mix of unit types (studio to three-bedroom), along with shared facilities such as a multipurpose community room, rooftop play area, ground-floor retail, and on-site service offices.⁵¹ The design integrates into the surrounding urban fabric, echoing the massing of nearby industrial and commercial buildings while softening its

⁵⁰ Mithun, "Sansome and Broadway Family Housing."

⁵¹ "Broadway-Sansome Apartments."

presence through a pedestrian-friendly façade and community-oriented ground level. Though the architectural language is restrained, the building achieves a powerful presence through thoughtful urban design and social programming.⁵²

Broadway Sansome was selected as a precedent for this thesis because it demonstrates how reclaimed or overlooked urban sites can be transformed into platforms for social equity, family stability, and community healing. Its development process reflects themes from the literature review around supportive ecological assets that support development like housing, community infrastructure, and access to care. By providing services and spatial conditions that foster interdependence and dignity, the project supports both vulnerable youth and elderly, even if not explicitly designed for intergenerational interaction.

Architecturally, the project offers insights into how supportive housing can blend privacy with community, and how common areas like the rooftop garden or community room can become potential nodes of informal learning, mentorship, or gathering. These principles align with the thesis's intention to create civic spaces of incidental intergenerational encounter, where making and mentorship can occur organically rather than through prescriptive programming.

Broadway Sansome also models how urban policy, architectural advocacy, and grassroots community development can intersect to produce outcomes that are both functionally effective and culturally resonant.⁵³ In terms of adaptive reuse thinking, while the building itself is new, its repurpose of a contentious and abandoned urban void mirrors the thesis's ambition to transform overlooked spaces into dynamic sites of civic and social repair.

⁵² "Broadway-Sansome Apartments," n.d.

⁵³ CNU, "Sansome and Broadway."

In this way, the project reinforces the thesis's belief that architecture can—and should—operate at the scale of human need and relational care, particularly for populations whose voices and contributions are often undervalued or unseen. It demonstrates that buildings can be more than shelter; they can be instruments of belonging, resilience, and continuity.

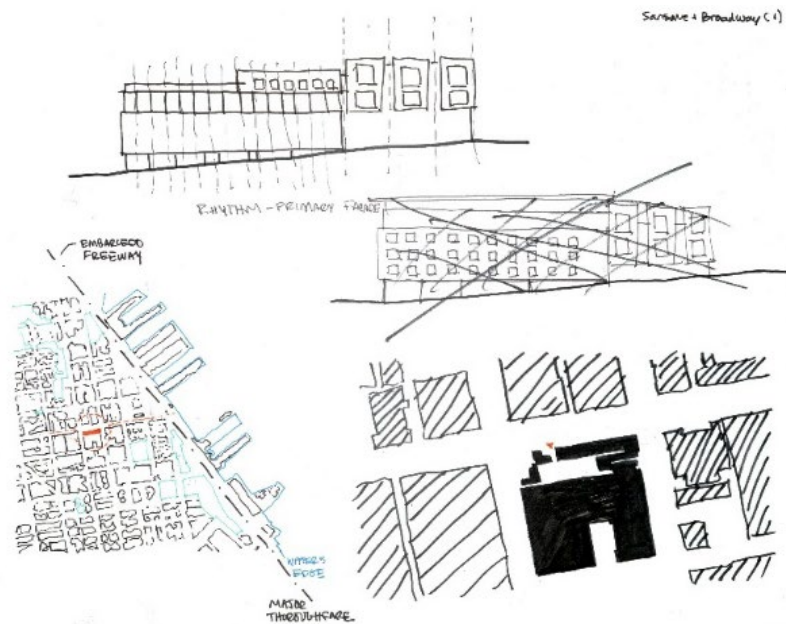


Figure 16 Sansome and Broadway Site Analysis Diagrams (Source: Author)

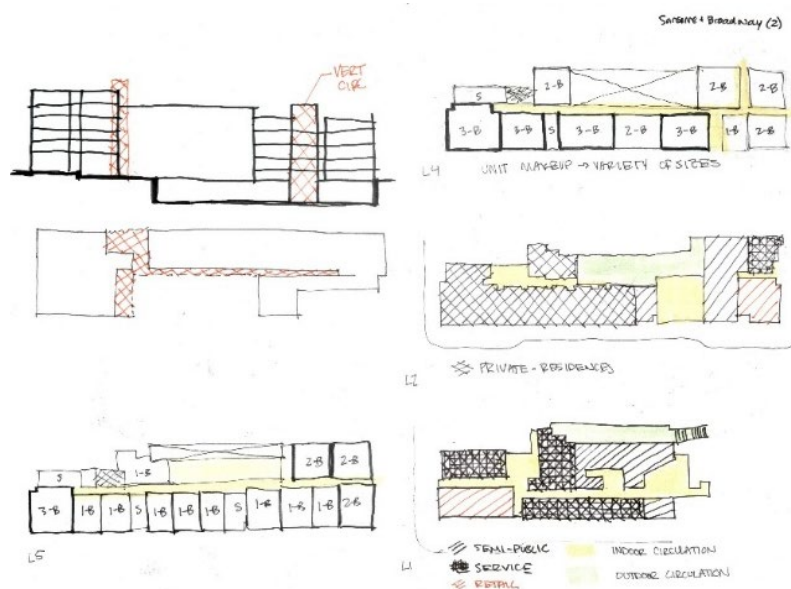


Figure 17 Sansome and Broadway Private/Public Relationships and Circulation Diagrams (Source: Author)

First Church of Christ, Scientist

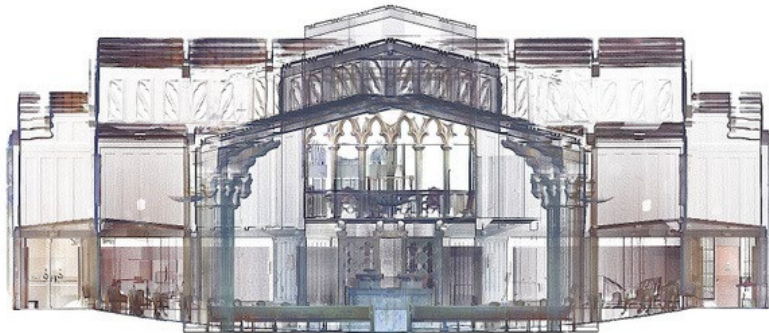


Photo courtesy Scott Page Design

Figure 18 First Church of Christ, Scientist Image of Section Render (Photo courtesy Scott Page Design)

Bernard Maybeck designed the church in 1910, making it a notable architectural moment in the Bay Area. Maybeck's design was in response to five women of the First Church of Christ, Scientist congregation who wanted "a church that would look like a church" and built of materials "that are what they claim to be, not imitations".⁵⁴ The Christian Science church was founded in Boston in 1879 by Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910). The denomination believes in prayer as a means of healing rather than traditional medicine, suggesting that "by bringing the material body into harmony with the spiritual, Man can achieve perfection and be healed."⁵⁵

The design represents architecture that is true in material, honesty, and construction is apparent in the architecture of the building. Maybeck articulates different styles, from Gothic and Oriental to Romanesque and Craftsman, and fuses them together in the common language of structure and ornament. The materials employed are concrete, cement asbestos board, industrial sash, and local redwood. Material and lighting enhance the structure and are embedded into the preserved color scheme.

⁵⁴ Hendel, "First Church of Christ, Scientist, Berkeley."

⁵⁵ "Berkeley Landmarks :: First Church of Christ, Scientist."

This project is relevant to the thesis not for its typology, but for its deep integration of user values, spiritual identity, and environmental context into architectural form. The church exemplifies how architecture can be an extension of collective vision and belief, built not from trends or typological conventions, but from a responsive and reflective design process. This speaks directly to the thesis's concern with designing adaptive, community-rooted spaces that embody the voices and values of their users, particularly those often left out of mainstream narratives.

Figure 19 First Church of Christ Scientist Site Analysis (Source: Author)

yet immensely spiritual”.⁵⁶ It also demonstrates how architectural environments can support transitional, contemplative, and communal experiences, echoing literature around spatial thresholds as important moments in both individual development and collective memory.

In terms of phenomenology, Maybeck’s church presents a compelling case for how architecture can be emotionally legible across generations. Its textures, light qualities, and formal complexity invite different modes of interaction and interpretation.⁵⁷ These qualities reinforce the thesis’s intent to create a space where younger and older populations can recognize themselves and each other, not through programming alone, but through atmosphere, presence, and sensory memory.

Ultimately, the First Church of Christ, Scientist contributes to the thesis by demonstrating that meaningful architecture emerges from cultural listening and embodied empathy. Its beauty lies not in ornament, but in the way it reflects its community’s spiritual and emotional aspirations, offering a timeless lesson in designing with and for people, rather than simply around them.

⁵⁶ “Berkeley Landmarks :: First Church of Christ, Scientist.”

⁵⁷ Dupré Judith and Mario Botta, *Churches*.

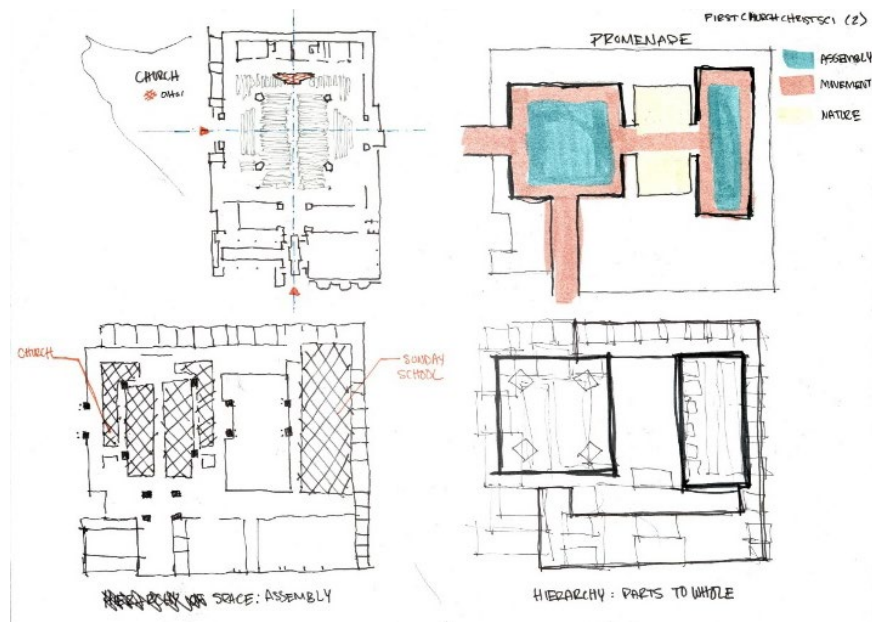


Figure 20 First Church of Christ Scientist Space/Circulation/Promenade (Source: Author)

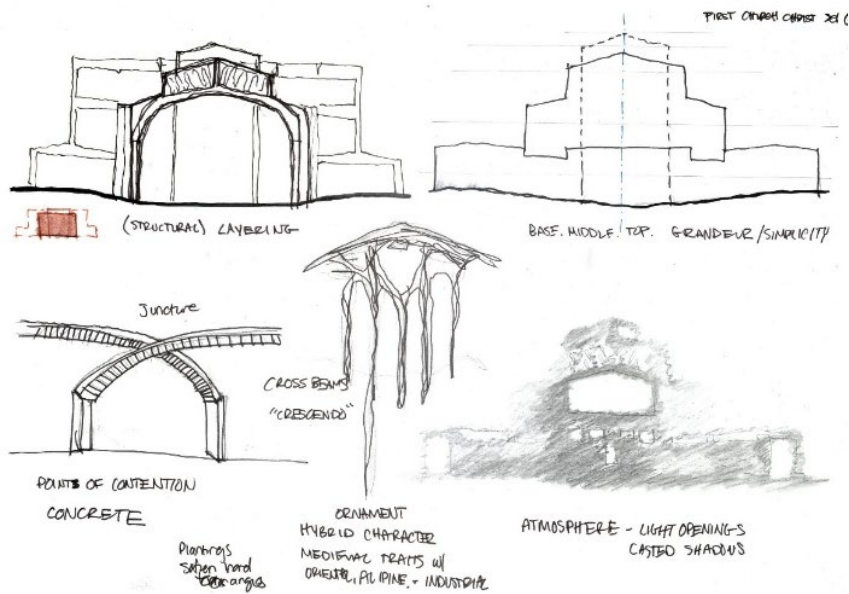


Figure 21 First Church of Christ Scientist Section (Source: Author)

Fujian Tulou



Figure 22 Fujian Tulou Interior View⁵⁸ (Source: Team Website)

Dating back to around 1120, when a period of mass migration from northern provinces during the Northern Song dynasty occurred, Hakka refugees sought safety and community in these earth-made structures. The buildings started as modest structures accommodating many families, but they soon evolved to incorporate wide scale educational and communal functions, reflecting the growing complexity and sophistication of Hakka society. The design served two primary purposes: defense and community living. With a capacity of up to 800 people, the structures could accommodate multiple families within a circular, inward facing layout which fostered a sense of shared responsibility equality.⁵⁹ The internal atmosphere was characterized as porous and shaped by the communal areas including markets, education, and ancestor commemoration whereas the exterior walls functioned as fortifications with minimal openings and an imposing character.

At the center of many Tulou compounds is the ancestral hall, a small structure dedicated to ritual, education, storytelling, and intergenerational ceremony.⁶⁰ It is here that families passed down cultural values, heritage, family histories, moral teachings, and skills.

⁵⁸ Team, "Fujian Tulou."

⁵⁹ Atlas, "Fujian Tulou, the Hakka Walled Villages."

⁶⁰ Centre, "Fujian Tulou."

These intergenerational transmissions of craft, language, agricultural knowledge, and shared responsibilities were embedded in the rhythms of daily life and formalized through architecture.

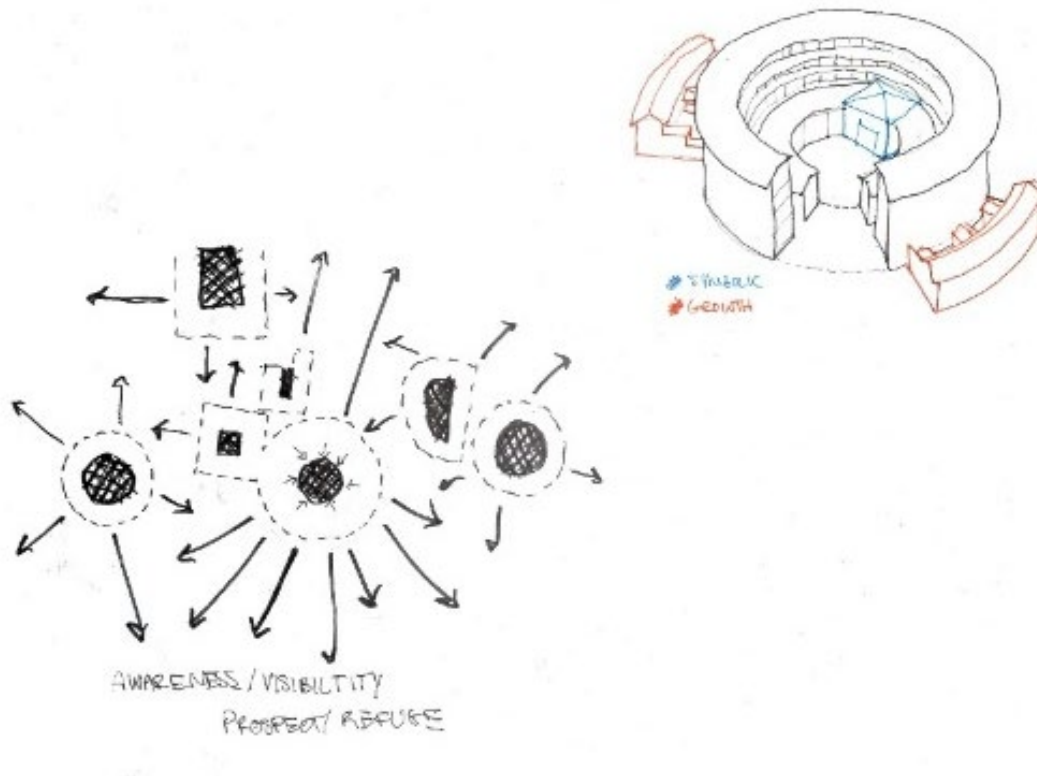


Figure 23 Fujian Tulou Prospect/Refuge and Symbolic/Growth (Source: Author)

The layout of these structures at an “urban” scale is also notable, where the clustering reflects a variance of shape, size, and people’s specific needs. While the parts are diverse, the whole is cohesive within its landscape. Tulou demonstrates how architecture can physically structure the sharing of knowledge and identity across generations, not as a programmed event but as an ongoing condition of life. This aligns with literature reviewed on developmental ecologies and the importance of supportive environments for both youth and elders, particularly in preserving prosocial values and cultural resilience in times of social change.

In the context of the thesis, Tulou serves as a powerful precedent for spatialized intergenerational learning. The combination of shared domestic life, communal infrastructure, and designated cultural space offers a model for how adaptive reuse projects can create hybrid environments where making, mentorship, and memory are not separate functions but coexisting practices. The central courtyard, in particular, illustrates how an open, accessible space can act as a common for reciprocal support, skill-passing, and identity-making.

While the formal and material logic of Tulou may not translate directly into a Western adaptive reuse context, its social architecture, grounded in continuity, collectivity, and belonging, provides deep inspiration for the thesis's vision of a civic hub where intergenerational makers and learners co-create meaning and value. Tulou exemplifies that meaningful architecture does not just support life, but it sustains culture, memory, and the relationships that give life purpose.

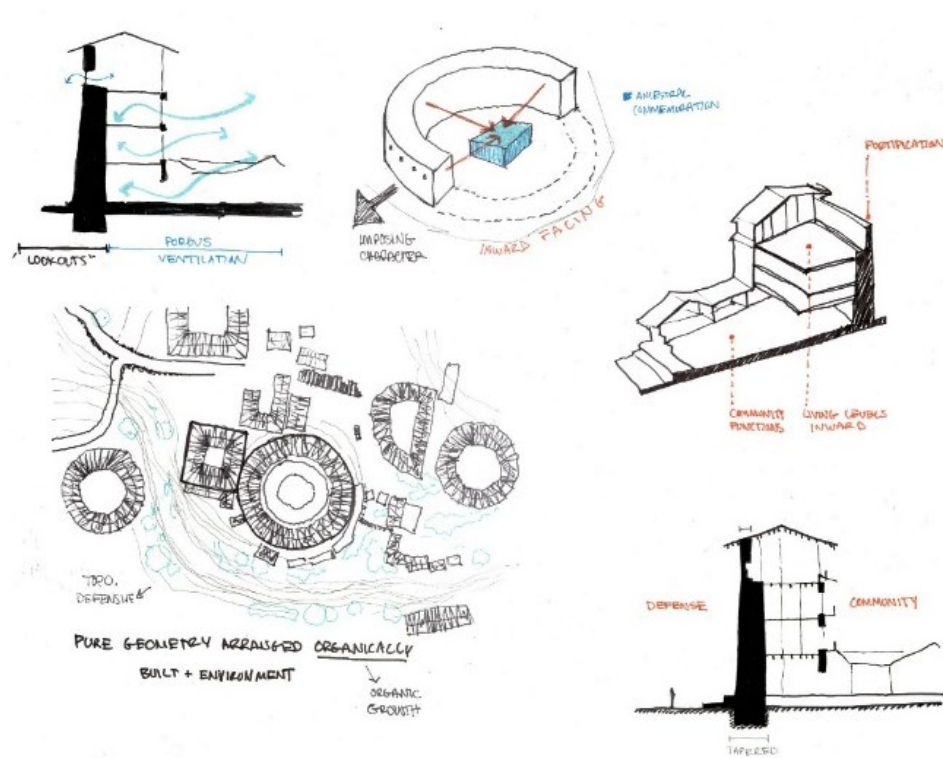


Figure 24 Environmental and Material Diagrams (Source: Author)

Adaptive Reuse: Bok Building



Figure 25. Image of Bok Building (Source: Bok Website)

Building BOK is an example of adaptive reuse for community infrastructure. The project turned an abandoned high school into repurposed workspaces for Philadelphia makers, businesses, nonprofits, and artists. Leading with a community-first mindset and staying mindful of the existing building's bones, designers at Scout Ltd adaptively reused the 340,000 SF building which now supports over 200 tenants.⁶¹

Additional programs housed in BOK are daycare, a hair salon, ESL classes, a tattoo parlor, a coffee shop, and a rooftop bar. The building incorporates public spaces like the WKSHP which is programmed by the bakery, coffee shop, cafe, bike shop, and retail shops. Building-wide events also provide community outreach opportunities. Some tenants will host visiting hours by appointment to invite the public into their workspace.

Building BOK will be further explored in this research for its approach to tenant curation, community network-building, and spatial flexibility. The thesis builds on this model by explicitly positioning knowledge-passing and intergenerational learning as central architectural drivers. While curation and making will serve as the foundation for activity in the proposed project, the intentional inclusion of intergenerational exchange aims to create broader impacts on community health, connection, and well-being.

⁶¹ BOK, "Building BOK Website."

Additional Precedents Studied During the Design Phase

Pool typologies were studied to understand how water, light, and air, inherently neutralizing mediums, can support connection across ages and bodies. Roman bath typologies including the Baths of Caracalla were also studied.

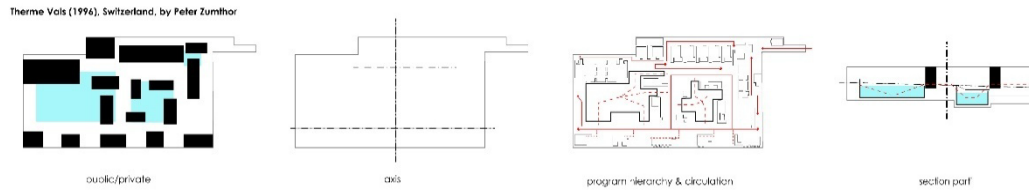


Figure 26. Therme Vals (1996), Switzerland, by Peter Zumthor (Source: Author)

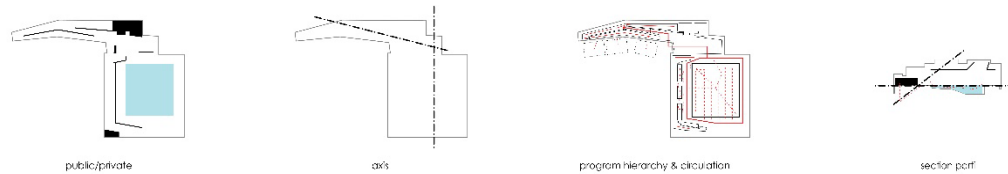


Figure 27. Cranbrook Natatorium (1999), Michigan USA, by Eiel Saarienen (Diagrams by Author)



Figure 28. Saint Prex Swimming Pool (2020), Switzerland, by LVPH Architects (Source: Author)

Museum precedents were studied for their cavernous circulation and shared views and thresholds.

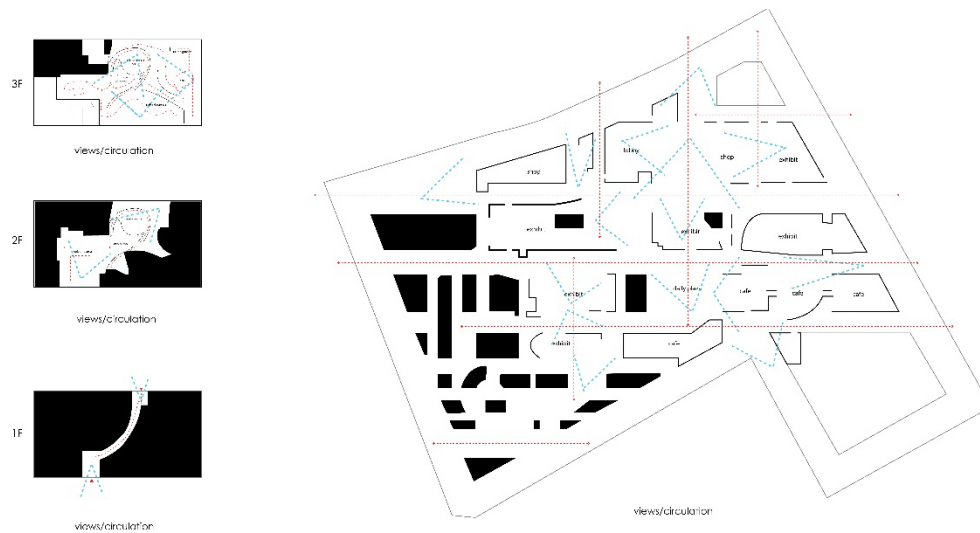


Figure 29. Bronx Children's Museum (2022), New York USA by O'Neill McVoy (Left) Wandering Space of Art Museum (2011), Taipei Taiwan by Yi-Hsian Chao Architects (Right), (Source: Author)

Additional precedents from the work of Diller Scofidio + Renfro were studied, including Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York, The Perry and Marty Granoff Center for the Creative Arts at Brown University in Rhode Island, and the Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. These precedents manifested themselves into the design through extracting elements that exuded relational qualities relevant to the design goals.

Overlooked	Site	Precedent	Intervention	Relational Qualities
			Vessel	Meandering
			Plaza/Plinth	Light & Air
			Column grid, new	Imagery Exchanges
			stair ramp for the landscape	Shared Views
			intertitle zone	Temporal Rhythms
			shared levels	
			program adjacencies	
			facade	
			crapper, terrace	

Figure 30. Precedent Matrix (Source: Author)

The precedent studies presented in this chapter offer a layered foundation for understanding how architecture can support community connection, cultural continuity, and intergenerational exchange. Collectively, these cases provide critical insight into the spatial, material, and programmatic strategies that can inform the proposed transformation of an underutilized building into a civic common for intergenerational connection.

Projects like Säynätsalo Town Hall and the Fujian Tulou exemplify how architectural form and shared space can cultivate social rituals and collective responsibility across generations. Seattle Central Library and First Church of Christ, Scientist demonstrate how buildings can challenge typological expectations to support layered experiences of identity, reflection, and knowledge circulation. The Broadway Sansome Apartments reveal the power of architecture to serve vulnerable populations through dignity-driven, community-focused housing. These precedents reinforce literature that positions architecture as a social determinant of well-being, especially when it prioritizes relational proximity, symbolic openness, and emotional legibility.

Together, these case studies suggest that architecture alone does not produce connection, but it can create the conditions, adjacencies, and atmospheres where connection becomes possible. Intentional from these models and then pushing them further toward intentional intergenerational interaction, the thesis positions architecture as an active agent in community healing, continuity, and cultural care. These insights will directly inform the spatial, programmatic, and experiential strategies of the proposal in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 5: Zones and Program

The proposed program integrates a wellness facility with a daycare center, establishing a multi-generational infrastructure that serves the community across the full spectrum of age. By co-locating these typically disparate programs, the building's functions are allowed to hybridize, generating intentional "zones of overlap" where meaningful social interaction can take root (see Figure 30). Within these shared sectors, specialized learning and activity spaces are designed to facilitate reciprocal exchange, moving beyond mere co-existence toward active engagement. These areas accommodate both formal, goal-oriented programming such as classrooms and structured wellness sessions and flexible civic spaces accessible to the broader neighborhood. This programmatic diversity transforms the building from a single-use facility into a vibrant neighborhood hub, anchored by the shared needs of its diverse users.

To illustrate the operational success of this hybridization, the spatial organization is informed by the temporal rhythms of the occupants. The intersection of disparate daily routines, specifically those of younger and older populations, serves as the primary driver for the building's zoning (see Figure 31). By mapping the schedules of these distinct groups, the design identifies critical temporal windows where routines naturally converge, such as shared mealtimes, morning exercise, or afternoon learning modules. These intersections are manifested architecturally through porous boundaries and shared nodes, ensuring that the building functions not just as a container for services, but as a dynamic site of intergenerational encounter throughout the day.

The heart of this programmatic hybridization is the interstitial interior courtyard, a protected central volume where the building's diverse functions physically converge. Conceived as the primary "zone of overlap," this space acts as a social condenser, anchored by a community cafe and a dedicated storytelling stage that serves as the main gathering node. While the courtyard is fully enclosed to ensure year-round usability and safety, it is designed with the atmospheric qualities of an exterior environment. Generous vertical volumes allow for an abundance of natural light and ventilation, creating a porous, airy sanctuary that provides the psychological benefits of an outdoor plaza while maintaining the climatic control and protection of an interior room.

Within this courtyard, the boundary between daycare, wellness facility, and civic space is intentionally blurred. The storytelling stage provides a platform for the reciprocal exchange of knowledge, where older adults might share oral histories with children, or community members might gather for informal performances, while the adjacent cafe facilitates the casual, unstructured encounters that build social capital. This spatial arrangement ensures that the courtyard is never a static passage, but rather a dynamic theater of daily life. By prioritizing light, air, and accessibility, the courtyard serves as a permanent neighborhood anchor, offering a resilient and welcoming environment that remains active across all hours of the day and through every season.



Figure 31. Program Zones – Spatial Overlaps (Source: Author)

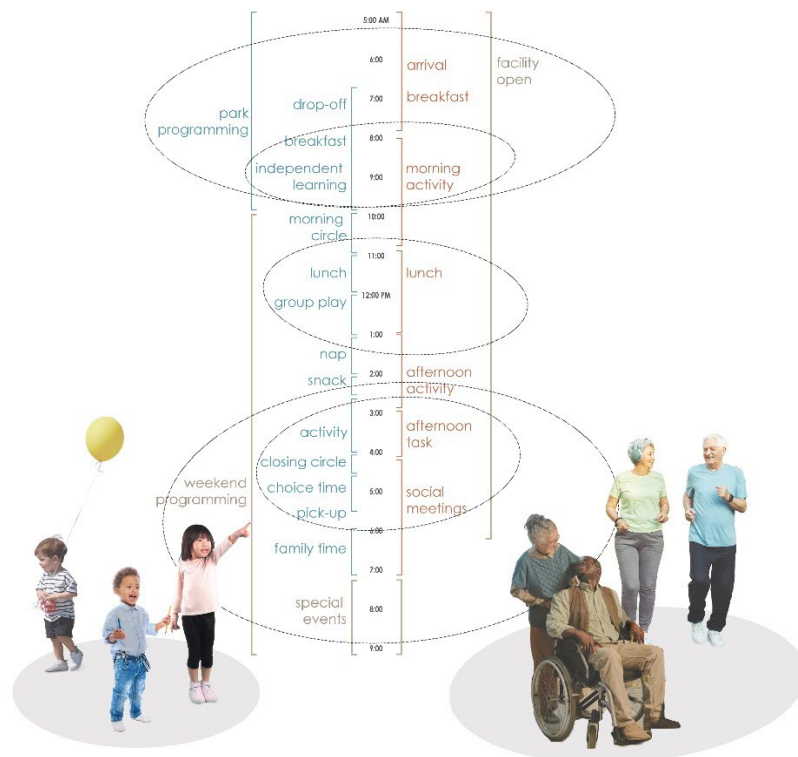


Figure 32. Program Users - Temporal Overlaps (Source: Author)

function of space	OU	category	program	net		
daycare	35 net	served	infant	350		
			infant napping	100		
			12 - 18 mo	600		
			18-24 mo	600		
			2-2.5 yr	650		
			3-5 yr	700		
		service	cubby storage	60		
			toy storage	200		
			stroller storage	200		
			bathroom	200		
			bathroom	200		
			staff restroom	140		
			kitchenette	100		
			laundry	150		
		admin	storage	200		
			director's office	300		
			coordinator office	150		
			coordinator office	150		
			staff lounge (shared)	400		
		flexible	small conference	350		
			indoor play spaces throughout	800		
		connective	daycare entry vestibule	700		
			daycare reception	300		
outdoor play space per child	75 net	available	outdoor play spaces	0.72 acre		
edu cns - 20 net	20 net	shared	gallery exhibit			
		multi-use	multi-purpose classroom - arts studio	1400		
			multi-purpose classroom - storytelling	1200		
			multi-purpose classroom - activity	1200		
			multi-purpose classroom - role/game	1200		
			multi-purpose classroom - seminar	1200		
		shared views	interstitial zone	180		
			multi purpose space	2000		
		15 net	cmo anchor	stage/performance area	600	
			outreach	computer lab	750	
				media lab	750	
		50 net		reading room	2000	
		100 gsf		book stacks	1200	
		admin	director's office	400		
			coordinator office	250		
			coordinator office	250		
			staff lounge (shared)	400		
			small conference	350		
commercial kitchen	200 gsf	shared resources	kitchen/cafe/terrace	550		
atd assembly w/o fixed seats	15 net		tea/coffee bar	75		
			snack bar	75		
			dining	400		
		wellness center	public plaza entry	10000		
			info desk	300		
locker rooms	50 gsf	operations	wellness entry	200		
			facilities manager office	175		
			support office	100		
			support office	100		
			staff lounge	400		
		service	planning room	300		
			staff restroom	150		
			public restroom	400		
			locker (M)	600		
			shower zone	100		
		locker rooms	locker (W)	600		
			shower zone	100		
			family locker	100		
			laundry	150		
			locker storage	60		
		social	locker storage	60		
			storage	200		
			adj to museum outreach	waiting	400	
				member lounge	600	
			swimming pool	50 gsf	pool	main pool
		pool volume area				20172
		wading pool/splash zone				1000
		jacuzzi				80
pump room	184					
sauna-therapy	charcoal sauna	250				
	crystal salt room	250				
	hotstone sauna	250				
	heat dome	250				
	ice room	250				
fitness & movement		viewing terrace	200			
		aerobics studio	500			
		aerobics studio	300			
		yoga room	500			
		yoga room	300			
exercise rooms	50 gsf	weights	600			
			8000			
		walking track				
program total	net		85295			
		12%-15% building	12794			
		12.5% of pool water surface	4338			
		8% building gross	6824			
		proposed building program	109250			
		existing building	148530			
		carved building difference	21515			
		17765				

Figure 33. Tabular Program (Source: Author)

Chapter 6: Site Selection and Analysis

Site Positioning

The site is situated at the intersection of residential scales, transit lines, and urban centers, positioning it as an intermediary threshold in the urban fabric. While currently vacant, it embodies both a void and a potential connector between neighborhoods and infrastructures. This in-between condition presents itself as an ideal incubator for intergenerational connection as absence can be transformed into presence. Rather than creating community from scratch, adaptive reuse builds on what already exists, bolstering it with the intergenerational opportunities it lacks. By reusing vacant infrastructure in this way, the site demonstrates how architecture can help strengthen cohesion in the surrounding community.

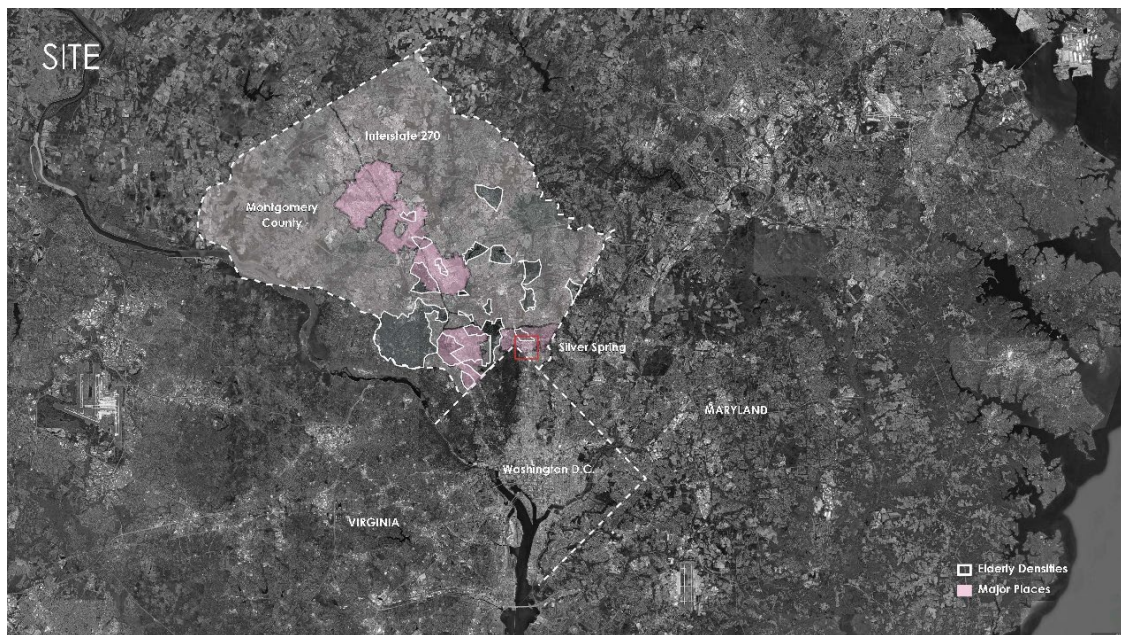


Figure 34. Location Map: Intermedia Thresholds and Population Demographics (Source: Author)

The site is in Silver Spring, Maryland. This site was chosen because it is at an intermediate threshold between Montgomery County and Washington DC. Montgomery

county is also noted for being the county with the highest populations of 55+, 65+, and 85+ individuals in comparison to the rest of the DMV. Silver Spring is also considered a major place in Montgomery County, making it a ripe spot for testing this thesis.

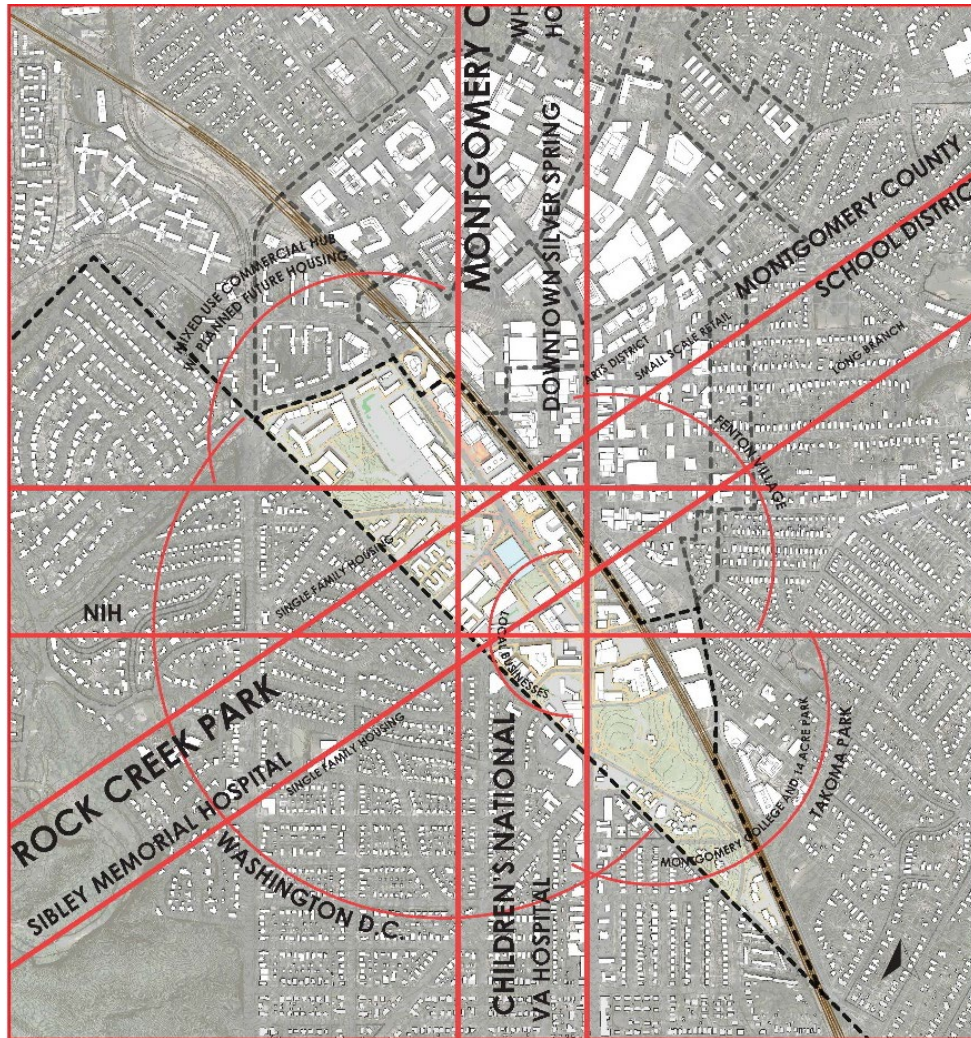


Figure 35. Intersecting Site Forces (Source: Author)

Zooming in further, South Silver Spring presents a mix of residential fabric, commercial zones, vacant or underutilized properties and a network of potential collaborators like Montgomery College. The area itself is at the intersection of different neighborhoods, downtowns, and contains the very social ingredients that might benefit from strengthened intergenerational connection.

Raymond Lucas describes context as “the messiness of everyday life” which is to say that architecture must contend with real-life conditions - social, political, historical, and material. For the thesis topic on intergenerational use, programming, and connectedness, the question arises from a critique of the age-segmentation in American cities and suburbs. In this way, the thesis operates at a scale that feels broadly universal but must be tested through a specific, situated intervention. The approach is through a building type that invites multiple generations into a shared space that has layered uses and routine encounters. The criteria should also keep in mind previous research findings and support strategies that prepare readiness in young children⁶², promote prosocial values in adolescents⁶³, and maximize performance potential in older adults⁶⁴.



Figure 36. Site Context Diagram (Source: Author)

⁶² Mollborn, “Young Children’s Developmental Ecologies and Kindergarten Readiness.”

⁶³ Wray-Lake et al., “Developmental Change in Social Responsibility during Adolescence.”

⁶⁴ Lawton et al., *Aging and the Environment*.

Site positioning matters because the thesis is rooted in a specific social context where the target users are those within younger and older generations who may be experiencing changes either physically, mentally, emotionally, or socially. The thesis focuses on these vulnerable populations in response to the singular nature of the built environment in the U.S. In a way, architecture becomes a symbol of resilience through social or individual change. To charge the chosen site, specific criteria include adjacency to nearby institutions and businesses with an existing or growing residential fabric. The Montgomery County planning department includes this site within their Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, officially approved and adopted in June 2022.⁶⁵

Site Analysis

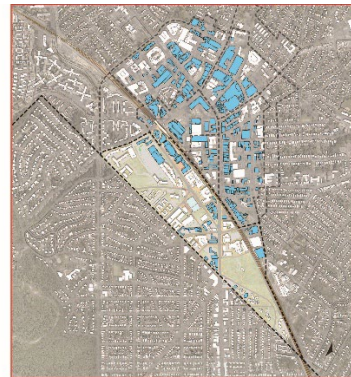
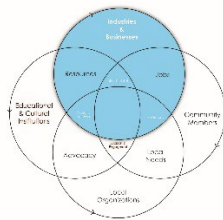


Figure 37. Industries and Business (Source: Author)

Site Analysis

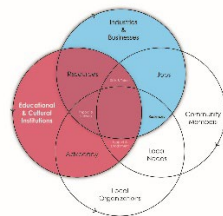


Figure 38. Education & Cultural Institutions (Source: Author)

⁶⁵ Montgomery Planning, “Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan.”

Site Analysis

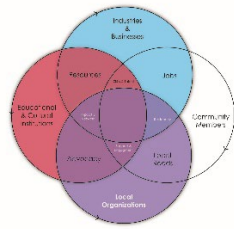


Figure 39. Local Organizations (Source: Author)

Site Analysis

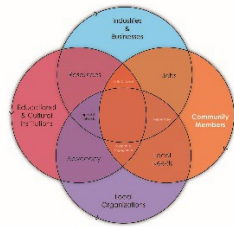


Figure 40. Community Members (Source: Author)

Site Analysis



Figure 41. Opportunity for Overlap (Source: Author)

Notable residential adjacencies to the site include the co-housing community at Eastern Village Apartments⁶⁶, the future development of The Blairs multi-use complex⁶⁷, and the neighborhood of single-family dwellings across Eastern Ave within the Washington D.C. border. These adjacencies, and in their variety, show the potential for even more diverse ranges of unit sizes to accommodate individuals and families of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds. A combination of missing middle housing types, small apartment buildings, cooperative housing, and accessory dwelling units have the potential to thrive in the south silver spring district given its strong residential character and community that already exists. Although the thesis will not focus on the future/potential housing opportunities, the site selection considered these criteria of affordable and diverse housing options within an urban context, suitable for people and families of all ages.

Additionally, Montgomery College's west campus is situated near the focus site context, which includes its Cultural Arts Center, Health Sciences Center, and the Cafritz Foundation Arts Center. The campus is within the 1/2 mile radius of the focus building site. According to the sector plan, which pulls survey data from residents and leaders, there is a desire for Montgomery College to expand its programming and outreach to the South Silver Spring District. This partnership would provide a network of collaborations with already existing programs, educators, and thought leaders.

Ample parks and open green spaces also contribute to the unique character of the South Silver Spring district. Most notably, Jesup Blair Park, a 14-acre parkland owned by Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), is a huge opportunity site for increased outdoor recreation and activation. Part of the greater sector plan to activate

⁶⁶ "Eastern Village Cohousing."

⁶⁷ "Development Review Search - Plan Number 120130220."

an outer and inner green loop around the totality of downtown silver spring, the park space could be activated as a destination park, one that would energize the chosen focus site. Equally important is the 1-acre open space located at 1110 East West Hwy, which is the abutting site to 8045 Kennett Street. M-NCPPC purchased the property from the National Tire and Battery in 2021 with the intention of demolishing the building and transforming the lot into an urban recreational park. The project status shows that demolition is complete, and park construction is slated to start in late April or early May 2025 with an already approved park plan.⁶⁸ While this is a promising addition to the south silver spring area, the park design may only serve temporary benefits. The park itself is currently surrounded by vacant buildings and non-users. The park needs to be activated, and the 8045 Kennett Street building is ideally positioned to do so. Not to mention that Jesup Blair Park would be a more impactful and opportune space to focus renovation efforts for maximal impact, especially given its existing nature but overgrown and underutilized status.

A prominent business headquartered in northern downtown Silver Spring is United Therapeutics, a biotech company that focuses on creating products that address the medical needs of patients with chronic illnesses.⁶⁹ This would be very interesting to explore because as people are living longer, they also experience more years with chronic illnesses. As the gap between lifespan and health span grows, people live longer but may deal with symptoms and limitations of chronic conditions that make everyday a little more challenging. A potential partnership with this business in the area could support the thesis's goals of improving health and well-being through ideation and entrepreneurship at the community level. That is, collaboration with large corporations and community needs could be more interconnected through local community experiences and ideation.

⁶⁸ Montgomery Parks, "South Silver Spring Urban Park."

⁶⁹ United Therapeutics, "United Therapeutics Leadership & Corporate Governance."



Figure 42. Figure Ground Diagram (Source: Author)

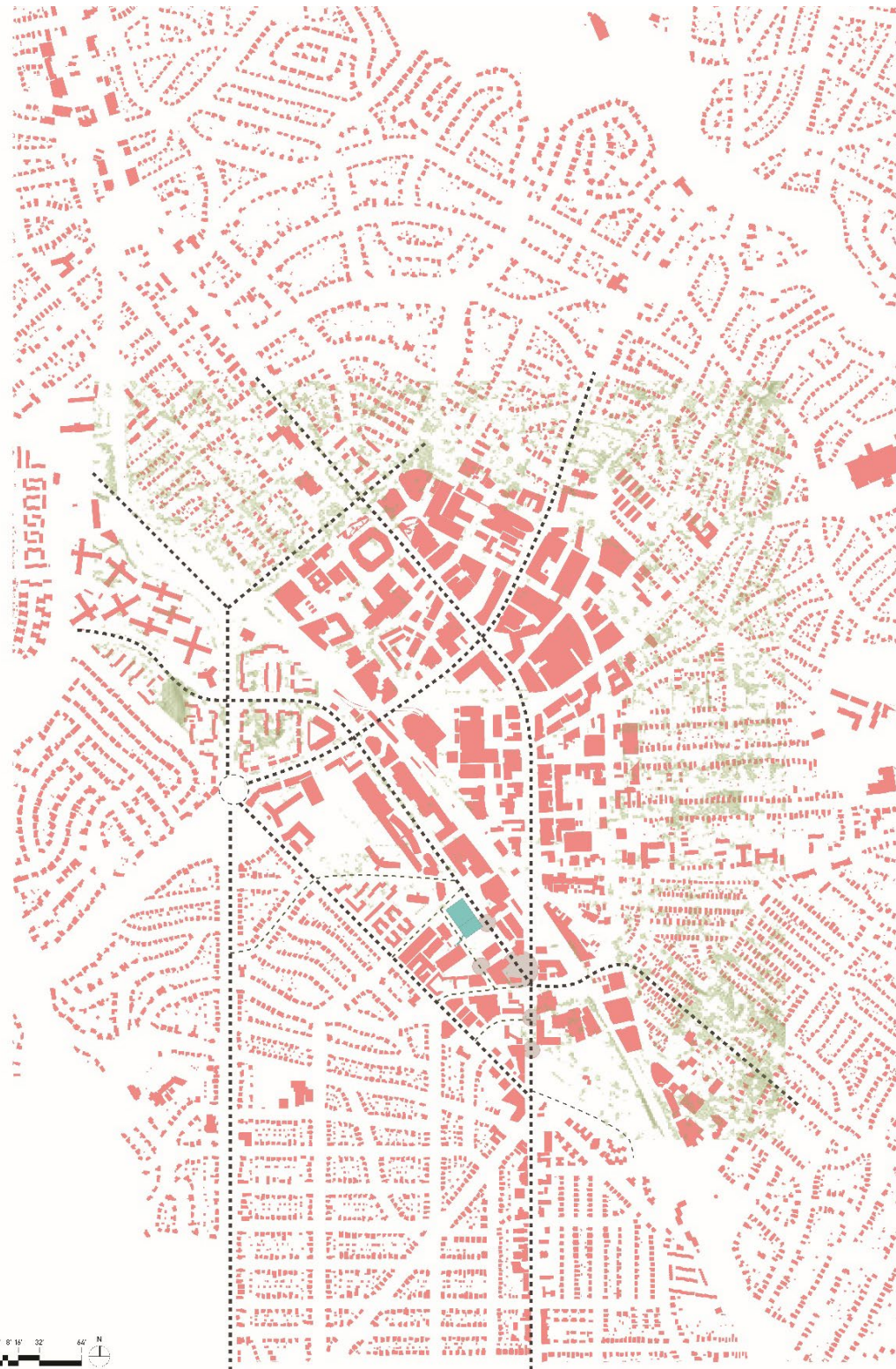


Figure 43. Site Analysis (Buildings, Major Corridors, Tree Canopy, Pedestrian Risks) (Source: Author)

Building for Adaptive Reuse

The building located at 8045 Kennett St Silver Spring⁷⁰ opened in 1994 as a 3-story Big Box Department Store called the Caldor Building. In developing the site for the department store, the proposal advocated for providing 200 new jobs for the south central business district, as no major redevelopment was carried out in the south district in comparison to the other silver spring districts. This project was also aimed at enhancing Acorn park in order to maintain a sense of place and preservation. During the proposal process, the planning commission also advocated for a connecting garage that would play a part in serving the whole area, not just the Caldor building itself. For that reason, the design of the garage was intricately planned and designed. The Caldor chain struggled to keep up with competitors like Wal-Mart. After filing for bankruptcy in 1995, they chose to close the Silver Spring store in 1998. The building was repurposed in 1999 for the Discovery Communications Inc tenancy. The use was converted into offices and an accessory television broadcasting studio.

When the Discovery Communications Inc headquarters moved into the existing masonry building, they were seen as a new anchor to the silver spring community, giving vibrancy and jobs to the area.⁷¹ Established in 1982, the company was known for its factual and lifestyle television brands including Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, Science Channel, and TLC. In 2018, Discovery Inc acquired Scripps Networks Interactive which added Food Network, HGTV, and Travel channel to the portfolio. Since its notable growth, Discovery prides itself on serving members of “passionate audiences”. The company moved its headquarters to New York City in 2019, leaving the 8045 Kennett Street site vacant and

⁷⁰ Park and Recreation - Prince Georges County MD, “The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.”

⁷¹ “Discovery Communications Broadens Expansion Plan With Lease of Former Caldor Site in South Silver Spring.”

unused since then. In conjunction with the pandemic, uncertainty about what is to come for the area was felt by the surrounding neighborhood and businesses. Evidently, other businesses closed including Nia's Early Learning and Development Center, the Denizens Brewing Co. taproom, and other commercial and office leases in and along the immediate Georgia Avenue corridor. Fortunately, the neighborhood might be seeing a turnaround with Dacha Beer Garden planning to take over where Denizens used to be.

The building at 8045 Kennett Street in its current state can be revitalized as a useful resource for the surrounding community. During the initial site zero field visit, there were many signs of a lively community from the spontaneous sightings and hearings of children playing and laughing, people of all ages walking and passing through on their way to somewhere, and many dog owners taking their dogs for walks. However, just around the old Caldor building there was a gap felt, with valuable space being inactive and not reaching its potential. To note, the garage was actually beautifully detailed and seemed well used by the surrounding community.

According to the posted leasing information, the building specs for the first floor include 1862 SF of data center space, several editing suites with voice booths, a mix of office and private workspace, an atrium cafe, escalators to the third level, two elevators, and a loading area with three freight elevators. The mezzanine space includes private offices and open space with two editing rooms/offices. There is direct access to the cafe area and first floor conference room with functional garage doors. The mezzanine has an optional 2-story lobby entrance with elevator access to floors one, two, and three. The third floor space has 7,634 sf of data center space, 2,934 USF of mechanical/electrical area with full backup power generator, a highly collaborative open area, private offices with vaulted ceilings, kitchenette and lounge area, and an enclosed garage access bridge with reception and security. The

fourth-floor space boasts a large open office area with access to natural light. There are more private offices with vaulted ceilings, a kitchenette, two conference rooms, a barn style conference room with collaborative workspace, access to two freight elevators, and an elevator to garage covered entrance. The architectural drawings showing plans, sections, and elevations were found in the Montgomery County Development Activity Information Center.⁷²

Over the last 20 years, the downtown residential population has doubled from under 7,000 people (2000) to over 12,000 people (2021)⁷³. The growth is due to the success of public and private investment and the 2000 Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan. Among the list of major recommendations that came out of the 2000 sector plan, one stood out: “provide civic facilities that will help to make the downtown a center of community civic and cultural life.”⁷⁴ That is, local residents of all ages want programs related to affordable housing, spaces for youth, jobs, and connection to the local art scene.



Figure 44 "What we've heard" graphic from the 2022 Communities Plan Booklet (Source: Silver Spring Adopted Approved)

⁷² “Development Review Search - Plan Number 819940300.”

⁷³ “The Third Place » Silver Spring: Journey from Suburb to City and What the next 20 Years May Hold | MontgomeryPlanning.Org.”

⁷⁴ Montgomery Planning, “Silver Spring CBD.”

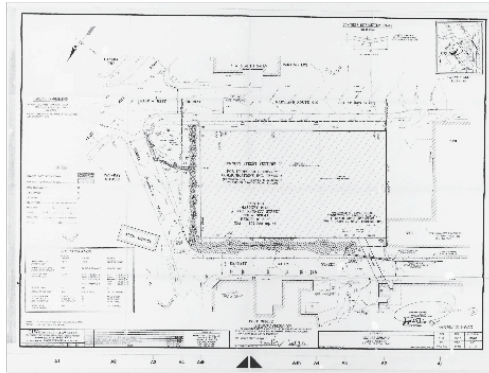


Figure 45 Site Plan Archive Provided by Montgomery County Development Review Database Plan Number 819940300, 120130220 (Source: Montgomery County Database)

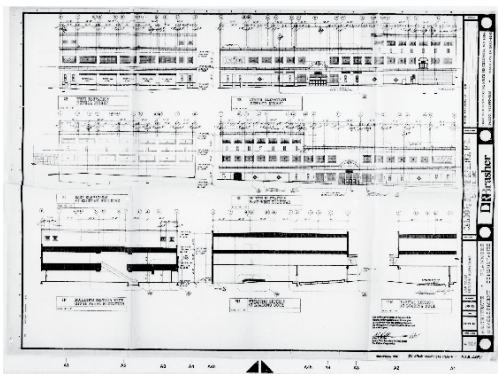
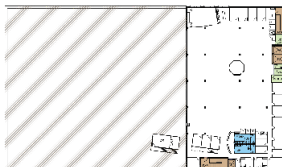


Figure 46 Elevations and Sections Archive Provided by Montgomery County Development Review Database Plan Number 819940300, 120130220 (Source: Montgomery County Database)

FLOOR PLANS

4th floor - 21,330 SF



- 4TH FLOOR SPECS:**
- Large common area with great window line
 - Private offices with vaulted ceilings
 - Kitchenette and two conference rooms
 - Built-in conference room in the middle of highly collaborative work space
 - Access to two freight elevators
 - Covered in garage covered entrance

FLOOR PLANS

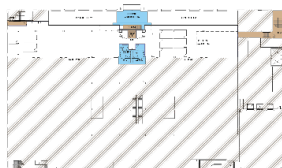
First floor - 56,342 SF



- FIRST FLOOR SPECS:**
- 1,682 US - 2" state center space
 - Several end shop suites with voice control
 - Mix of office and private work space
 - Person's work area
 - Escalators to the third level and two elevators
 - Load mg 2nd and freight elevators

FLOOR PLANS

2nd floor - Mezzanine - 11,113 SF



- MEZZANINE SPECS:**
- Can be combined with first floor for a large open area
 - Private offices and open space
 - 2 Soling rooms for use
 - Direct access to call area and private conference rooms with mechanical garage doors
 - Optional / entry lobby / entrance
 - Intersected access to main lobby, main and main

FLOOR PLANS

3rd floor - 59,746 SF



- THIRD FLOOR SPECS:**
- 7,234 SF data center
 - 2,704 LOF Mezzanine, laboratory area with full, storage corner
 - Highly collaborative open area
 - Private offices with vaulted ceilings
 - Kitchenette and lounge area
 - 1 covered garage entrance bridge with integrated, top city view

Figure 47 Existing Floor Plans and Building Specs from Discovery Inc Office Building Use Provided by the Building Leasing Pamphlet from Cushman & Wakefield

Site Fieldwork

An initial site visit was conducted in April of 2025 within the south silver spring region. The visit began in the residential neighborhoods west of Eastern Avenue. At the time of the visit, two potential sites were identified. The first potential site discovered was the open space at Blair Mill Road. This site is characterized by an underutilized and vacant parcel adjacent to high rise multifamily apartments and a shopping plaza with a large grocery store chain and surface parking. This site was unique for its edge condition right along the D.C. border and would have been influenced by the spatial and use difference within its block. The second potential site discovered is along E-W highway and incorporates a 150,000 SF vacant office building, vacant open space, and local businesses. This site is also located on a primary approach to Montgomery College East campus and Jesup Blair park.

The field study began at the open space site option and was conducted moving south towards Jesup Blair park. The fieldwork was fully conducted by walking on foot and pausing during moments of discovery and observation. Fieldwork occurred for 3 hours on a Thursday evening. Fieldwork methods consisted of map notations, photography, and section-perspective sketches. A site matrix compared the two potential options based on criteria of population demographics, adaptive reuse potential, connection to arts district or historical sites, scale, and threshold. Ultimately, the second site located along E-W highway was selected with a specific focus on the vacant office building.

A follow-up site visit was conducted on September 9, 2025. With the help of Megan and Peter at Cushman & Wakefield, I was able to tour the inside of the building.

ADDRESS: 8045 Kennett St, Silver Spring, MD 20910

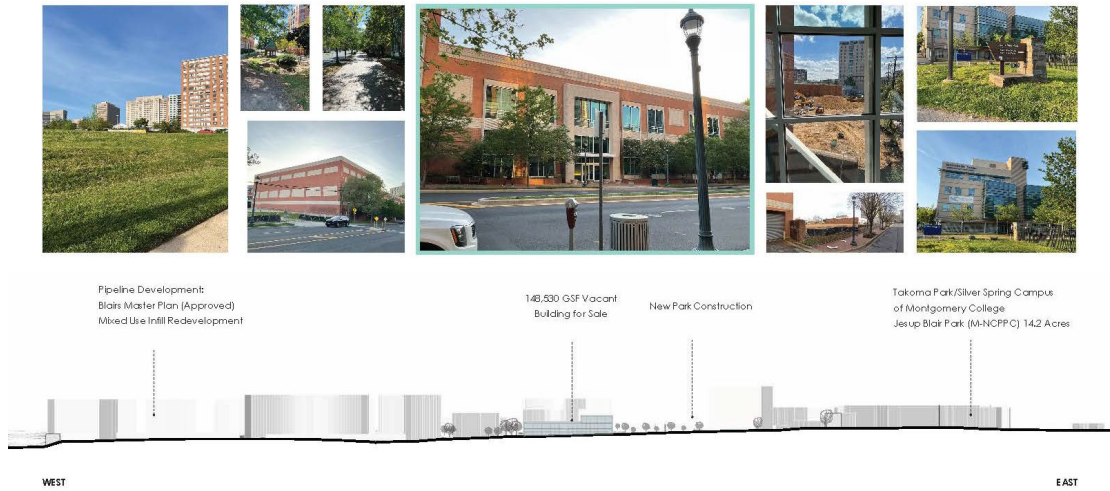


Figure 48. Surrounding Site: Future Growth and Connection to Silver Spring Green Loop Trail

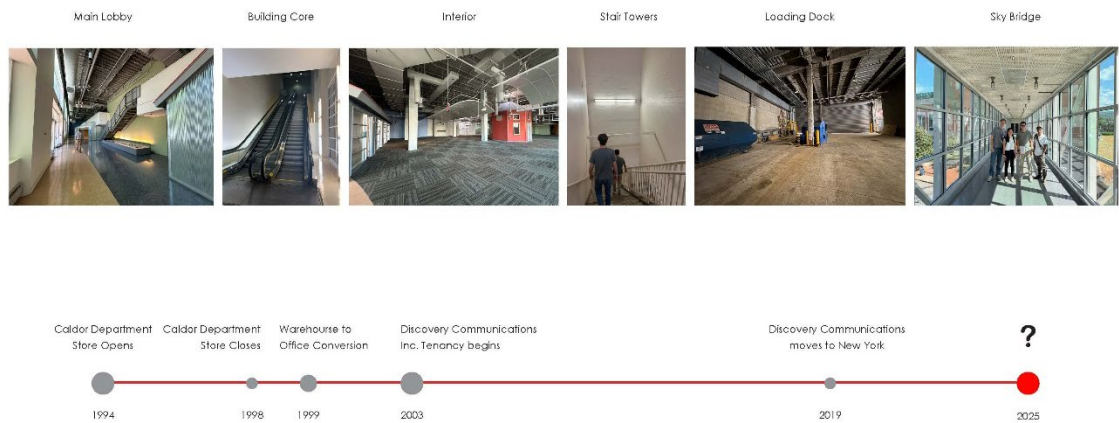


Figure 49. Site Visit: Understanding Existing Conditions

The existing building is constructed with a steel frame and concrete floor slabs, supported by steel bracing and corner stair towers that act as shear walls. It measures approximately 320 by 190 feet and is three stories tall, with an average 24-foot floor-to-floor heights. This structural makeup emphasizes the building's large floor plates and overall solidity. The exterior consists of a brick veneer with CMU backup. An existing central core connects the two primary entrances fronting East–West Highway and Kennett Street. All existing data and mechanical systems will require full replacement.

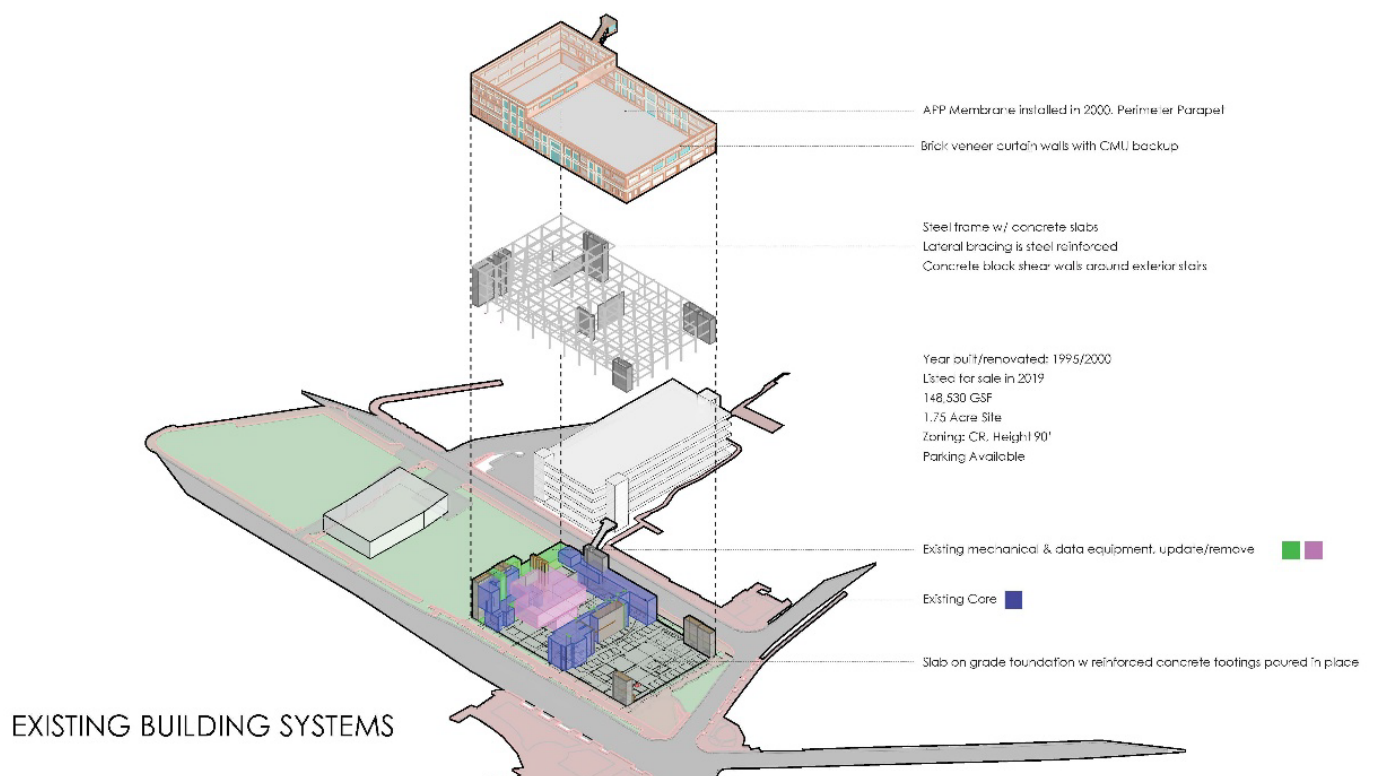


Figure 50. Existing Building Systems (Source: Author)

Chapter 7: Discovery Phase: Thesis Conceptual Testing

Concept Generation During Research

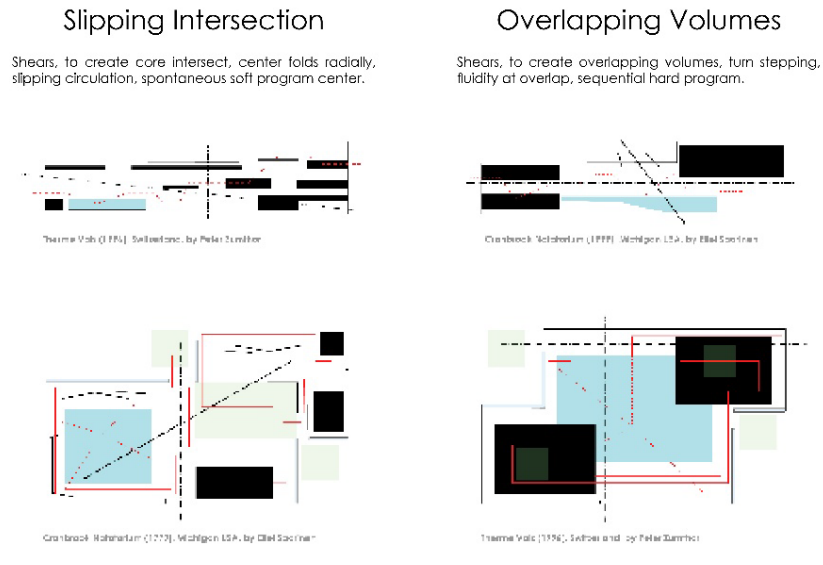


Figure 51. Spatial Exploration (Source: Author)

Concept Generation During Design

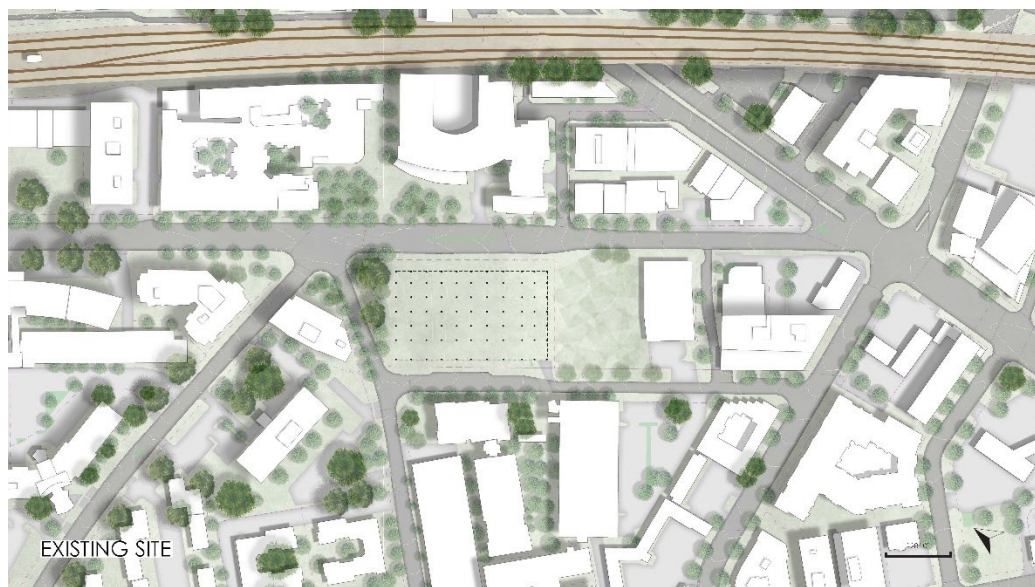


Figure 52. Existing Site Before Intervention (Source: Author)

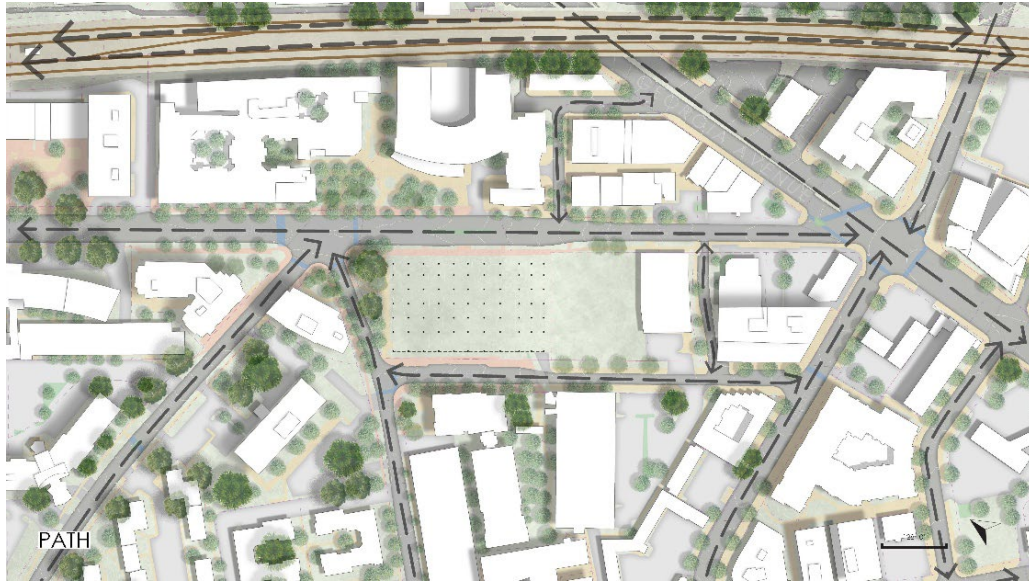


Figure 53. Paths (Source: Author)

Existing paths are primarily defined by vehicular streets. Sidewalk space is provided; however, some areas lack street amenities that allow for comfortability and safety.

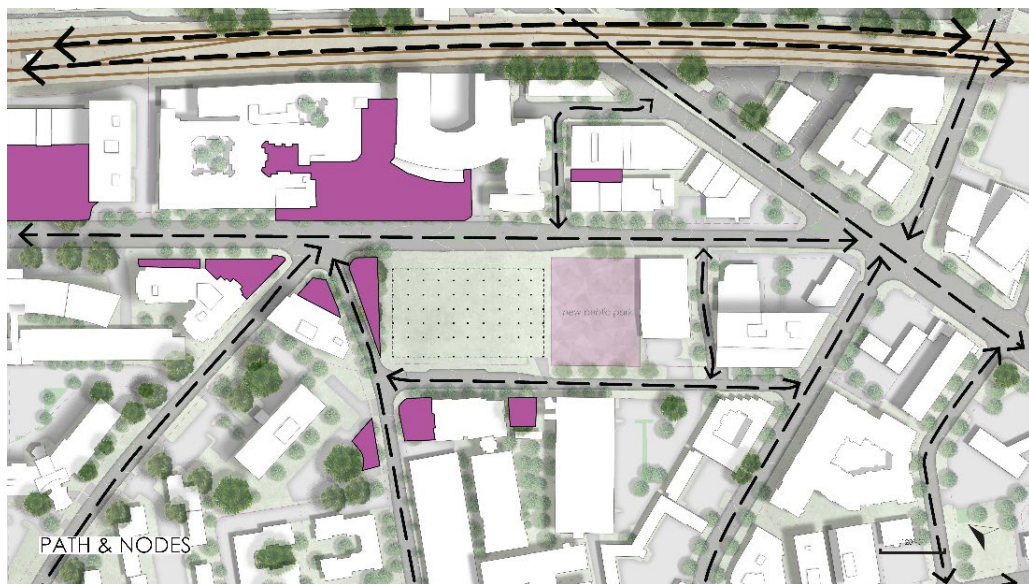


Figure 54. Paths & Nodes (Source: Author)

Existing and incoming nodes provide spaces of rest and refuge along these paths, but they are mainly only visited by residents who live in the area.

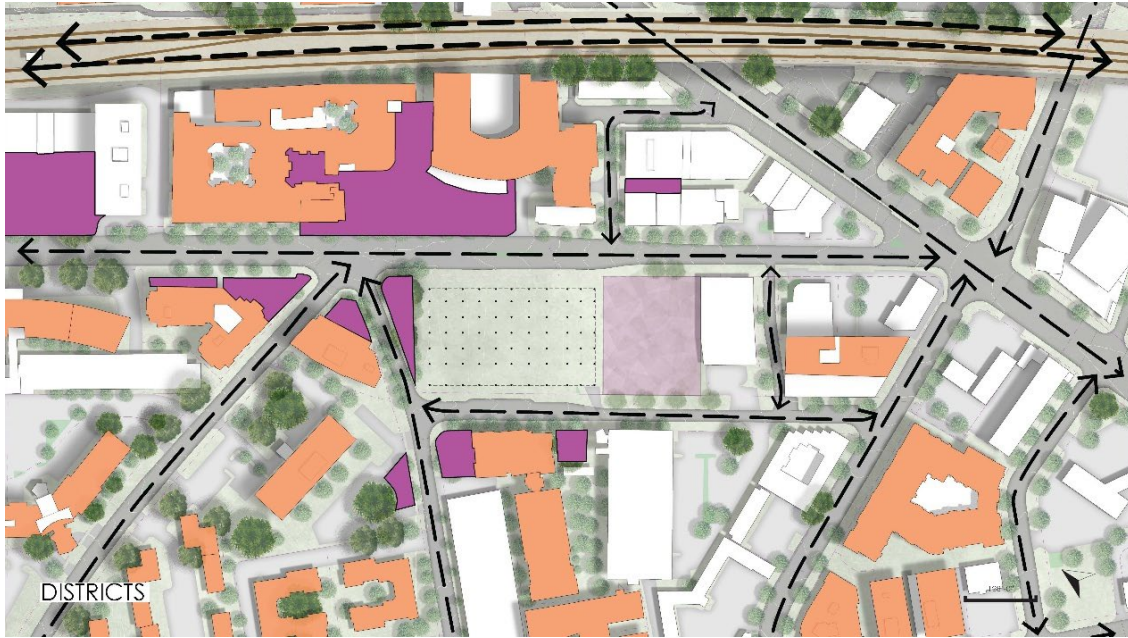


Figure 55. Neighborhood Districts (Source: Author)

Most of what is highlighted in orange here are multifamily residential towers.

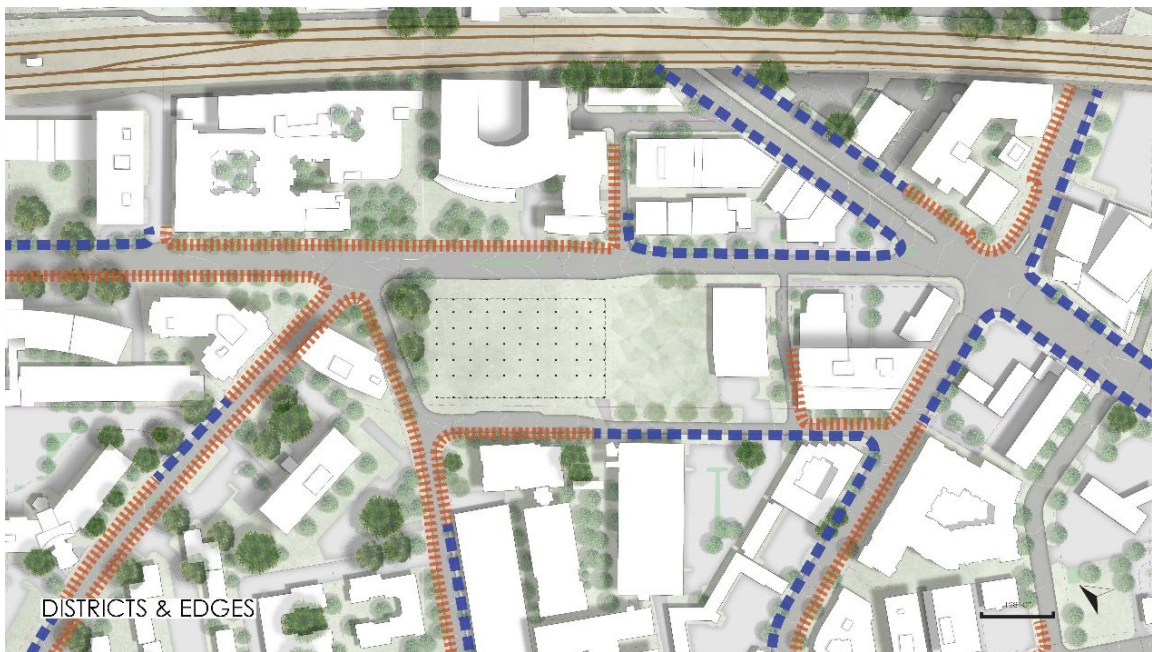


Figure 56. Residential Edges (Orange) and Commercial Edges (Blue) (Source: Author)

These residential districts and commercial zones characterize the edges that inform the site.

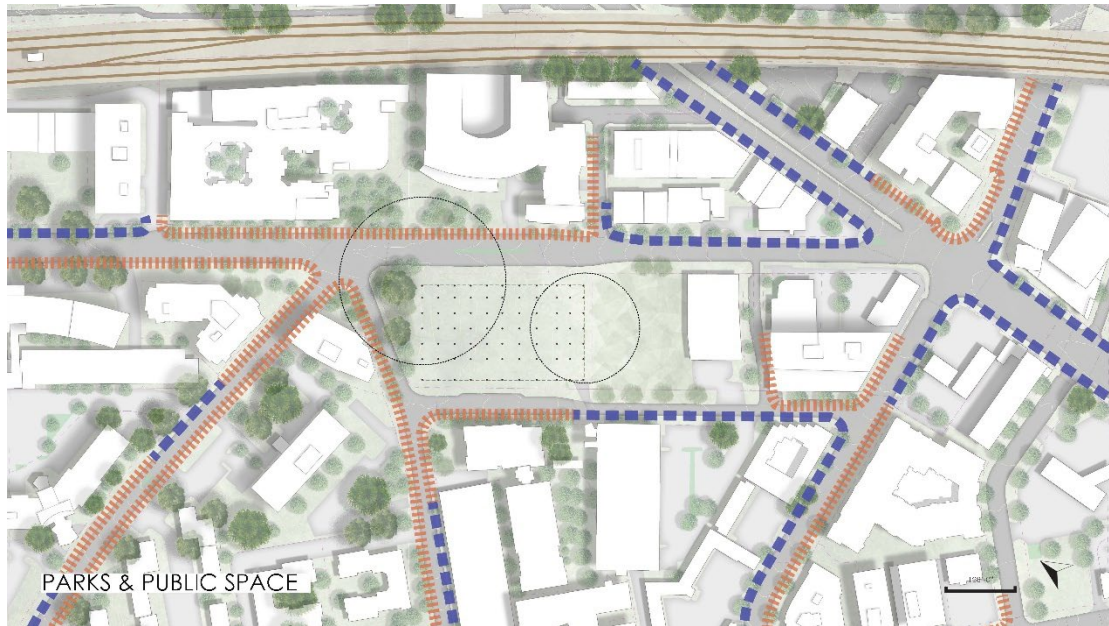


Figure 57. Parks & Public Space (Source: Author)

Responding to these edges, I identified surrounding parks and public spaces as opportunities to more fully integrate the building into its context.

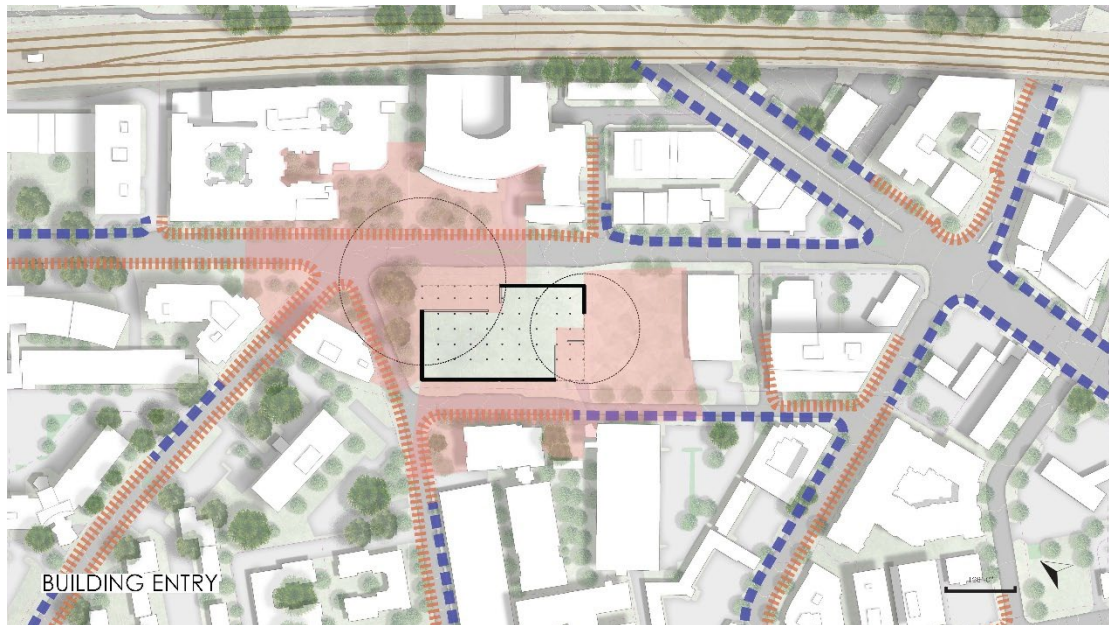


Figure 58. Building Entry (Source: Author)

These public edges are then pulled inward, where civic space becomes intertwined with the building at its primary entries.

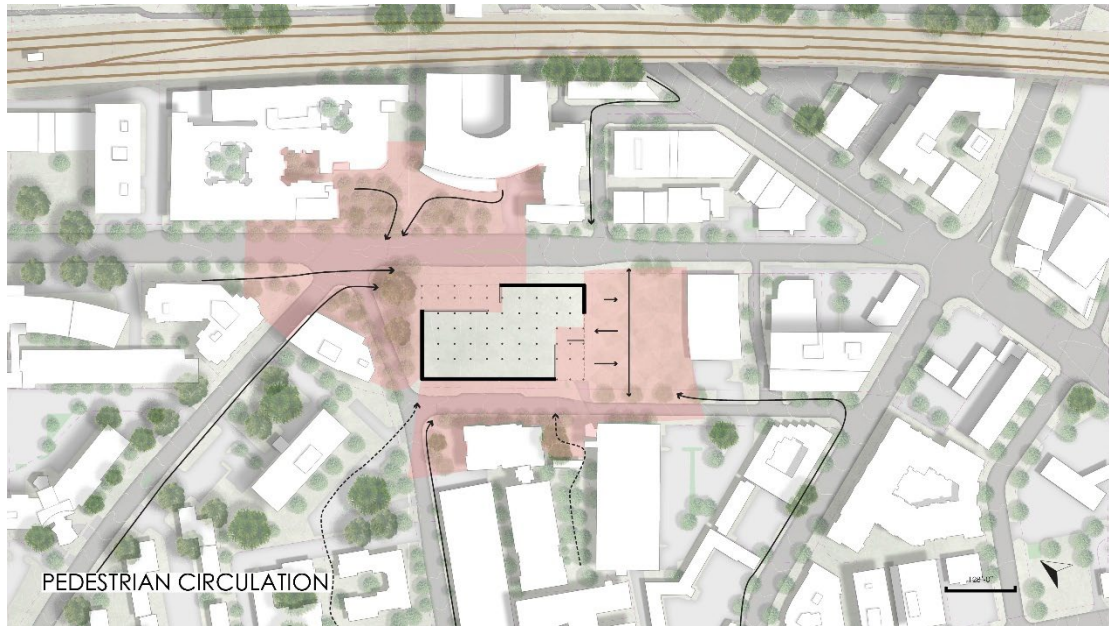


Figure 59. Pedestrian Circulation (Source: Author)

Pedestrian circulation reinforces this relationship, drawing movement from the surrounding pathways directly into and through the building.

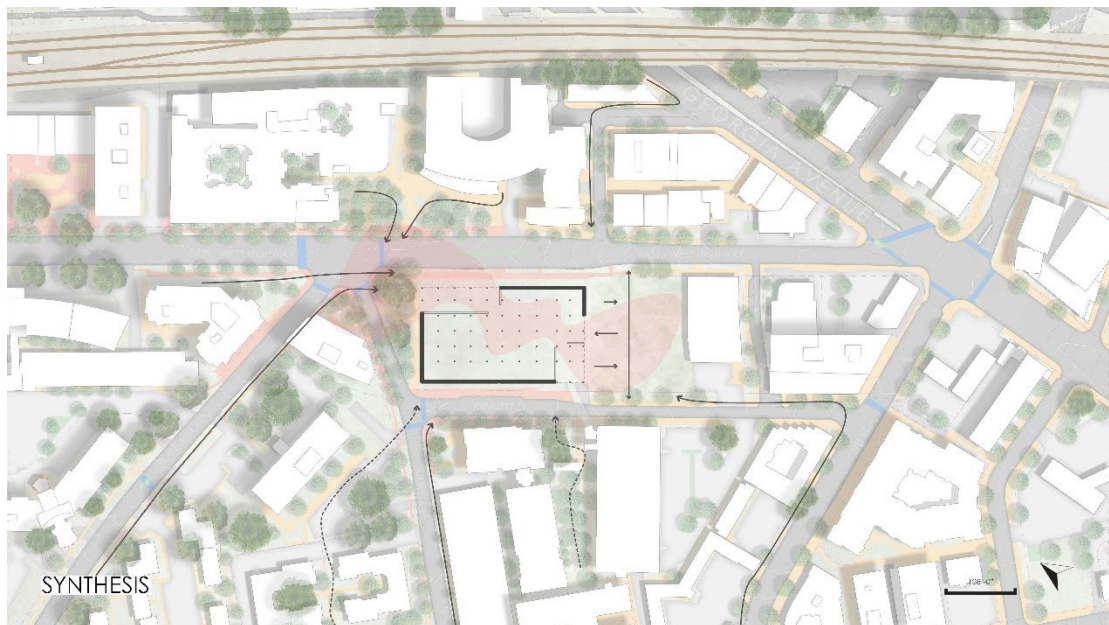


Figure 60. Site Synthesis (Source: Author)

And a new, connective core emerges.

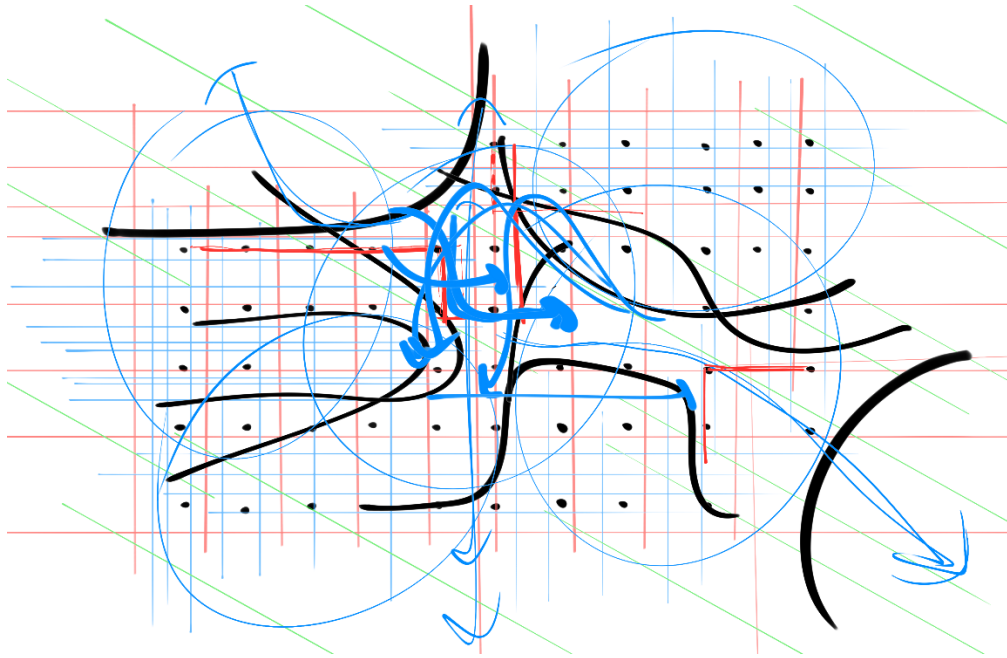


Figure 61. Conceptual Testing, Site & Building (Source: Author)

Through adaptive reuse, a vacant building like this can be reimagined to serve the needs of the surrounding community. Strategic carving transforms the once segmented block into a porous structure that brings people together. This transformation is driven by the people and their needs, a point of convergence.

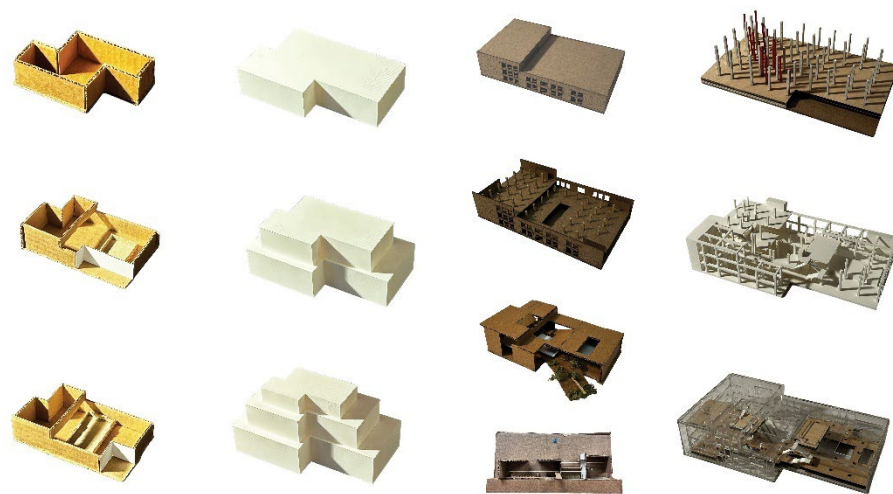


Figure 62. Concept Testing with Models (Source: Author)

Concept Generation Through Physical Modeling

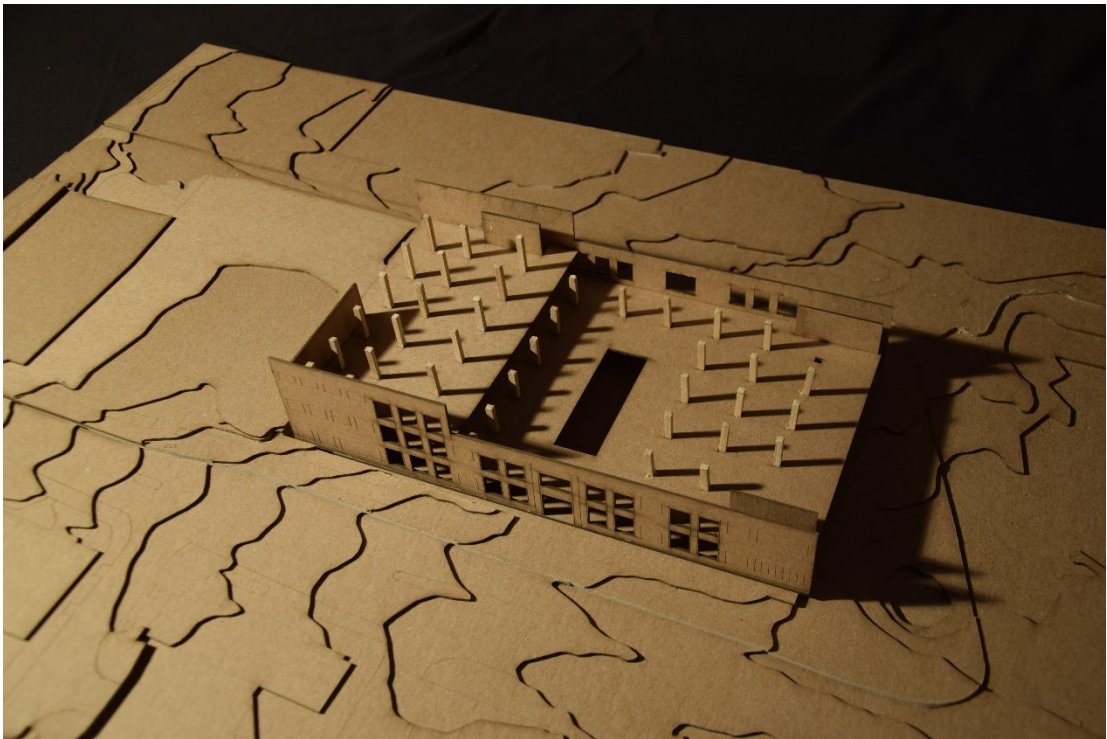


Figure 63. Existing Building (Source: Author)



Figure 64. Concept Testing – Connective Core/New Axis (Source: Author)



Figure 65. Intersecting Datums (Source: Author)

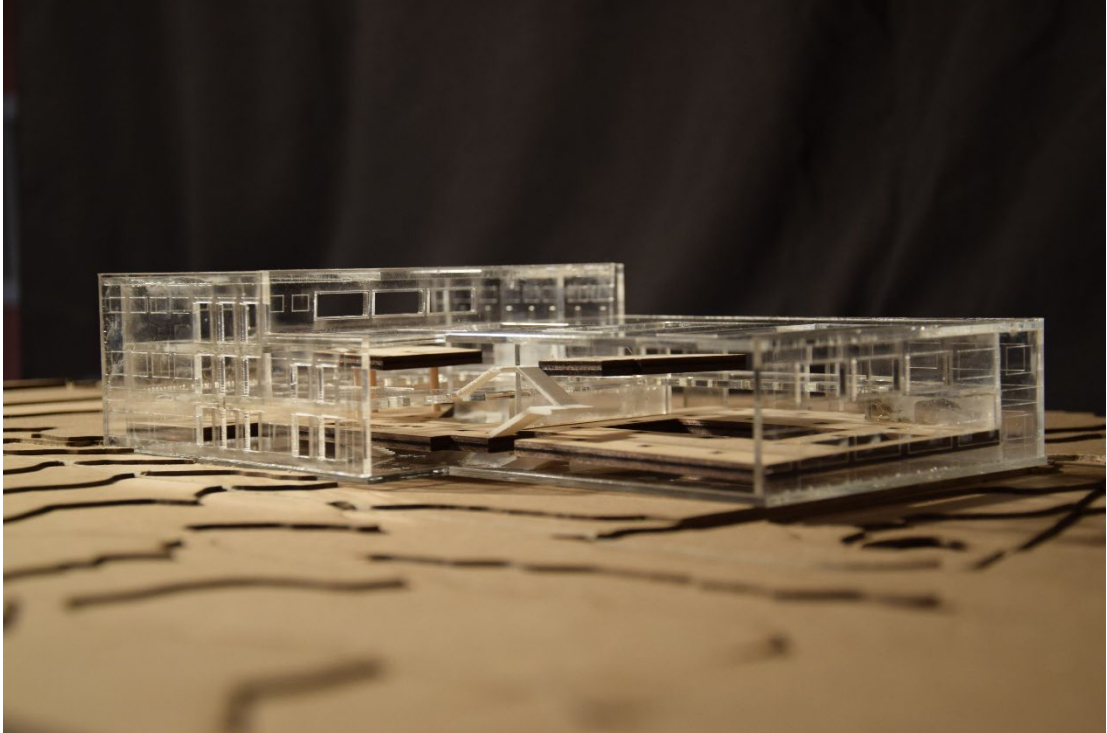


Figure 66. Representation Model - New & Old Planes (Source: Author)

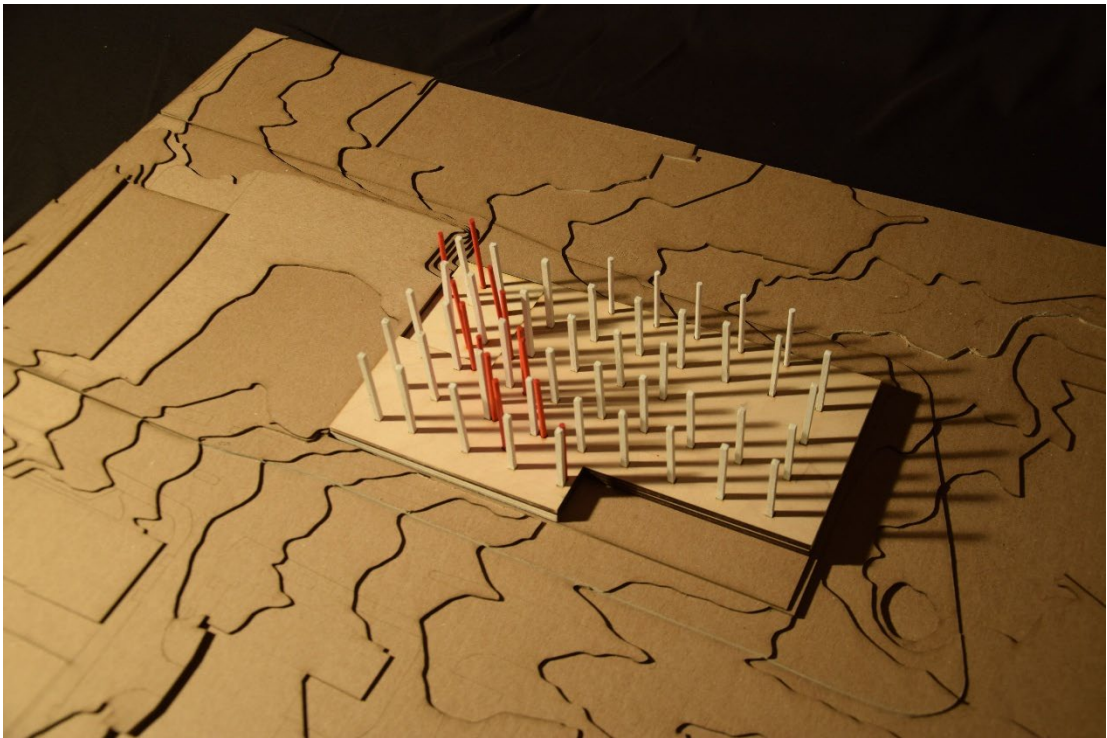


Figure 67. Representation Model - New & Old Column Grid (Source: Author)

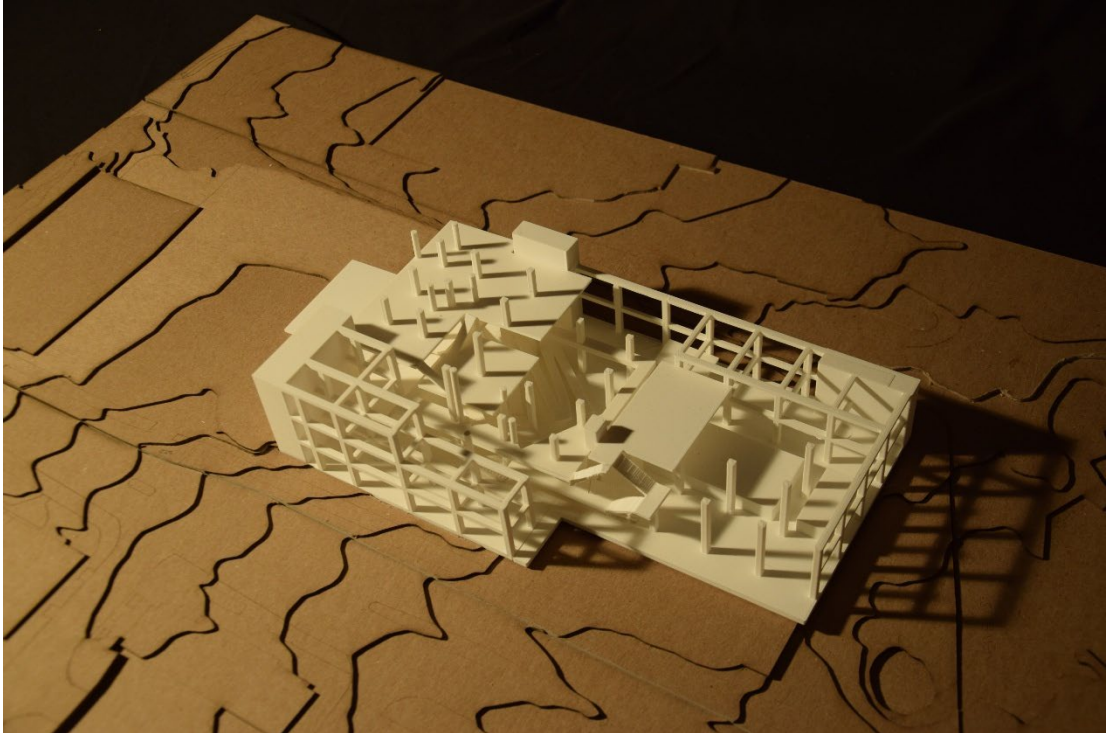


Figure 68. Representation Model - Interior Massing (Source: Author)

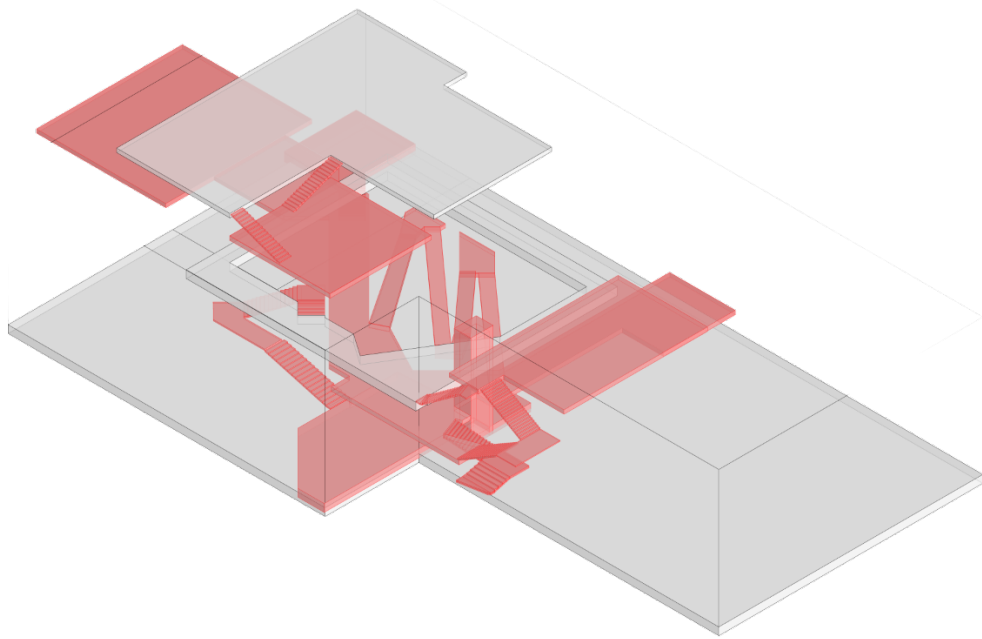


Figure 69. Circulation (Source: Author)

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Concluding Remarks

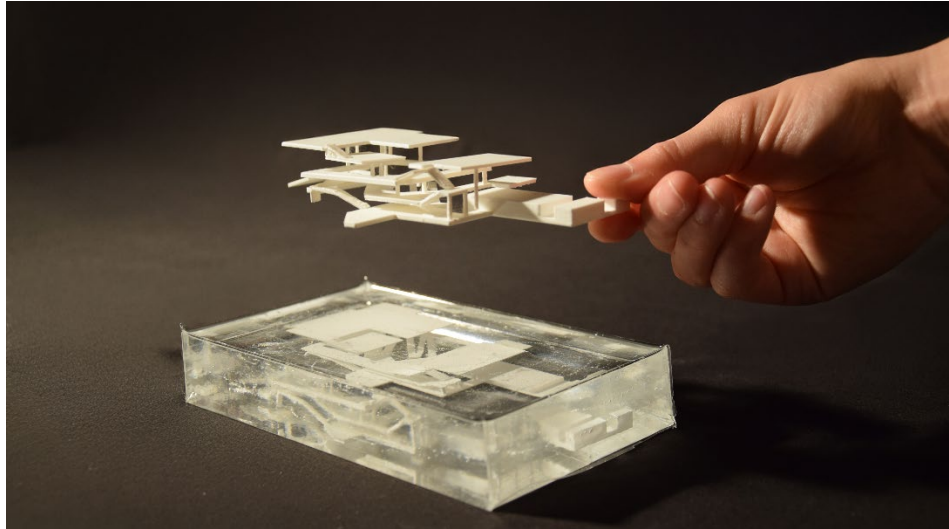


Figure 70. *From Overlooked to Overlap* (Resin Model by Author)

This thesis began with a fundamental question: in what ways can obsolete buildings be transformed to support intergenerational connection, elevate well-being, and build community cohesion? The resulting project, *From Overlooked to Overlap*, asserts that the built environment can actively choreograph encounters through the strategic manipulation of shared place and time. By addressing the social and physical silos that isolate the very young and the very old, this work challenges the modern infrastructure that prioritizes the middle generation. Through the adaptive reuse of an overlooked urban structure, the design replaces spatial disconnect with an interstitial zone, a physical manifestation of overlapping circulation, sightlines, and everyday routines.

The architectural intervention is grounded in the preservation of the original structure and envelope, guided by the principle that light and air are essential to a sensorial, wellness-oriented design. The site is reoriented to the public realm via a new plaza along East West Highway, while a secondary entrance on Kennett Street provides an accessible drop-off zone. At the main threshold, a new façade locks into the existing fabric, creating an intersection of

old and new planes. This dialogue between new and old continues inside, where an additional grid line delineates the space of overlap.

The ground floor contains an exhibit/gallery space which is wedged between a media library and the storytelling stage. The storytelling stage and stair landscape create a space for gathering, with the extra function of a ramped meandering pathway that takes you up to the second-floor plaza. With the proposed pool program, a large portion of the ground floor will be reserved for mechanical and structure to support the aquatic space. The ground floor is best characterized as a container of memories and knowledge, where sharing and storytelling by both younger and older perspectives can cross paths and be displayed for community members. The media library will have resources for people of all ages including reading rooms, library resources, and computer classes for older adults. The gathering space can be used for formal events, celebrations, as well as informal seating and chance encounters. The stair ramp acts as seating for when the stage is in use and it also provides a tactile landscape for children to navigate along.

The second level emerges as an elevated plaza that houses the aquatic center and connects to the new public park through an indoor–outdoor porch and café. This floor functions as a full insertion within the existing building. Pathways into the building converge at the interior plaza. A colonnade of new columns lines this pathway, interacting with the old columns. Sightlines are shared and light floods the once solid building. The existing third floor will be carved through according to its original grid. This floor houses the intergenerational classroom modules where retirees can teach and pass along their skills and knowledge to younger generations. The on-site wellness center is also located on this floor and is equipped with physical therapy services, as well as guided classes and unguided movement activities. Intergenerational classrooms become opportunities for exchange between generations, where knowledge, skills, and mentorship can occur. These classrooms

Design



Figure 72. Site Plan (Source: Author)

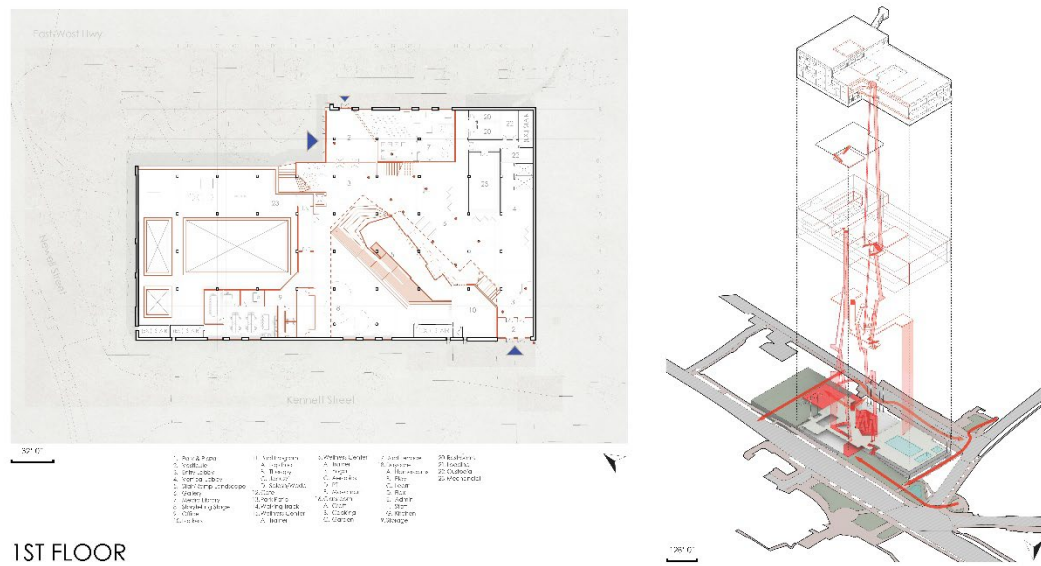


Figure 73. First Floor Plan (Source: Author)

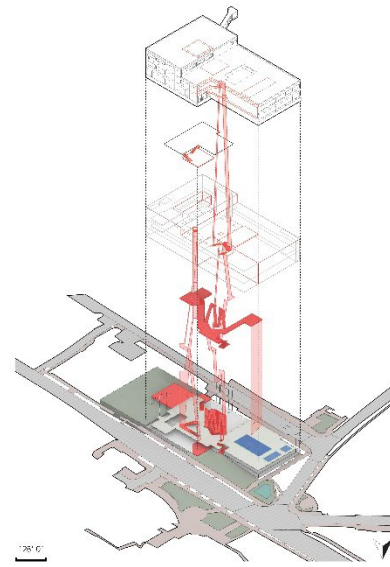
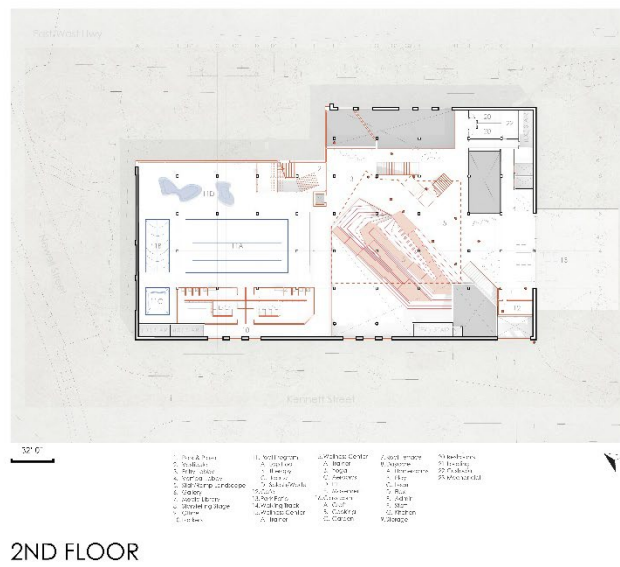


Figure 74. Second Floor Plan (Source: Author)

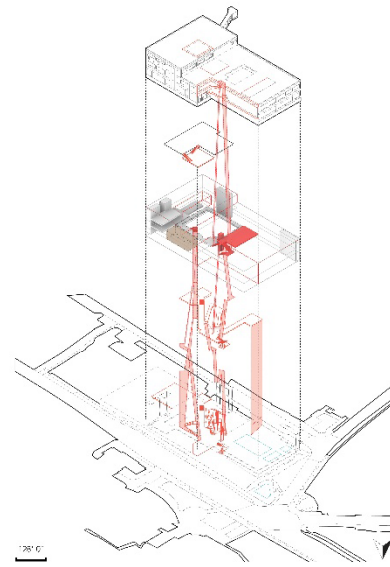
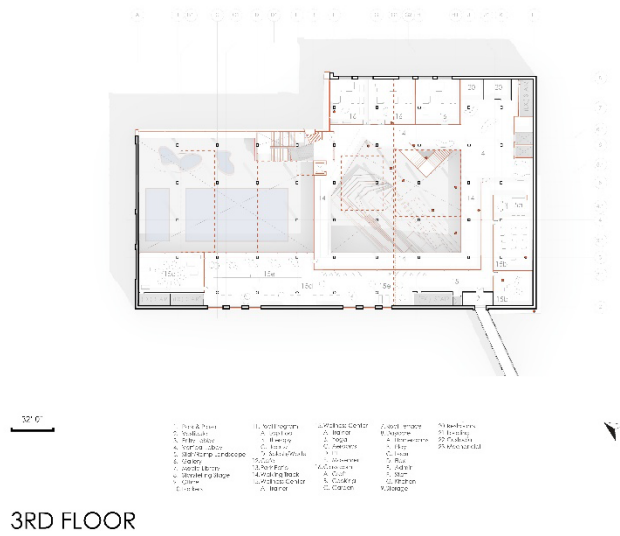


Figure 75. Third Floor Plan (Source: Author)

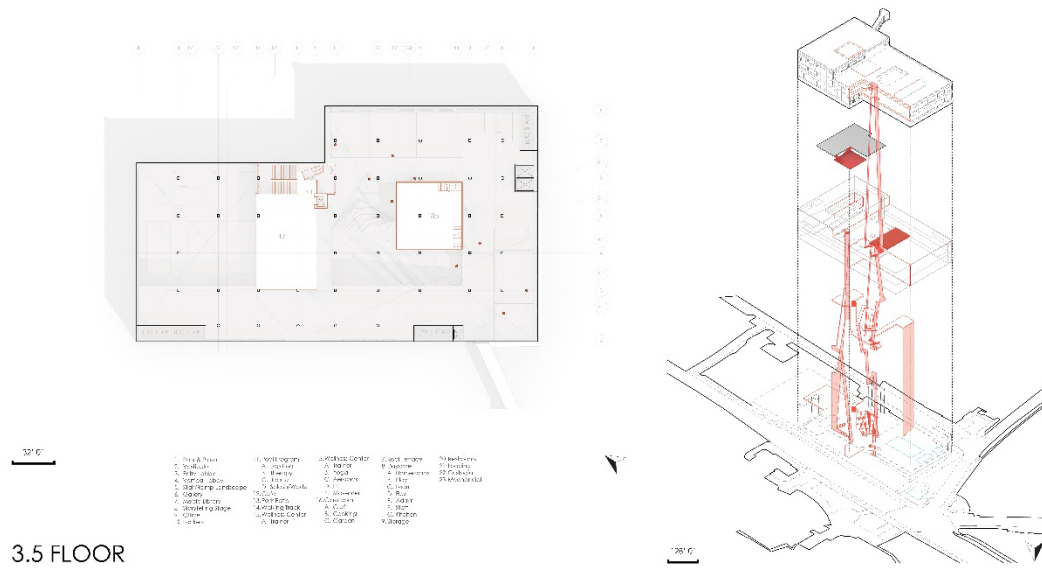


Figure 76. Third and a Half Floor Plan (Source: Author)

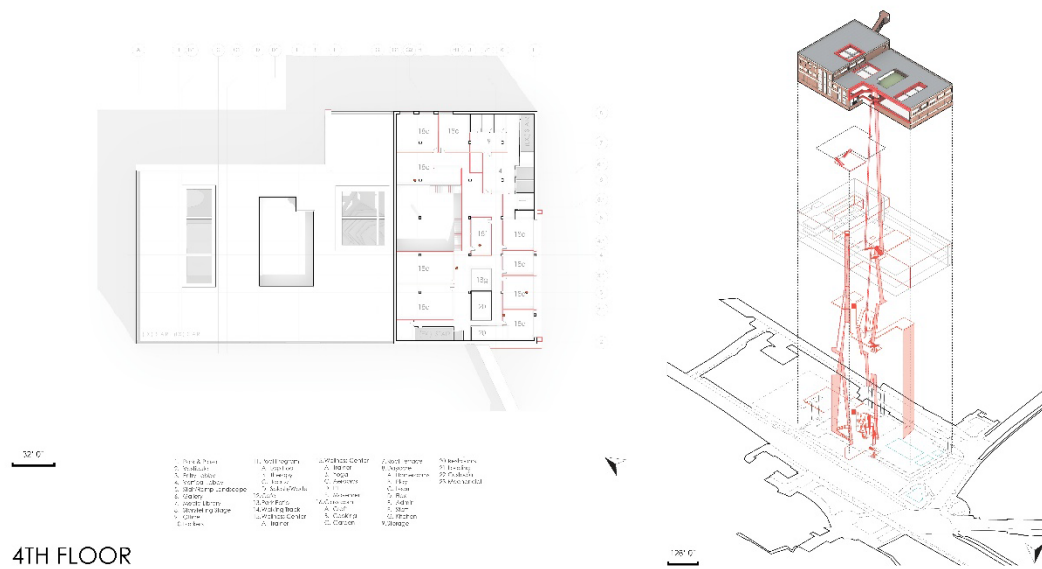


Figure 77. Fourth Floor Plan (Source: Author)



Figure 78. Main Entry (Source: Author)



Figure 79. Park Entry (Source: Author)



Figure 80. Exhibit Gallery (Source: Author)



Figure 81. Media Library (Source: Author)

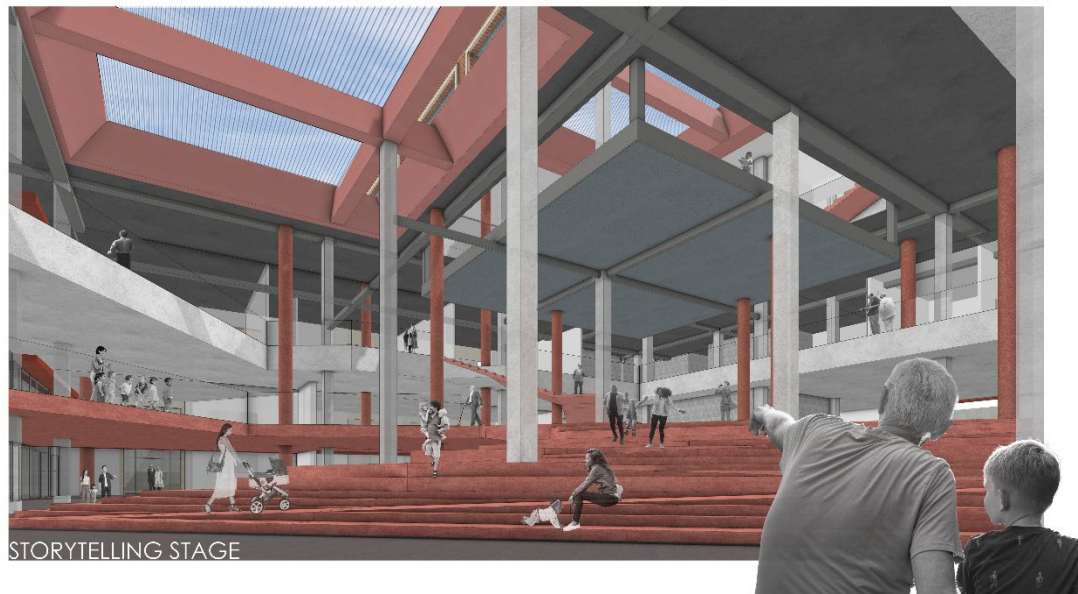


Figure 82. Storytelling Stage (Source: Author)



Figure 83. Interior Plaza (Source: Author)

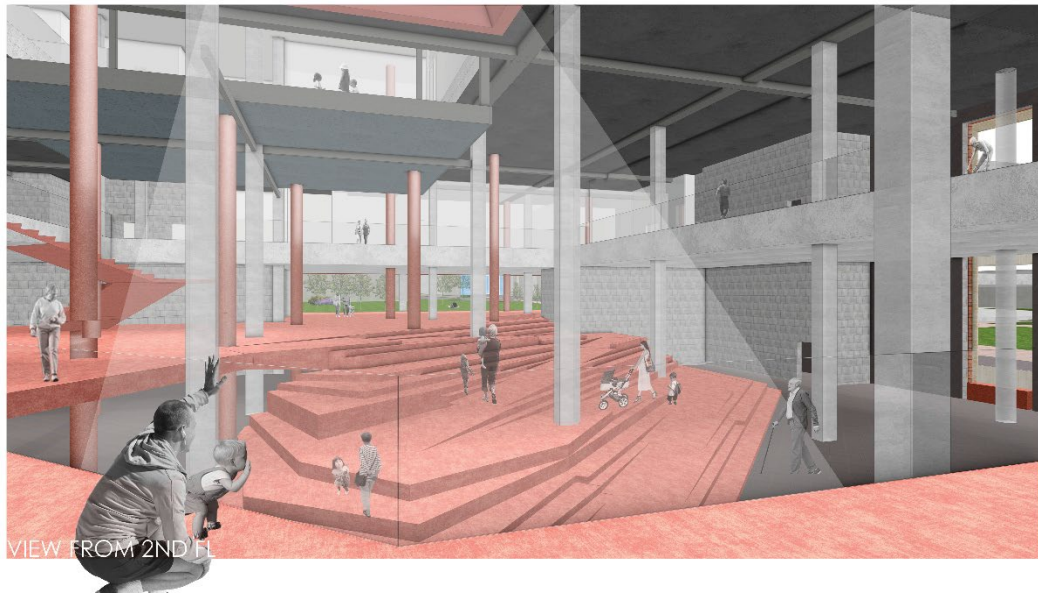


Figure 84. View from Mezzanine (Source: Author)



Figure 85. Intergenerational Classrooms (Source: Author)



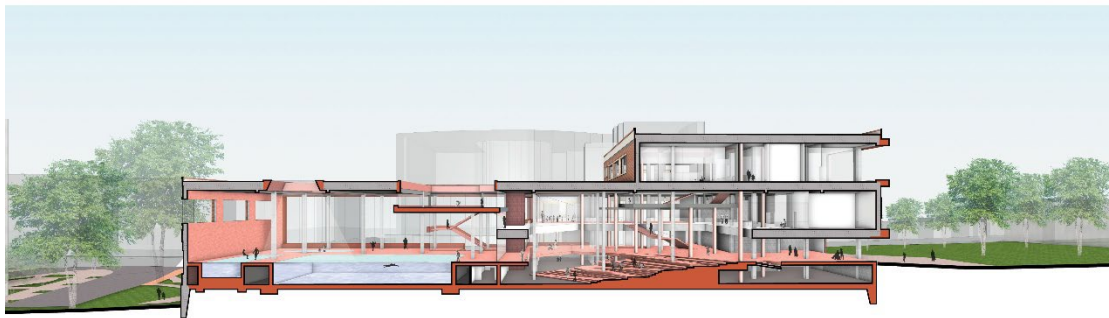
Figure 86. Sunken Playroom at Daycare (Source: Author)



Figure 87. View from Roof Terrace (Source: Author)



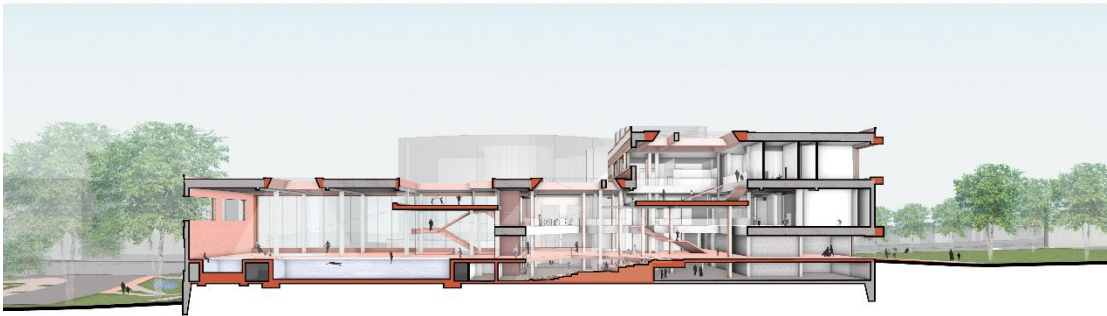
Figure 88. Connectivity Collage (Source: Author)



Overlap



Figure 89. Section Showing Overlap (Source: Author)



Light & Air



Figure 90. Section Showing Light, Air, and Overlap (Source: Author)

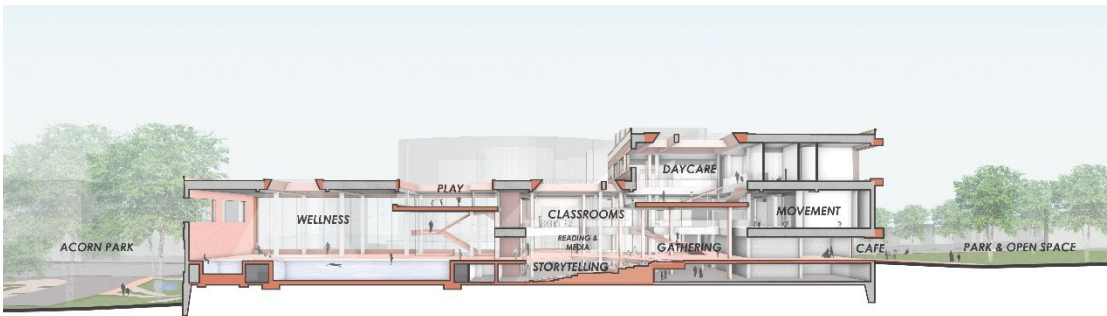
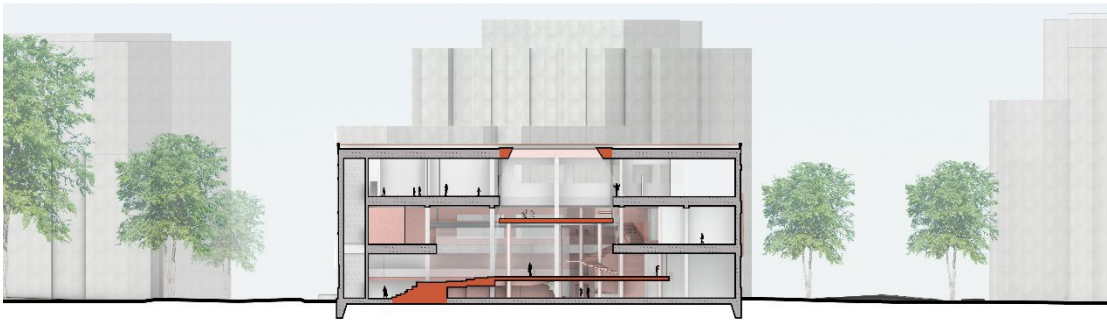


Figure 91. Section Showing Program Overlap (Source: Author)



Program Convergence



Figure 92. Section Showing Program Convergence (Source: Author)

from OVERLOOKED

to Overlap

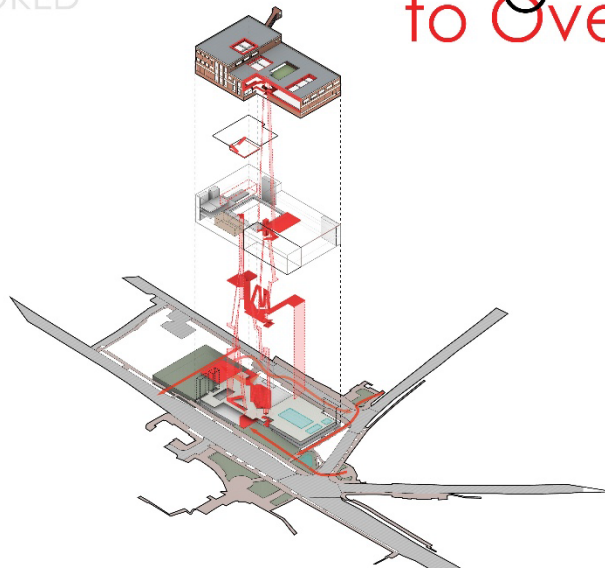


Figure 93. Exploded Axon (Source: Author)

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