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THE SWITCH:
ENGAGING CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH CONNECTION BETWEEN COMMUNITIES
by
Dustin B. Langley

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Architecture
Major: Architecture

The University of Memphis
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to study the relationships between people in the City of Memphis, whether they are part of the community or visitors. Each individual's experience with the city starts somewhere, and the continued experience shapes local, regional, national, and international perceptions of the City of Memphis.

Creating spaces that encourage interaction with the surrounding community can help foster positive relationships and understanding of the culture in the city. This thesis strives to create these spaces and to provide amenities to all, while embracing the values that reflect both the history of the city and the progressive movement towards a healthier, more sustainable city.

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MANIFESTO

Creating a sense of place starts with site location. The context drives design factors such as site access and visibility.

Creating a sense of place begins with the community. The community drives experiential factors, such as relationships between elements and program needs.

Planning and site analysis help determine program needs and spatial layout. Studying pedestrian and vehicular traffic can help determine key design elements.

Studying the history and demographics of an area can help to create a meaningful design that fits to serve and be a sustainable staple within the community.

The context can be a source for material composition and rhythm. Lighting, design features, and vegetation should be studied to fit within context.

Relationships in the building program can drive materials, lighting, and opening placement. The connection between user and space, and user and user should drive the plan.

Providing flexible space allows the community to use it as they wish. The atmosphere and program grows organically through the users as their creative interests develop over time.

The shared culture and identity of the locale can be a good source for the interior design and the relationships it supports. Designing for the users helps to create a sense of place.

INTRODUCTION

People around the world are known for their culture: their language, art, food, and customs define who they are, and these qualities give identity and pride to people. They create a sense of place unique from other cities. Skyscrapers and bridges form city skylines and are often a visitor's first impression of the city, but it is the spaces people experience that contribute most to the unique culture. Often, the designs of buildings are neglected when it comes to supporting cultural identity, in favor of designs that provide a progressive image. As it is inevitable to progress, it should be embraced in a way that stays true to culture.¹ Thus, designs of common spaces should reinforce cultural identity by building around the unique aspects of the city.

This thesis explores the relationships that architecture creates between people and the community, for visitors and locals alike. It looks at the physical and psychological connections through different design approaches including placemaking² and sustainability.³ The thesis aims to strengthen these connections through design by responding to the identity of the city's culture.

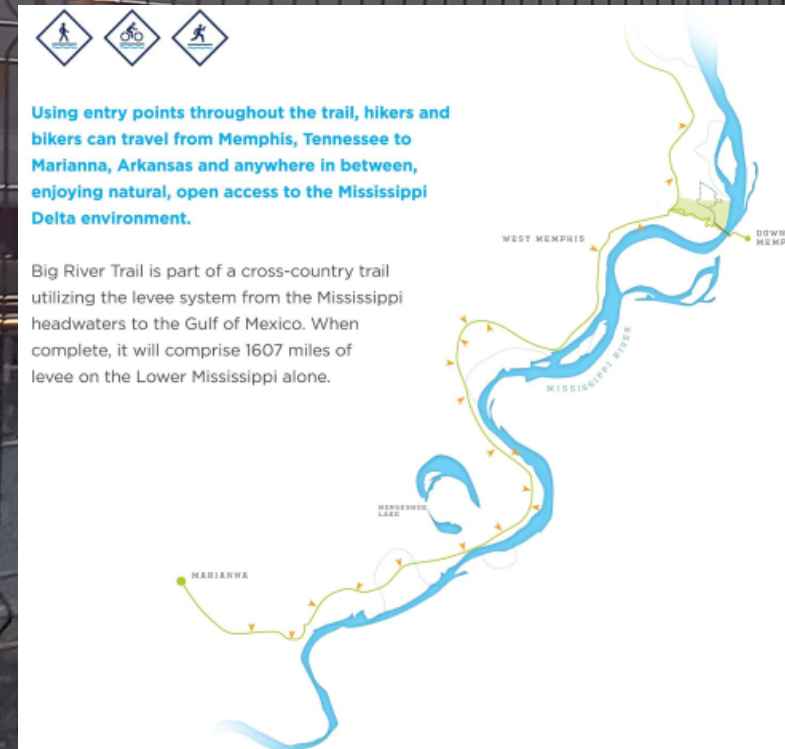
In order to design a space that will support the culture for both the local community and visitors alike, the place must offer amenities that will provide for each. Welcome centers provide detailed information to travelers, however, their secluded locations and lack of amenities do not tend towards engaging with the community. By selecting a site in a very prominent location entering the City of Memphis—situated between Riverfront and Channel 3 Drive at Carolina Avenue—in a very active community, this project reaches out to visitors while also providing for locals. This engagement by both visitors and the local community

can give visitors a firsthand experience of the culture in Memphis. By connecting to other major projects within the city, such as the Big River Crossing (figure 1), part of the ongoing Main to Main project and Big River Trail, the building and site can serve as a major node in the city.⁴ The multipurpose project, dubbed The Switch, lies in a prime location to draw people from nearby Main Street and other local anchors. Positioning entertainment and support for cyclists at this location will strengthen the fabric of the community and help Memphis continue to move forward in its quest to provide a safer, more sustainable and livable city.

1. Lynch, *The Image of the City*.
2. Holl, *Anchoring*.
3. Braungart and McDonough, *Cradle to Cradle*; McDonough and Braungart, *The Upcycle*.

4. Alexander et al., *A Pattern Language*; Lynch, *The Image of the City*.

Figure 1 Photograph and Trail Map of Big River Crossing (Opposite Page)



DESIGN SOLUTION

Welcome Centers are resources to travellers to learn about the city in which they are located. Studying the Welcome Centers in Memphis can help to understand how people experience the city for the first time.

EXISTING WELCOME CENTERS

There are four notable welcome centers located around Memphis: three located on major interstates, and one located on Elvis Presley Boulevard near Graceland.

The largest welcome center is adjacent to the Mississippi River and is accessed just as commuters pass over the river on I-40 (figure 2). It features a small riverwalk (figure 3); however, the building itself offers little more than restrooms to visiting patrons. It has been largely disconnected from other gathering spaces for years. In May of 2015, Bass Pro opened in the Pyramid, and more recently, in November of 2018, the River Garden opened at a nearby park. These adjacent amenities are a step forward in connecting to the community, but the center itself still falls short in providing meaningful spaces to visitors.

The visitor's center on I-55 is a contemporary rebuild of a former rest stop (figure 4). The welcome center located on I-40 westbound also provides a few architecturally interesting features (figure 5). The remote locations and lack of anchoring within the communities of these two welcome centers, however, limit their use to only visitors from out of town. This is intended, as the amenities they provide are geared towards short stops: restrooms, pamphlets, and memorabilia.

The Memphis Visitor Center (figure 6), located on Elvis Presley Boulevard, is a contemporary building designed for the sole purpose of providing Elvis memorabilia to visitors heading to Graceland. This center does little to connect with the neighborhood, providing no use for the surrounding community.

These welcome centers should provide visitors with opportunities to engage with the culture of Memphis, and not simply learn about it through pamphlets and statues. Designing a space that incorporates art, music, or food (amenities that also serve locals and are aspects of local culture) provides visitors with an opportunity to experience more of the identity of Memphis first-hand. This experience could then spur visitors to stay and visit other locations in the city.



Figure 2 Tennessee Welcome Center



Figure 3 Tennessee Welcome Center Riverwalk



Figure 4 I-55 Welcome Center



Figure 5 Shelby County Welcome Center



Figure 6 Memphis Visitor Center

PRECEDENTS

Many new establishments have opened in Memphis in recent years, offering a mix of family-friendly entertainment, food, and event space in flexible gathering spaces. The spaces that these establishments provide offer opportunities for people to interact regardless of their social situation. Looking at how these projects have been successful in attracting people and facilitating social mixing can help to guide program and spatial organization decisions in the building that support its connection with the culture in Memphis.

Opening in 2016 in a vacant building south of Downtown, Loflin Yard made use of its expansive outdoor space. Opening up part of the Gayoso Bayou, Loflin built around this water feature and provides seating, games, and food to create an inclusive outdoor space (figure 7). The project also makes use of a Coach House on site for more indoor space to host events, and provide a warm space during the cold winter months (figure 8).¹

Down the street, Carolina Watershed opened in 2017 (figure 9). It features indoor dining, an indoor and outdoor bar, and a multilevel outdoor space for gathering and games (figure 10). Recently, it opened up a new side yard for an adult sports league, which will host games such as dodgeball, badminton, and kickball.² This space offers a lot of flexibility to sit, eat, and enjoy various activities, making it an attractive destination for many different users.

Railgarten, located in Midtown between Cooper Young and Overton Square, helps bridge a gap between the two popular districts. This project

spans multiple buildings offering dining, desserts, and entertainment. The outdoor space behind the buildings include: a stage centrally located between rail cars (which are placed on site to partition the gathering spaces), a kids' play area, a beach volleyball court, games, and an outdoor bar (figures 11-12).³

1. Hill, "Loflin Yard Now Open."
2. Chandler, "Changes at Carolina Watershed."

3. Coeffy, "The Railgarten."



Figure 7 Loflin Yard Exterior



Figure 8 Loflin Yard Interior and Site



Figure 9 Carolina Watershed



Figure 10 Carolina Watershed Gathering Space and Site

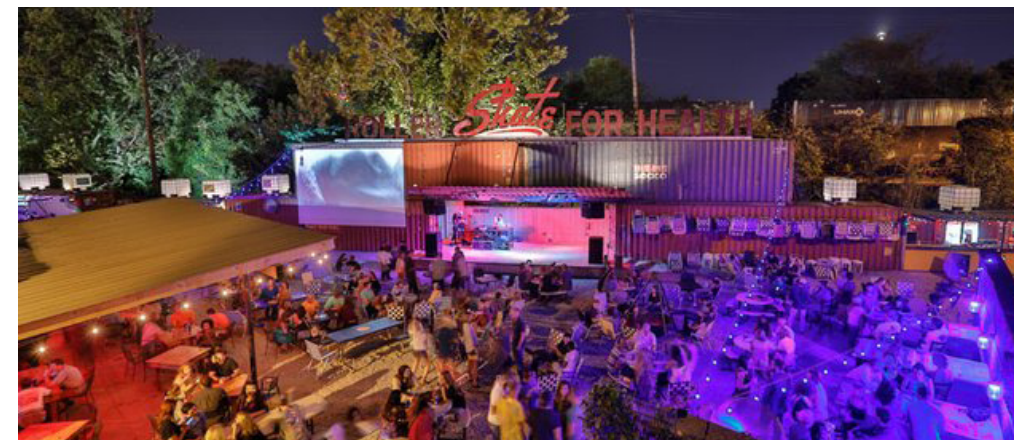


Figure 11 Railgarten Gathering Space



Figure 12 Railgarten Beach Volleyball and Site

ARTS DISTRICTS

Along with its ties in Blues and Rock music, there is a strong visual arts culture in Memphis.⁴ It is as tied to the city and its history as the music is, and is widespread throughout the city. The most significant to this design project is the prevalence of murals within the city, many of which have social ties.

There are many arts districts around the city: Cooper Young, Overton Square, South Main, and Broad Avenue are among them.⁵ These neighborhoods feature murals specific to their locations within the city, and also host many galleries and art studios. South Main hosts murals that tie into the Civil Rights Movement, as this is where the Lorraine Motel, now the Civil Rights Museum, is located. Cooper Young (figure 16), Overton Square (figure 14), and Broad Avenue (figure 17) feature murals in vibrant colors, which promote a positive and prideful image of the city.

Arts districts provide places where large events can be held. Annual festivals are held in many of these areas, spurring economic activity and public interest (figure 13).⁶ These neighborhoods also provide many locally owned businesses in walkable communities, helping to support more sustainable living.

Another example of publicly influenced development is the renovation of the Sears Crosstown building, Crosstown Concourse (figure 15). Renovated in 2015 after a MemFix⁷ event, it is a notable development that provides many amenities in the same building. This project serves

4. Kollar, "10 Emerging Contemporary Artists."
5. Luna, "Murals in Memphis."
6. Lewandowski, "Memphis Festivals."
7. Hill, "MemFix."

as an example of how to reuse historically significant, vacant buildings in the city, and repurpose them rather than tearing them down to build new. The eclectic nature of the building, including restoring the facade and exposing the structure in new spaces, provides a unique experience and connects the user with the building's history. The concourse is geared around learning and the arts, hosting many events throughout the year, showcasing young local talent. Providing space to nurture local talent is a great way to build pride in the city.⁸

These districts are located miles apart, however, the new bike lanes throughout the city connect them. Bikeshare stations at many locations within these neighborhoods makes them more accessible for those who do not live there and do not want to search for limited parking. They connect to the expanding bicycle infrastructure throughout the city. Including a bikeshare station in the program of the thesis is a key element to engage local identity and culture.

8. Kageyama, *Love Where You Live*.



Figure 13 Crawfish Fest at Overton Square



Figure 14 Mural at Overton Square

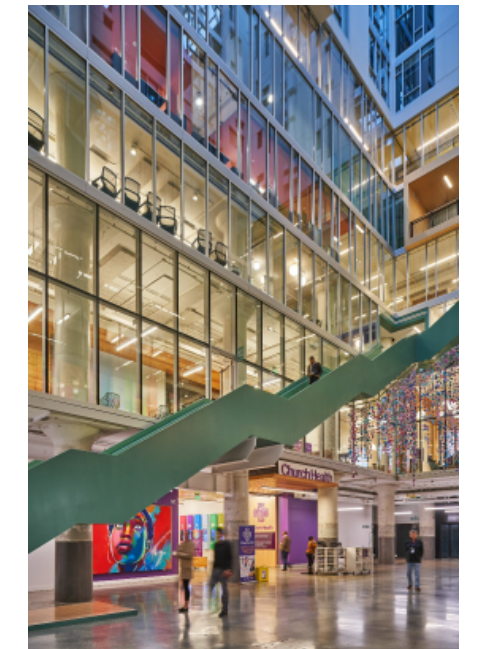


Figure 15 Crosstown Concourse



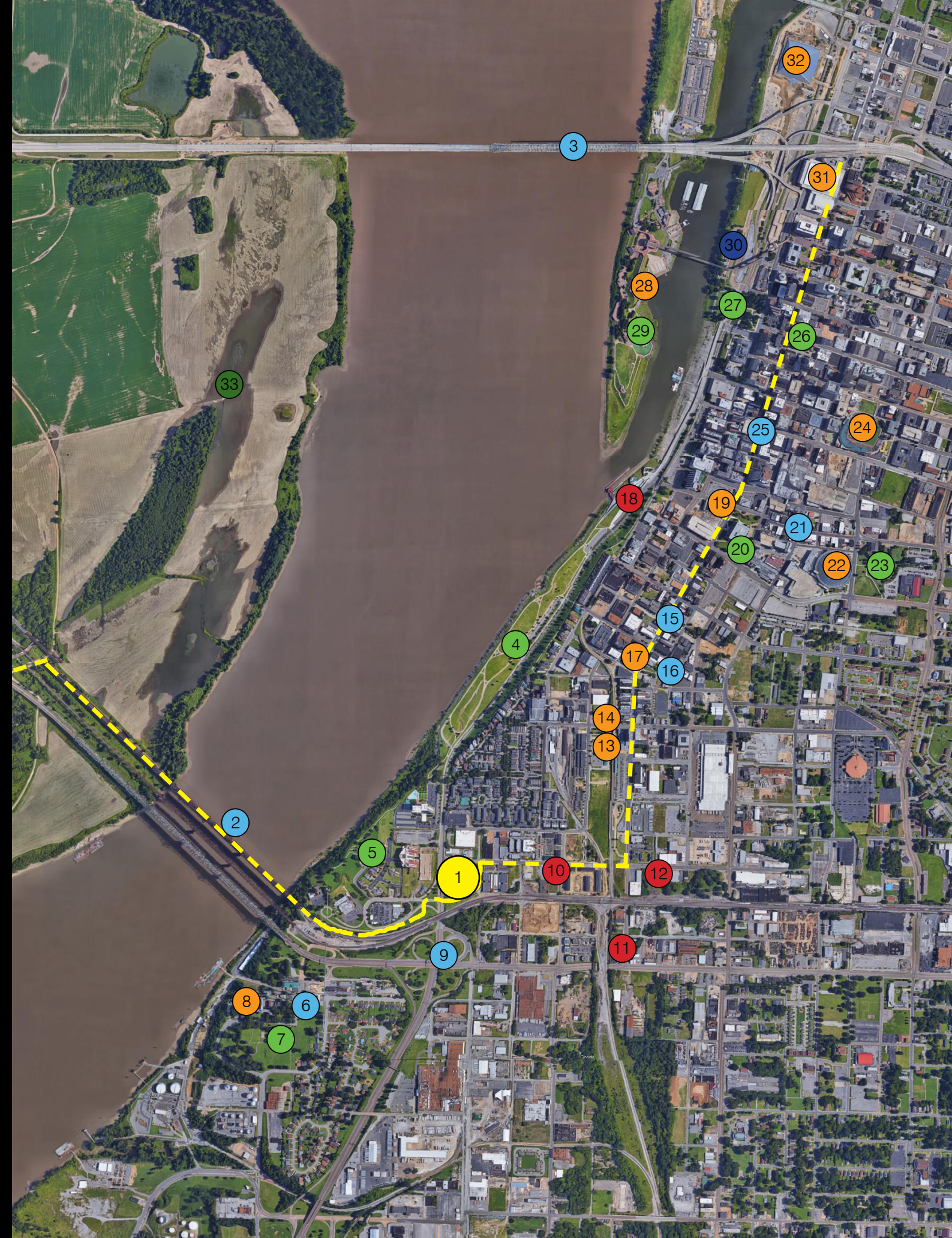
Figure 16 "I Love Memphis" Mural in Cooper Young



Figure 17 "This is We" Mural on Broad Avenue

- 1 PROJECT SITE
- 2 HARAHAH BRIDGE
- 3 HERNANDO DESOTO BRIDGE
- 4 TOM LEE PARK
- 5 MARTYRS PARK
- 6 FRENCH FORT
- 7 CHICKASAW HERITAGE PARK
- 8 METAL MUSEUM
- 9 I-55 FLYOVER DEVELOPMENT
- 10 LOFLIN YARD
- 11 GHOST RIVER BREWERY
- 12 CAROLINA WATERSHED
- 13 MEMPHIS FARMERS MARKET
- 14 MALCO POWERHOUSE CINEMA
- 15 SOUTH MAIN DISTRICT
- 16 NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM
- 17 BLUES HALL OF FAME
- 18 BEALE STREET LANDING
- 19 ORPHEUM THEATER
- 20 MLK REFLECTION PARK
- 21 HISTORIC BEALE STREET
- 22 FEDEX FORUM
- 23 ROBERT R. CHURCH PARK
- 24 AUTOZONE PARK
- 25 MAIN STREET MALL
- 26 COURT SQUARE
- 27 RIVER GARDEN/ FOURTH BLUFF PARK
- 28 MUD ISLAND AMPHITHEATER
- 29 MUD ISLAND RIVER PARK
- 30 I-40 WELCOME CENTER
- 31 COOK CONVENTION CENTER
- 32 BASS PRO PYRAMID
- 33 WEST MEMPHIS FLOOD PLAINS

- LEGEND
- 1 PROJECT SITE
 - RESTAURANT/BAR
 - GREEN SPACE
 - WELCOME CENTER
 - ENTERTAINMENT
 - FLOOD PLAINS
 - DISTRICTS/ LANDMARKS
 - - MAIN TO MAIN TRAIL



CONTEXT

The site is situated on the south end of Downtown, and is mostly surrounded by single family and multifamily residential developments. It is located along the Main to Main trail, which connects to many businesses and amenities downtown (figure 18).

There are public parks located near the site, along the river, which are connected by pedestrian paths. A few destination spots with outdoor spaces and weekend activities are located to the east of the site along Carolina Avenue and South Main.

For the most part, this area is lacking a connection between Main Street and the Big River Crossing. With the planned future development of the French Fort and I-55 flyover, this site is located as such to be a visible connection for both the community and visitors (figure 19). Being visible is an important factor in creating community space.⁹



Figure 19 French Fort Plan

9. Lynch, *The Image of the City*.

Figure 18 Context Map (Opposite Page)

SITE ANALYSIS

The site is bounded by Riverside Drive to the west, West Carolina Avenue to the north, and Channel 3 Drive to the east and south. Railroad tracks also bound the south side of the site just across Channel 3 Drive. A three-story residential building lies to the east across Channel 3 Drive, one-story maintenance shops are to the north across Carolina Avenue, and to the west, a 16-story residential building across Riverside Drive. The main route for vehicular traffic is along the west on Riverside Drive (figures 22 and 23). This is a major entry point into the downtown area and serves many coming in from Interstate-55.

PATH AND NODE

This site lies along the Main to Main trail, a trail that connects Main Street in Memphis, Tennessee to Main Street in West Memphis, Arkansas. This trail makes use of the Big River Crossing (figure 20), a pedestrian bridge that extends from the side of the Harahan Bridge project, an actively used railroad bridge. The Harahan Bridge was the first bridge built across the Mississippi River, and the structural supports extending outward, which now support the pedestrian path, originally supported automobile traffic.¹⁰

SIGNIFICANCE OF VIEWS

The site includes views to the city and surrounding area due to its elevation. If further elevated, one would have unobstructed views back to the city, the Hernando DeSoto Bridge, the Harahan Bridge, and the surrounding communities of South Bluffs and French Fort (figure 21). Views to significant landmarks create placemaking in the city.¹¹

10. Hickman, "Mississippi's Longest Pedestrian Bridge."

11. Holl, *Anchoring*.

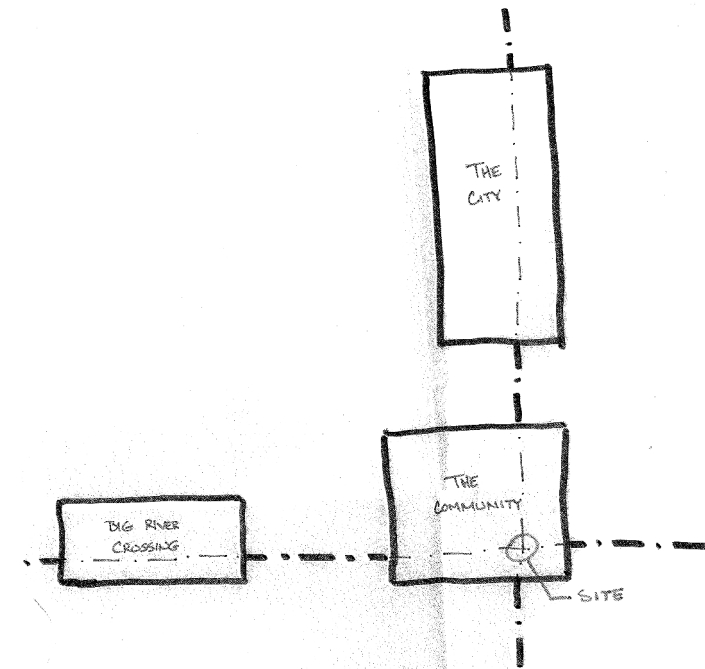


Figure 20 Central Node

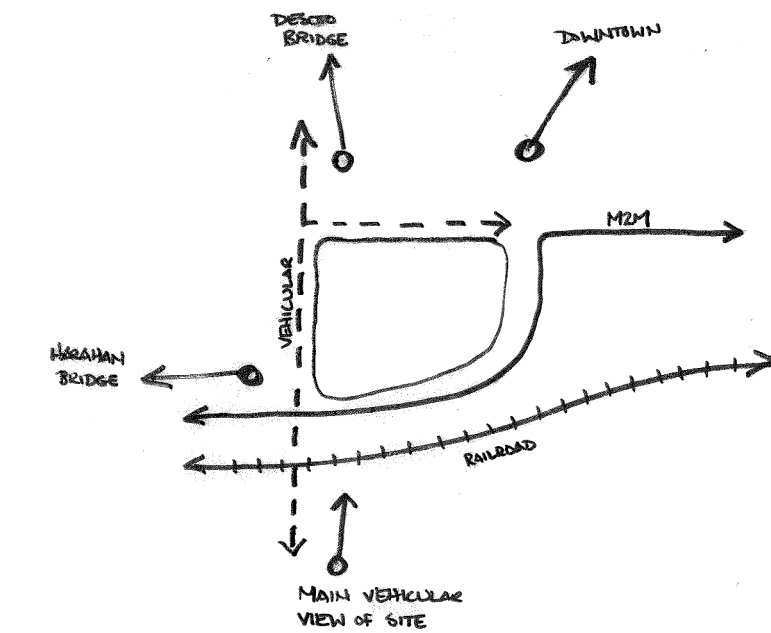


Figure 21 Site Analysis

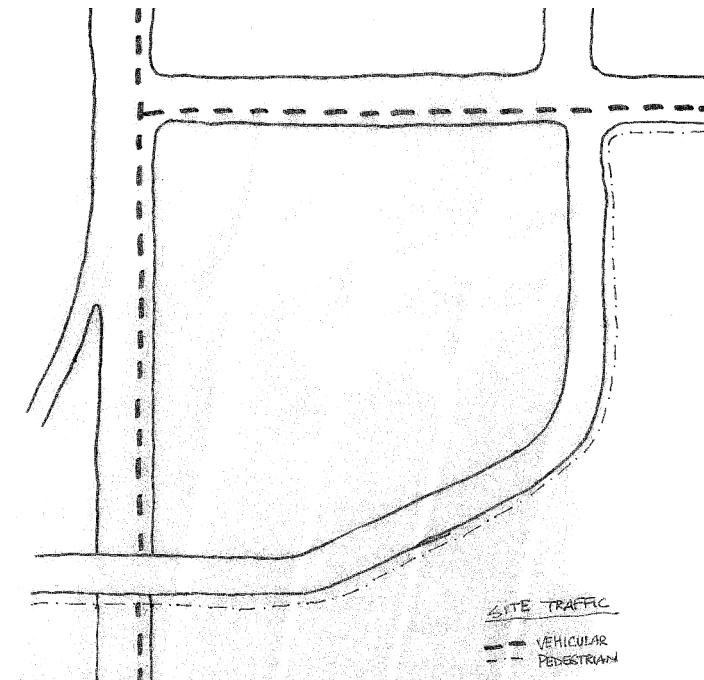


Figure 22 Site Circulation

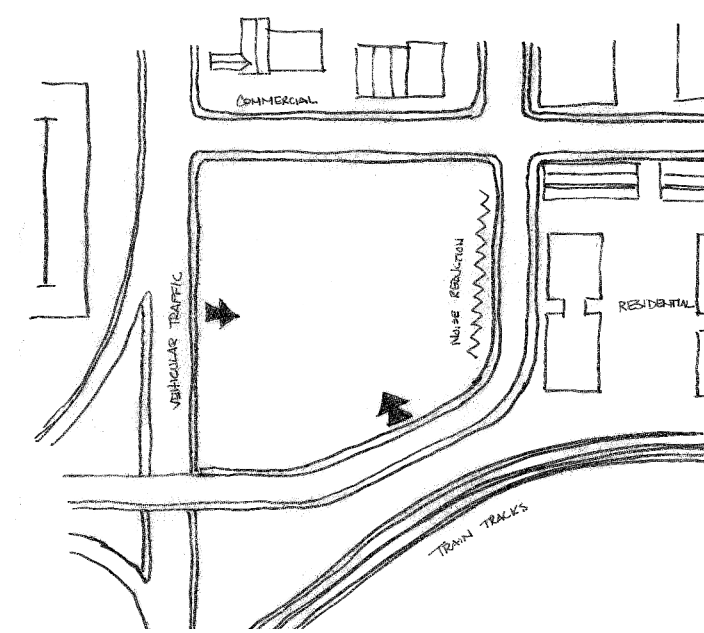


Figure 23 Context Study

SIGNIFICANT CONNECTIONS

The French Fort neighborhood is slated for rehabilitation of many of its dilapidated lots, as well as a major reworking of the I-55 connection. A planned roundabout and I-55 flyover would allow this neighborhood to be connected with the rest of downtown, and to the project site. The roundabout would also decrease traffic speeds on the west side of the site, making it safer and quieter.

The site is also located near many public parks, including Martyrs Park and Tom Lee Park, home of Memphis in May's Beale Street Music Festival and International Barbecue Cooking contest. The site's proximity to these amenities allows for the project to also be an asset for locals that do not live in the immediate surrounding community and for visitors that may be experiencing the City of Memphis for these events.

FORM

The design of the building draws from the site and its surroundings. The site itself is not squared off on all corners. It is curved on the southeast by the railroad, forcing the street to cut at an angle. Thus, in plan and in elevation, the form responds to the curved edge.

The development of the form is driven by views from, and access to, the site. A drawing study of the steel structure of the Harahan Bridge shows how many supports come together to a central point (figure 24). Utilizing the site study of the views to the city, river, and bridge, the form is situated to maximize and frame these views, as well as respond to pedestrians accessing the site (figure 25). This project, sited at a central location to new infrastructure, becomes a node within the city, an important piece in city planning.¹²

An interior courtyard is embraced by the building form, creating a safer space to enjoy the outdoors, and an open and inviting entrance to the site from the north. The scale of the building on this facade is lower than the other facades, providing a more comfortable, pedestrian scale. This is in contrast to the south and east sides of the building, which mirror the height of the adjacent residential building and provide a more commercial scale along the train side.

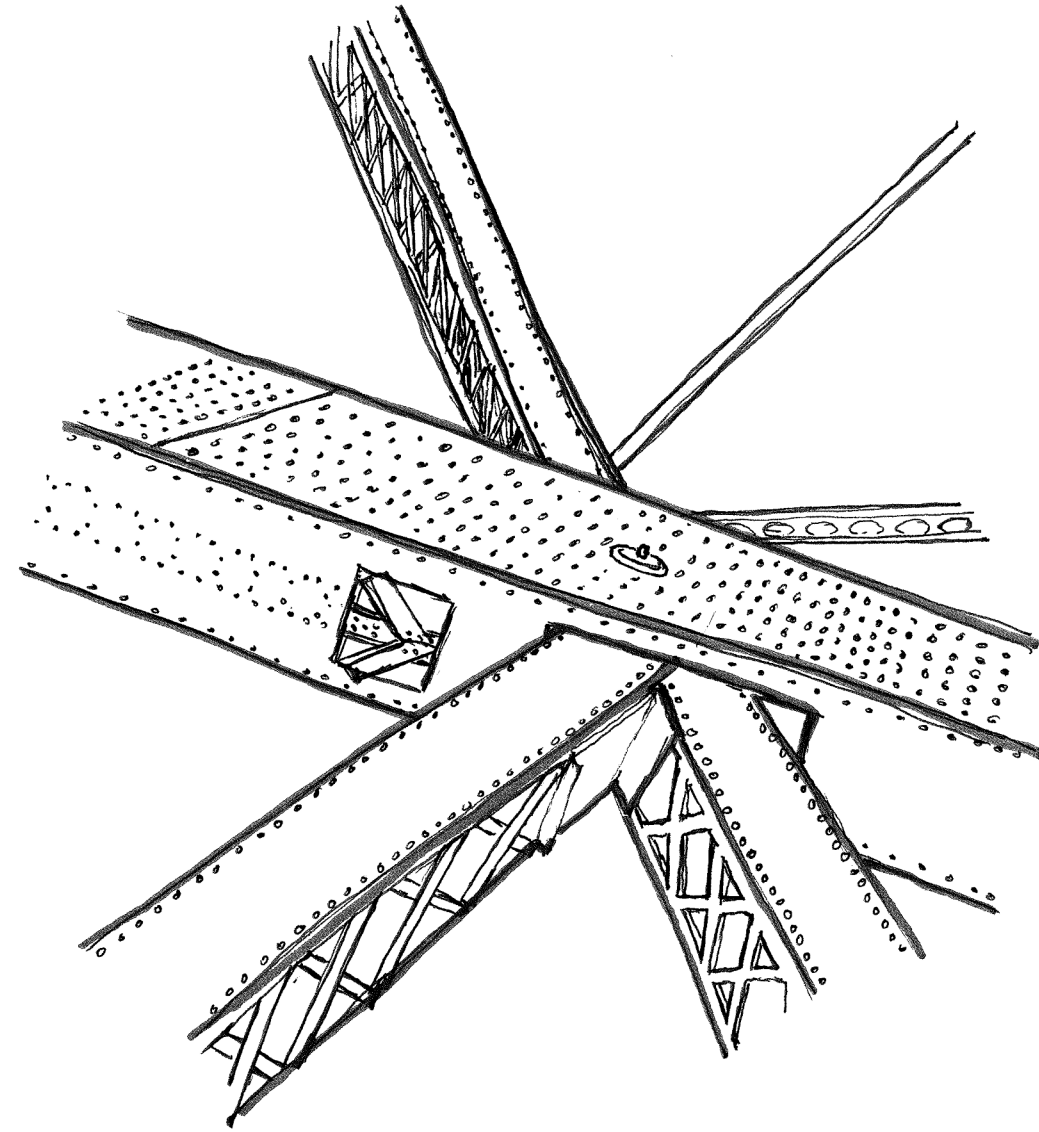


Figure 24 Detail of Harahan Bridge - Inspiration for Concept

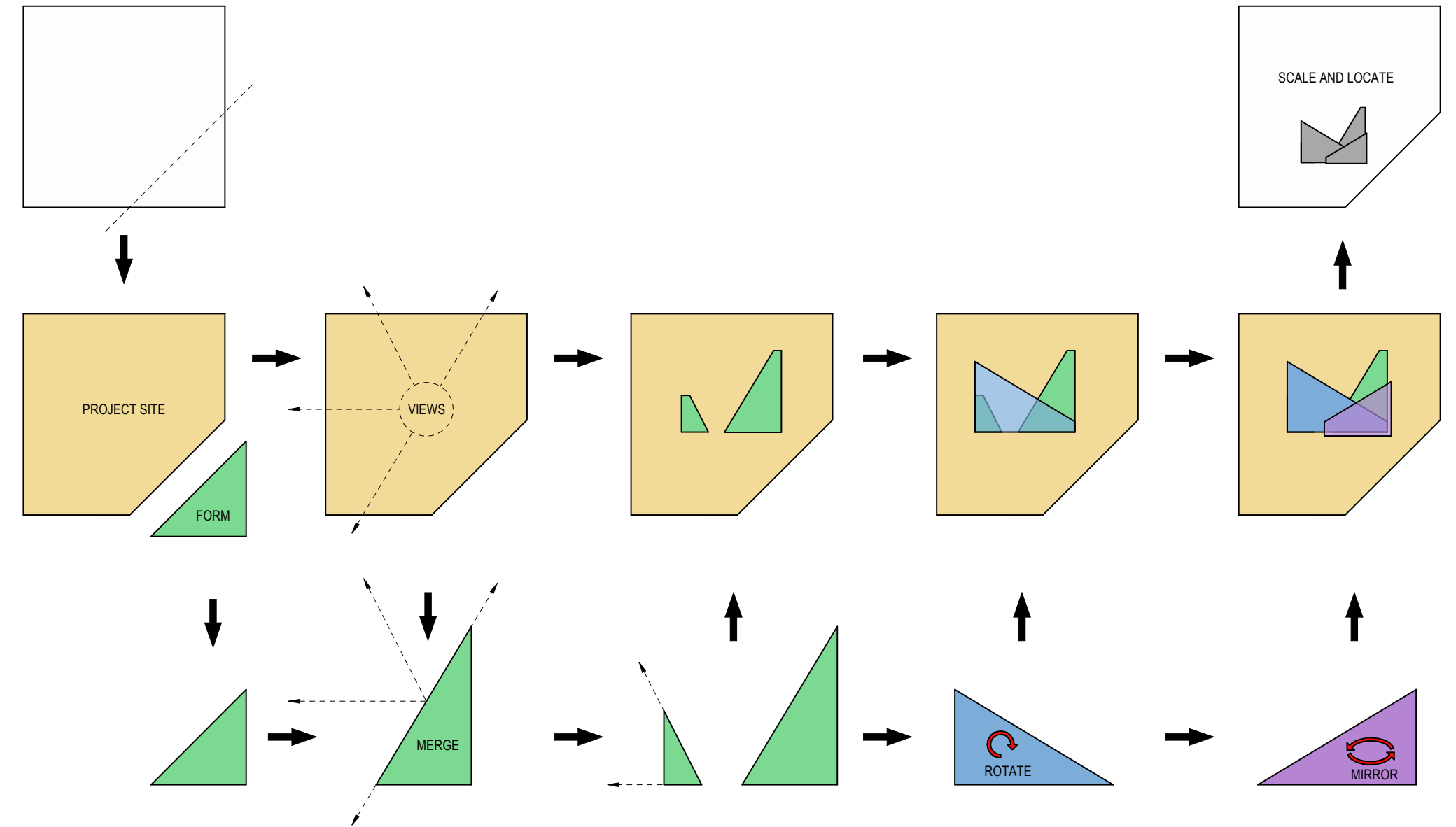


Figure 25 Form Progression Diagram

12. Lynch, *The Image of the City*.

PROGRAM

The project program aims to provide amenities for the immediate surrounding community, the larger Memphis community, as well as visitors from out of town. This is accomplished by locating the project along major vehicular routes, connecting to a major pedestrian and bicycle route, and sitting on the edge of neighborhoods lacking in amenities such as food options or gathering spaces within a walking distance (figure 26). Creating this focal point, or node, helps to establish identity and boundaries in the area.¹³

The project is aptly named The Switch due to its ties to the adjacent railroad and for the idea that first-hand experience will switch users' thinking of the culture of Memphis. The Switch serves the surrounding neighborhoods, both immediately and in the long term, by creating an option for food and gathering, and spurring interest in the site for future development. Further investment in the site will bring amenities to serve the neighborhoods, and continue to provide meaningful spaces to locals and visitors.

In order to serve the city as a whole, the site connects to a major new investment in the Big River Crossing. The bicycle and pedestrian routes have brought increased traffic to the area for those wishing to experience the Mississippi River from a different perspective, and avid cyclists crossing to and from Arkansas at one of the few Mississippi River crossings.¹⁴ With exterior accessible public restrooms and showers, and a bicycle repair station, the project provides resources to bike owners or cyclists on long journeys (figure 27). As another docking station for the bike share program, the Switch also allows locals and tourists to start here and reach downtown and the Big River Crossing in minutes.

13. Alexander et al., *A Pattern Language*.

14. Charlier, "Big River Crossing."

For those unfamiliar with the city, the project provides opportunities for visitors to understand where they are in the city through views to various landmarks.¹⁵ Accessible by visitors coming in on I-55, the Switch provides views to downtown, the Harahan Bridge, the Hernando DeSoto Bridge, and the river. Seating is provided near the busy railroad, which has a train passing through every 30 minutes.

In addition to connecting cyclists and visitors with the city, the program encourages connection with others by designing the spaces to be integrated with each other. The mezzanine and dining space have a similar relationship to the terrace and interior courtyard (figure 28). The dining space opens up to the covered seating by a folding glass panel system. Benches in the plaza are designed to allow users to face each other for easier conversing.

15. Alexander et al., *A Pattern Language*.

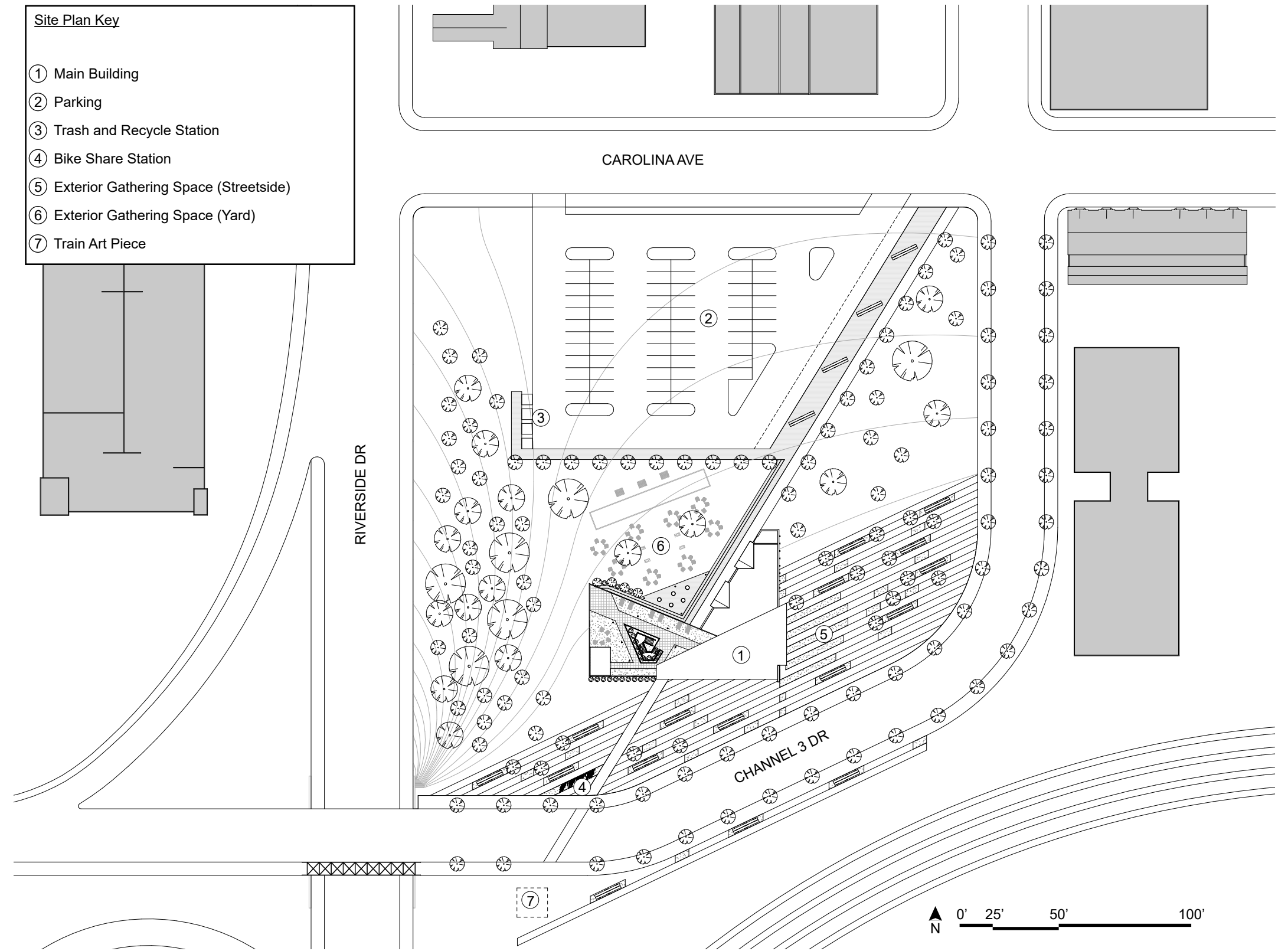


Figure 26 Site Plan

- First Floor Plan Key**
- ① Exterior Gathering Space (Yard)
 - ② Open Stair Lightwell
 - ③ Cyclist Support Zone
 - ④ Restaurant
 - ⑤ Exterior Gathering Space (Streetside)
 - ⑥ Shower

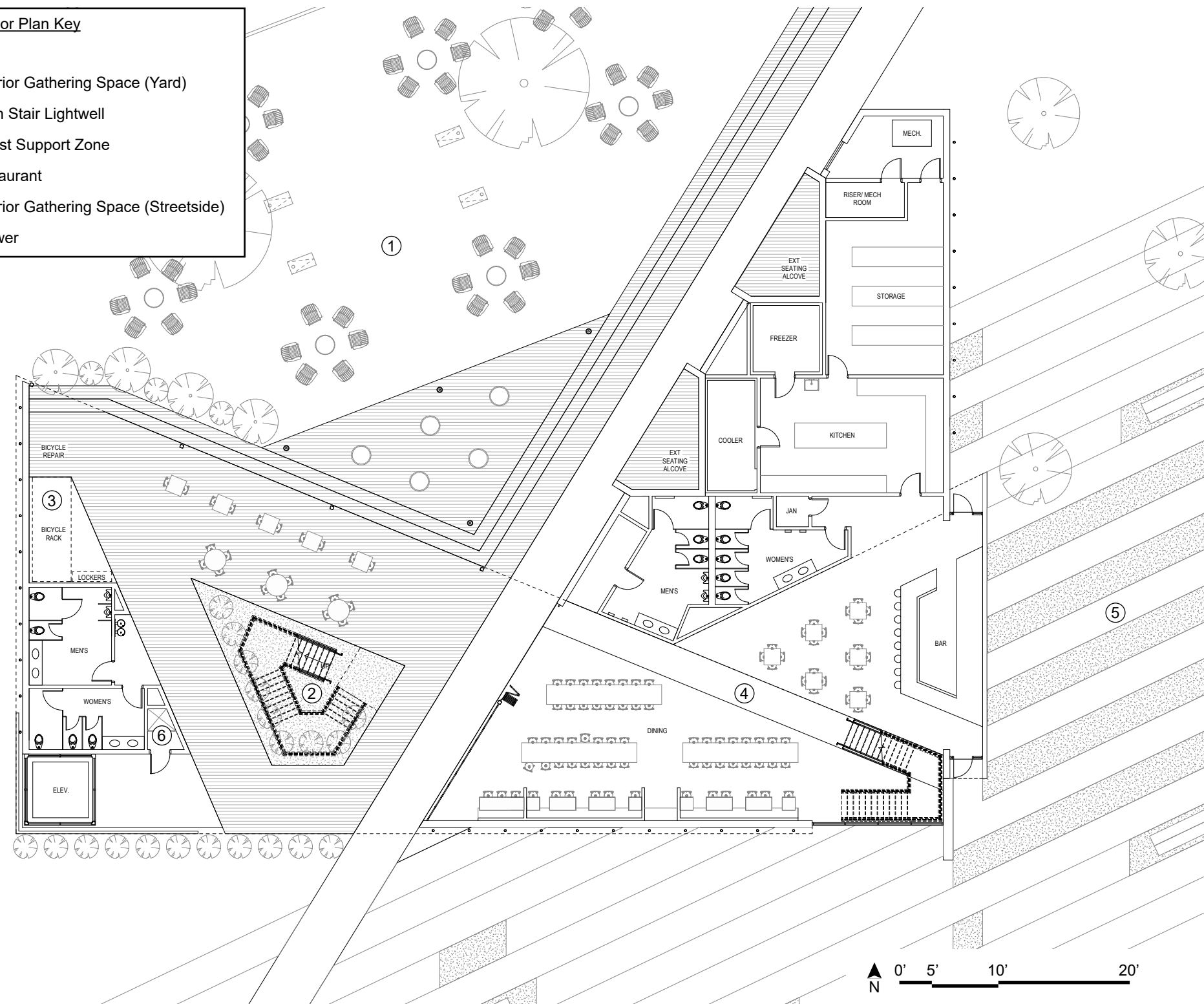


Figure 27 First Floor Plan

- Second Floor Plan Key**
- ① Lounge Space
 - ② Rooftop Terrace
 - ③ Open Stair Lightwell
 - ④ Green Roof
 - ⑤ Open to Restaurant (Below)
 - ⑥ Look-out

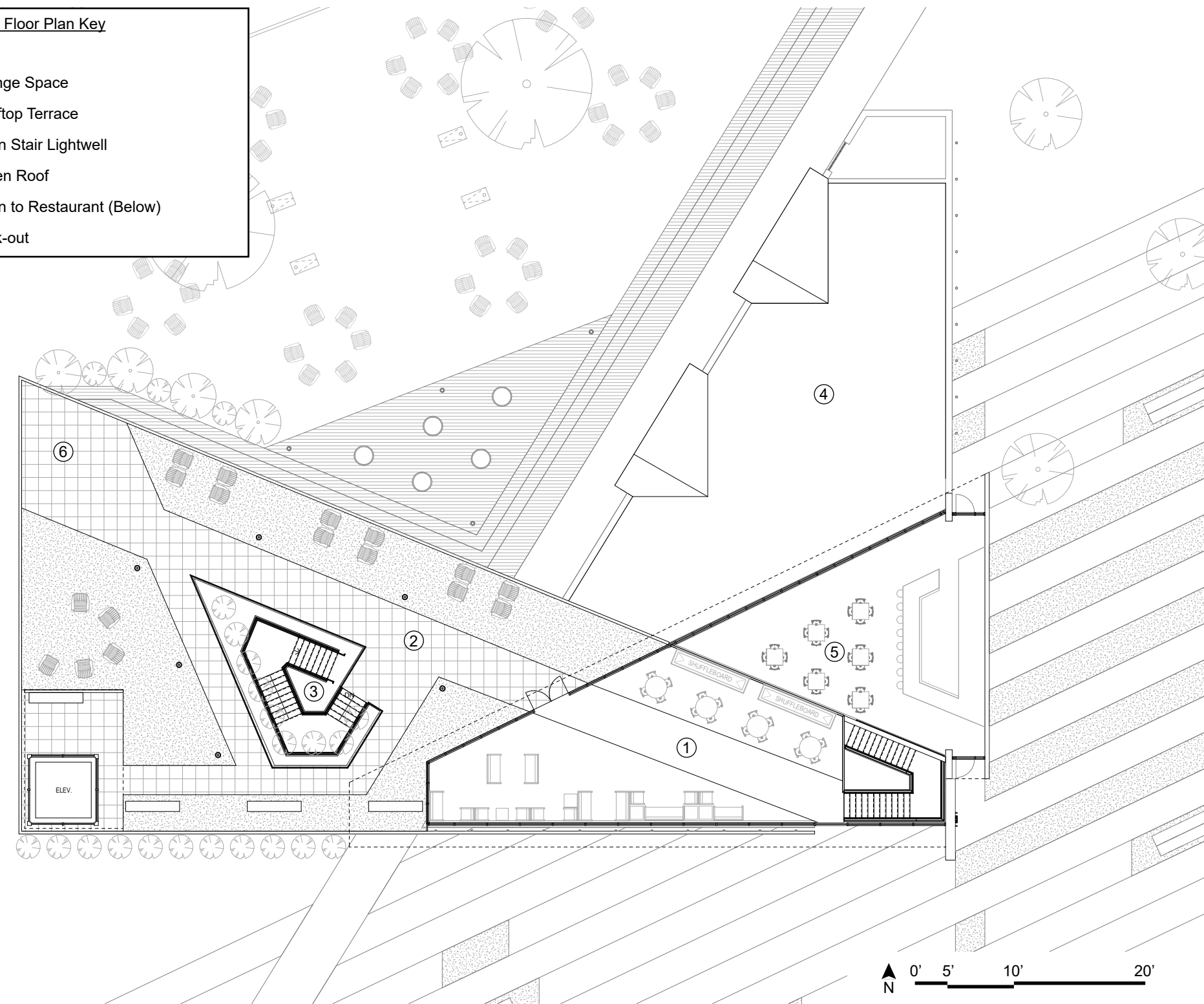


Figure 28 Second Floor Plan

SCALE

The form of the building has similarities in elevation with the plan. The same form derived from views in plan are used to create a dynamic facade to capture the eye of users. This dynamic form wraps the building in a colorful display of local art, everchanging throughout the years. The facade is largely transparent, allowing people to see into the space from the street (figure 29). A wide sidewalk enters under the wrap element, creating a direct path through the site on axis with views to the city. The scale is lowered as one enters to the covered seating area to provide a closer connection among users.

The streetside elevations are similar in scale to the surrounding buildings, however, the facades facing the interior courtyard are shorter, creating a comfortable human scale for the gathering space (figure 30). The restaurant opens to this space via a folding glass wall system, and other amenities such as the restrooms and bicycle repair station are accessed from this courtyard. Many seating areas break up the large courtyard into smaller zones to further bring the scale down to a human level. This gathering space is intended to be used for casual entertainment and most outdoor events.

The East facade features a large blank wall to be used as backdrop for movies or bands (figure 31). This plaza can be used for large events, and serve as a main stage for any gathering. This facade is opposite the three story condominium building, which together make the plaza more of an outdoor room. The striations of the concrete and natural areas are prominent in this plaza, where grass turns to compressed stone, continuing the detail across the site. Signage for the building is facing this facade to welcome users as they round the corner along Channel 3 Drive.

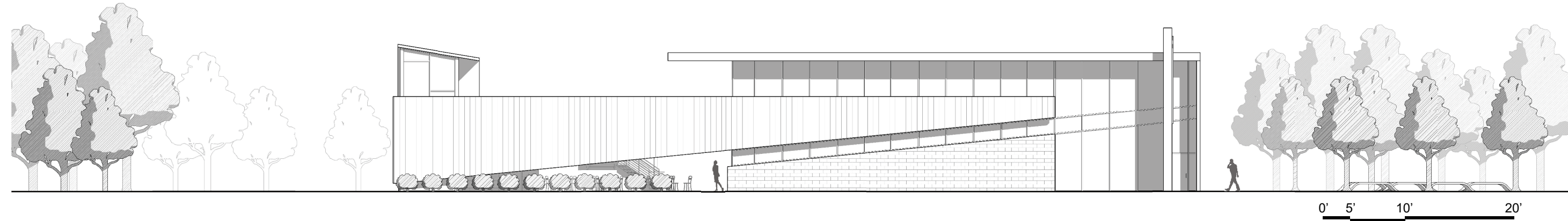


Figure 29 South Elevation

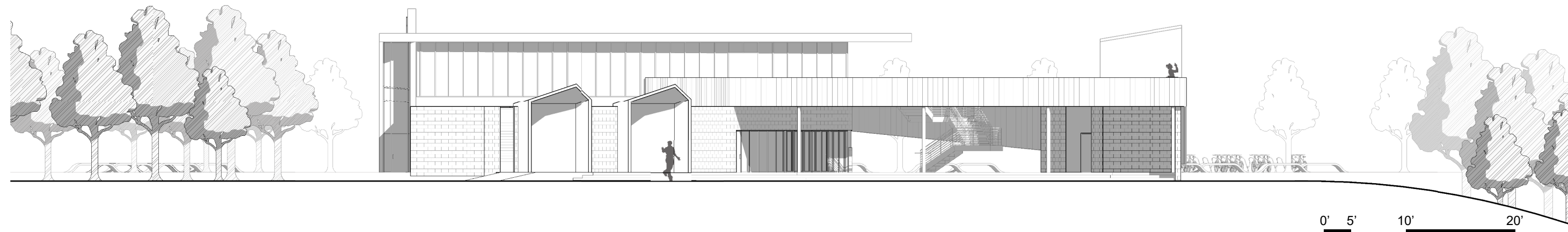


Figure 30 North Elevation

The West facade is prominent to pedestrian and bicyclists heading towards downtown from the Big River Crossing. This facade mostly features the artful building wrap, as service spaces lie behind. This facade also frames views on the second level towards the Harahan Bridge. The scale of this facade allows users to see above the trees on the west side of the site. Elevated above the building, the elevator in the southwest corner serves as a beacon at night, drawing interest from motorists entering the city (figure 32).

Sections through the site (figure 33) show how the building and trees serve as a barrier between the interior courtyard and the train tracks, without completely eliminating the connection (figure 34). The path through the building allows users to stay connected with the train, though the form of the building funnels the focus to a small scale. The section through the dining space shows how the larger scale of the interior space is situated so that the upper and lower floors share the same space (figure 35). This supports the idea of connecting people to one another.

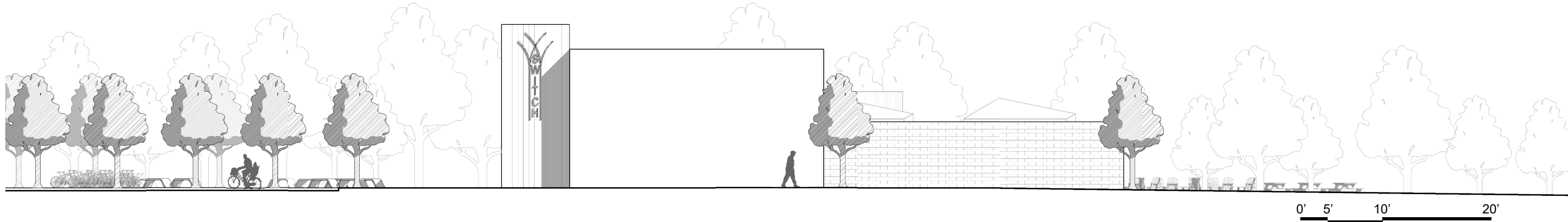


Figure 31 East Elevation

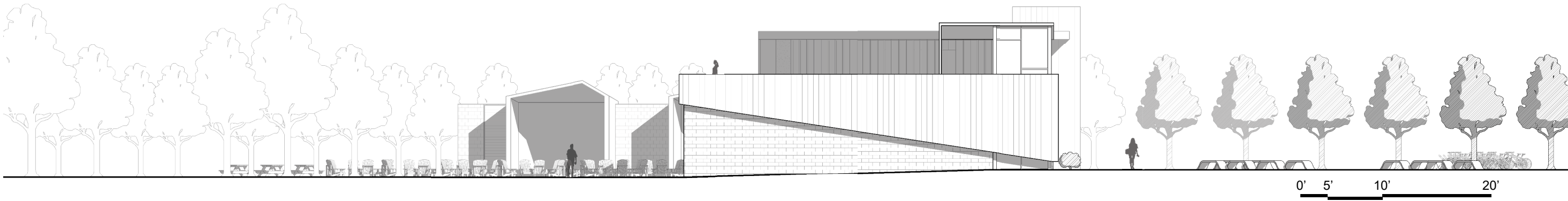


Figure 32 West Elevation

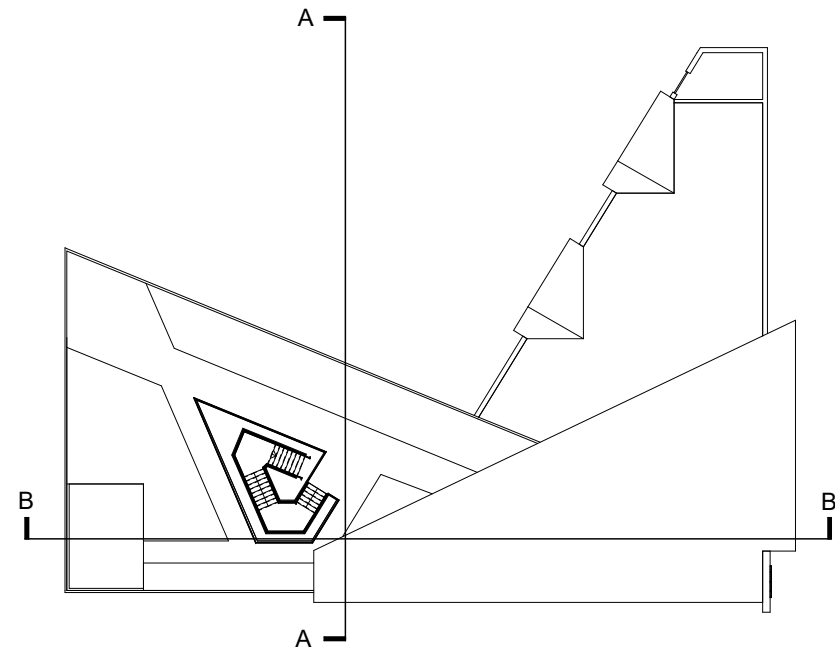


Figure 33 Section Key Plan

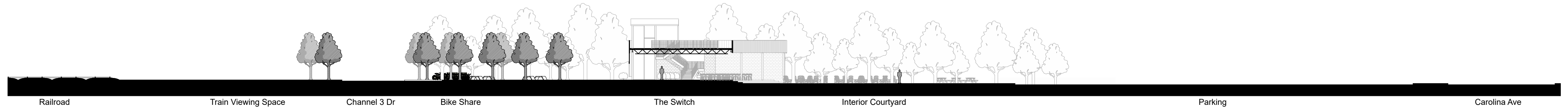


Figure 34 Transverse Section A-A

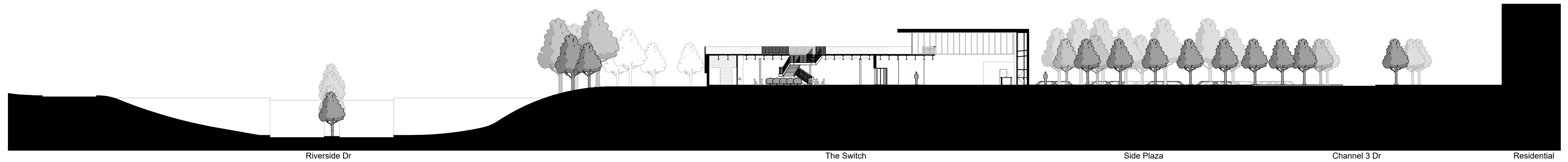


Figure 35 Longitudinal Section B-B

INDOOR / OUTDOOR SPACE

The scale and form of the building creates spaces in and around it. The project features several outdoor spaces, providing flexible gathering options to users in how they want to use the space, similar to the precedents around the city. The purpose of providing separate spaces is to allow users to experience the building in different ways each time they come, or to choose where they feel most comfortable.

The street side plaza engages pedestrians walking or biking by, and guides them onto the site by providing a more direct route across the site. This facade provides views to the interior, enticing passers-by to take notice of activity in the building (figure 36). Programmed site elements such as benches and shade are provided to encourage users to stay and spend time at the site, along with the food and vista opportunities. A large hardscape with a smooth wall as a backdrop provides the opportunity to use the space as a stage for live music, to cast a movie for free movie nights, or similar types of gatherings. This space is enclosed opposite of the building by the residential buildings, creating a family friendly outdoor room.¹⁶

The interior courtyard is all grass with non-fixed seating (figure 37). This space provides a freer and more relaxed atmosphere in which parents may feel comfortable allowing their kids to run and play, with natural barriers to the North and West of the site. Colorful alcoves provide seating and small play areas for toddlers. Outdoor games, such as cornhole and bocce ball, are provided for entertainment, while most of the space is open to be changed throughout the year to fit different uses.

A boardwalk cutting through the site passes alongside the interior courtyard, connecting those that are using the space and those passing

16. Kageyama, *Love Where You Live*.

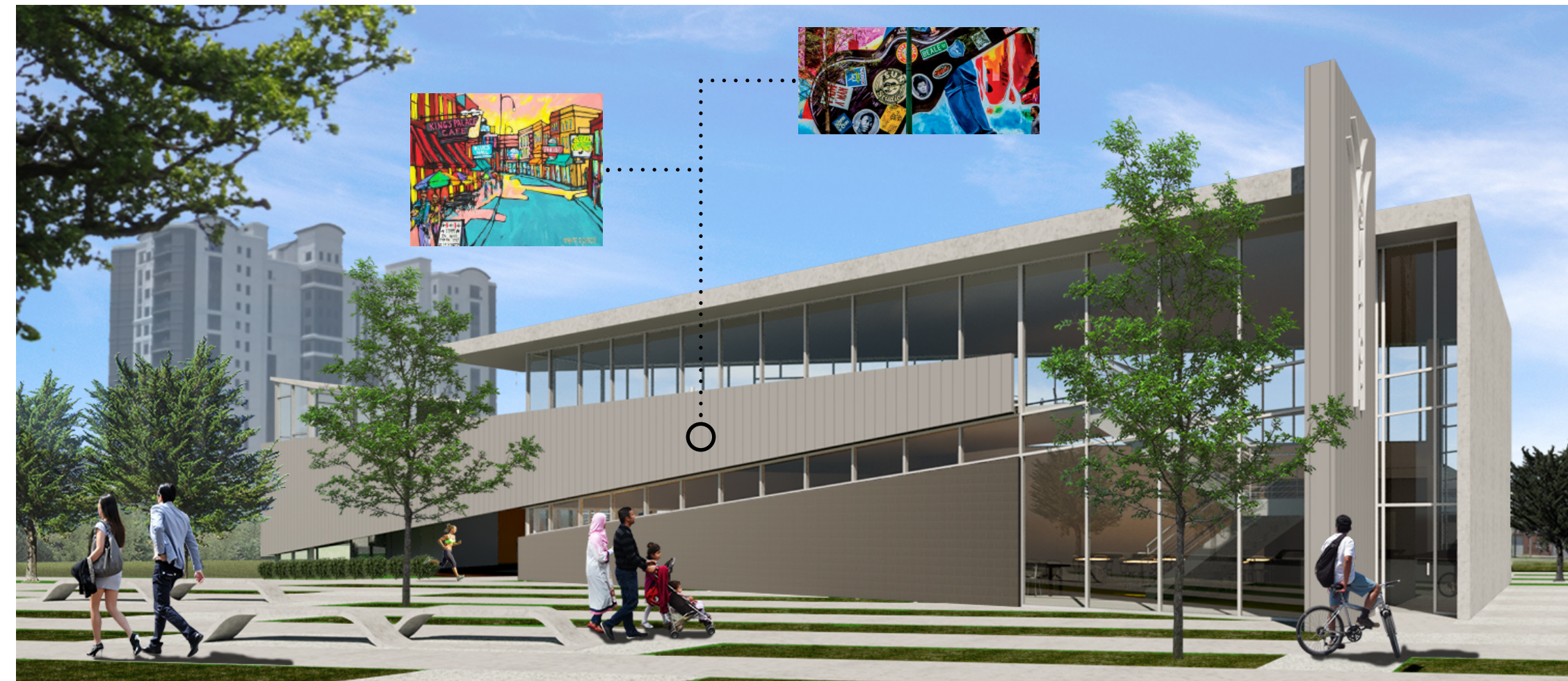
through. This boardwalk also passes through the building where there is covered seating, and along the folding glass panel system looking into the interior dining space. It continues to the front of the building where there is a bike share station, and onto the path to the Big River Crossing.

In mild weather, the folding glass wall system may be adjusted to allow the interior space to connect to the covered seating. This further allows the user to be connected with the site, and supports the idea of connecting users with nature. This interior space is further connected by a mezzanine that opens out to a rooftop terrace, from which the user can see downtown, the river, and the Harahan Bridge. The user may also like to watch a train pass by to the south, or see the activity in the interior courtyard, which they can access from an exterior stair. Design choices that respond to the site and allow users to grasp where they are within the city anchors the project to the site.¹⁷

17. Holl, *Anchoring*.

Figure 36 Front Exterior (Top, Opposite Page)

Figure 37 Interior Courtyard (Bottom, Opposite Page)



SITE ENGAGEMENT

A visitor may experience the site from many different perspectives. A main goal of the project is to bring people together to connect with one another. Individuals that live within the community may walk to the site to meet with friends, share a meal, and enjoy the outdoor space together (figure 38). They may know of an event being held at the venue that they would like to attend, or make it a regular meeting location on the edge of downtown. The walkable community surrounding the site makes it easy to get to by foot, and bike routes make for safe cycling.¹⁸ Users may make use of the bike share station located on site, making the trip to downtown much shorter.



Figure 38 Boardwalk

Out of town users may be coming into downtown for the first time, seeing the project while driving down Riverside Drive. The active exterior spaces provide interest, encouraging would-be passers-by to stop. They may find some street parking along the south edge of the site, or they may park in the parking lot on the north side. They will be able to taste some Memphis food, sit at the communal tables and chat with some locals, and possibly take in the sounds of a local musician playing in one of the plazas (figure 39). The stairs will draw them to the upper level where they will have an opportunity to see the city from a different perspective. With views towards downtown, the river, and the Harahan Bridge, the out of town guests get a sense of where they are in the city (figure 40).¹⁹ Perhaps the train will draw their attention, and as they make their way back down to head across the street to the viewing area for the train, they will see the bike share that they can take to the Harahan Bridge or to downtown.



Figure 39 Interior/Exterior

Figure 40 Rooftop Terrace (Opposite Page)

18. Alexander et al., *A Pattern Language*.

19. Holl, *Anchoring*.



ART IN DESIGN

There is a large artistic community in the City of Memphis. Most notably, Memphis is known for its history in Blues music, which can still be found as a staple on historic Beale Street. However, the artistic community spreads much further, to other musical genres supported by the likes of the Visible Music College, or theater, as seen in the many local theaters found across the city. Support for local talent strengthens community bonds.²⁰

Memphis also has a vast visible art community. Memphis is a city of many murals, most of which are found in art districts such as South Main, Broad Avenue, Cooper Young, and Overton Square. The style of these murals is unique to Memphis. Bold colors and thick lines seem to carry the same weight that the Blues music does, the same weight as the city's history with Civil Rights issues.

To support the artistic community in Memphis, a stage is provided for musicians and performers in the street side plaza; the building wrap, serving as a sun screen, brings the bold colors of Memphis art to the site (figure 43) along with other vibrant spaces (figure 42). The art displayed may change throughout the year, creating an evolving art installation.

The design of the plaza is striped to guide users across the site, and to imitate the crops that were so important in building the City of Memphis (figure 44). The benches, designed so that users can face each other when in use, represent waves of the river, like water added to the crops (figure 41). These subtle yet functional design applications keep the project grounded in the history of the city.

20. Kageyama, *Love Where You Live*.

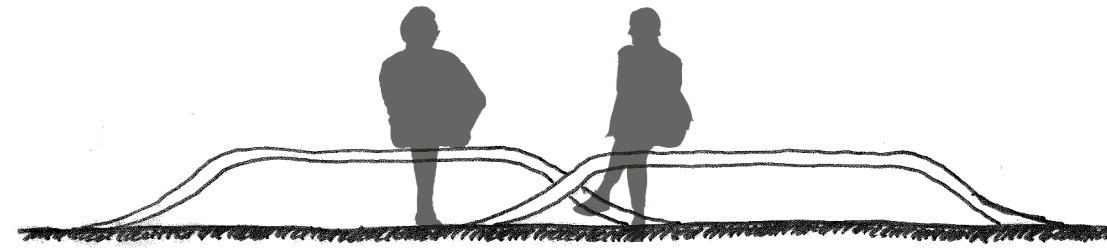


Figure 41 Bench Drawing

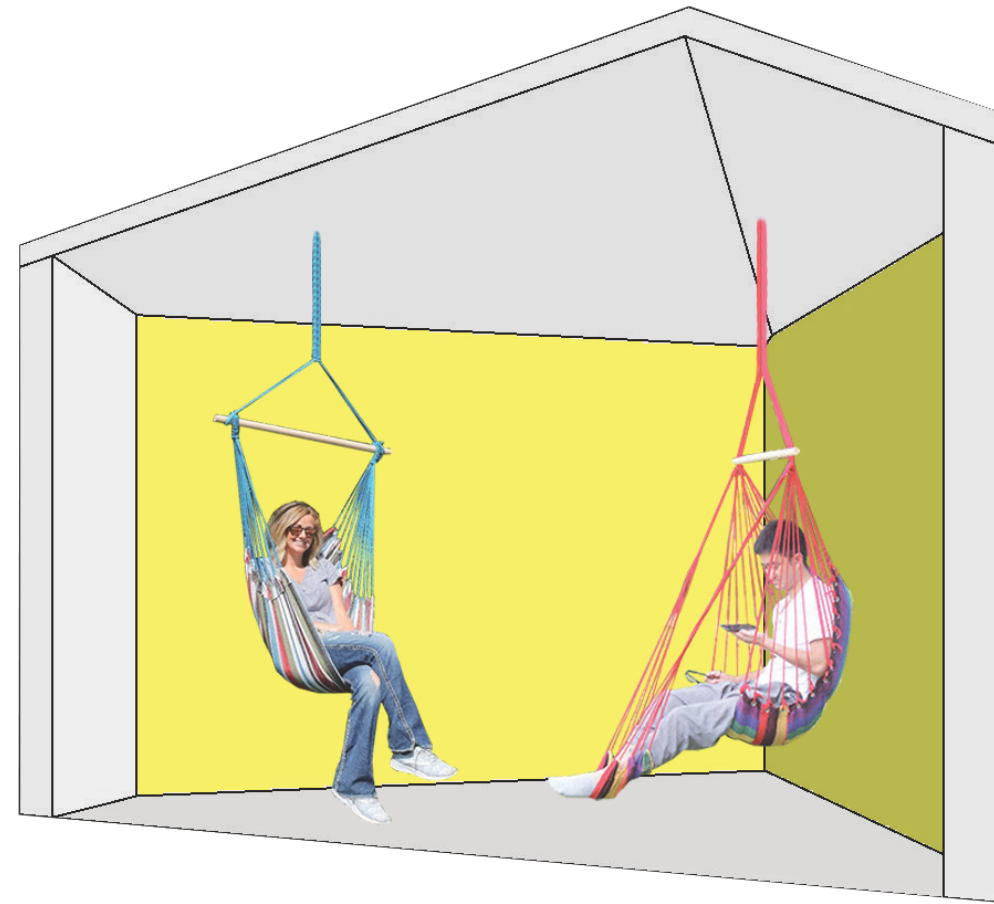


Figure 42 Exterior Seating

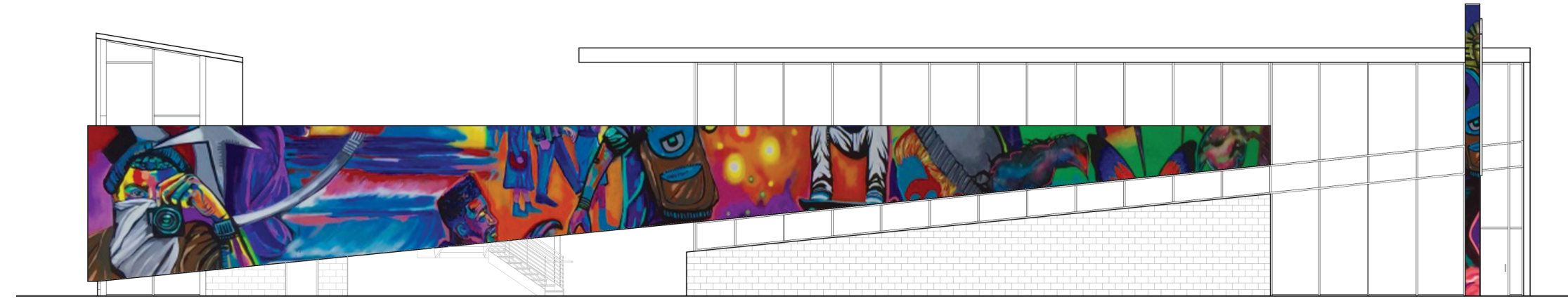


Figure 43 Building Wrap Diagram



Figure 44 Side Plaza

CONCLUSION

The study of this thesis has shown me just how layered connections within communities are. Designs need to meet the needs of many, and provide amenities to multiple groups. The design has to adjust to many moving parts and work within the context to provide spaces that not only allow, but encourage connection.

The design is focused around the users, whether they are cyclists or a family of four. It is a flexible space that provides several options in how one experiences the building and the city. The vistas that are supported by the project allow users to place themselves within the city, and the support for cycling provides them with a mode to explore it. The outdoor spaces provide users the ability to enjoy the weather, connect with others while playing games or listening to live music, and connect with the city by train watching or looking out to various parts of the city.

Careful detail was given to design elements to reference the history of the city. The benches, designed to allow users to face towards one another, mimic the waves of the river in the formation of a “M” to reference the Hernando DeSoto bridge (sometimes referred to as the “M bridge” for the shape of its structure). The alternating materials striped across the site mimic the crop industry that is so historically significant in Memphis. The scale of the building fits within its context and is largely masonry to match surrounding buildings.

Each element of the surrounding area was given attention to detail, such as responding to the proximity of the train by creating a viewing area and locating the main gathering space away from it, using the building and trees as a buffer. The building provides amenities to allow others to experience the Big River Crossing more enjoyably. Lastly, it connects a major landmark to the rest of the city by creating a node along the Main to Main trail, which in turn, connects people to the city of Memphis.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, Christopher, Sara Ishikawa, Murray Silverstein, Max Jacobson, Ingrid Fiksdahl-King, and Shlomo Angel. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977.

Alexander was the first recipient of the AIA medal for research. He was a practicing architect and professor. Likewise, Ishikawa, Silverstein, and Jacobson also taught at universities. Fiksdahl-King and Ishikawa were licensed architects at the time this book was written.

In this book, the authors study nodes, paths, districts, outdoor spaces, and other elements that contribute to defining the city and its boundaries. They look at both good and bad practices of each element, and look at how their organization can influence people and the way they interact with the city. The emphasis in this work is on outdoor space and connection. The way in which outdoor spaces, or outdoor rooms, are situated between buildings, connected via pedestrian paths, and treated at a human scale can make these spaces more or less comfortable. On a larger scale, the city must be ordered in such a way that travel is not a hinderance, and people are located near proper amenities.

This work supports the thesis by showing how the bicycle route can help to provide needed amenities to the surrounding communities through planned development. Providing safe outdoor spaces to connect to other nodes within the city helps to bring the city together.

Braungart, Michael, and William McDonough. *Cradle to Cradle*. London, UK: Vintage, 2009.

The first of multiple books in which the two authors collaborated, *Cradle to Cradle* challenges the ways in which people live from an environmental standpoint. McDonough, an architect, and Braungart, a chemist, are proponents of sustainable living and practices. McDonough received the Presidential Award for Sustainable Development. Braungart founded the Environmental Protection Encouragement (EPEA) and was the chemistry director for Greenpeace.

In this book, the authors detail the harmful practices in which they live. While they may understand large contributors to climate change, many of these practices go unnoticed. These are not only harmful to the environment, but also people’s health from chemicals that are breathed in daily. It is also noted how much of what is considered to be recycling is actually downcycling. It is a reuse of materials in a lesser quality; degenerative rather than regenerative. Also noted are the effects of the economy on renewable energy, and how something that is good economically may not be what is best for the environment.

The Switch is a project designed to bring people together and to encourage pride in one’s city. A catalyst to building that pride is to enable people to experience their city, and to do it in a sustainable way. Providing amenities to encourage biking as a sustainable option to travel is a core part of the design.

Chandler, Jennifer. “Changes at Carolina Watershed.” *Commercial Appeal*, January 8, 2019. <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/entertainment/dining/2019/01/08/memphis-restaurant-carolina-watershed-new-management-loflin-yard-party-memphis/2515790002/>.

This article covers the transition of management of Carolina Watershed, as well as changes forthcoming in scheduling and renovation. It describes the venue as a restaurant and bar made up of four silos, with a backyard complete with waterfalls, a stage for live music, and picnic tables.

Charlier, Tom. “Big River Crossing Opens Saturday.” *Commercial Appeal*, October 21, 2016. <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/2016/10/21/monumental-impact-seen-crossing/92465774/>.

In this article from October 2016, Charlier, a journalist for the *Commercial Appeal*, provides details of the construction of the Big River Crossing. The author outlines other significant projects along the Mississippi River, such as restored wetlands, public nature parks, and other Mississippi River crossings.

Coeffy, Ella. "The Railgarten." *4Memphis Magazine*. <https://4memphis.com/the-railgarten-3/>

In this article, Coeffy details indoor and outdoor elements to Railgarten. The author describes in detail the decor and vision the owners had when bringing the project to fruition. The thesis has similar indoor and outdoor elements to Railgarten.

Hickman, Matt. "The Mississippi's Longest Pedestrian Bridge is Now Open for Strolling." *Mother Nature Network*, October 26, 2016. <https://www.mnn.com/green-tech/transportation/blogs/mississippi-longest-pedestrian-bridge-now-open-strolling-cycling>.

In this article, the author discusses the history of the four bridges crossing the Mississippi River at Memphis, including the Harahan Bridge, which now supports a pedestrian path dubbed the "Big River Crossing." The article is in depth about the past use of the Harahan Bridge, as well as the project that turned it into the multifunctional train and pedestrian bridge that it is today.

Hill, Amanda. "Loflin Yard Now Open in Downtown Memphis." *Choose901*, April 7, 2016. <https://choose901.com/loflin-yard/>

Hill introduces Loflin Yard by its history as a "Safe House" called Loflin Safe & Lock Co. The renovated space contains two major constructed components: the Smoke House and Coach House. It features indoor and outdoor spaces, and a stage for music.

———. "MemFix: The Art of the Possible." *Choose901*, November 5, 2012. <https://choose901.com/memfix-the-art-of-the-possible/>.

This article introduces the MemFix initiative and what the goal is for the series of events. As one of the first of these neighborhood redevelopment events, spurred by another successful event in the city to bring interest to a declining neighborhood, the MemFix event at Cleveland

gave the community an opportunity to reimagine the neighborhood by activating spaces for businesses. At the heart of this community event was the vacant Sears Crosstown building, which later would go on to be redeveloped in one of the city's largest reuse projects. Many merchants and artists participated. Bands, outdoor games, and food trucks help to make the event successful. In addition to the temporary vendors, the event also provided permanent bike lanes and new crosswalks. The way in which this neighborhood transformed shows the potential in untapped resources, such as the thesis project site.

Holl, Steven. *Anchoring*. New York, NY: Princeton Architectural, 1991.

Anchoring by Steven Holl, an internationally recognized architect, looks at how buildings are connected to their site. In his book, Holl talks about how the buildings must be part of the site in which they are located, and must enhance it. He uses many examples of how buildings are designed to account for sunlight and the terrain, providing detailed sections, plans, and models to support his work.

Buildings must be built to react to their surroundings, to the sun, and to the people. The materials used should reflect the context, or be used purposefully to invoke a sense of place through common practices. The use of sunlight is important. The way sunlight is brought into the building, whether it is direct or indirect, must be done with intention. Many of the works that are displayed have courtyards to capture light in the outdoor spaces.

In creating many separate gathering spaces in this thesis, the use of sunlight is important. Designing the building to provide vistas to surrounding features, respond to the train, and connect to the Main to Main trail, helps anchor it to its place within the city. It is an important piece in connecting people with others and helping them understand where they are.

Kageyama, Peter. *Love Where You Live: Creating Emotionally Engaging Places*. Middletown: Creative Cities Productions, 2014.

This book's author, Peter Kageyama, is a grassroots engagement strategist who offers community development advice world-wide. In this book, he talks about the many ways in which people can get involved to build up their city, and provides examples of how others have done so across the United States. He provides lists of resources that may be helpful in new startups, as well as what it means to have "community engagement."

The author puts an emphasis on having fun with projects. Often times elected officials are hesitant to do weird or quirky things in fear of citizens viewing things too outside the box as negative, but with grassroots projects, keeping it fun is the best way to get others involved and reach people. The author suggests that projects should be catered to the communities in which they are embedded, and should have a personal connection to the surrounding community. The role art plays is very significant, as often art portrays the identity of the city and is something all can relate to.

The personal connection that is seen in so many of the example projects is what is strived for in this thesis. The various ways in which the startup projects provide a chance to connect with others through shared interests is a driving force for many elements in the design of the thesis where there are opportunities to gather, such as the side plaza and lounge space.

Kollar, Leena. "10 Emerging Contemporary Artists From Memphis to Know." *Culture Trip*, September 26, 2017. <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/tennessee/articles/10-emerging-contemporary-artists-from-memphis-to-know/>.

This article covers many significant artists in the city of Memphis, and provides insight to their backgrounds, style, and breadth of work. The artwork that is shown ranges from murals to canvas painting and even to public art installations from artists that have studied locally and abroad.

Lewandowski, Nao. "Memphis Festivals to Look Forward to in 2020." *Choose901*, January 4, 2020. <https://choose901.com/memfix-the-art-of-the-possible/>.

In this article, Lewandowski lists major festivals around the city of Memphis for the year 2020. The author provides details such as the date and location, as well as the focus of the event and any charitable contributions by them.

Luna, Kristin. "Murals in Memphis: Why Street Art Lovers Should Flock to West Tennessee." *Camels & Chocolate: Travel & Lifestyles Blog*, June 10, 2019. <https://www.camelsandchocolate.com/murals-in-memphis/>.

The author is a writer based in Nashville. She is a journalist by trade, having done freelance writing for *Newsweek*, *Us Weekly*, and *Entertainment Weekly*. In addition to Nashville, Luna has worked out of New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

The City of Memphis has many murals that are culturally significant. The set of photos collected displays the wide range of art found throughout the city. Bold colors, thick lines, abstract, and accurate representations of political figures are shown to all be important components to visual art in Memphis. Arts districts such as Cooper Young and Broad Avenue feature many murals. These districts attract many young people, providing local establishments with steady, reliable business. These districts are very walkable, and connected by bicycle or scooter.

The art community is important to the city of Memphis, and it must be incorporated into the design of the thesis as it is significant to the culture of the city. The thesis must offer the opportunity to display local work, temporarily or permanently, to help create a sense of place. Displaying local art instills pride in the city and also encourages locals to use the space.

Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1960.

Lynch was an urban planner and author, having studied under architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright. He went on to teach at MIT for several years, where he published *The Image of the City*, and later received funding for research into how young people use cities. That research would eventually lead to the publishing of *Growing Up in Cities*.

This book looks at the built environment of a city and how it shapes residents' perspectives. The focus is on how certain elements and the connectibility between different areas within the city give form to understanding it. The author does this by looking at the cities of Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles; and interviewing people that live in each. He then speaks about the importance of the different elements that make up a city such as nodes, paths, and edges. Natural connections are the base for any new city, and as the built environment grows around it, it must support them. As districts are formed, so are edges, nodes, and paths between them, and in all, how the user interacts with these should be the focus of planning and design. Art must play a large role in urban design, as it helps to connect on a personal level in the overall structured environment. Landmarks are infrequent as to stand out, but also to offer meaningful gathering spaces.

This reading influences the thesis in that the Main to Main trail is such a large factor in the siting of the project. It connects a landmark in the Harahan Bridge with major nodes, the South Main district and downtown. By creating another node along the edge of the South Bluffs neighborhood, this project will help to provide people with a point of connection and make the city feel smaller. The emphasis on "art" as part of urban design is part of the implementation of many design choices, such as the benches and the building wrap.

McDonough, William, and Michael Braungart. *The Upcycle*. New York, NY: North Point Press, 2013.

In this next installment by William McDonough and Michael Braungart, the authors discuss the idea of Upcycling. McDonough, an architect, and Braungart, a chemist, are proponents of sustainable living and practices. McDonough received the Presidential Award for Sustainable Development. Braungart founded the Environmental Protection Encouragement (EPEA) and was the chemistry director for Greenpeace.

They suggest that it is not enough to just do less bad, but that we must do more good. We should strive for abundance, not just "enough." The authors suggest that encouragement rather than absolutes is the path to success when spreading the idea of upcycling. In order to strive for abundance, people should be efficient with their time and resources. This takes time to optimize.

The notion of upcycling is implemented in the project through the encouragement to be efficient with one's resources. By being connected to other nodes within the city and providing bikeshare stations as well as bike racks and bicycle repair stations, others are encouraged to use a sustainable and efficient form of transportation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PRESENTATION MATERIALS

The presentation boards and model help to support the thesis idea and provide a sense of form and space (figures 45-51). These materials help to show the experience users would have in this project.



Figure 45 Title Board

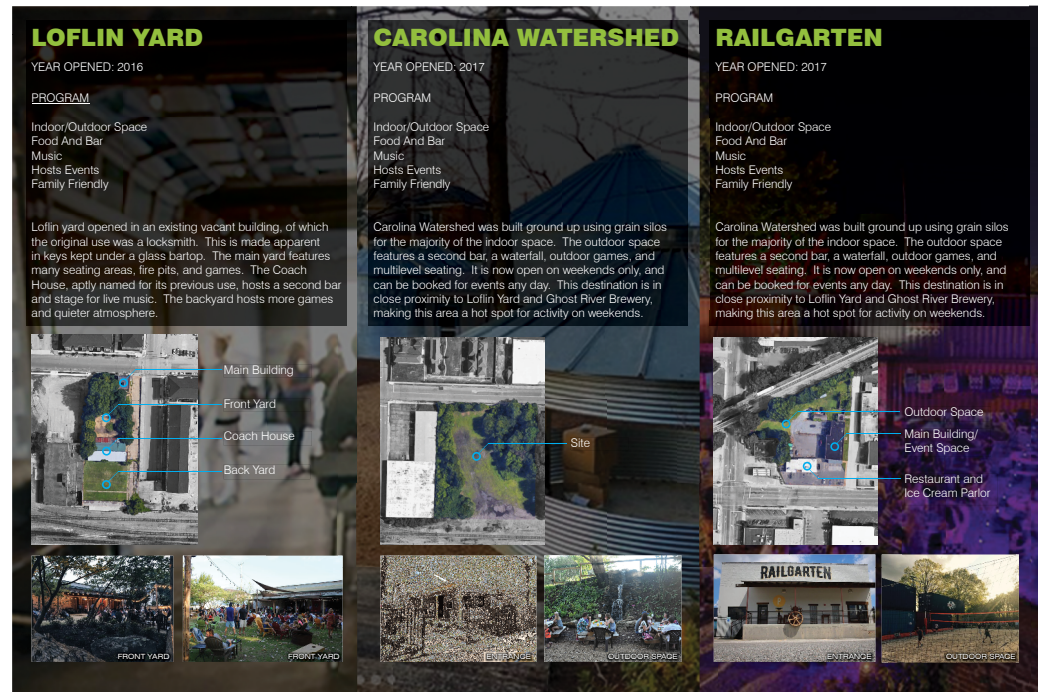


Figure 46 Precedent Boards

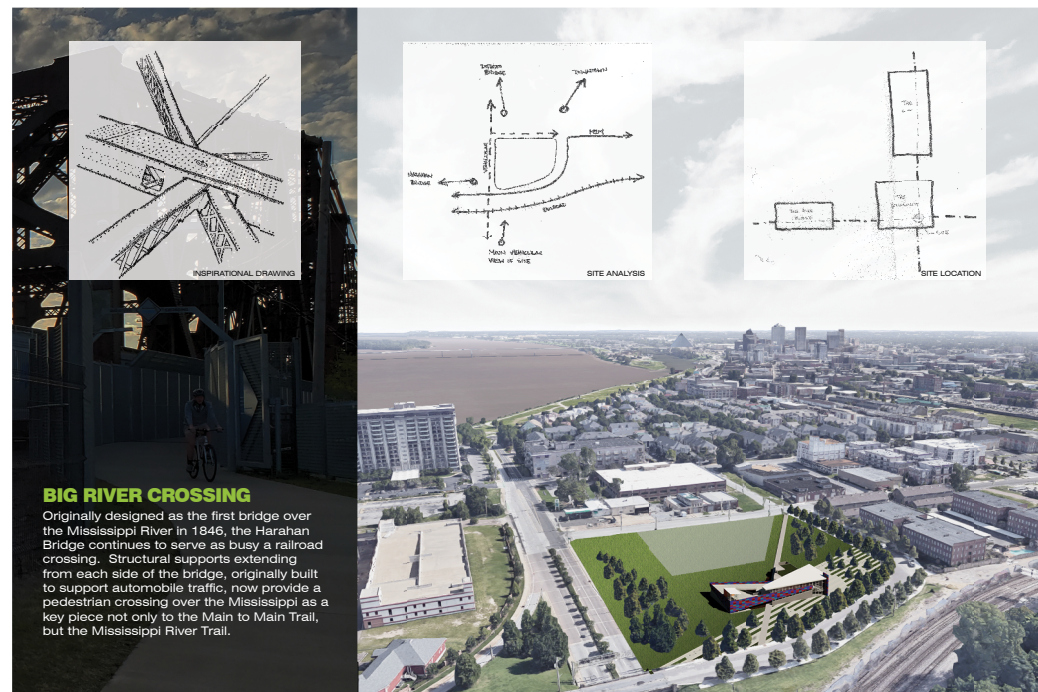


Figure 47 Site Analysis Boards

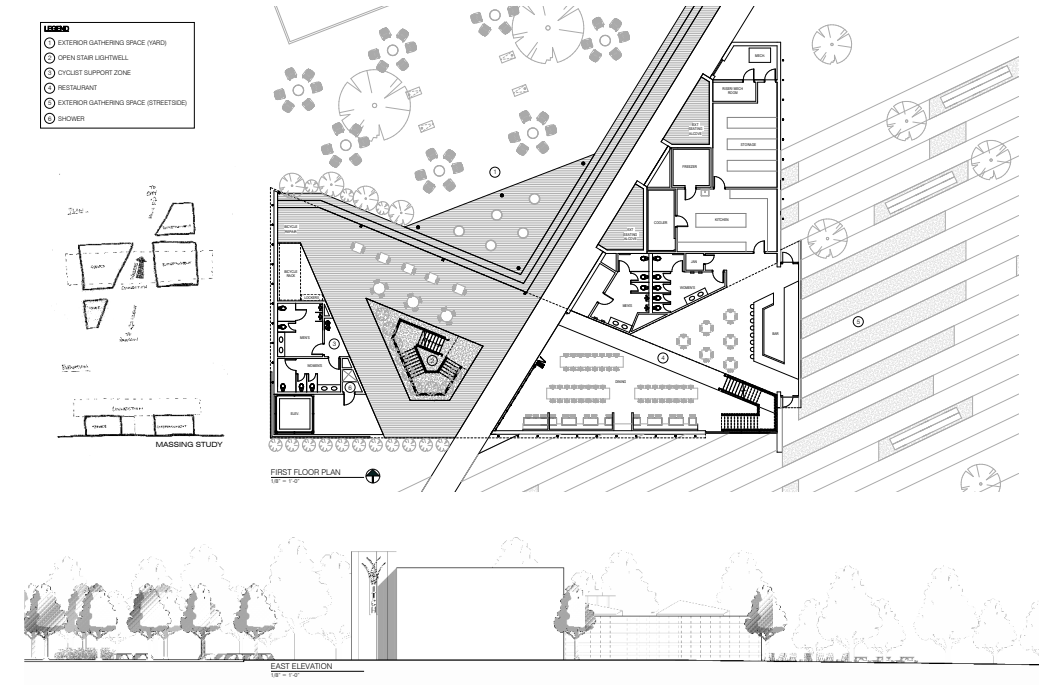
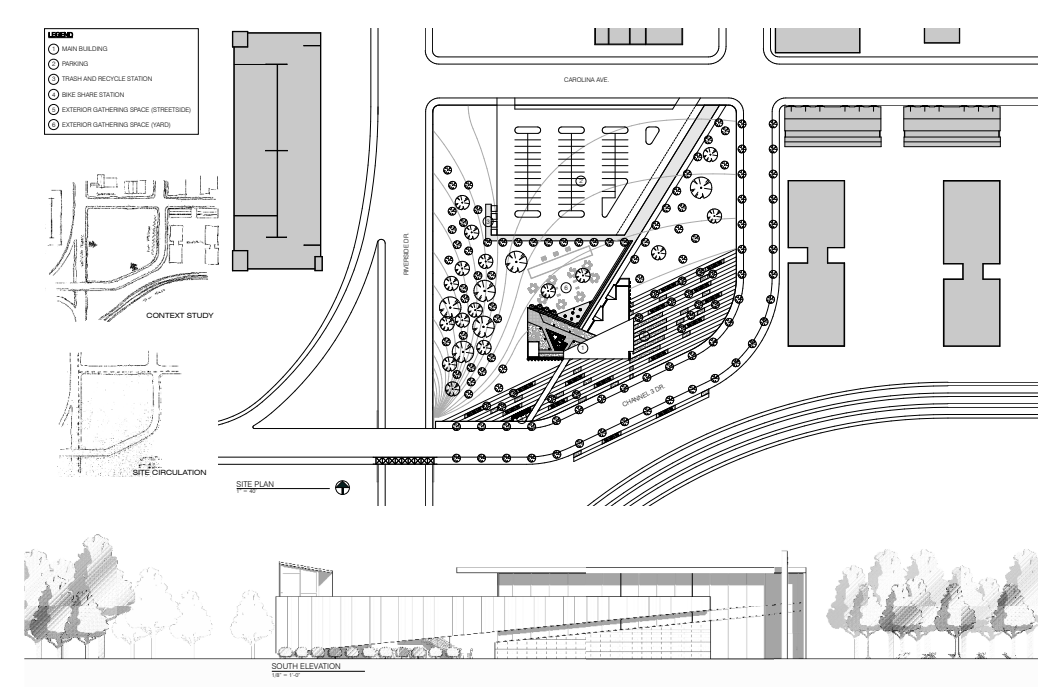
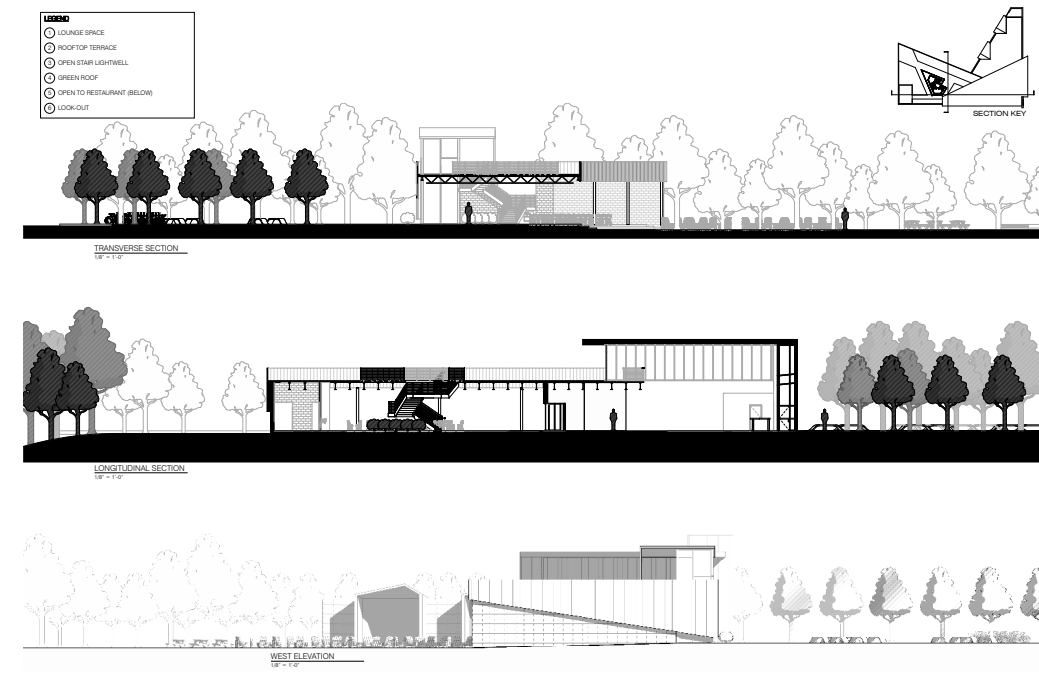
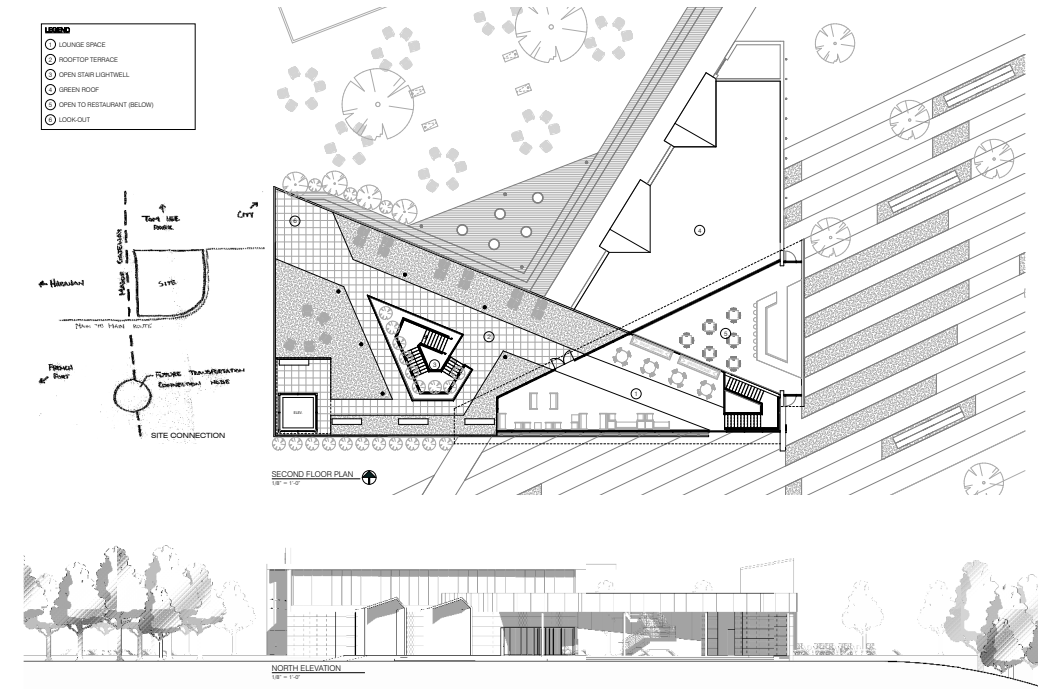


Figure 48 Plan, Elevation, and Section Boards



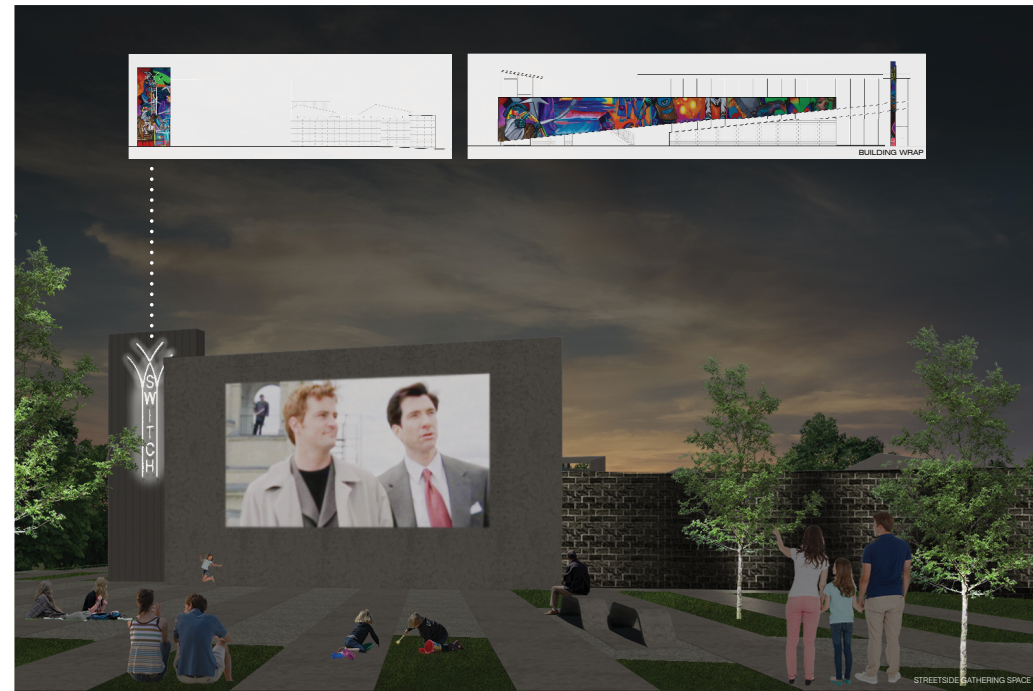
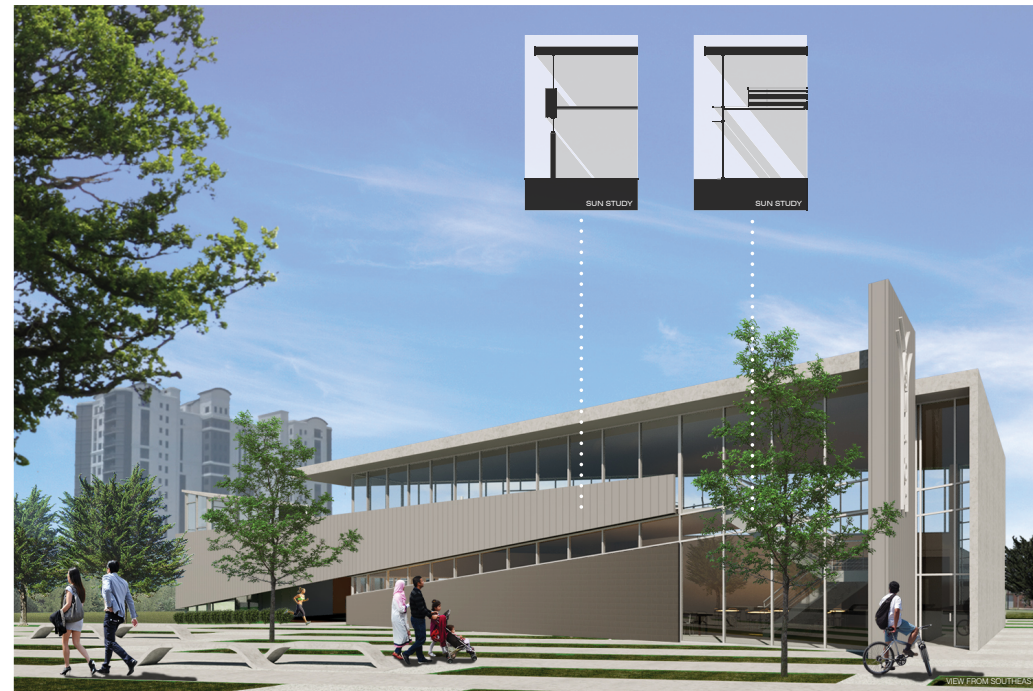


Figure 49 Rendering Boards

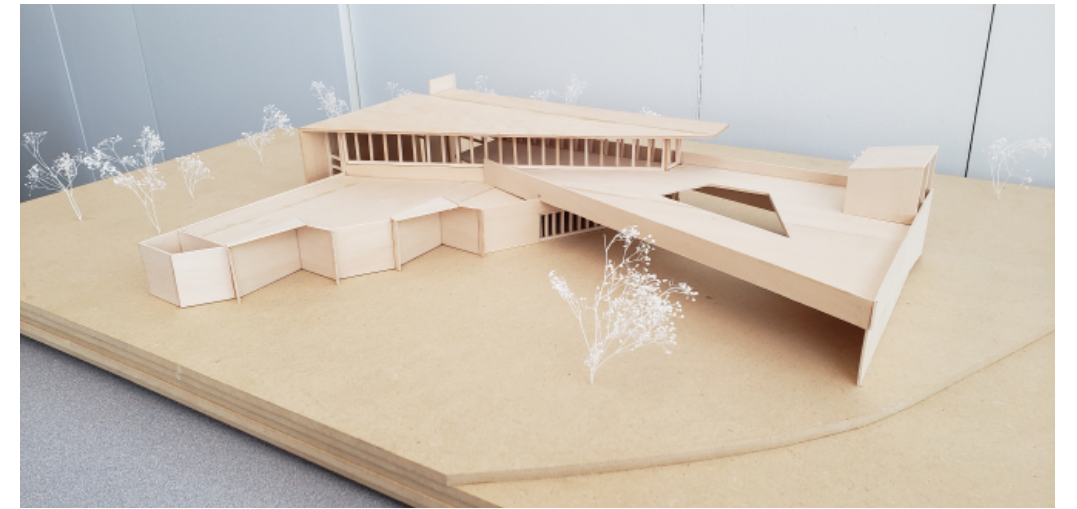
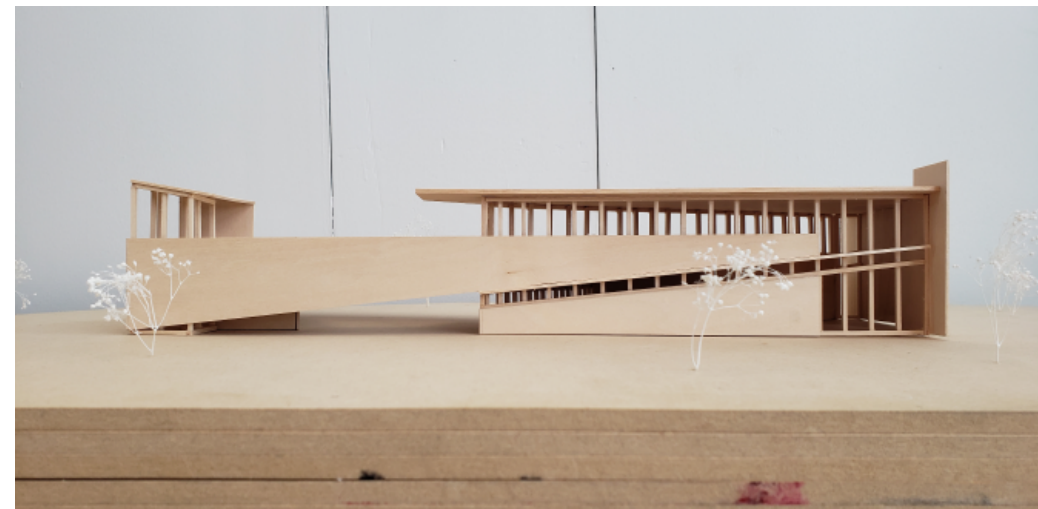


Figure 50 Presentation Images

Figure 51 Model Images

APPENDIX 2: PROCESS PIECE

A series of sketches were done around the project site studying the way in which people engaged the area and the connection of these components with the rest of the city (figure 52). The structure on the Harahan Bridge provided inspiration for the dynamic angles in the design of the project. The bridge is integral to the greater idea of providing a healthier relationship with the city and river, an important component in the project.



Figure 52 Process Piece Sketches