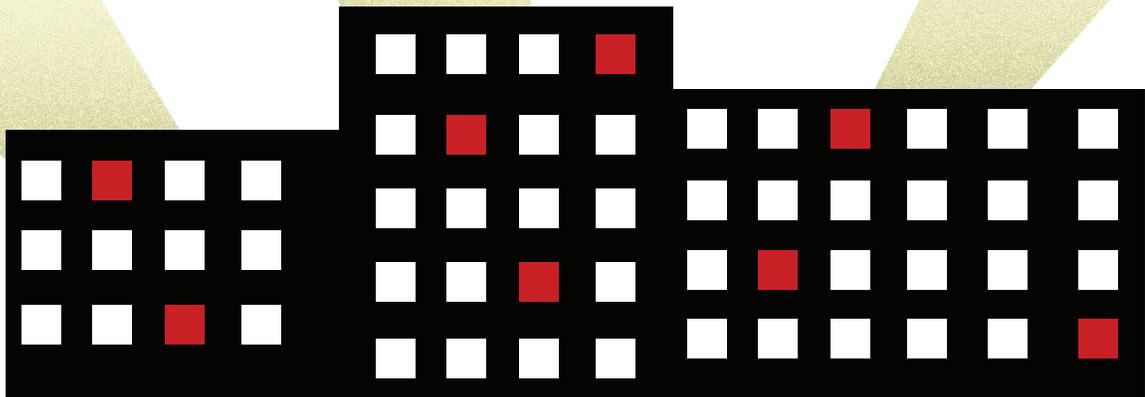


# RADIANT FUTURE: DWELLING, PRUITT IGOE, AND THE IMPRINT OF COMMUNIST ARCHITECTURE

*Robert Darling*



**RADIANT FUTURE:**  
The Intent of Communist Architects and How  
it Applies to Social Housing

A Design Thesis submitted to the Department of Architecture &  
Landscape Architecture of North Dakota State University

by Robert Darling

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of  
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Primary Thesis Advisor



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Thesis Committee Chair

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>10</b>	ABSTRACT
<b>11</b>	NARRATIVE
<b>13</b>	TPOLOGY
<b>14</b>	PROJECT EMPHASIS
<b>15</b>	PROJECT GOALS
<b>16</b>	USER/CLIENT DESCRIPTION
<b>17</b>	PROJECT JUSTIFICATION
<b>18</b>	DESIGN METHODOLOGY
<b>20</b>	DESIGN PROCESS PLAN
<b>22</b>	PLAN FOR PROCEEDING
<b>24</b>	RESEARCH PAPER
<b>34</b>	ARTEFACT
<b>38</b>	PRECEDENT ANALYSIS
<b>76</b>	PROGRAM
<b>84</b>	SITE ANALYSIS
<b>102</b>	CODE ANALYSIS
<b>106</b>	PROJECT SCHEDULE
<b>108</b>	RESEARCH DIRECTION
<b>110</b>	DESIGN METHODOLOGY PLAN
<b>112</b>	DESIGN PROCESS DOCUMENTATION
<b>114</b>	DESIGN PROCESS
<b>142</b>	FINAL DESIGN
<b>166</b>	APPENDIX

# LIST OF TABLES & FIGURES

- Cover Image  
Darling, Robert G.
- Figure 1, 2, 11-25  
Retrieved on October 27, 2016 from <http://www.narkomfin.net/>
- Figure 3, 7, 26-30, 33-39  
Retrieved on October 28, 2016 from <http://www.pruitt-igoe.com/press-materials/>
- Figure 4  
Retrieved on December 2, 2016 from <https://thecharnelhouse.org/2013/07/16/the-speculative-constructivism-of-iakov-chernikhovs-early-architectural-experiments-1925-1932/chernikov-11-main-library/>
- Figure 5  
Retrieved on December 2, 2016 from <http://www.archdaily.com/155470/ad-classics-rusakov-workers-club-konstantin-melnikov>
- Figure 6  
Retrieved on December 3, 2016 from <http://www.archdaily.com/96824/ad-classics-convent-of-la-tourette-le-corbuiser>
- Figure 8  
Retrieved on April 3, 2017 from <http://socks-studio.com/2015/11/01/a-growing-incremental-place-incremental-time-victims-a-project-by-john-hejduk-1984/>
- Figure 9, 10  
Darling, Robert G.
- Figure 31  
Darling, Robert G.
- Figure 32  
Darling, Robert G. Data obtained on October 11, 2016 from <http://www.pruitt-igoe.com/press-materials/>
- Figure 40-46, 48, 51-54  
Retrieved from <http://www.archdaily.com/536147/heliopolis-social-housing-biselli-katchborian-arquitetos>
- Figure 47, 49, 50  
Darling, Robert G. Data obtained from <http://www.archdaily.com/536147/heliopolis-social-housing-biselli-katchborian-arquitetos>
- Figure 55-59  
Darling, Robert G.
- Figure 60  
Darling, Robert G. Data obtained from <http://www.openstreetmaps.org>
- Figure 61, 64  
Darling, Robert G. Data obtained from Google Earth
- Figure 62-63  
Darling, Robert G.
- Figure 65  
Darling, Robert G. Data obtained from <http://maps.stlouisco.com/propertyview/>
- Figure 66-67  
Darling, Robert G. Data obtained from <http://maps.google.com>
- Figure 68, 69B, 70-71  
Retrieved on October 15, 2016 from [https://www.windfinder.com/forecast/st\\_louis\\_lambert\\_airport](https://www.windfinder.com/forecast/st_louis_lambert_airport)
- Figure 69A  
Darling, Robert G.
- Figure 69C  
Retrieved on October 15, 2016 from <http://www.history.com/topics/us-states/missouri/pictures/missouri/old-courthouse-gateway-arch-st-louis-missouri-usa-2>
- Figure 72-76  
Retrieved on December 1, 2016 from Google Earth
- Figure 77-79  
Darling, Robert G. Data retrieved on February 15, 2017 from <http://maps.stlouisco.com/propertyview/>
- Figure 80-81  
Darling, Robert G. Data obtained from Ching, F. D. K., & Winkel, S. R. (2012). *Building Codes Illustrated: A Guide to Understanding the 2012 International Building Code* (4 edition). Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.
- Figure 82-112  
Darling, Robert G.
- Figure 113-114  
Darling, Robert G. Data obtained on March 6, 2017 from <http://aviaperm.com/pruitt-igoe-floor-plan.html>
- Figure 115-176  
Darling, Robert G.

# INTRODUCTION



# ABSTRACT

This project seeks to solve the issue of public housing that America is facing in the present day. This housing sector is in crisis, and needs a renewed emphasis on quality and regard for human dignity, as well as an enhanced understanding of dwelling. The method through which this problem will be researched and dealt with is primarily investigative research, looking into the oft overlooked precedents of communist spaces in the historic USSR. By investigating these issues and their ultimate culmination in the case of Pruitt Igoe, as well as the general issues of dwelling and public space, this thesis seeks to solve the issue of public housing in a very particular case: specifically, on the former site of Pruitt Igoe, where the failures of the past will inform the success of the future.

# NARRATIVE

. This project reinvestigates the potential for social housing on a site known for the historic failure of the same type: Pruitt Igoe, in St. Louis Missouri. This is accomplished through the appropriation of the metaphysical ruins of the site, the careful examination of its former problems, and the application of historic ideologies, reinterpreted in a way that makes sense for the modern era.

The first step to this approach was the creation of an artefact, a device that creates an experiential facsimile of the architecture to come. The artefact is composed of concrete blocks in which the husks of antique radios have been set, and then removed, while their electronic innards are scooped out and then placed on the resulting form. The resulting impressions leave a sense of history, of what was there that now exists only in memory as an absent presence. The absence of the radios' shells recalls decay as well as progress, absence as well as presence, the inexorable march of time as humanity strives for the future, the memories that people hold, fading in clarity as their childhood falls to the past. To that end, plaster casts create a negative of the concrete impressions, travelling further away from the initial history from which it traces its lineage. The casts are smoother, pure white, and contain only so much information as was embedded in the concrete impressions, held within the smoothed lines of their newer counterparts. Just as the memories of Pruitt Igoe have shaped the people who live today, so have the impressions of history made their mark on the new and smooth.

The architecture of this project builds on the aspects of the artefact: namely, utilizing the impressions of the past in order to create a better, more aware future. These impressions are conveyed in the design and layout of the building, as well as more directly in the actual impressions in the walls, the windows, and the corresponding memorial to the site, located on the former pathway system of Pruitt Igoe.

The flaws of Pruitt Igoe were many, and the project does not seek to move forward without addressing them in unison with an examination of architectural

# NARRATIVE

“radiance.” Circulation in Pruitt Igoe, for example, grew to be a great peril, with the “gallery” spaces and stairwells that were necessitated by skip-stop elevators becoming ideal spots for crime and theft. The public and circulation spaces of the current project are significantly more visible and open, allowing for greater security, light, and a shared space of remembrance and historic awareness when set against the memorial just outside the building. The memorial in question lies on a historic path, once covered by an overgrowth of trees, now reborn as a reminder of what once stood and dictated the lives of its inhabitants. It serves as a symbol of what happened before, and reminds the occupants, as well as the administration of the crushing weight of a system that does not prioritize the dwelling of its inhabitants.

Dwellings are set into the building, providing a very real sense of impression with their varying degrees of cantilever and depression. With each dwelling being slightly different than the next, while containing a shared sense of modularity, they stand in direct contrast to Pruitt Igoe’s standardized and flush apartments. With their variation and orientation, this allows for the creation of many intimate semi-public spaces, providing layers of ownership and uniqueness not seen in standardized social housing developments or gigantic public squares. With the mixture of visible gathering spaces, semi-public shared spaces, and unique dwellings for every family, this thesis stands in opposition to the failed processes of the past and learns from them in a way that opens a symbolic bridge from the failed past to the radiant future.

## TYPOLGY

The project typology is a public housing apartment building. It will house low-income residents of the St. Louis area, and will also include public spaces for gathering and remembrance.

This thesis is comprised of many elements: public space, private space, dwelling, the implications of social housing, etc. The emphasis in this project will be relating the lessons learned from the USSR and Pruitt Igoe and applying them in a way that works. Issues and successes in Soviet designs will be at the forefront of what can work in the context of a site in the contemporary USA.

The goals of this project are to argue and prove that:

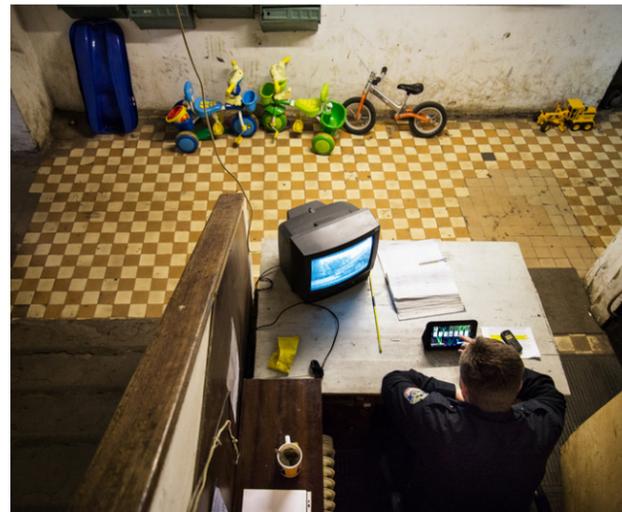
1. The USSR had designs that were more successful than just the infamous housing block. Their explorations into public space and community living revealed a number of lessons in what a user of a space enjoys or is willing to tolerate. These examples translated, over time, into Pruitt Igoe, and that failure will be the foundation of the project.
2. Dwelling is an active role that someone takes on in their abode. It is not passive, one actively participates with their environment. This design should successfully facilitate "active" dwelling in a way that is enjoyable and liveable.
3. Public space can and should be integrated better, and more intentionally, in a building meant for dwelling.

This thesis is a public housing initiative. As a result of its public nature, it will be owned and operated by the public: namely, the city of St. Louis and the St. Louis Housing Authority. Additionally, in order to make costs more bearable and to ensure the funding of quality design, it is quite possible that a private developer will also be brought on board.

Social housing as an institution is a failing system in the USA. Options are very limited, with only 1 of 130 apartments in the nation being public housing apartments, and even then, those options are often unsuccessful and in disrepair. St. Louis is a city that could most definitely benefit from another social housing option, especially one that is designed to be of higher quality and with more relevant influences than options in the past. By looking to what the USSR tried, successful or not, the lessons to be learned can be applied to make a functioning, pleasant, and hopeful dwelling for those who need it most.



[Figure 1]



[Figure 2]



[Figure 3]

Due to the historical nature of this thesis, I will be adopting the design methodology of interpretive research: producing knowledge by identifying, naming, and assigning new significance to the oft discredited designs of the Soviets, as well as comparing them to the works of other architects, such as Le Corbusier, and Minoru Yamasaki. By drawing out the meaning of these historic works, and synthesizing their ideas in a way that is relevant to a modern social housing problem, a thoughtful and coherent thesis solution will be achieved.

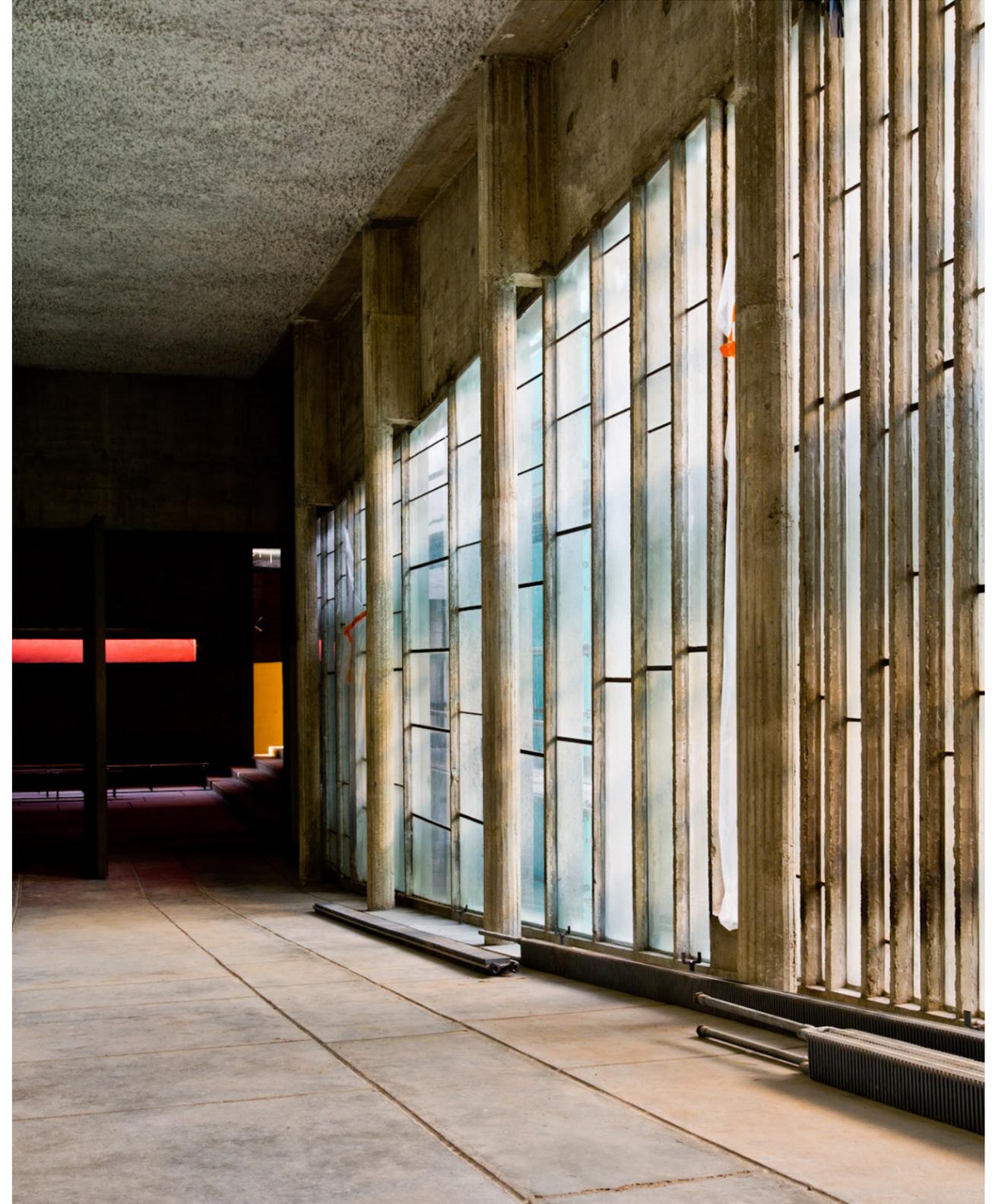
By implementing this interpretive research methodology and using it in conjunction with design research, the thesis will come to full fruition in the form of a public housing project design.



[Figure 4]



[Figure 5]



[Figure 6]

### PROCESS

The design process for this thesis will consist of a number of methods to achieve a cohesive final design.

The process will begin with and continually consist of exploratory sketching: drawing out potential plans, elevations, perspectives and details in order to get a visual grasp on what is to be constructed.

An exhaustive site analysis will play a pivotal role as well, influencing orientation, fenestration, massing, and views. The results of the analysis will shape the project in a way that no other site could.

### DIGITAL

In order to envision the project in three dimensions, the fabrication of multiple digital and physical models will be necessary. A number of different materials (cardboard, matboard, concrete) may potentially be used, as well as a suite of different programs (Sketchup, Revit, Rhino) in order to achieve the form that most effectively evokes an impactful experience.

More specifically, form-finding via algorithms may play a major role in the design, as the tool of Grasshopper for Rhino allows for efficient and rapid iterations of multiple models, as well as very unique forms. Although form will not be the central goal of the design process, achieving it may be made easier through Grasshopper.

All of the design work process will be documented digitally, compiled to a hard drive (and a backup drive), and relevant pieces of process will be added to this document as needed.

Over the course of the semester, it will be necessary to have deadlines in order to make progress at a reasonable pace. I plan to dedicate the first few weeks to conceptual analysis, both of the project itself and of the context around it. Following that, one week will be dedicated to passive Environmental Control Systems Analysis, and the next to active analysis. Structural selection and development will follow, and this will then lead into more specific plan, envelope, and materials development, with 1/2 of a week to a week dedicated to each.

By this time in the semester, it will have reached the midpoint, and a review will take place. Following that and spring break, a week and a half will be set aside for revisions, and afterwards will be renderings, book revisions, and presentation preparation. It is my hope that following this plan will lead to a balanced, well rounded project, as well as a balanced semester that efficiently uses my time.



[Figure 7]

Radiant Future:  
The Intent of Communist Architects and How it Applies to Public Housing  
Robert Darling  
North Dakota State University

America is in the middle of a long-standing battle with public housing. For many years, architects and planners have struggled to clear slums and move the low-income demographic into quality dwellings, only to have it all undone by inadequate funds, ill-maintained public spaces, and the decay of the community's moral fabric. This is a problem that faces designers on opposite ends of the world. It is a human problem, one that occurs in every economic and political system. For example, communist architects historically strove to create housing that was socially optimistic, community-driven, and ideologically inspiring. While the USSR developed plenty of buildings that were architecturally oppressive, successful examples and design intentions can be examined to reveal the true merit of designing for the proletariat. Thus, the intent of the communist architect and their approaches to both public and private space can be analyzed, particularly through the lens of style, to improve social housing in the modern American city.

## History & Dwellings

Shortly after the communist revolution in Russia, the effort began to construct new, improved buildings to improve the quality of life of its citizens, and to show the powers of the new government. The shift from a poor, agrarian economy to an urban, industrial one was rapid, and it necessarily meant that there would be a movement of people into large cities. "A building boom transformed the country from a rural to an urban society in the course of forty years following the Second World War" (Kelleher, 2009). The USSR compensated for this influx of people by creating block upon block of socialized housing, with some types better than others.

Within the typology of public housing, the Soviets tried a number of examples, before settling on one that was the most

efficient. One example is, strangely enough, the single family house. By far the least dense option to house the communist public, "the small, detached house" was considered "a problem of architectural design" (Anderson, 2009). It found its use, however, as a unit that was easily mass produced during the evacuation to the east, which occurred during World War II. When citizens had to move from place to place on a regular basis, the detached house became the ideal unit to create communities, piece by piece. A consequence of this rapid construction, through which fifteen houses could be completed per day, was that most construction was finished with low quality, amateur craftsmanship (Anderson, 2009). Thus, with the focus being placed solely on efficiency, the result was houses that lacked both durability and regard for the occupant as dweller.

An interesting aspect of the detached house as mass production unit was that it was based in part on American mass production techniques. This was due to a mutual cooperation during World War II, when the common enemy of Nazi Germany brought architects from both allied countries together in cooperation. Soviet architects learned of American production techniques from exhibitions such as the 1944 Museum of Modern Art exhibition, as well as from purchasing dwellings from Detroit architect Albert Kahn to later reverse-engineer (Anderson, 2009). This import of techniques was not limited to the detached house. It permeated Soviet architecture as a whole, and left a profoundly programmatic impact (Anderson, 2009). With the parallels between American and Soviet dwelling construction this strong, we must take a certain responsibility to design with quality while drawing from past examples in both countries, acknowledging mistakes and

all.

The apartment building, realized through Socialist Realism (or “Stalinism”), was another typology common through the Soviet Union. Kelleher (2009) states that while never really defined, “Socialist Realism is neither a style nor a movement, but an artistic method applied to all the arts” in order to “educate and inspire” the proletariat. It focused on “critically assimilating” all of the world’s preceding cultures in order to create something new and inspiring (Cooke, 1997). Results were mixed. An apartment building by Ivan Zholtovsky, for example, was given a Stalin prize for its exemplary Stalinist qualities, such as glazed interior walls to allow for maximum light penetration (Cooke, 1997). The dwellings, in short, were well-received. When applied to other buildings, especially outside of Russia, the buildings were often reviled due to their foreignness, and their immense scale. Such was the case with the Palace of Culture in Warsaw, Poland, which was seen as architecturally oppressive (Kelleher, 2009). In short, Socialist Realism was successful when it took into account the needs of its occupants, designing for the context and sensibilities of its users.

Some other successful examples do exist, though in some cases they are not apartment buildings. In many cases, they embody the socialist ideal of collective space in a phenomenon known as a “social condenser.” A social condenser, as defined by Hatherley (2016), is a place for collective life and provides “education, games, films, and plays in a deliberately vodka-free environment.” Often, synagogues and churches were converted to accommodate these new functions, in the absence of religion. In the city of Vilnius, Lithuania, the idea of the “social condenser” is

embodied within the city. Hatherley goes on to describe it:

Proletarian culture, atheist marriage, sport, high and low arts, all the schizophrenic revolutionary-conservative aspects of Soviet public life appear one after the other, all of the buildings designed with imagination, wit, and urban specificity, all of them full of large circulation spaces filled with visual content and rich, tactile surfaces; almost all of them commanding public squares filled with sculptures and benches. The architectural interest almost always comes from the ingenuity involved in fitting the buildings into the sites, and from the craftsmanship of the interiors – never from standardized virtues like precision, economy, or order. (Hatherley, 2016)

Once again, these spaces were successful largely in part due to their careful consideration for the user, as well as adequate regard for the site and context.

The last and most widely-known piece of communist public housing is the Modernist apartment bloc. When Khrushchev came into power following Stalin’s death in 1953, he subsequently denounced Socialist Realism, claiming it was a drain on the people’s resources, and turned to different building systems to increase construction (Cooke, 1997). These new construction systems were by and large LPS (Large Panel System) construction, which were made primarily from large, precast concrete panels, and had concrete column and slab structural systems. In some areas in Bulgaria, they were designed at a somewhat smaller scale, and had amenities such as hot water that the residents were not previously accustomed to (Kelleher, 2009). These were well-received, but later on the scale increased and the satellite state became full of the grim, concrete monoliths that characterized the rest of the eastern bloc (Kelleher, 2009). While the new designs were intended to emphasize public space and strengthen the public’s view of

communism (Kelleher, 2009), the results were instead “museums to the mistreatment of the proletariat (Hatherley, 2016).” Cities soon became filled with “prefabricated towers with balconies at unlikely angles ... cantilevered over vast, usually empty public spaces.” The problems with these spaces go beyond design and into the socio-political realm, but their problems, by and large, are very comparable to those here in the United States concerning similar public housing projects.

Western Public Housing

One project that bears resemblance to public housing in the USSR is the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex in St. Louis, Missouri. It was created under the United States Housing Act of 1949, and could house 15,000 tenants on 57-acre sites in a series of 11 high rise buildings (Bristol, 1991). While their construction met stiff opposition initially (public housing is a much more socialist idea, after all), the units were praised upon completion in 1954 as an oasis within a desert of slums. Once a few years passed, however, new issues began to manifest.

The project faced constant pressure from the Public Housing Administration to keep costs at a minimum, so quality had to be cut again and again to keep things under budget. The hardware and materials were of the lowest quality possible, so much so that “doorknobs and locks broke on initial use” (Bristol, 1991). Additionally, income came exclusively from tenant rent, and since the rent was necessarily low, maintenance could not be regularly paid for. The result became quickly deteriorating public spaces, non-functioning elevators, and a declining standard of safety. Further, ownership of public spaces was something not felt by the tenants, while their own apartments were still treated with care. While some of these issues are Pruitt-Igoe-specific, they are shared on a broader scale with the apartments of the historic

Soviet Union.

Public & Private Space

Pruitt-Igoe shares a very close parallel with communist housing, in both its initial opulence and eventual decline. Therefore, it is very important to discuss the design and failings of this project in depth, in addition to examining communist dwellings. Design issues, for the most part, can be divided into two distinct categories: those dealing with public space, and those with private space.

Designing quality public space is paramount to successful public housing. Without it, an entire project can fall apart. Pruitt-Igoe’s public spaces ended up being breeding grounds for violence and vandalism, and maintenance all but ceased in their later years (de Graaf, 2015). Elevators ceased to function, and soon smelled like urine from children who misjudged the time it took to get home, and the galleries that resulted from skip-stop elevators became “gauntlets” through which residents had to pass to get to their homes and back (Bristol, 1991). Why was this an issue, and what can be done to prevent this again? Oscar Newman, in his 1996 book *Creating Defensible Space*, outlines a number of issues with the project and their public spaces. He points out that interior public space, especially in high rises, are hot-beds for crime, with over half of incidents taking place in such spaces. Additionally, the spaces in question were so big that individuals took no ownership of them when they began to fall into disrepair. On the other hand, when spaces such as small landings were shared by only two or three families, they were kept relatively neat and tidy (Newman, 1996). In fact, the best-used spaces are often “accessible from dwellings” and are “shared with other residents” (Bornat, 2016). The conclusion? Design

housing at a smaller scale, with public spaces sharing ownership between few families.

Communist dwellings, for the most part, did not conform to most of these conclusions either. They designed tall, concrete blocks that “lost much of the humane character of their predecessors” (Kelleher, 2009), and they occupied vast stretches of land. This negatively affects the community regardless of country, as public housing, when concentrated, magnifies the feeling of isolation from the rest of the city (Newman, 1996). While the documentation for Soviet crime is less obvious, the public spaces of communism suffered from similar problems of scale, lack of ownership, and dilapidation (Hatherley, 2016). If one is to learn what to do from these very similar problems, the lesson is that grand community spaces have their place, but it is not in public housing, and it is especially not indoors.

Private space, the individual dwelling unit, has its share of problems too. As a result of the wave of standardization that swept both the USA and the USSR in the middle of the century, we have dwellings that “are tailored to fit an infinitesimal portion of humanity” (Robinson, 2011). The Soviet and the American architect shared this; the goal became not to create dwellings, where one’s personality could flourish, but the creation of people storage, boxes to hold people between work hours. In creating new private space, especially for those with lower income, the goal must be to accommodate, rather than to impress (Robinson, 2011). Despite all of these unsuitable dwellings, people have found a way to make their spaces comfortable, and home-like. In the wake of communism’s collapse in the 1990’s, some residents of the former Eastern bloc even long for the time when they

were required to be in public housing (Rethmann, 2009). This is summed up in the term *ostalgie*, or the nostalgia for the past state of communism. Within this *ostalgie*, the residents of former satellite states remember the times when they made homes out of their small, geometric Soviet flats. Even in times of oppression, with little access to consumer goods, they personalized and made homes out of their standardized spaces (Rethmann, 2009). The same was true of the flats in Pruitt-Igoe. While public spaces fell in the thralls of vandalism and decay, individual apartments could often be found in neat order, pristine by comparison (Bristol, 1991). Even in the midst of architectural and socio-economic oppression, people found a way to make a home for themselves. What is the lesson for the designer here? It goes back to Robinson’s remark on accommodation in that we need to leave room for occupants to customize, to make a space their own. Homogeneity and white-washed walls lend no favors to the resident.

## Conclusions

So, what is to be gained from communist housing and its parallels in the USA? A number of decisions led to poor space, both publicly and privately. Designing large, tall, concrete complexes has yet to produce a community with quality spaces, especially publicly. In general, scale needs to be brought down to a minimum, yet still maintained at a density that makes sense for the context. Walkups are nearly ideal, and public spaces need only be shared by a few families, lest they remain unclaimed and filled with trash, vandalism, and gangs. While the intentions with large, public gallery spaces are good, the reality of precedents shows us that crime and a lack of ownership will eventually take over.

Another lesson to learn is to design with time and durability in mind. When designing with cost as the absolute bottom line, corners get cut, and deterioration happens far too soon.

This happened both in the communist USSR, and, to a somewhat greater extent, Pruitt-Igoe. While the dwellings may not be fancy, they should at least invest the money into quality materials, so that they do not end up as part of the vicious, all-too-short building cycle of today’s built environment. Durability can also refer to the community, as well as materials. Architects and planners may wish to fill the void of public housing that exists in America with a ratio of about 130 housing units to 1 public housing unit (Blumgart & Kim, 2015). However, one should design pockets of public housing, intermixing them with various social classes. This will prevent the slumming that happens far too often in cities, when poor areas become too big.

On a basic, ethical level, the conclusion is clear: design with the human being in mind, and don’t place them in a featureless box. Architects on both sides of the iron curtain certainly had good intentions, in many cases, but all too often they were hampered either by a concern for public space as circulation, budget cuts, or promoting the ideology of their respective country. The radiant future is a lofty aspiration to hold, but one mustn’t be blinded by its radiance and forget the human that should stand in its glory. In looking toward the future, the architect should design with a careful consideration for the user as a dweller, and one who participates in a public space that allows for ownership and interaction with their fellow proletariat.

## Annotated Bibliography

Anderson, R. (2009). USA/USSR: Architecture and War. *Grey Room*, (34), 80–103.

In this brief article, Anderson explains the often unexplored cooperation that occurred between the USA and the USSR. He details the typologies that the two groups explored and shared information on, namely, the detached single family house, and how it played a role during Soviet society in World War II. He goes on to explain the subsequent cultural rift following the war, and the purge of American architectural concepts and ideals from the Soviet syntax.

Anderson is aware of the seemingly un-impactful effect the withdrawal of techniques from the Soviets has on the argument, and further explains the more subtle effect that American ideas and construction techniques had on the construction industry post-war. This article is relevant because it shows the common ground that Americans and Soviets shared in a time when public housing was becoming a major issue for both countries.

Blumgart, J., & Kim, W. (2015). The slow death of public housing: HUD's latest approach keeps it alive (barely) but makes it much less "public." *Planning*, 81(10), 12–20.

In this article, the Blumgarts explain the steady decline of the public housing effort in the USA, and how it negatively impacts the country and its poor as a whole. It details the policies and the specific statistics of the public housing sector over time, and how funding is declining.

This article is relevant because it more fully details the public housing situation in America today, in a very recent context. It also outlines how dire the need is for more public housing in a country with so little of it to choose from.

Bornat, D. (2016). Designing green spaces that people want to use. *Architects' Journal*, 243(10), 22.

Bornat explains, in this brief article on public green spaces, the difference between successful and unsuccessful public green spaces, and how the decline in public activity has affected their use over the years. It examines the situation in England, and collects its data via observation of peoples' comings and goings, and what types of activity they are doing. It concluded that the best used spaces were easily accessible to its residents.

Bornat's methodologies are simple, yet very comparable to traditional ways of conducting public space studies. The results are qualitative, and useful in the realm of public space as a whole. This article's examination of green spaces in a modern, western context is directly applicable to this thesis, as public green spaces will be a vital part of the project on a programmatic and philosophical level.

Bristol, K. G. (1991). The Pruitt-Igoe Myth. *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-), 44(3), 163–171. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1425266>

Bristol seeks to elucidate the problems of Pruitt-Igoe, and then subsequently debunk the myth that it was the modernist design that was the death of the project in this article. Bristol begins by outlining the situation of St. Louis and post-war America, detailing the move from the inner-city to the suburbs by middle-class whites, and the optimistic vision the city had for the center of the city in the future. Bristol goes on to show how the design was but one of many factors that spelled the end for Pruitt-Igoe, including a budget-obsessed Public Housing commission, and an already disenfranchised rent base.

This article outlines the result of a disastrous public housing project in America, one that this thesis project will be sited on, and is thus an imperative read. It also shows some of the problems that architecture can and can't solve, and thus provides a lens of realism to the research and design process.

Cooke, C. (1997). Beauty as a Route to "the Radiant Future": Responses of Soviet Architecture. *Journal of Design History*, 10(2), 137–160. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/10.2.137>

This article casts light on the ideologies and motivations behind the design of many Soviet buildings, particularly those of the Soviet Realism style. Cooke details how the style under Stalin was abruptly ended when Khrushchev came to power and denounced the ornamentation of Soviet Realism, and how it was wasting the peoples' money. Beyond that, Cooke explains the intricacies of Soviet Realism, how it came to be, its purpose and methodologies, and its success and failures.

This article bears relevance to this paper because it sheds light on the thought processes that Soviet architects used when coming up with new buildings in the wake of the revolution, and through the second world war. By understanding the thought processes, the good can be separated from the bad, and design can move forward.

de Graaf, R. (2015). Coup De Grâce: The Rise and Fall of Pruitt Igoe 1956 - 1972 and Beyond. *Blueprint*, (340), 74-75-84-88.

This article by de Graaf shed yet further light on the situation of Pruitt-Igoe, and provides another perspective on its history. It does this without the ulterior motive of debunking the myth of its failure, and it gives a thorough account of the life of the public housing project. Additionally, it sheds light on the current situation of the site, providing a recent perspective, useful for further development in the area. This article is useful for the same reasons as Bristol's, as it provides a perspective on the design and social issues that the buildings had, which is applicable when compared against the same issues raised by communism.

Hatherley, D. (2016). *Landscapes of Communism: A History Through Buildings*. New York: New Press, The.

This book takes an in-depth look at the buildings that arose as a result of communism, and their effects on the people who inhabited them. It explores a variety of communist building types, from the worker's club to the Moscow Metro. It explores the high building as well, and explains all the stylistic and ideological implications. More than just the buildings, however, it explains the social constructs and the people that used them. Their success or failure is shown in detail, and it is clear that Hatherley has personally visited many of the places within the book.

The book is one of the most relevant items on this bibliography, as it takes an exhaustive look at a variety of building types, why and how they were constructed, and their applicability to communism, as well as how they compare to Western cultural paradigms.

Kelleher, M. (2009). Bulgaria's Communist-Era Landscape. *The Public Historian*, 31(3), 39–72.

Kelleher's article gives a concise history of communism in Bulgaria, and it shows the difference between it and the rest of the USSR, and how it viewed the changes that were forced upon it. Kelleher details the various facets of Bulgarian history, from Byzantine origins, to the invasion of the USSR, to the shift into capitalism following communism's collapse. Overall, Kelleher states that quality of life increased as a result of communism and Bulgaria, and goes over the differences between the communist styles in the country. This article is relevant because it elucidates communist styles in great detail, providing perspectives of the regime from the view of a satellite state. It also highlights the views of different peoples in a specific area, and not just the USSR as a whole. While it covers a good deal of irrelevant content, like monuments, it has a great deal of architectural information.

Newman, O. (1996). *Creating Defensible Space*. DIANE Publishing.

Oscar Newman's book is both a historical reference and a fantastic design guide for any space that involves the public. While it is a bit biased against the Pruitt-Igoe project, neglecting to fully acknowledge the economic and social situations of the occupants, it still provides solid guidelines for creating space that is safe, pleasant, and sustainable.

This is a relevant book because it uses Pruitt-Igoe as a major case study, and goes into detail on what went wrong, and what solutions are to the issues of ownership and safety concerning large, small, public, and private spaces.

Rethmann, P. (2009). Post-Communist Ironies in an East German Hotel. *Anthropology Today*, 25(1), 21–23.

In this brief article, Rethmann visits a hotel in East Germany that actually highlights the time of oppression in Berlin until the collapse of communism. Rethmann goes into detail on the sentiment that fuels the market demand for such a hotel, a form of nostalgia called *ostalgie*. They then expand on the origin of the feeling, and then the lives of the people who lived during the time of communism.

This article is relevant because it provides insight into the lives of people who experienced the USSR firsthand. These perspectives allow for a more thorough and meaningful examination of the life and architecture of communism, and the user's experience with their dwelling units, especially since the subject in question in this case is a hotel.

Robinson, S. (2011). *Nesting: Body, Dwelling, Mind* (First Edition edition). Richmond, Calif: William Stout Publishers,US.

Robinson's book on *Nesting* takes a philosophical and poetic look at the human being and how they dwell and inhabit spaces. Robinson takes some notes from Heidegger in this book, and discards traditional modes of experience and thought, such as those proposed by Descartes. In doing so, Robinson details the perception of the mind-body, and how the dweller interacts with their environment.

This book is a relevant one because it provides a basis for what it is to dwell well. With this basic framework, it provides something to judge examples of public housing in the USA and USSR against.

Ruins & Collective Memory  
Robert Darling  
North Dakota State University

## Part I: Victims

Ruins are a mysterious cultural phenomenon. They exist initially thanks to the work of man, yet can only become the essence of what they are through the timely work of nature. In fact, the work itself had always had a claim by nature that lay dormant until it was ignored, allowing for the reclamation of what was taken. Decay and memory are key aspects of a ruin, and they can exist in the physical world as well as the minds of those with collective experiences. John Hejduk understood and utilized this in a 1984 work titled *Victims*, which harnessed the tragic memory of the holocaust to link the “ruins” of the past with the working memories of the present.

Hejduk was an architect who practiced just after the era of Mies, Le Corbusier and Wright. He was known primarily for his theoretical works, as opposed to built structures, and preferred the clarity of poetic expression, rather than objective representations. *Victims* was the height of this expression, and was a theoretical work intended to intervene at a former Gestapo headquarter that adjoined the Berlin Wall. The winning proposal was one by Peter Zumthor, although it was halted and subsequently demolished in 2004, following funding problems. Presently, the site is occupied by a museum designed by architect Ursula Wilms and landscape architect Heinz W. Hallman. This contemporary museum, while informative of the atrocities that were once committed there, does not address memory in quite so considerate a way as Hejduk’s design.

John Hejduk’s vision for the site was one that was specific, poetic, and temporal. It consisted of 67 separate structures, intended to be constructed over two thirty-year time periods. As to what would be constructed when (or at all), it was to be left up to the Berliners, involving them in one way with the

care and preservations of the site’s embedded memories. Each design had its own particular name, drawings, and detailed construction documents interwoven with stories. These stories served to tie the architecture to the place, making sense of the varied shapes of the concepts.

Rather than confronting people directly with the objective horrors of World War II, as the modern exhibit does, Hejduk’s work was aimed at involving participants in the process of remembering as well as healing, which was to be achieved through “participatory focal actions” that were to bridge opposing dualities: past and future, play and torture, angels with demons. The user could thus feel the past come through the present poetically, rather than directly. In the end, Hejduk’s linking the ruins of the past through the collective memory of its visitors, as well as the site, provides an experience that can revive cultural memories in a manner that resonates through its architecture.

## Part II: The Artefact

The artefact for my thesis, which concerns public space, dwelling, communist architecture, social housing, and their culmination in Pruitt-Igoe, deals with similar themes of ruin and collective memory. Rather than focusing on architectural modalities of representation, this artefact brings together the ruins of the past, the memories of their experiences, through an experience wrought in the fires of history and materiality.

History is something not easily produced or replicated. If one is to obtain history, it must be found. This was achieved through the procurement of radios, whose husks have been stripped away and vanished, leaving behind

# PRECEDENT & ARTEFACT

only their innards, which hum at a frequency that seems to affect time itself, as well as impressions of their former shape. These memetic impressions are left within blocks of concrete, reminiscent and evident of the sites of the past, and quite near to being “set in stone.” Even stone, however, can crumble, and this is apparent in the rubble that surrounds the fossils of the formerly functioning radios, reminding us of the uncertainty of the future and the instability of the past.

The absence of the radios’ shells recalls decay as well as progress, absence as well as presence, the inexorable march of time as humanity strives for the future, the memories that people hold, fading in clarity as their childhood falls to the past. To that end, plaster casts create a negative of the concrete impressions, travelling further away from the initial history from which it traces its lineage. The casts are smoother, pure white, and contain only so much information as was embedded in the concrete impressions, held within the smoothed lines of their newer counterparts. Just as the memories of Pruitt Igoe and the USSR have shaped the people who live today, so have the impressions of history made their mark on the new and smooth.

The memories of the past play a vital role in the production of the future. This is evident in Hejduk’s project, as well as the programmatic generation of the artefact. The program of the architecture resulting from the artefact [promises] to be one that encounters dwelling in a way that can truly define the word, in a Heideggerian sense. It will make active the experience of dwelling through subtle disorientation and perceptive shifts in much the same way that the artefact can affect time. Additionally, the artefact prediction of the past made present will be

manifested through the public “memorial” space of Pruitt-Igoe (and its precedents), and any number of other public spaces. The arrangement of the casts speaks to integration of large and small, broken and whole, and this will be made present in the arrangement of the spaces as well.

The artefact ultimately makes present the realities of the past, calling forth the states of ruin and decay through its materiality, temporality, and collective memory. Through its experience, the artefact can shape the inhabitant and architecture of the future, in much the same way as Hejduk’s concept of his museum. The result remains somewhat uncertain, but the experiences of the past become all but impossible to discard.

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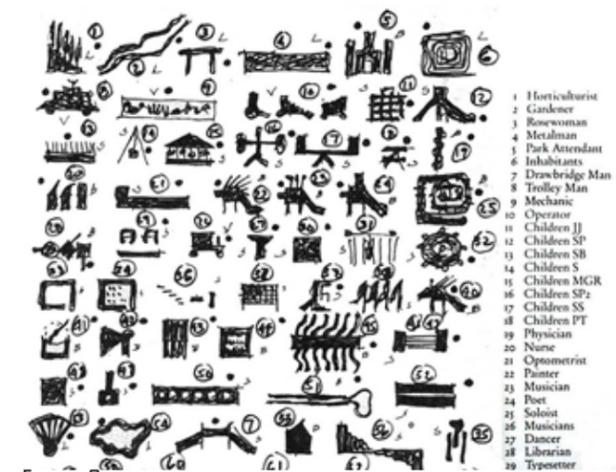


Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

# PRECEDENT ANALYSIS

In this formalized precedent analysis, a social housing example is examined from the USSR, the USA, and modern Brazil. The differences and similarities in their materials, layouts, organization, and overall user consideration show an interesting relationship that spans across borders. These precedents are, for the most part, full of flaws, and show the downfalls of their design. However, their unique qualities are something not seen in many other dwelling typologies, and by studying them, more successful variants can be achieved and implemented. These precedents, as well as others discussed in this work, are at the core of the design philosophy of the radiant building of the future.





[Figure 11]

### Narkomfin Building

**LOCATION:** Moscow, Russia

**ARCHITECT:** Moisei Ginzburg, Ignaty Milinis

**PROJECT DATE:** 1932



[Figure 12]

### OVERVIEW

The Narkomfin Building was an experimental communal living project built in the early years of the Stalin regime. It is regarded as an iconic example of Constructivist architecture, though little to no funding has been dedicated to its upkeep or restoration. It is a very early example of the same sort of Large Panel System (LPS) concrete buildings that became so popular in the USSR in the 1950's and onwards. This complex offers a comprehensive look at the type of housing that the Soviet Union was infamous for.



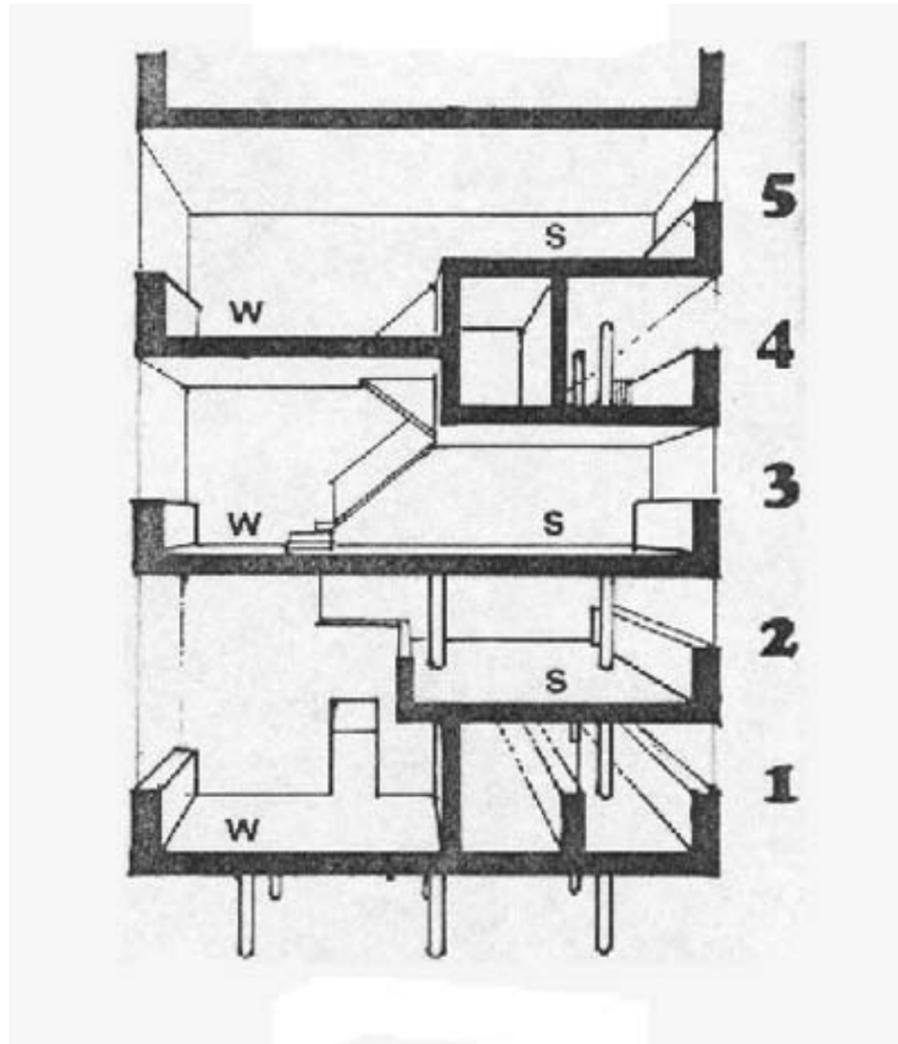
[Figure 13]

## MATERIALITY

This building was one of the first of its kind in Communist Russia. Its use of reinforced concrete was innovative at the time, and made for a very sturdy, efficient building. Parts were also clad in brick, then subsequently covered with plaster, as can be seen in the figure on the right.



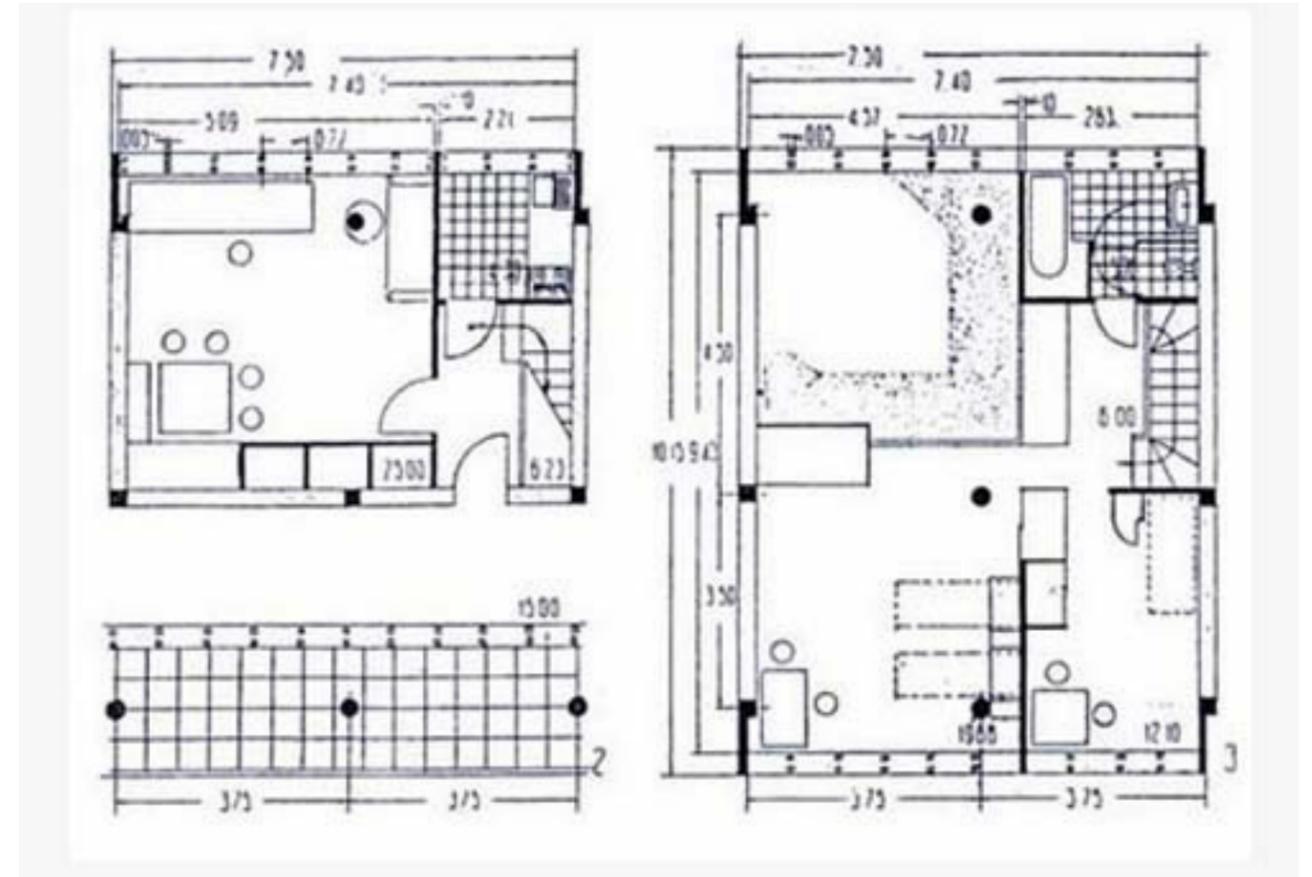
[Figure 14]



[Figure 15]

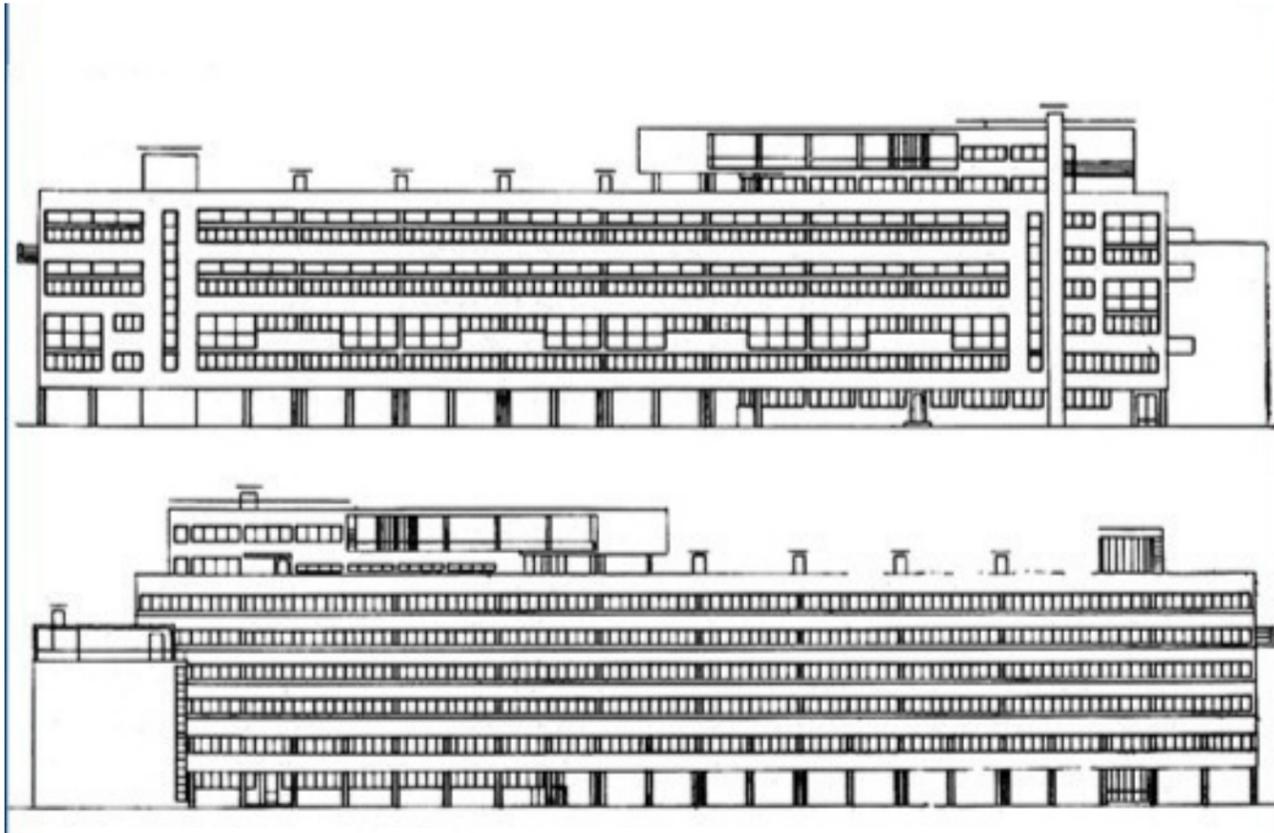
## SPATIAL LAYOUT

The apartments in this building were experimental during an early phase of communism. As a result, they played around quite a bit with the idea of collectivism. They were graded based on their level of "collectivization," with some units having their own kitchens, while others only had a bedroom to sleep and study in, with all of its other spaces as a part of a community.



[Figure 16]

A reality of the USSR at the time was that, due to the housing shortage, single-family apartments would very often be converted into multi-family "kommunalka." In order to prevent this and still retain enough space for a livable apartment, the architects designed the footprint just large enough for a single family, with emphasis on a vertical apartment plan. Bedrooms were up above, and the kitchen and living spaces down below, where applicable.



[Figure 17]

### ORGANIZATIONAL LINES

This project embodies the term “linear.” It organizes itself around multiple parallel lines, and has no bends or curves to speak of. One bonus of this, since it wasn’t entirely maximized for efficiency, is the single-loaded corridors it has. With these, natural light is let into the hallways in abundance.



[Figure 18]

A legacy of the organization of this project is how it influenced other architects later on. One of the most famous architects of the time, Le Corbusier, visited this building and was so inspired that he cited it in his creation of the famous Unite de Habitation. Both are concrete, linear, and feature prominent public spaces, such as roof gardens.

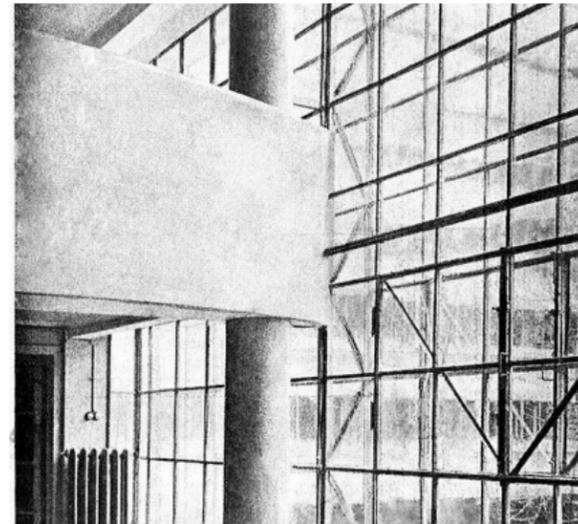
# PRECEDENT ANALYSIS

## USES - HISTORIC

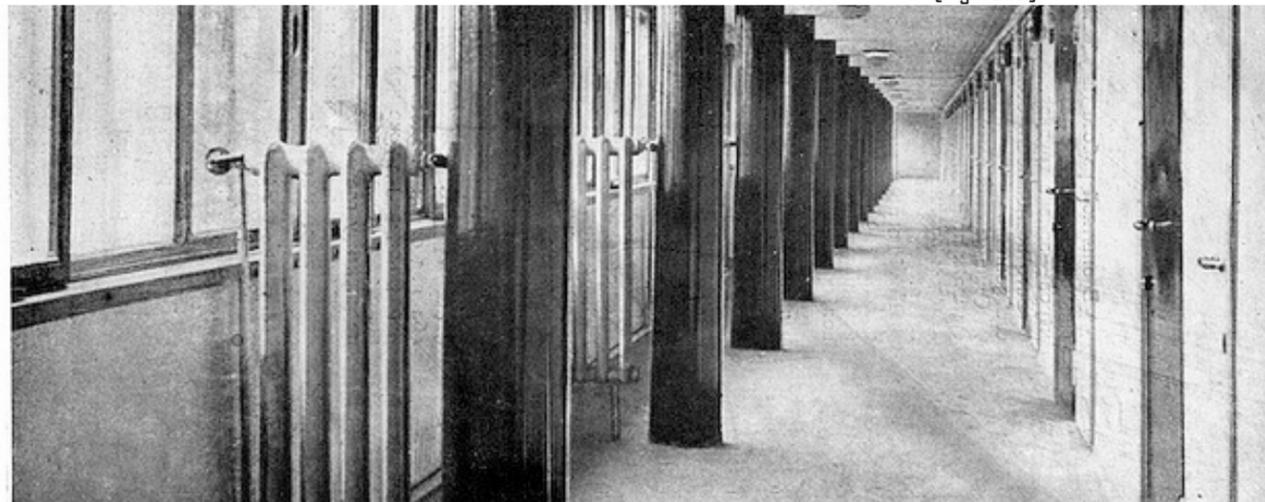
The use of this apartment block was not actually social housing. Rather, it was designed for high rank employees at the Commissariat of Finance. This goes to show that communal living was not just for the workers, but extended up the political ladder too (to an extent). The Commissar of Finance, as the exception, enjoyed a penthouse that was originally designed as a communal recreation area.



The ideas put forth in this design soon fell out of favor, however, as its ideologies were too "Trotskyist" to align with the politics of Joseph Stalin. Additionally, the roof garden looks over the US Embassy, which discouraged its use by the occupants.



[Figure 19]



[Figure 20]



[Figure 21]



[Figure 22]



[Figure 23]

## USES - CONTEMPORARY

The building survives to this day, although now it suffers a state of general disrepair. It is still occupied by a few residents, however, and has become a de facto artist commune. While the state will not put any money towards its improvements, it's clear that the artists have, in some fashion, improved their spaces to facilitate the experience of dwelling.



[Figure 24]



[Figure 25]

## CONCLUSIONS

The Narkomfin Building stands as an innovator of its time. It brought reinforced concrete and community living into the limelight and experience of the Soviet people, for better or worse. What's more, it directly inspired Le Corbusier, who went on to create some of the most iconic dwellings of the 20th century. By taking an experimental approach, the architects took risks and found success in areas that others could not have found more conventionally.

By the same token, many of the philosophies of the Narkomfin Building are wildly unpopular. Community living and the initial designs of the buildings were all subverted as much as possible, and many modifications, unintended by the architects, were made. Perhaps allowing for this customization is a good thing, and reflects the versatility of the space, but it may also reflect poorly on the architects' consideration for its users. Overall, the building was a pioneer, but it also executed its ideas in unsuccessful ways. It is useful to analyze this building because it very clearly outlines the intent of early communist architects. By analyzing the architects' work, and seeing what worked well in this complex, a successful solution can be applied to the modern thesis project.



[Figure 26]

## Pruitt-Igoe

**LOCATION:** St. Louis, Missouri

**ARCHITECT:** Hellmuth, **Yamasaki** and Leinweber

**PROJECT DATE:** 1954



[Figure 27]

## OVERVIEW

The Pruitt-Igoe social housing complex was an idea born out of economic necessity in the center of St. Louis following World War II. In order to prevent property values in the city from plummeting further, the decision was made to clear out the slums and move approximately 15,000 people into this new, low-income housing development. It was made up of 33 buildings at 11 stories high each, and took up a massive 52 acres on the city's north side. Initially touted an "oasis in the desert," Pruitt-Igoe was a rousing success initially. Only later would its many problems become manifest, becoming so bad that in 1972 the demolition process began, leaving the site empty to the very day of this writing.

# PRECEDENT ANALYSIS

## MATERIALITY

Pruitt Igoe was clad in brick on the exterior, with a reinforced concrete structure and plenty of plaster on the interior. None of this managed to collapse on its own, but the rest of the building fell into neglect with some fault given to the lack of maintenance, and the other to poor quality all-together. In fact, the materials and hardware chosen for the buildings to keep cost down were so poor in quality that some failed on the first day, such as the door knobs. The glazing was shoddy as well, and many of the windows were inefficient and broken by the end of the life cycle of the buildings.



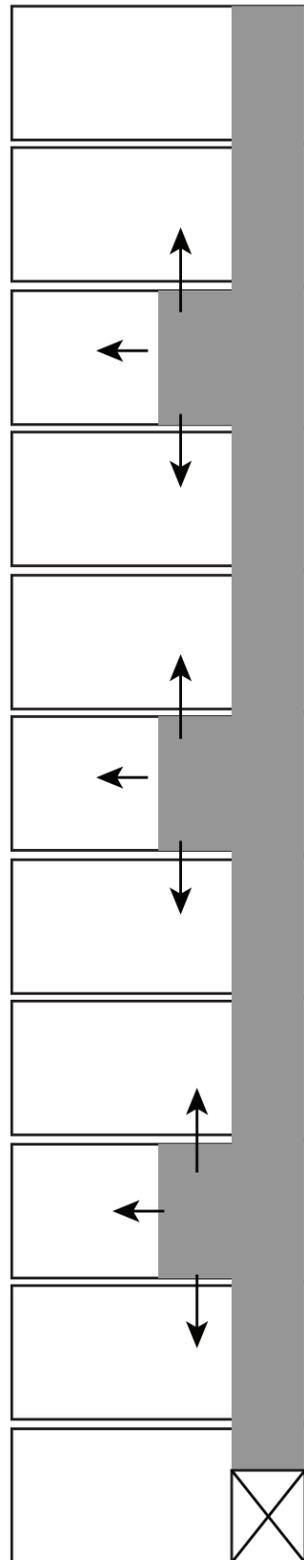
[Figure 29]



[Figure 28]



[Figure 30]



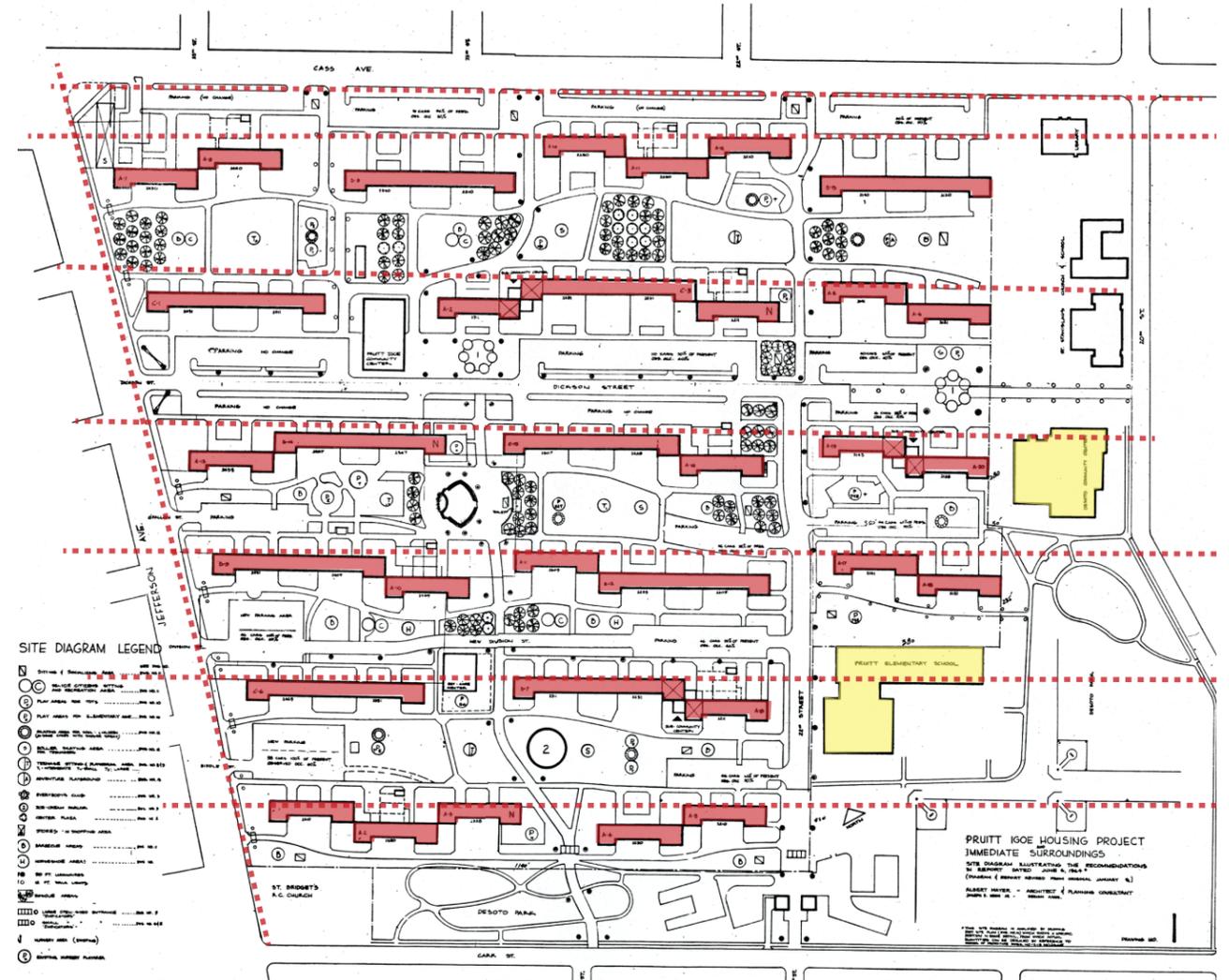
[Figure 31]

## SPATIAL LAYOUT

In a time when an elevator on every floor was not an absolute necessity, the skip-stop elevator was employed as a way to keep costs down and keep things efficient. These elevators stop every third floor, with these stops becoming communal gathering spaces, at least according to the architect's vision. In reality, these communal spaces became hang-out spaces for gangs, and became a "gauntlet" that one had to cross to get from the elevator or stairs to their apartment. This way of laying out space, in conjunction with the income level of the occupants, led to very negative results.

GALLERY LEVEL

APARTMENT LEVELS



[Figure 32]

## ORGANIZATIONAL LINES

The buildings were organized in an East-West dominant manner, laying them along lines that went in that direction. It was not entirely a grid, and the types of homes on the lines had no clear pattern of repetition. The dwellings follow this linear pattern as well, relying on long corridors to move between most of them. An added item of note is the proximity these buildings have to the elementary school and community center, highlighted here in yellow.

## REASONS FOR FAILURE

Pruitt Igoe failed because of its design, its lack of maintenance, and the socio-economic conditions of the time and place. It is more due to the latter two than the design, but we will discuss the failures of the design in this portion.

Chiefly, the deterioration of the complex came about because of the massive public spaces, both indoor and outdoor, that no residents felt any ownership of. Thus, when the budget couldn't pay for maintenance, none of the tenants stepped up to care for the areas, since none of them felt that a majority of the building was a part of "their space." The dangerous gallery spaces mentioned earlier didn't help either, especially in the realm of safety and security.



[Figure 33]



[Figure 34]



[Figure 35]



[Figure 36]



[Figure 37]

In reality, however, the fact is that Pruitt-Igoe failed as a complex because of the socio-economic conditions imposed on it, and the constant slashing of funding. The funding for maintenance came entirely from the rents of the occupants, and since this was a low-income housing development, revenue was very low. With the Housing Authority not willing to spend absolutely any more than it had to, maintenance came at the pace of a crawl from the day it was occupied.

Additionally, when "white flight" happened post war, and private homes became more affordable within the city, it became far more appealing to live in private dwellings. As a result, occupancy rate declined, along with rent revenues. With less revenue, less money could be applied in buildings where corners were already cut. With this myriad of negative factors, Pruitt-Igoe's demise came a mere 20 years after its inception.



[Figure 38]

## CONCLUSIONS

Pruitt-Igoe was an ambitious project from the beginning. The idea of taking 15,000 people and relocating them from the slums to a concentrated housing development was an impressive feat, but it certainly had its consequences. The concentration of so many low-income people into one plot of land without proper financial support was a pot that was waiting to boil over. Pruitt-Igoe failed fundamentally, but that blame can't all be placed on the design.



[Figure 39]

The architect genuinely tried to improve the lives of the inhabitants. Initially, high rises weren't even the typology. Yet despite the city's demands and massive budget cuts, the design of the public housing project was in fact pleasant; it was simply neglect from the city that led to its downfall. The public spaces were at first well-frequented, and the building functioned as planned. Promises of maintenance and the promises of public space, such as playgrounds, were unfortunately never fulfilled. The design was sound, in many ways; yet the neglect of the city and the disdain of the community marked the end of a hopeful endeavor, and put a sour taste in the public's mouth when the term "public housing" was brought up from that point forward. The pitfalls of Pruitt-Igoe will serve as a valuable lesson moving forward in the context of my St. Louis-oriented site.



[Figure 40]

### Heliopolis Social Housing

**LOCATION:** Sao Paulo, Brazil

**ARCHITECT:** Biselli Katchborian Arquitetos

**PROJECT DATE:** 2014



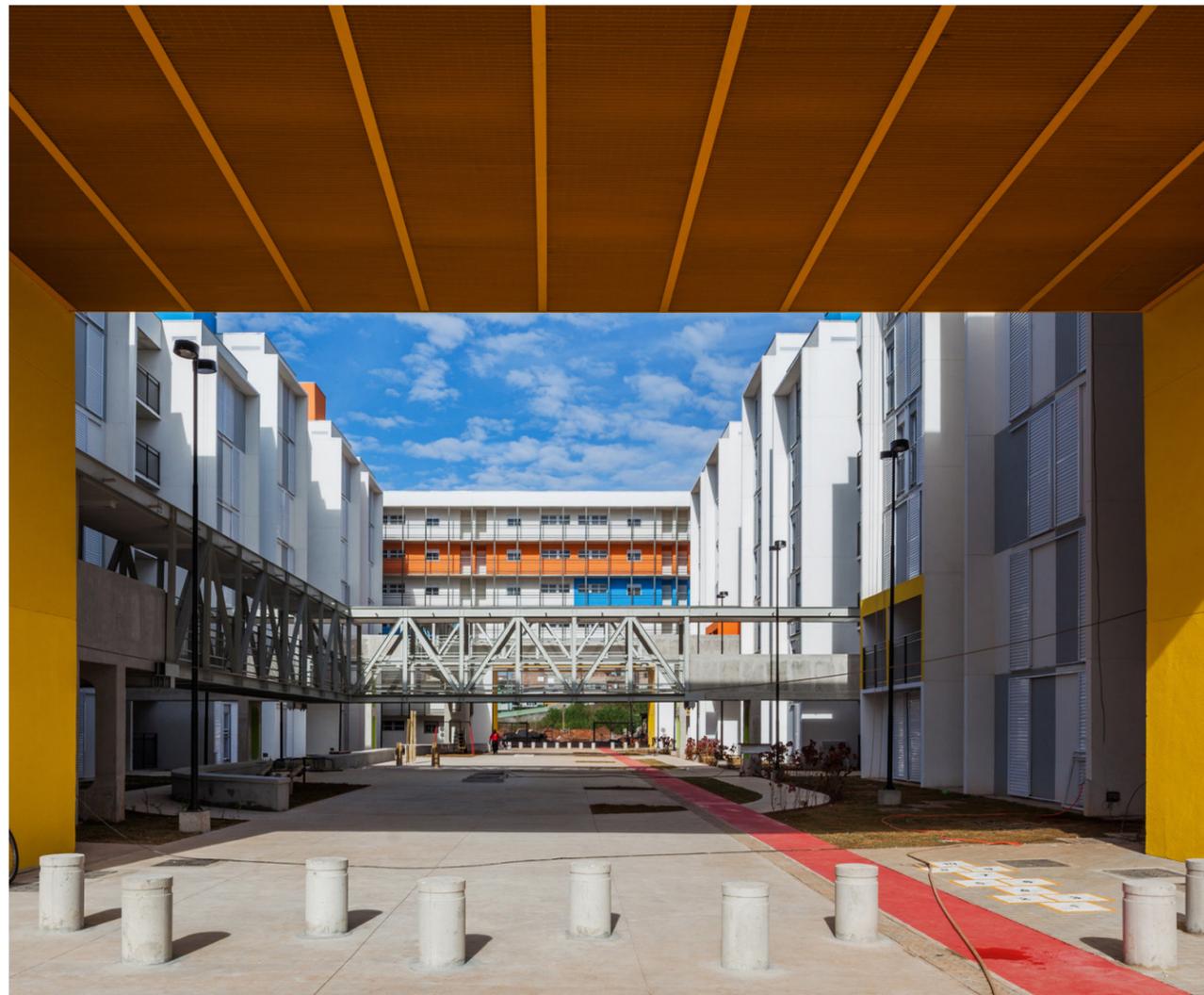
[Figure 41]

### OVERVIEW

This project is nestled in the midst of Heliopolis, a low to middle-income area of Sao Paulo, Brazil. The area is indeed classified as a favela: an urban Brazilian slum. Thus, quality public housing was something desired in this region. The slum area in question was massive, and was divided up into several plots of land, each tasked to a different architecture firm to develop as public housing. This particular plot (plot G) was given to Biselli Katchborian Arquitetos, and what resulted was a colorful composition that was expansive, economical, and incorporated a variety of materials. It includes three total buildings, with 420 dwelling units.

## MATERIALITY

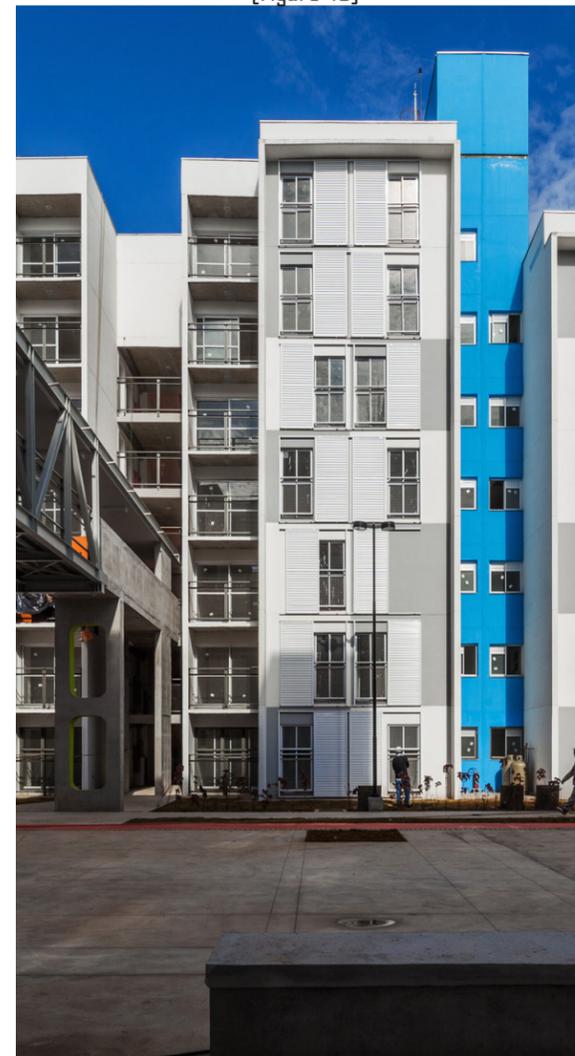
This complex uses several different materials in its construction, with some more visible than others. Its structure is primarily concrete masonry, which emphasizes repetition and rationality. In one of the entrances pictured below, reinforced concrete is used out of necessity for the span it covers. This entrance, like many other areas, is also painted in a bright color. These colors are utilized for the purpose of variation, composition, and clear identification of ownership for the residents. This sense of ownership adds to the sense of community in general, strengthening the spaces in a universal way.



[Figure 42]



[Figure 43]



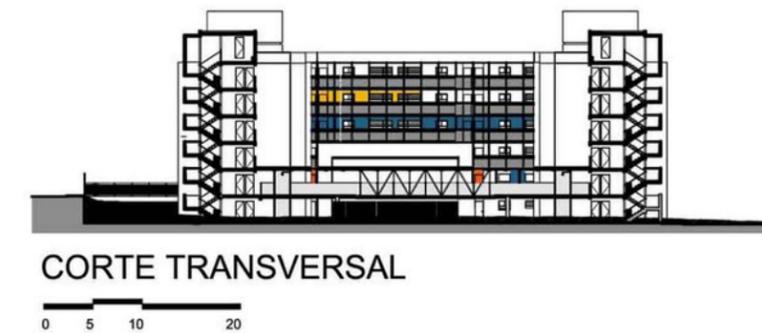
[Figure 44]

An iconic aspect of this project, the metal walkways pictured above, were a first for this typology in the area. They were deemed necessary for programmatic reasons that will be expanded upon later, and were made metallic in order to differentiate them from the other, concrete forms.

The glazing adds to materiality too, but in a more textural way. The architect has them open in a variety of different ways: some swing left, some right, others vertically. It is this variation in window function that, when operated by their occupants, results in an "entirely new facade" with every window opening.



[Figure 45]



[Figure 46]

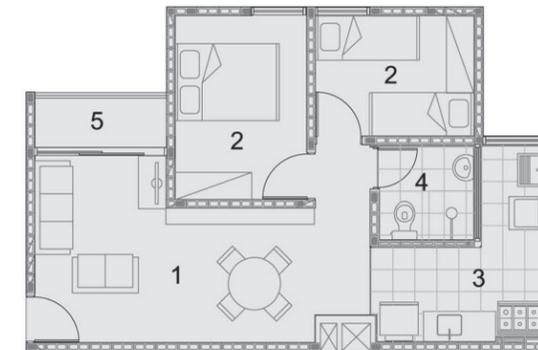
### SPATIAL LAYOUT

Heliopolis Social Housing is a complex of three separate buildings connected by a number of the aforementioned steel walkways. These walkways are in place not just as connections from one building to another, but they exist due to programmatic necessity. Local laws state that a building without elevators can be no more than 5 stories high, but the architects used the site's topography to define multiple "ground floors," which are extended by the walkways. With these "floors in place," they extended the height from 5 floors to 8, increasing the number of dwelling units possible within the building footprints.

With these new measures in place, the architects further defined the spaces by dedicating the ground floors to those with special needs, mitigating the need for an elevator. It is unfortunate that the laws do not require elevators in the first place, as caring for those with impaired mobility should be a universal design principal, and will be incorporated into this final thesis product. Regardless, the architects worked with the space in a way that maximized efficiency, with the side affect of creating very iconic connection points within the complex.

Within the perimeter of the buildings lies public court yards, which include playgrounds and other public spaces. This orientation allows for a semi-public use of the space, while still keeping things open and outdoors. Given that there is a minimum of public space that lies entirely indoors, the safety of the space will be statistically higher.

The dwellings themselves are connected primarily by the steel walkways and single-loaded corridors. This allows for a more airy circulation experience, and reduces the tunnel effect so common in most apartment buildings. The dwellings vary in size, though they are mostly two-bedroom units, and often hold between 5 and 11 people at one time.

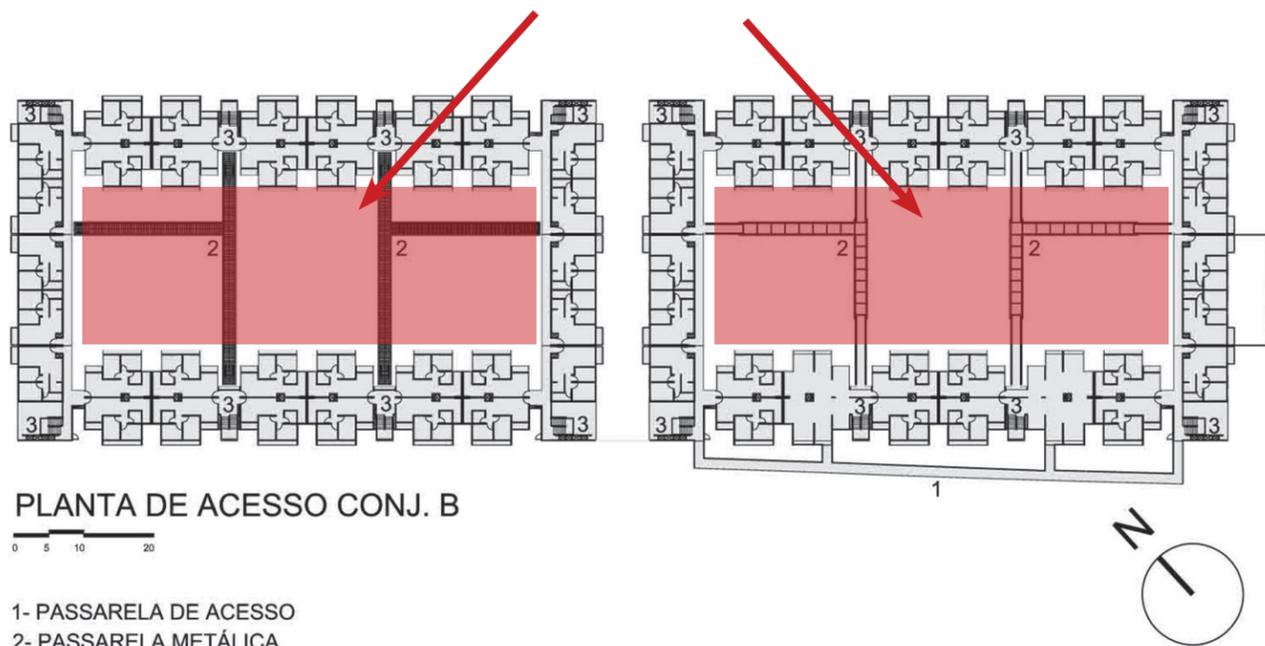


PLANTA TIPO B  
 1-ESTAR/JANTAR  
 2-DORMITÓRIOS  
 3-COZINHA/A.S  
 4-SANITÁRIO  
 5-SACADA



[Figure 48]

**COURTYARDS**



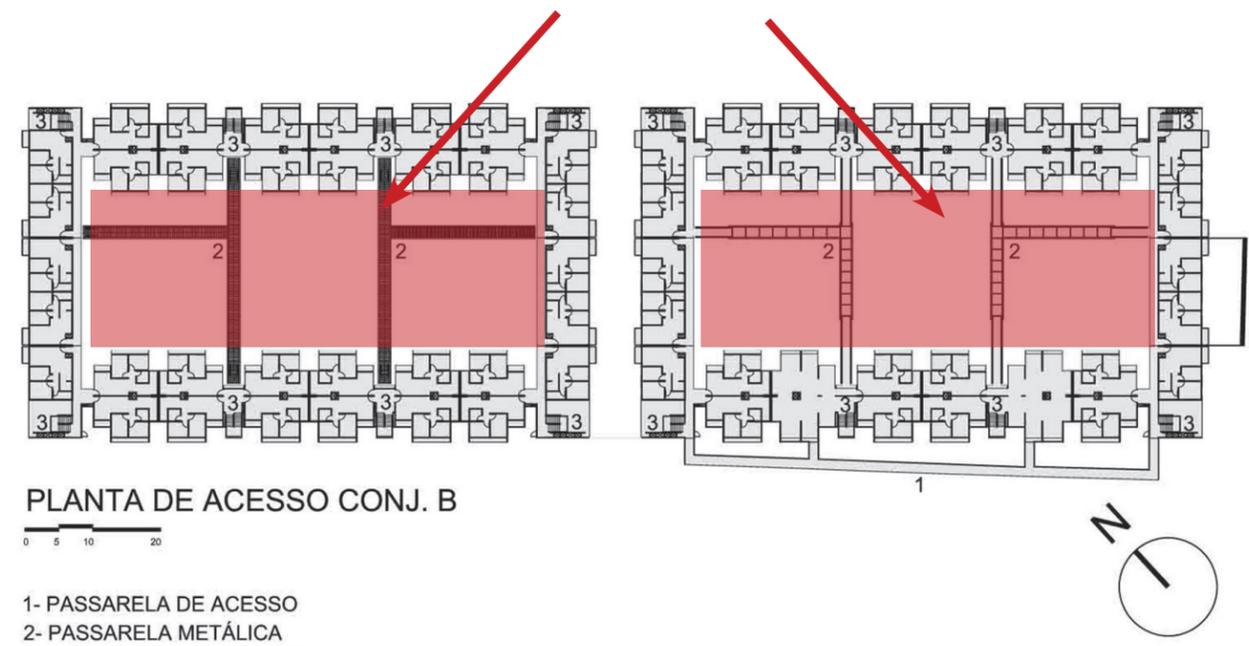
PLANTA DE ACESSO CONJ. B



- 1- PASSARELA DE ACESSO
- 2- PASSARELA METÁLICA
- 3-CIRCULAÇÕES VERTICAIS

[Figure 47]

**COURTYARDS**

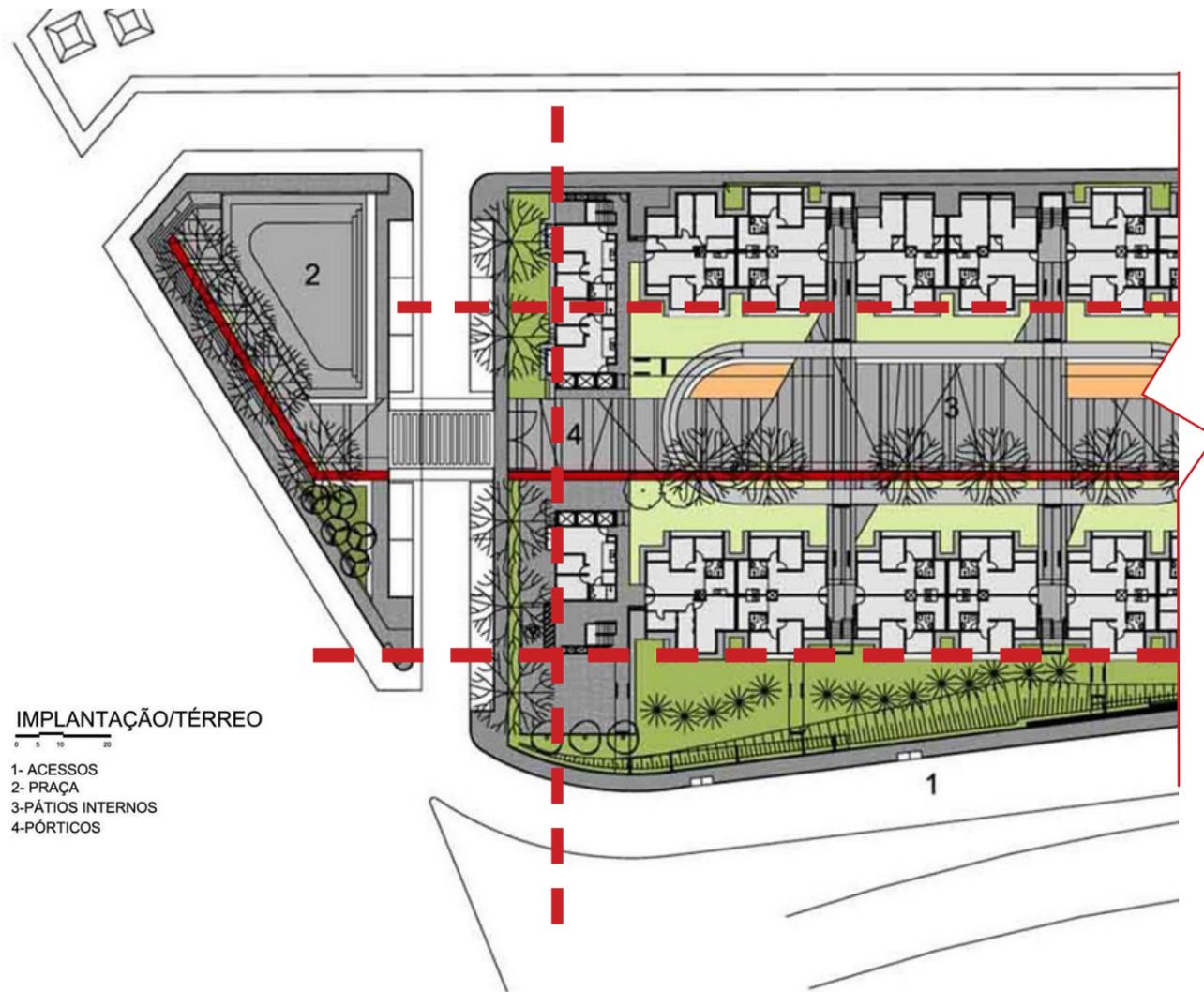


PLANTA DE ACESSO CONJ. B



- 1- PASSARELA DE ACESSO
- 2- PASSARELA METÁLICA
- 3-CIRCULAÇÕES VERTICAIS

[Figure 49]



[Figure 50]

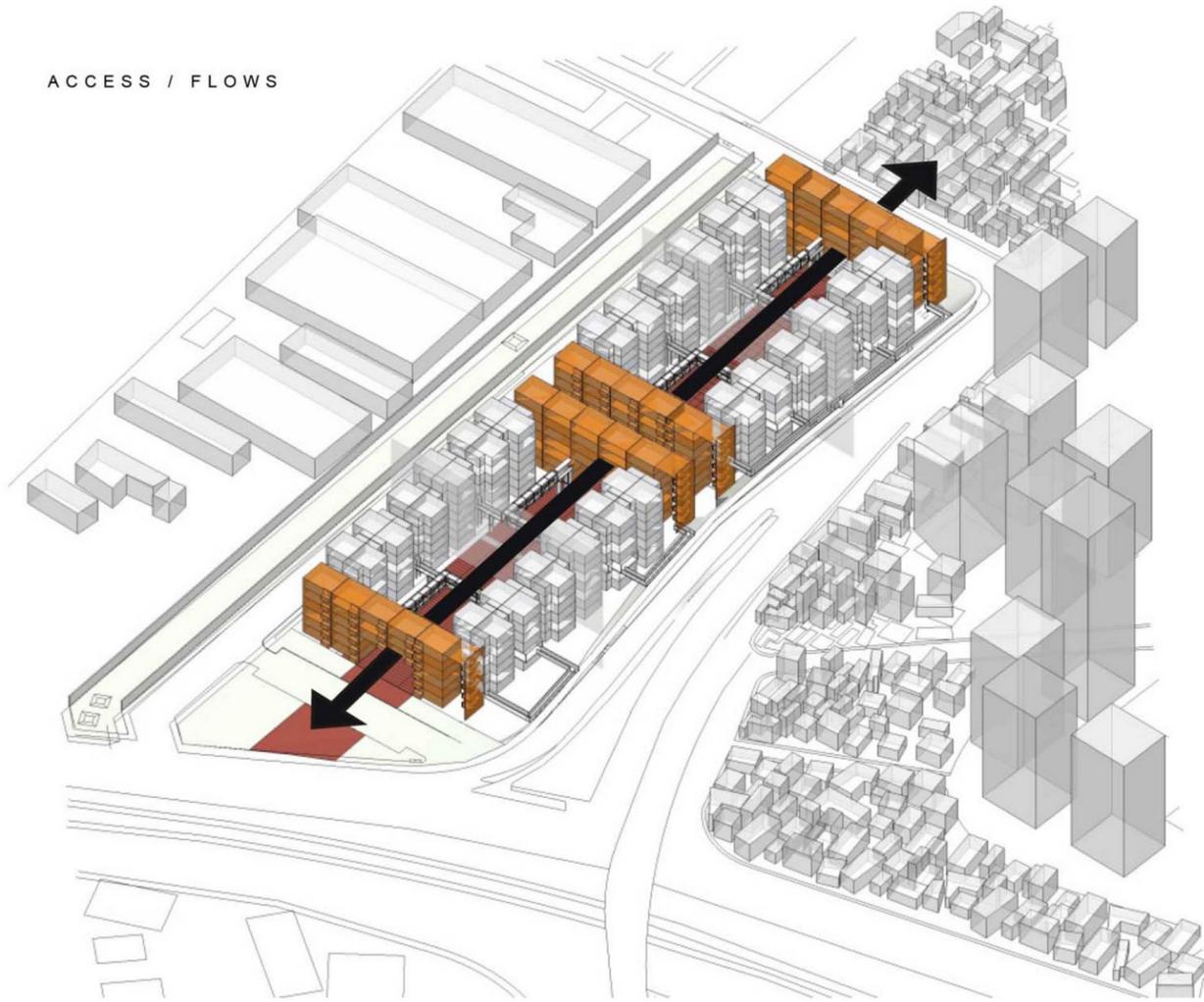
## ORGANIZATIONAL LINES

The plan for the structures is fairly simple: it is organized in a rectilinear manner, with a perimeter of blocks enclosing a number of courtyards. There is some variety in the facades, with certain spaces poking out of the basic rectangle, but there is nothing wavy or curvy in the built forms. The site is not entirely rectilinear, but this is compensated for in the plantings, and not the form of the building.



The organization ends up being very rational and orderly as a result of its rectilinearity. Between this and the variety of colors, sense of place and identification are rendered simple tasks.

ACCESS / FLOWS

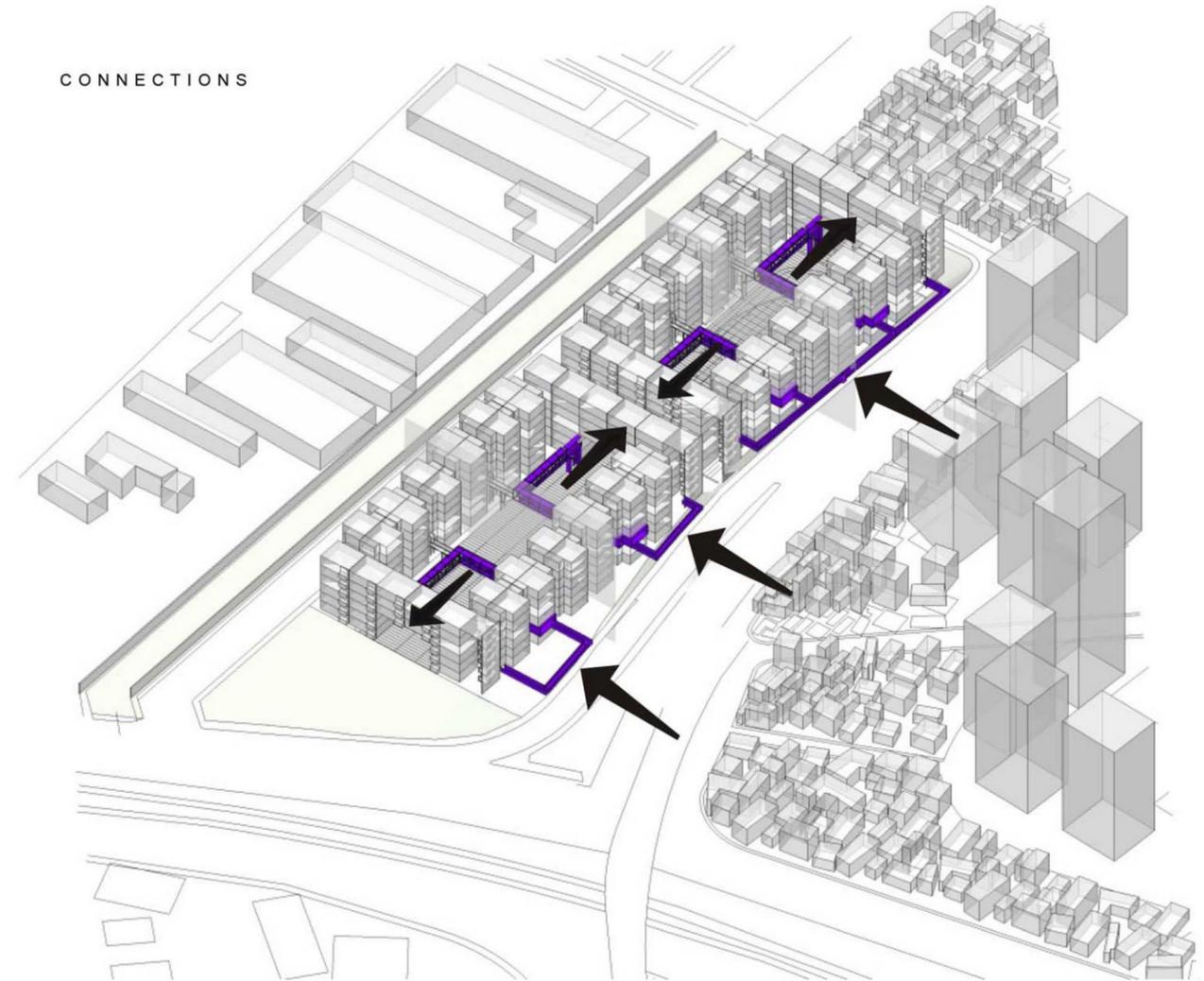


[Figure 51]

### CIRCULATION & CONNECTION

Circulation is a major priority in the design of Heliopolis Social Housing. This is due in part to programmatic and legal concerns, but the architects also attempted to make movement in the space pleasant and meaningful. Their primary gates, located near the arrowheads, are emphasized with a different color, and a different reinforced concrete structure.

CONNECTIONS



[Figure 52]

Circulation is also emphasized in the steel walkways, and have become a primary feature of the design. These allow for easy access to many parts of the buildings, without having to traverse the perimeter or change in elevation. These may not accommodate people in the same way as an ADA required walkway or ramp would be, but they still provide quality access up to a certain point.



[Figure 53]

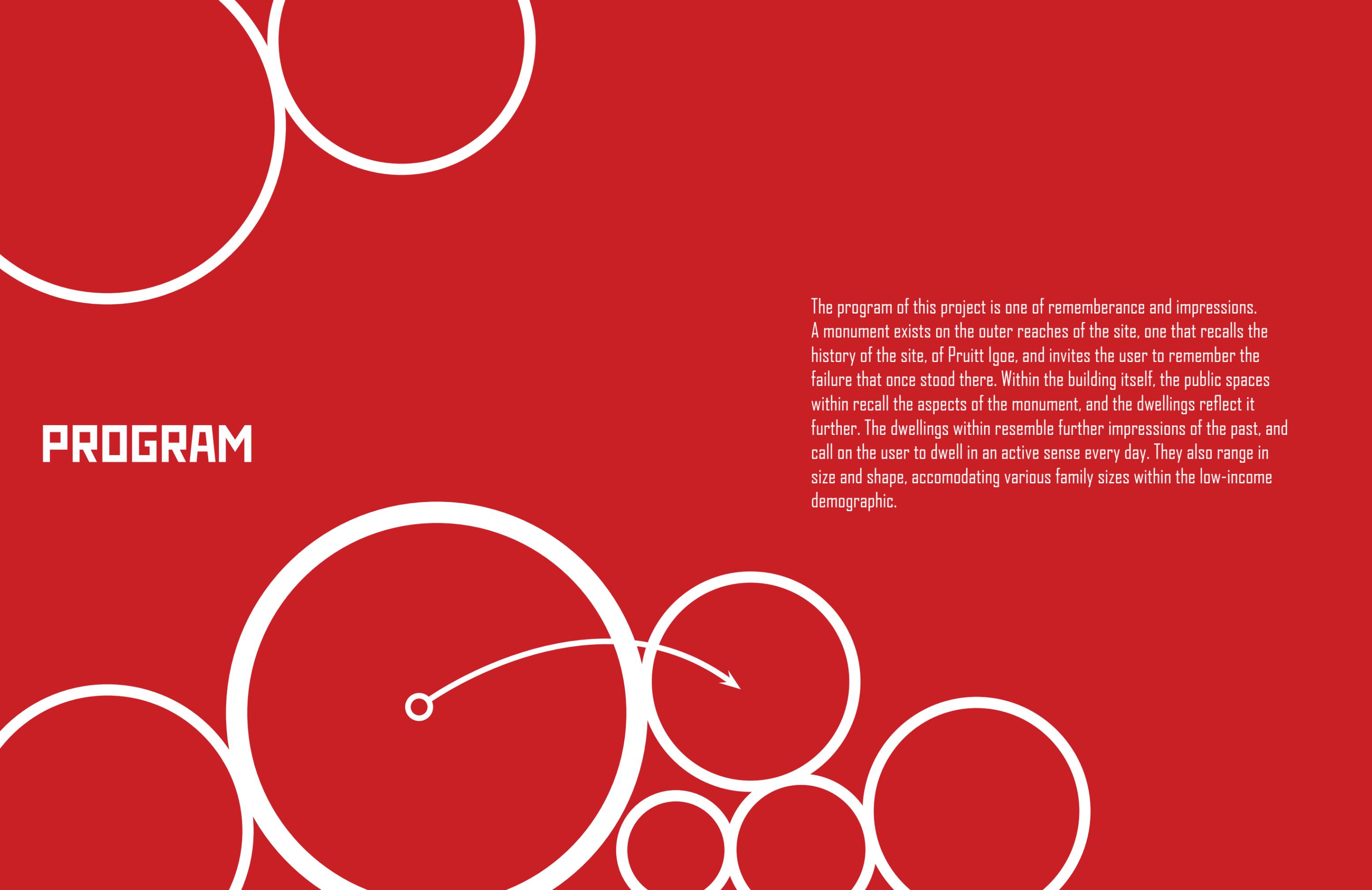
### CONCLUSIONS

Biselli Katchborian Arquitetos has done a commendable job creating social housing for the modern era. It has a wonderful use of materials, especially with the use of color to keep things from being depressing. The circulation is very clever as well, even if it wouldn't hold up to ADA standards.



[Figure 54]

It is organized very rationally, which works to the benefits of residents and visitors. Normally, this could almost become boring, but the variety put in place by the open gates and steel walkways add enough to keep the site as a whole very interesting. The dwellings themselves, however, seem very tight and small in the square footage department. This is done to ensure maximization of square footage, I'm sure, but one can't help but wonder if comfort could be placed before efficiency. This modern example of social housing serves to explain what can be done with the typology in a modern context. Drawing from this project will keep the Soviet-inspired design from being too antiquated or intensely Soviet.



# PROGRAM

The program of this project is one of remembrance and impressions. A monument exists on the outer reaches of the site, one that recalls the history of the site, of Pruitt Igoe, and invites the user to remember the failure that once stood there. Within the building itself, the public spaces within recall the aspects of the monument, and the dwellings reflect it further. The dwellings within resemble further impressions of the past, and call on the user to dwell in an active sense every day. They also range in size and shape, accomodating various family sizes within the low-income demographic.

This project will be produced for the people, and every effort will be made to ensure quality design is given to this disenfranchised demographic of low-income individuals. However, this will be designed for a public entity, and as a result, efficient cost will be a major goal for them.

Additionally, efficient use of space will be a prominent goal. It will be the architect's job, in this case, to make the case for somewhat less of an emphasis on efficiency for the purpose of making more beautiful, meaningful space.

### FUNCTION

The primary users of the building will be small families. Therefore, family and children-focused spaces need to be a part of the program.

### ECONOMY

This development will take place under the authority of the St. Louis Housing Authority, and will be contingent on the tax dollars of the city. Therefore, while quality design is important, the budget will have constraints on the design implications.

### FORM

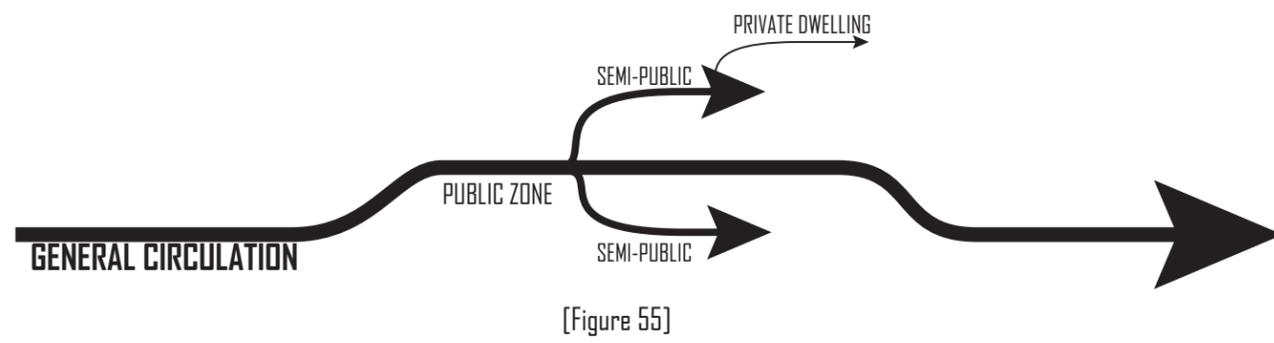
This new building will be in the midst of a mid-century part of St. Louis. It should acknowledge the scale and proportion, but it also needs to be an example of progress with some modern sensibilities.

### ENERGY

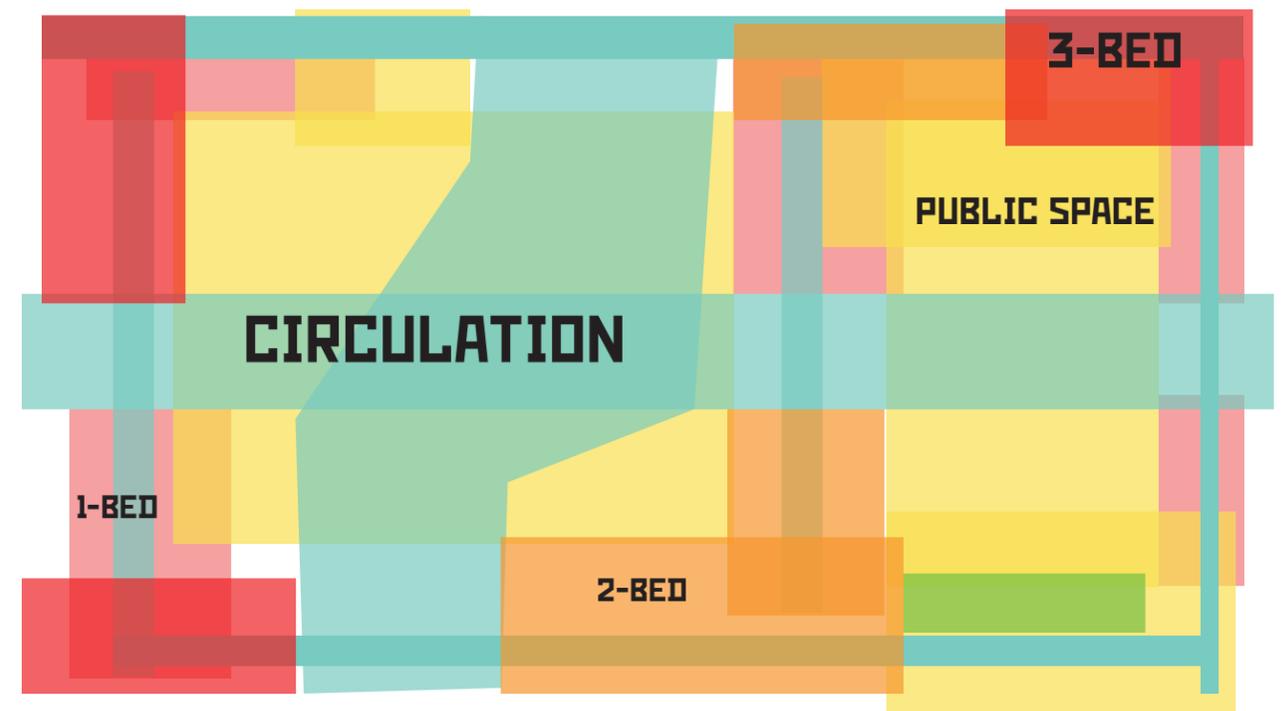
The site exists in a Midwestern climate, with a temperature that fluctuates throughout the year. It will also have multiple, separate units. Therefore, effective orientation and adjacencies need to be implemented, in addition to energy-saving materials and systems, in order to effectively deal with a complex involving multiple units.

### TIME

Because the nature of this project attracts more crime, and tends to suffer from declining facilities, the project will use easily installable and removable parts and systems in order to prepare for the future of technology, future problems, and maintenance.



Initial Process Program Diagram



## Space List

### St. Louis Housing Complex

Function	Capacity	No. of Units	sq. ft./Unit	Net Area
<b>Circulation</b>				
Pathways	-	-	-	3120
Stairs	-	4	180	720
Elevators	8	2	80	160
<b>Subtotal</b>	-	-	-	<b>4000</b>
<b>1-Bedroom Unit</b>				
Bathroom Space	-	1	150	150
Kitchen Area	-	1	250	250
Living	-	1	365	365
Storage	-	1	15	15
Bedroom	-	1	120	120
<b>Subtotal</b>	2	-	-	<b>900</b>
<b>2-Bedroom Units</b>				
Bathroom Space	-	1	200	200
Kitchen Area	-	1	250	250
Living	-	1	365	365
Storage	-	2	15	30
Bedroom	-	2	120	240
<b>Subtotal</b>	4	-	-	<b>1085</b>
<b>3-Bedroom Units</b>				
Bathroom Space	-	2	150	300
Kitchen Area	-	1	250	250
Living	-	1	365	365
Storage	-	2	15	30
Bedroom	-	3	120	360
<b>Subtotal</b>	5	-	-	<b>1305</b>
<b>Public Spaces</b>				
Lobby/Collection Areas	33	2	1200	2400
Interaction Spaces	28	2	1000	2000
<b>Subtotal</b>	61	4	-	<b>4400</b>
<b>Mechanical/Storage</b>				
Mechanical Rooms	3	1	1000	1000
Storage Room	1	1	400	400
<b>Subtotal</b>	4	-	-	<b>1400</b>

[Figure 57]

## Building Area Summary

### St. Louis Housing Complex

Space Name	Capacity	No. of Units	sq. ft./Unit	Net Area	Gross Building Area
Circulation	-	5	4000	20,000	-
1-Bedroom Units	30	15	900	13,500	-
2-Bedroom Units	80	20	1,085	21,700	-
3-Bedroom Units	40	10	1,305	13,050	-
Public Spaces	61	5	4,400	22,000	-
Mechanical/Storage	10	5	1,400	7,000	-
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>771</b>	<b>60</b>	-	<b>97,250</b>	<b>100,000</b>

[Figure 58]

## Land Use Requirements

### St. Louis Housing Complex

Building/Space	People	Floors	Gross Building Area	Building Footprint	Land Area
Building	771	5	100,000	20,000	-
Outdoor Public Space	-	1	4,250	26,125	-
Parking	150	2	31,500	15,750	-
					<b>61,875</b>

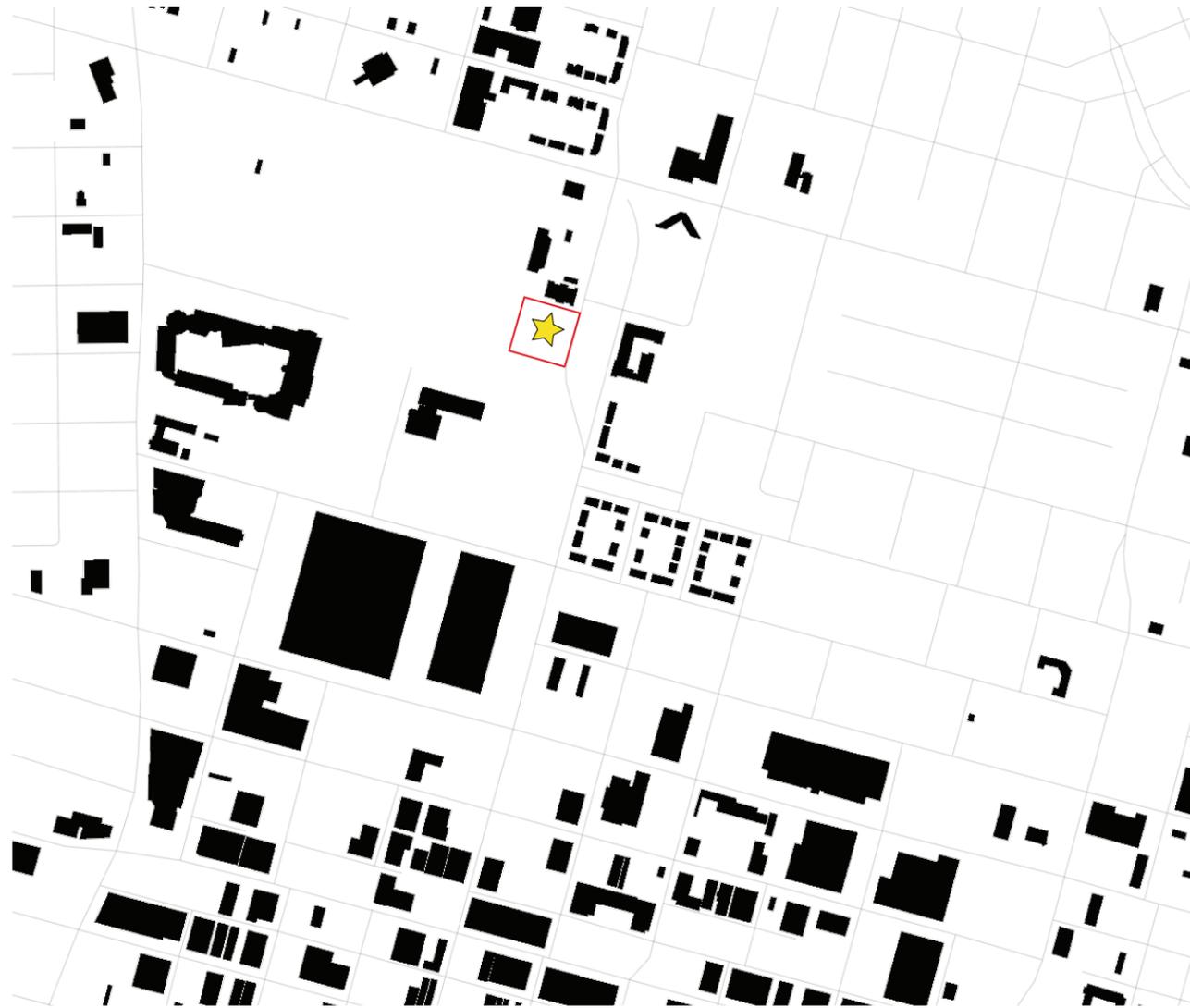
[Figure 59]

# SITE ANALYSIS

This site was chosen due to its historic ties to Pruitt Igoe, existing just on the edge of the former housing complex disaster and decendent of socialist dwelling models. By building on the former site, the "ruin" that exists in the embedded memory of the site is brought forth to generate a new architecture that learns the lessons from the tragedies of the past.



# SITE ANALYSIS



[Figure 60]

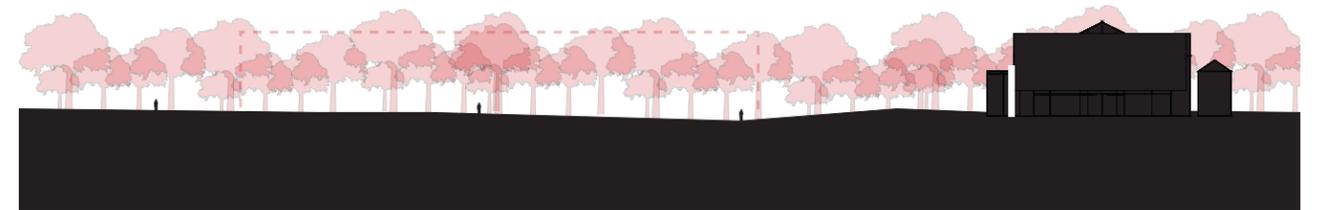
## FIGURE GROUND

This diagram shows the relationship between the site and the existing buildings. It is located just on the edge of the former Pruitt Igoe site, just south of an existing church. To the northwest, the former site has become overgrown with trees, and the area in general is not too dense.

## REFERENCE SITE MAP

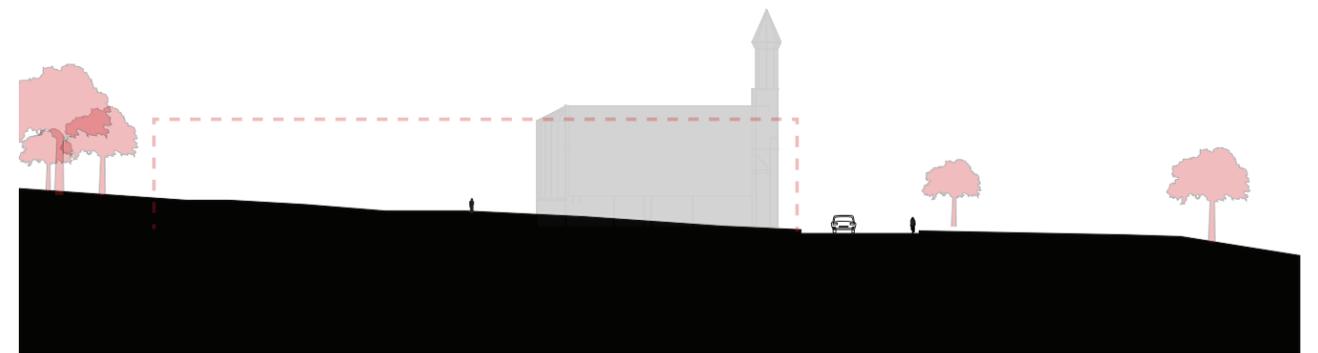


[Figure 61]



SECTION A

[Figure 62]



SECTION B

[Figure 63]

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Trees line the streets of this area, and buildings rise no more than 5 stories in a 3-block radius. The veritable forest on the western edge of the site creates a somewhat isolated feeling to the site, although a feeling of community is fostered by the nearby church. Integration with the community is tantamount to success.

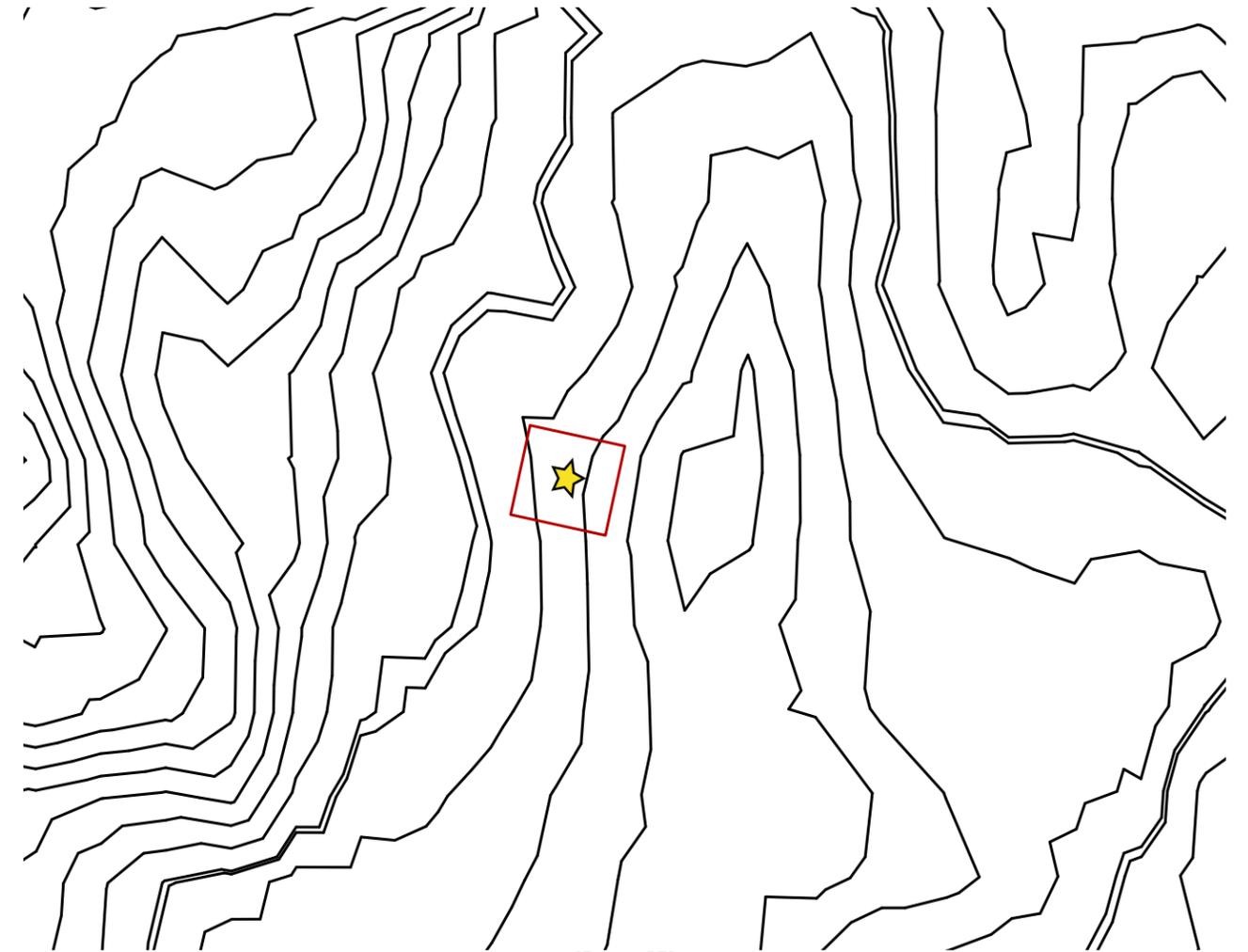
# SITE ANALYSIS



[Figure 64]

## DIMENSIONS

This map shows the basic dimensions of the site.

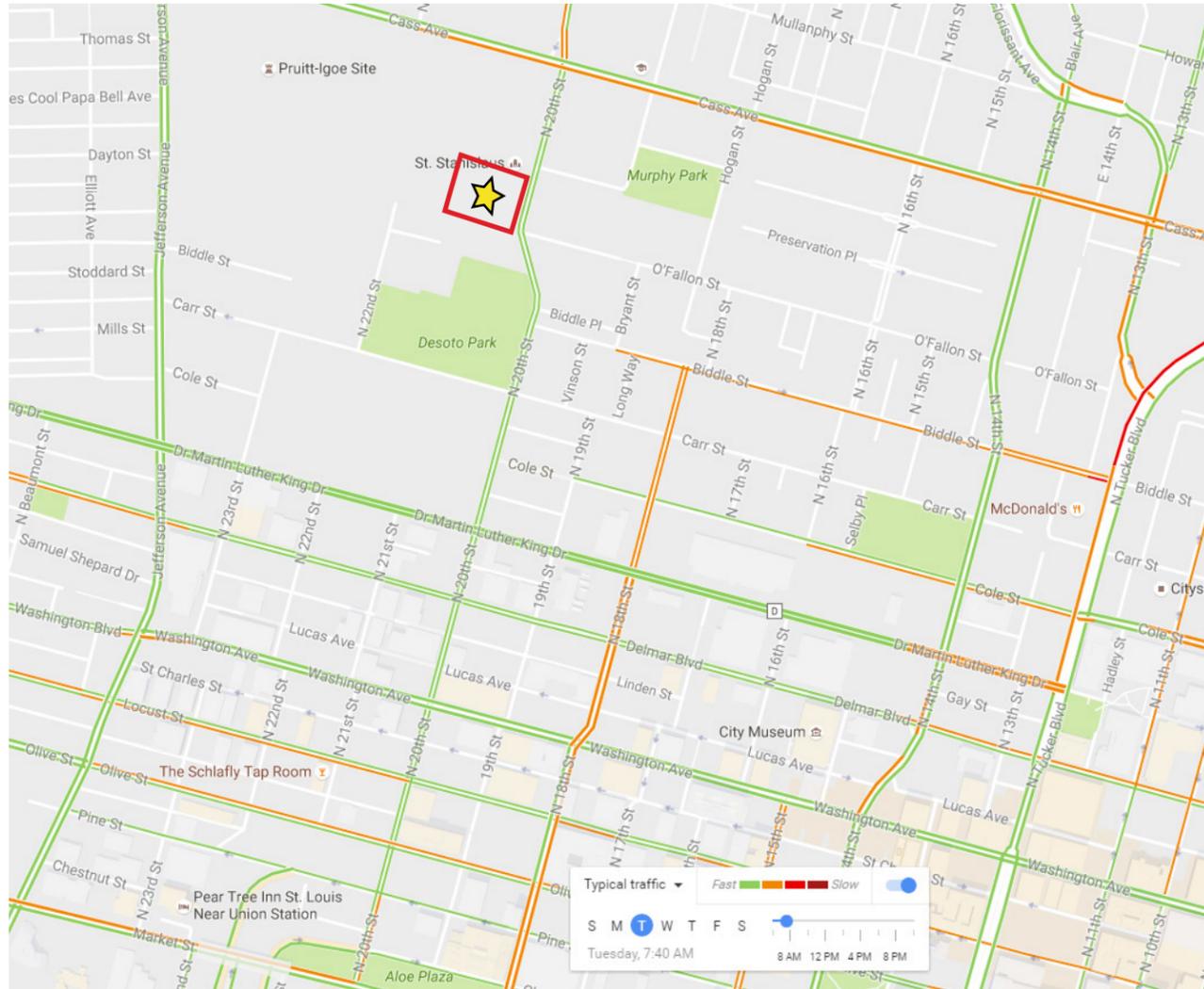


[Figure 65]

## TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of this site is around 500 feet above sea level, with a somewhat gradual slope. As a result, there will be no need for drastic measures such as integrating the building within a hill. Drainage will be simple, as it already goes towards the existing roads.

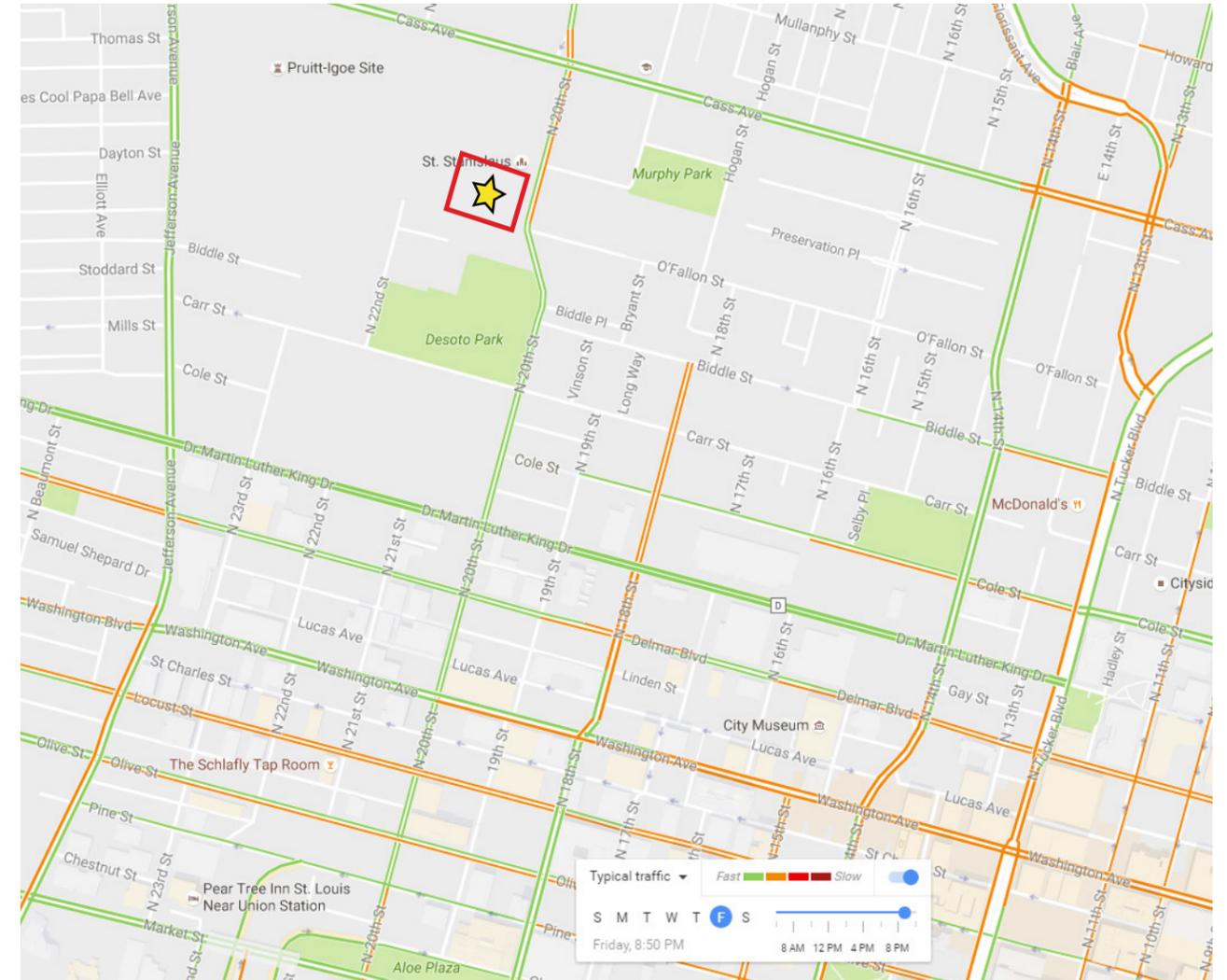
# SITE ANALYSIS



[Figure 66]

## TRAFFIC

Traffic in this area is very low at most all times of the day and week. Despite the wide street, there is very little to worry about concerning heavy traffic, except perhaps increased traffic on Sunday mornings due to the church just north of the site.



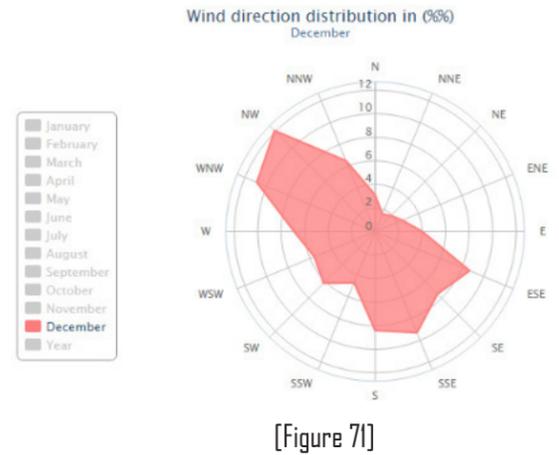
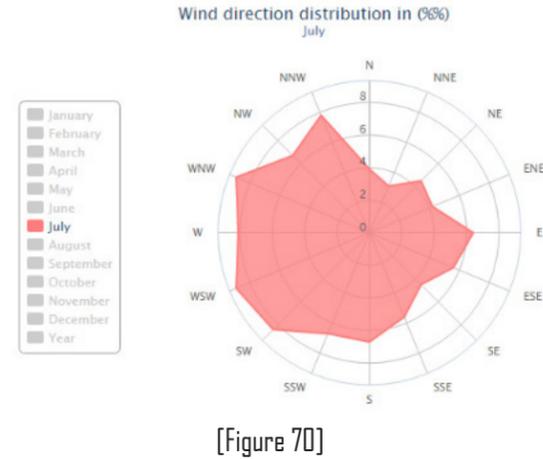
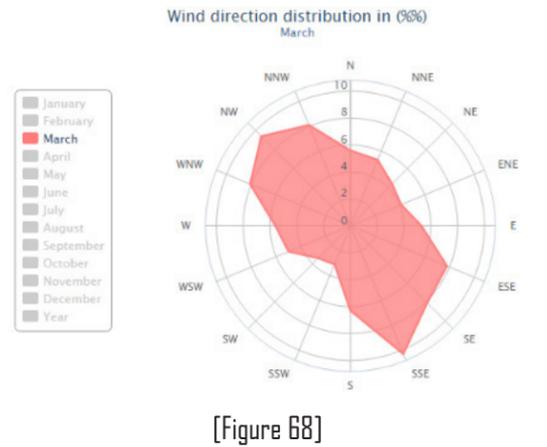
[Figure 67]

# SITE ANALYSIS

## CLIMATE ANALYSIS

The wind in St. Louis in a given year is erratic. It comes from every different direction with little reliable wind data. However, the somewhat general trend is that Northwest wind is more common, especially in cooler months. The mixed-use building to the West helps to shield this in part, but is not very tall, and the building to the South helps as a wall as well, but the rest is all fairly exposed.

The temperature in St. Louis is typically Midwest, with a flux in temperature that is expected throughout the year. Temperatures rarely dip below freezing, however, so cracking and frost are not as large of issues as they would be in more Northern climates.



Designing for this climate will focus on heating more often than cooling, though the effort expended will be less active due to the more temperate nature of this climate. Passive systems will thus be easier to integrate, and will be pursued at length in order to create a building that not only has a degree of meaning, but also of practicality and sustainability.

St. Louis also lies at a latitude of 44 degrees North, which means in a practical sense that sunlight is a fairly consistent resource, remaining useful even in the winter months. While not quite as utilized as it might be in more southern climates, its use as both a heat and energy source will be utilized to its maximum potential as the site allows for it, employing such strategies as passive solar heating and PV panels.

Month of year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	1-12
Dominant wind direction	↘	↘	↘	↘	↗	↖	↗	↖	↖	↗	↗	↖	↗
Wind probability >= 4 Beaufort (%)	36	39	38	39	30	25	15	15	17	28	36	34	29
Average Wind speed (mph)	12	12	12	12	10	10	9	9	9	10	12	12	10
Average air temp. (°F)	33	35	50	60	69	80	82	80	73	62	50	41	59

[Figure 66]

# SITE ANALYSIS

## SITE CHARACTER

The modern site rests on the edge of the former 57 acre Pruitt Igoe site. Adjacent to it is a Catholic Church, and there is some existing residential development nearby. Overall somewhat isolated, it is a near-empty grass field bordered by more grass, trees, and the aforementioned church.



[Figure 72]



[Figure 73]



[Figure 74]

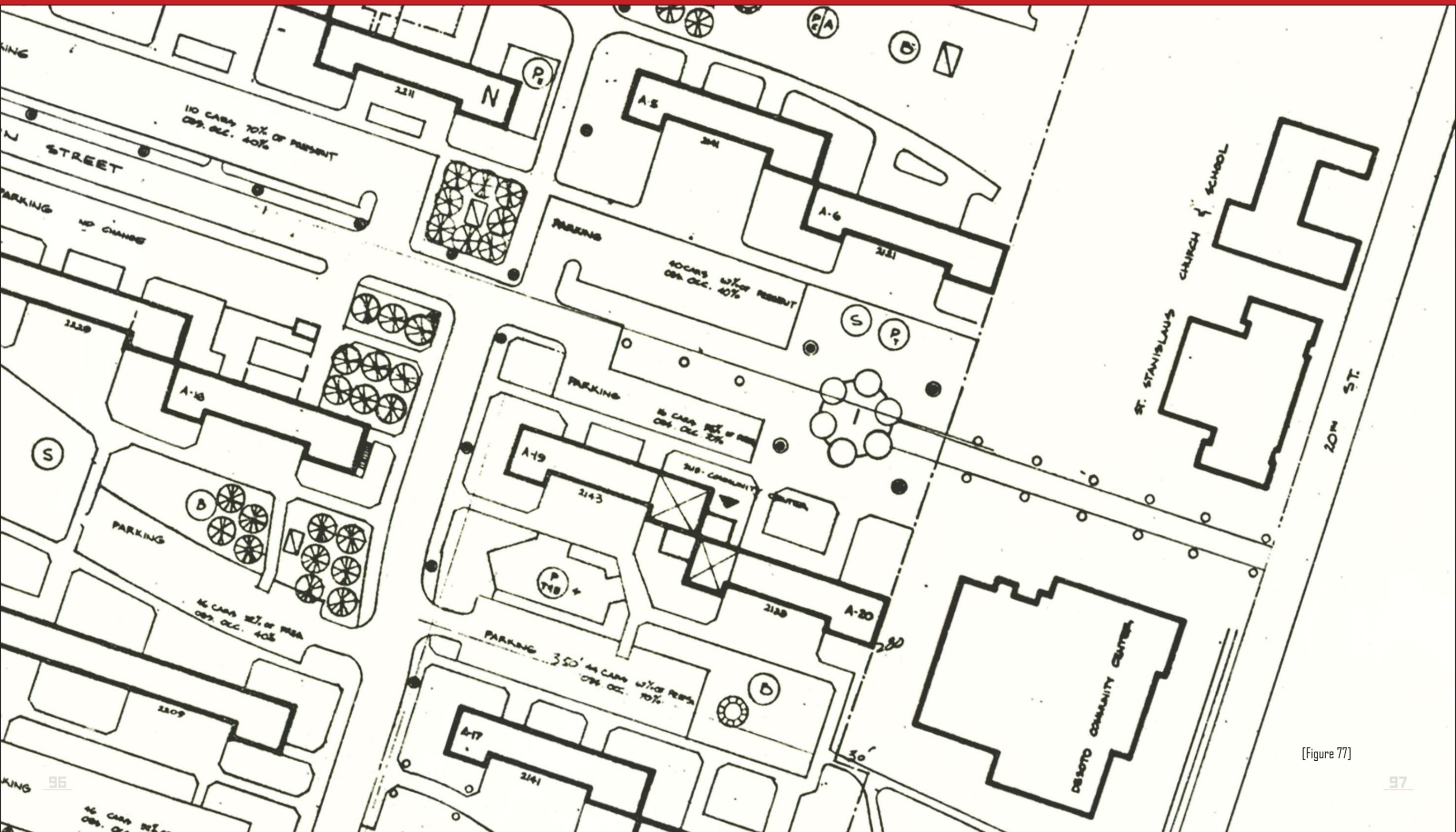


[Figure 75]



[Figure 76]

# SITE ANALYSIS



[Figure 77]

# SITE ANALYSIS



[Figure 78]

# SITE ANALYSIS



An overlay of the site's past drawings and aerial photographs helps to reveal the historic qualities, and aids in the overlay and quality of the final design.

[Figure 79]

# CODE ANALYSIS

This building will be a Type III-A construction, meaning that it will have a non-combustible exterior, and may have a combustible exterior. This is common for buildings of this typology, and allows for some flexibility in the materials and layouts for construction.

The occupancy type is R-2, meaning there are multiple occupants that will be sleeping in this building. It is the obvious occupancy type for apartments, and determines the number of people allowed, and their square footage.

Other, public spaces within the building (and on the exterior) will likely fall into the A occupancy type, meaning that there will be 50 or more people present. A large public space is part of the program, and its actual size will determine the applicability of this occupancy type, as well as the corresponding construction type.

All ADA guidelines will be followed, as required by code, including bathroom and elevator considerations, as well as pathway access.

# CODE ANALYSIS

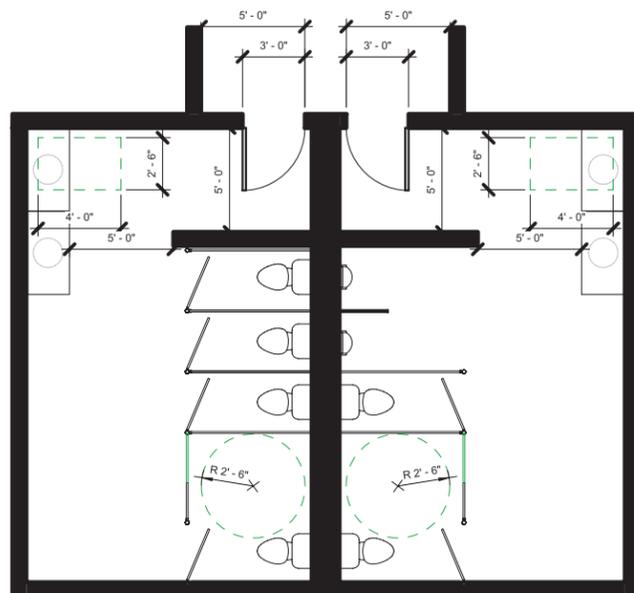
**Occupancy Type - R-2**

**Construction Type - Type III-A**

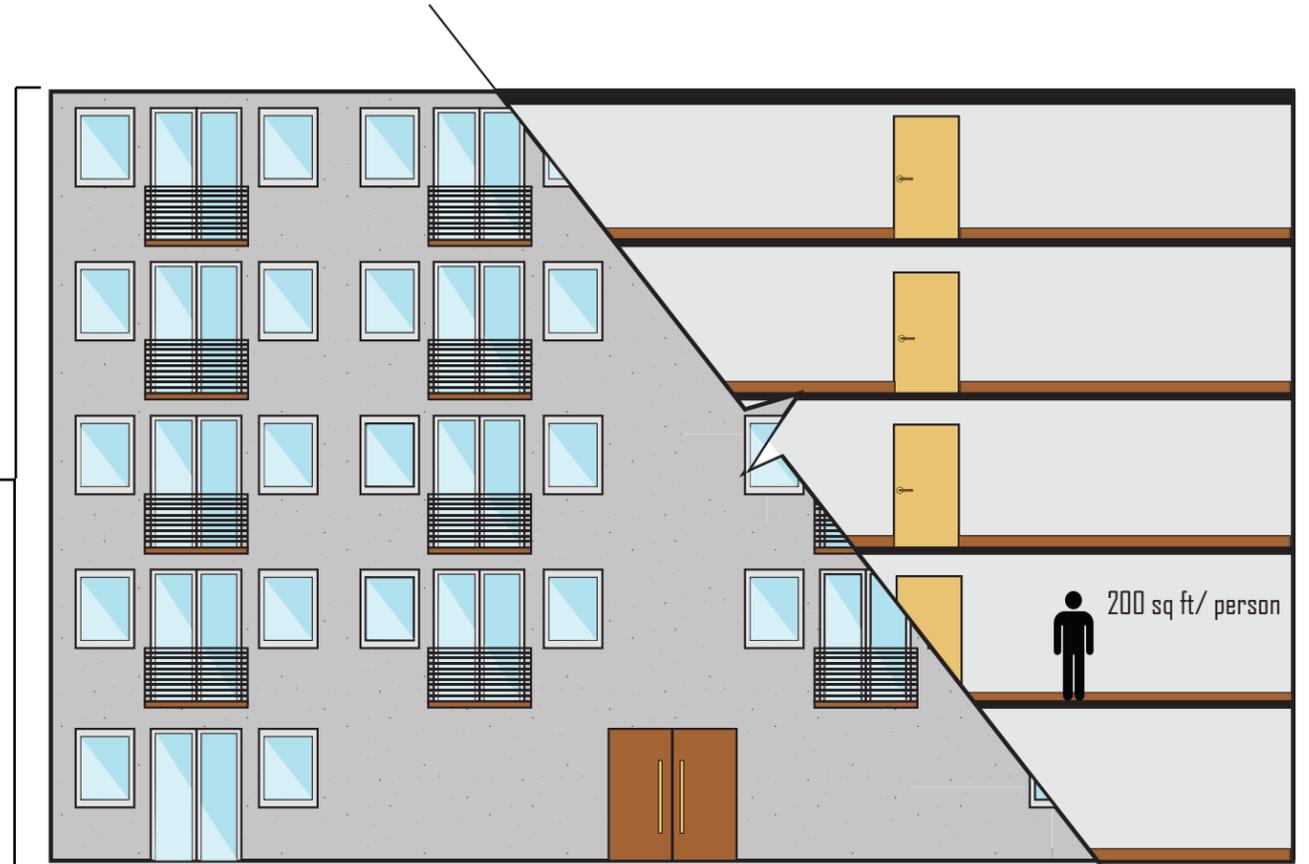
**Maximum Height - 85 ft (5 floors)**

**Square Feet / Ground Floor - Max 72,000**

**ADA Restroom**



[Figure 80]

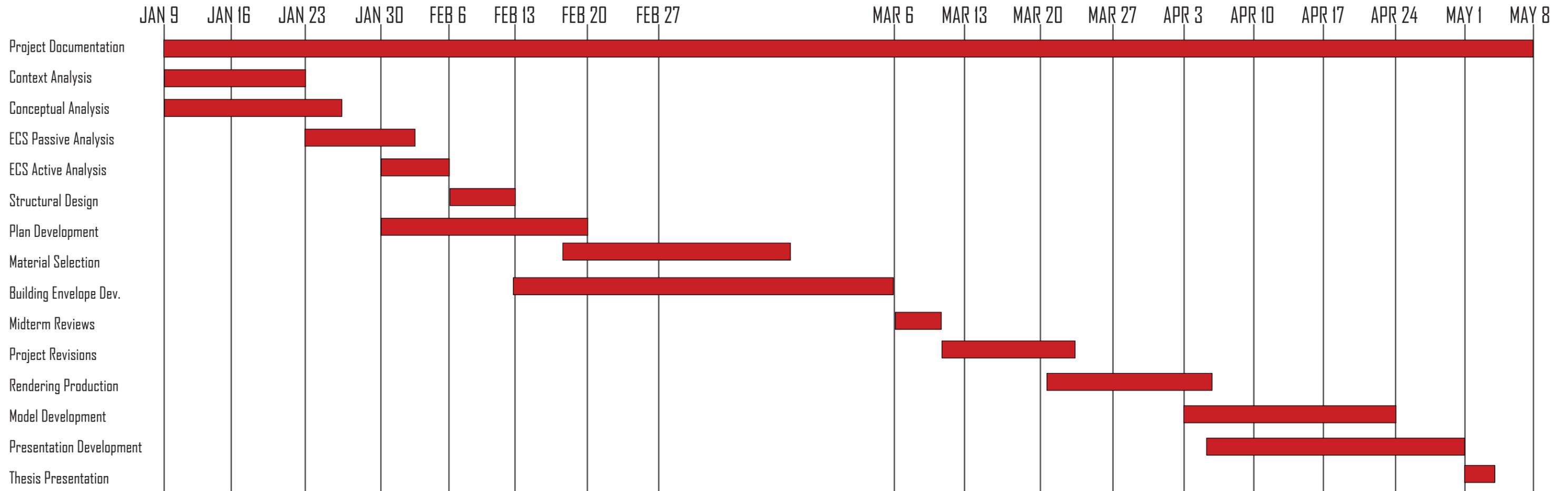


**Exit Width**

Min. 32 in  
Max 48 in.

[Figure 81]

# PROJECT SCHEDULE



[Figure 82]

# RESEARCH DIRECTION

Before attempted to design a dwelling in North-Side St. Louis, research must be completed concerning former communist precedents, the ideologies behind them, and comparable examples in the West. By investigating these, a cohesive standard for designing a successful space will be achieved.

Investigating communist precedents will include examining block housing, as well as more experimental buildings and public spaces. The results will drive the decisions behind the planning of spaces in America, while still considering the cultural differences between the two nations. Furthermore, the relationships between these examples and those in the West will reveal the similarities in culture, and the design decisions that must be made to overcome the flaws that exist(ed) in both.

National and design ideologies will also be crucial motivations to investigate when researching the direction a new housing development should take. Care will be taken to trim away harmful nationalism and propoganda, leaving behind the ideological remnats that were based on the consideration for the user.

Researching Western examples of dwellings and public spaces will also be a vital aspect of the research in this thesis. By having examples to compare the USSR against, as well as examining the ideological differences between the two country's designs, the true meaning and conflict between the differing systems will be ascertained, and creating a design that acknowledges communist designs, while respecting the culture in America will be facilitated.

In sum, the direction of this thesis research will involve examining the ideological and cultural differences between the USA and the USSR, and this will result in a design that acknowledges helpful and often overlooked aspects of historical dwelling in a vastly different culture, while at the same time creating a dwelling that is truely meaningful and important to the users it serves.

# DESIGN METHODOLOGY PLAN

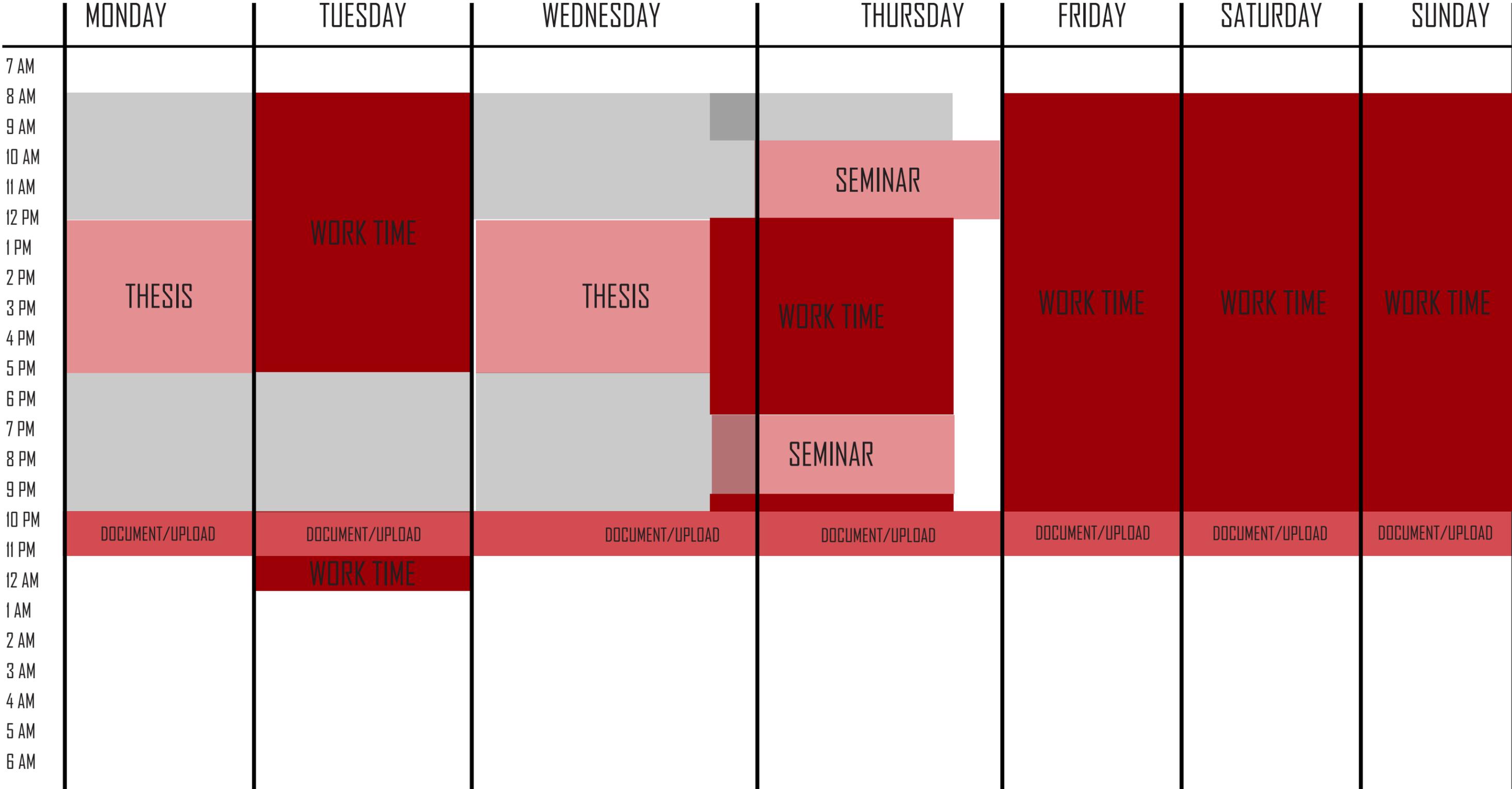
## Interpretive Research Plan

1. Select a topic or precedent.
2. Analyze the topic and address its relevancy:
  - How does this relate to public space, dwelling, or a difference in cultures?
3. Establish the narrative assigned to the work:
  - Is this nationalistic?
  - Is it purely functional?
4. Synthesize the ideas of the work with that of this thesis:
  - Take relevant meanings and relate their relevance to the new, proposed dwelling in St. Louis.
5. Apply the synthesized ideas as they pertain to the design.

## Design Research Plan

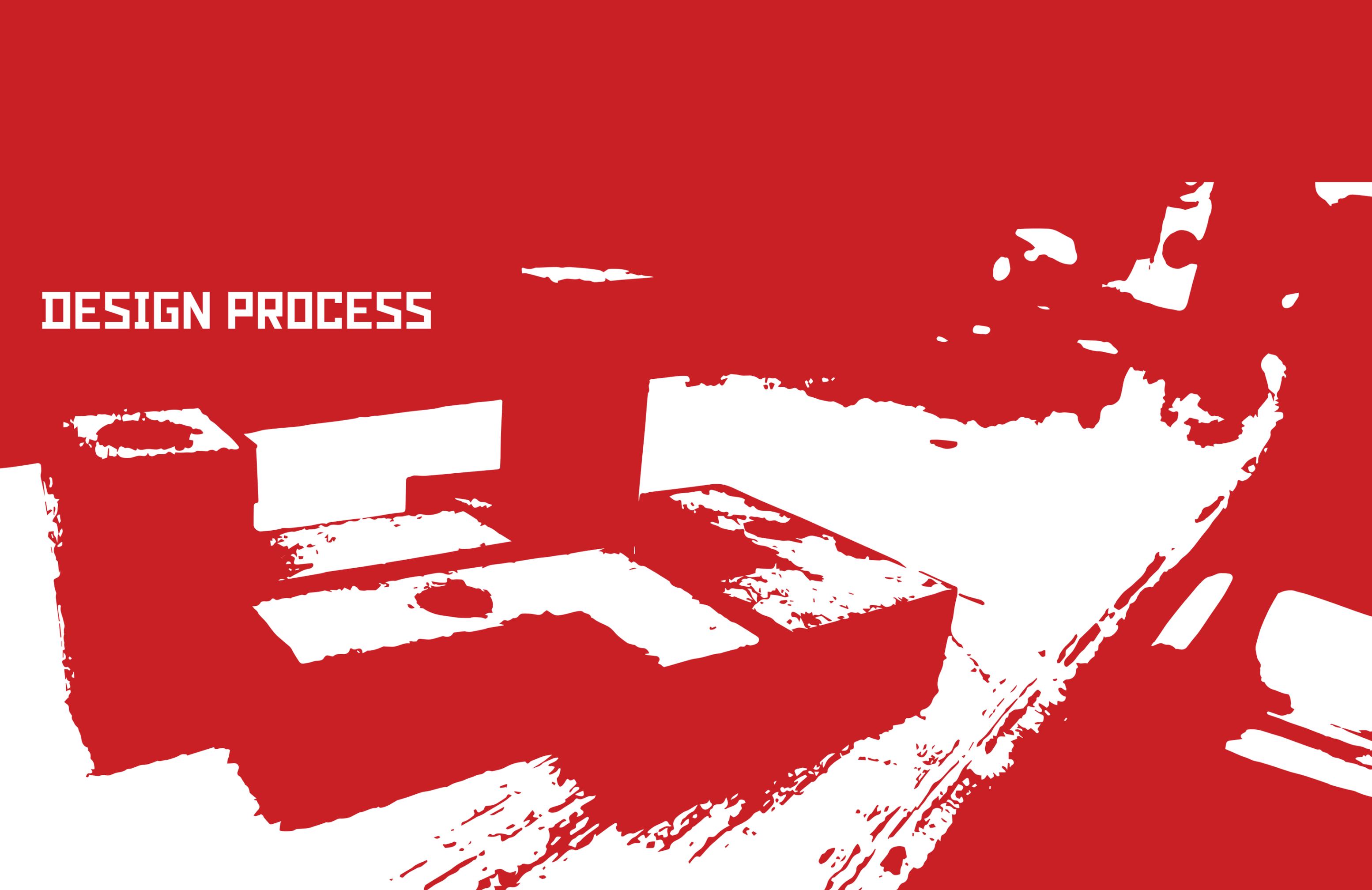
1. Establish the narrative.
  - The site exists in very close proximity to the former Pruitt-Igoe project, so it will necessarily have historical connections, as well as those to precedents in the USSR. In addition, the narrative of the lives of the users will play a major part, and how they live their day-to-day lives will shape the design in perhaps the most significant way.
2. Implement Systems (Environmental, Structural, Walls) in a way that fits the narrative, and follows the meaning of the project, while at the same time remaining sustainable and using modern, feasible construction methods.
3. Develop the technical aspects of the building in a way that makes the general constructability of the project clear.

# DESIGN DOCUMENTATION PLAN



[Figure 83]

# DESIGN PROCESS



## THE ITERATION OF THE ARTEFACT



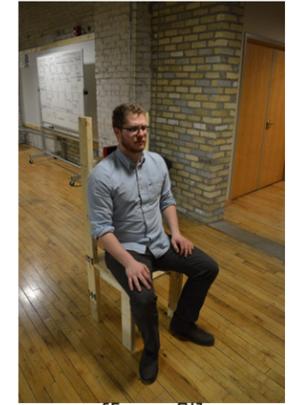
[Figure 84]



[Figure 85]



[Figure 90]



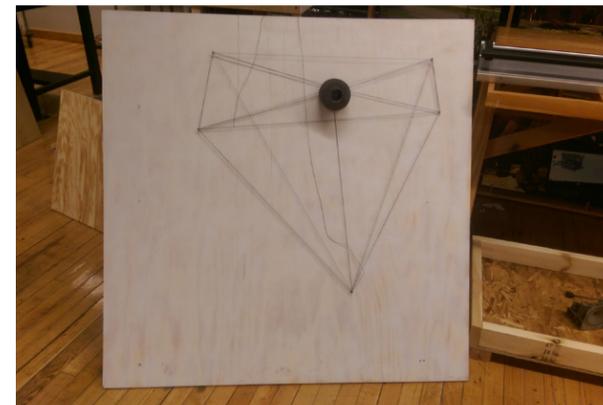
[Figure 91]



[Figure 86]



[Figure 87]



[Figure 92]



[Figure 93]



[Figure 88]



[Figure 89]



[Figure 94]



[Figure 95]



[Figure 96]



[Figure 97]



[Figure 98]



[Figure 99]



[Figure 100]



[Figure 101]



[Figure 102]



[Figure 103]



[Figure 104]



[Figure 105]



[Figure 106]



[Figure 107]



[Figure 108]



[Figure 109]



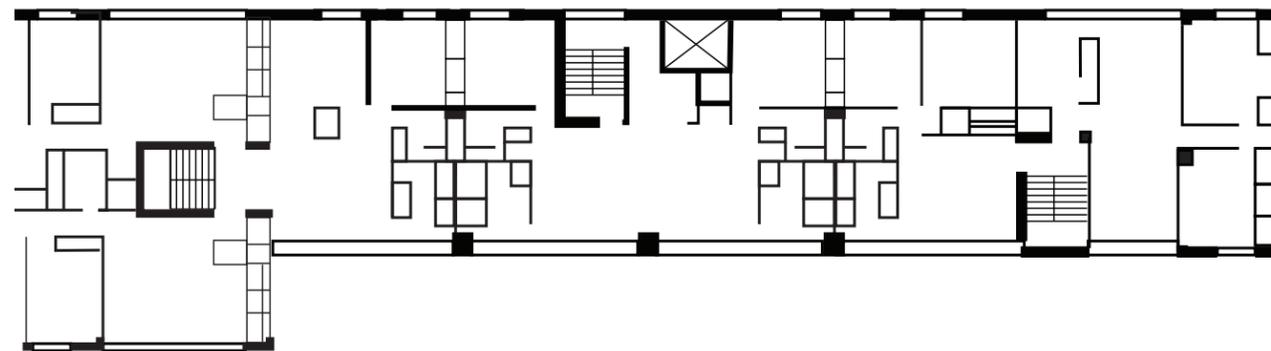
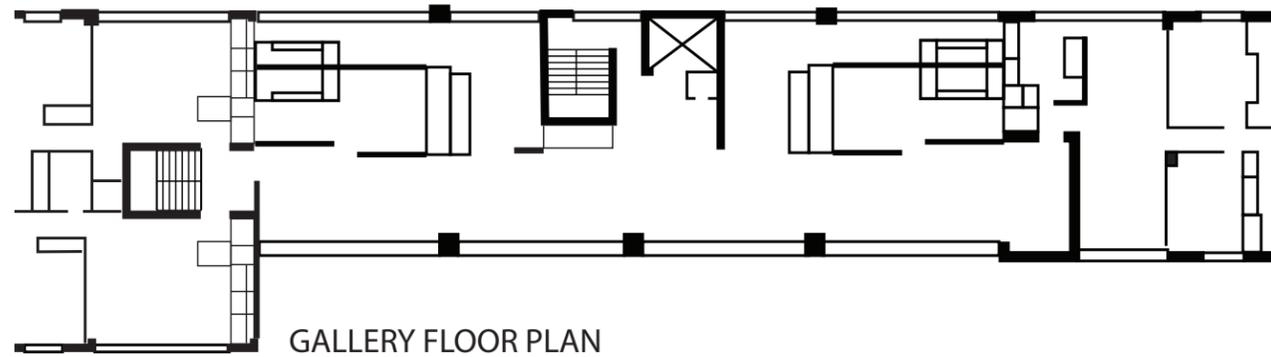
[Figure 110]



[Figure 111]



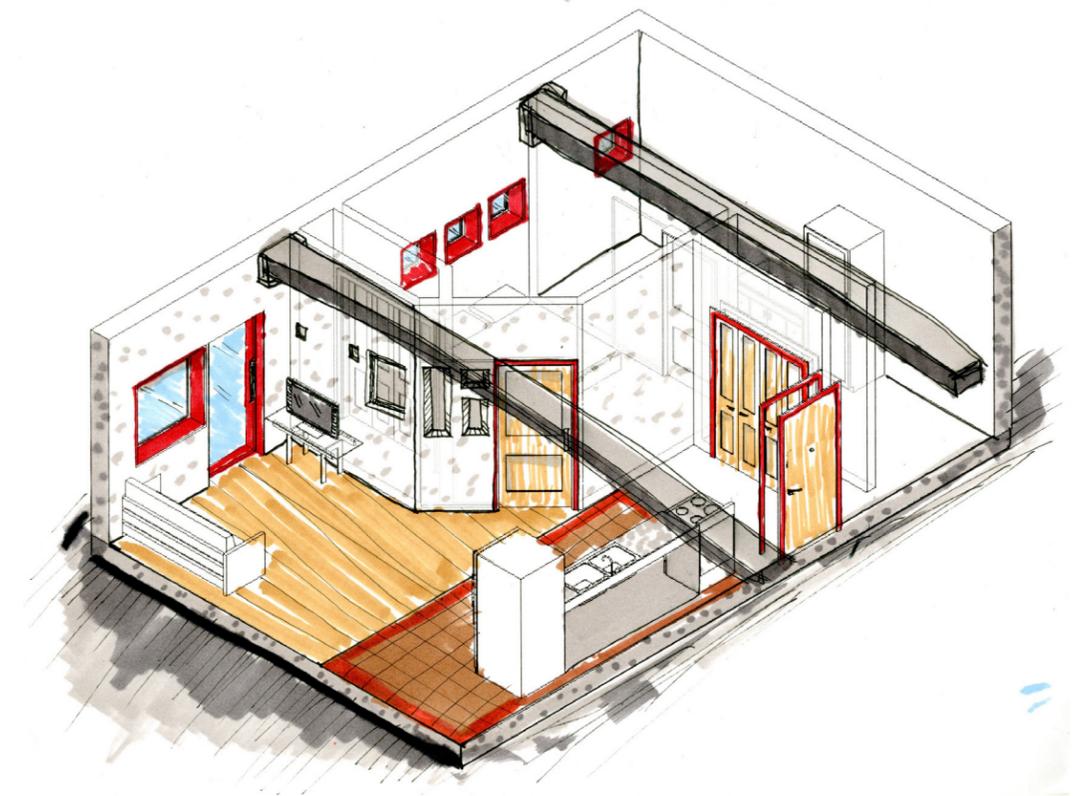
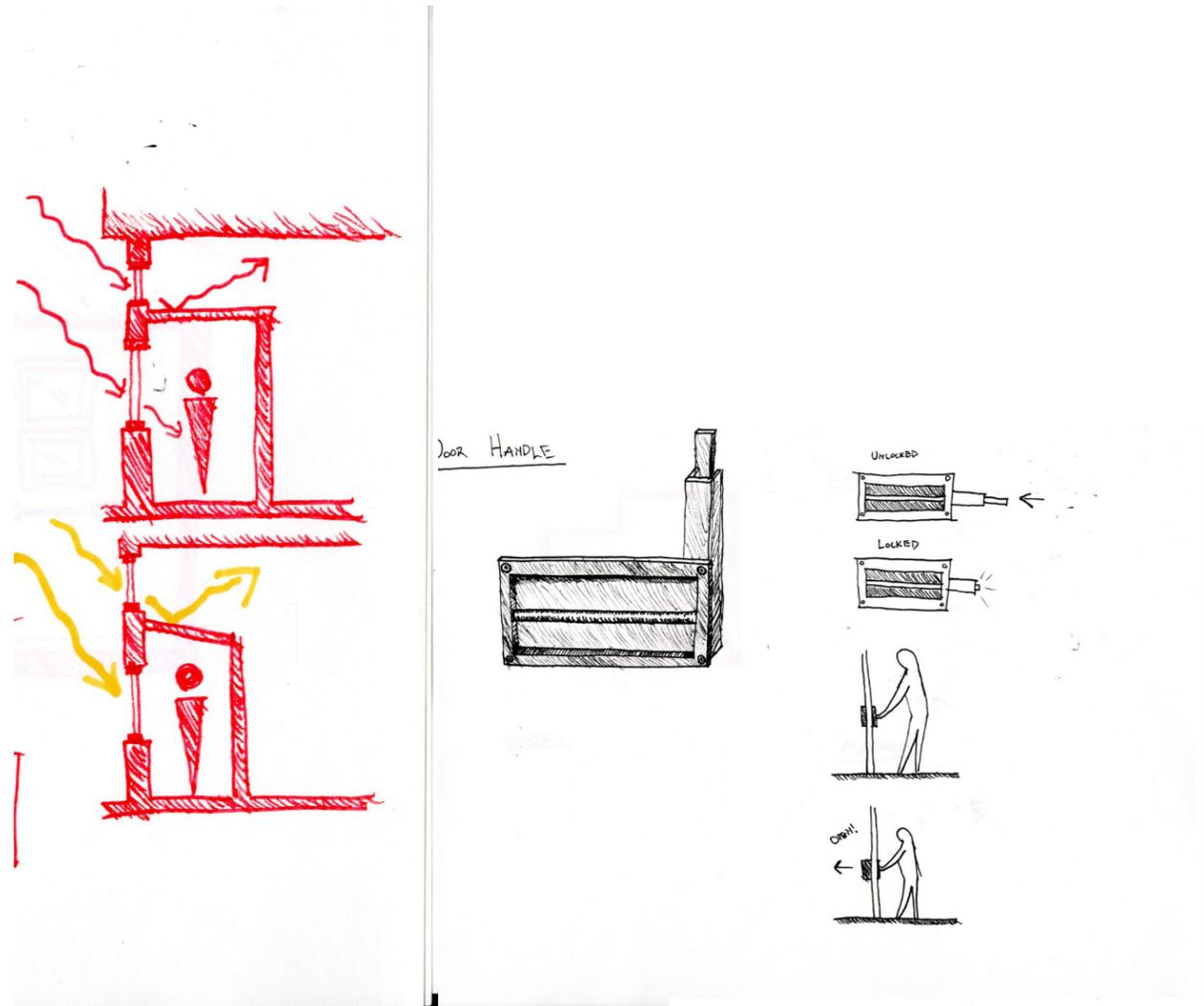
[Figure 112]



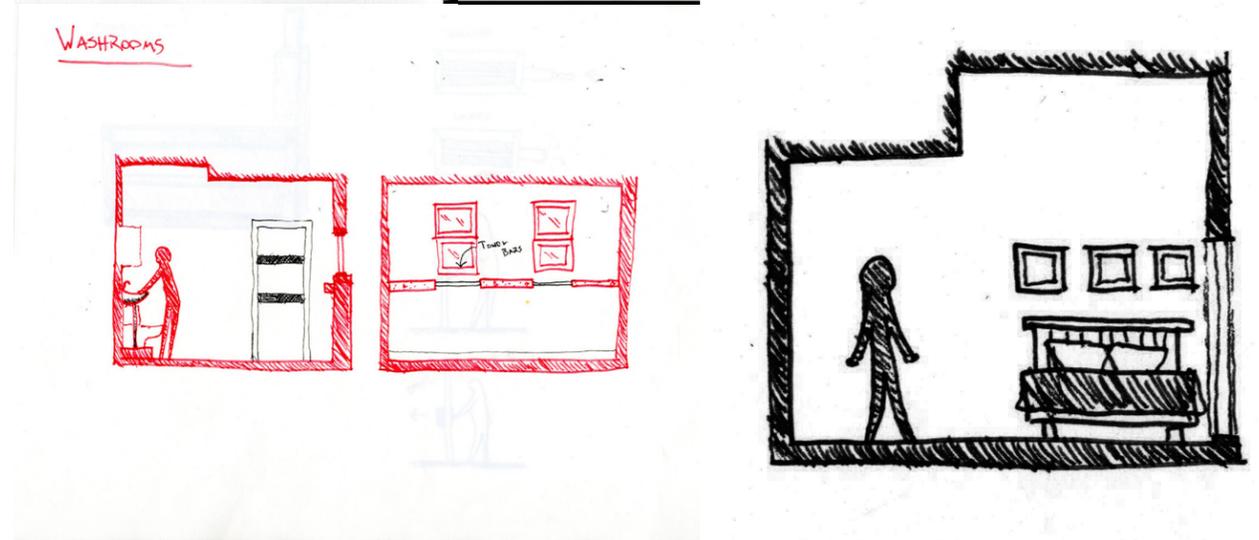
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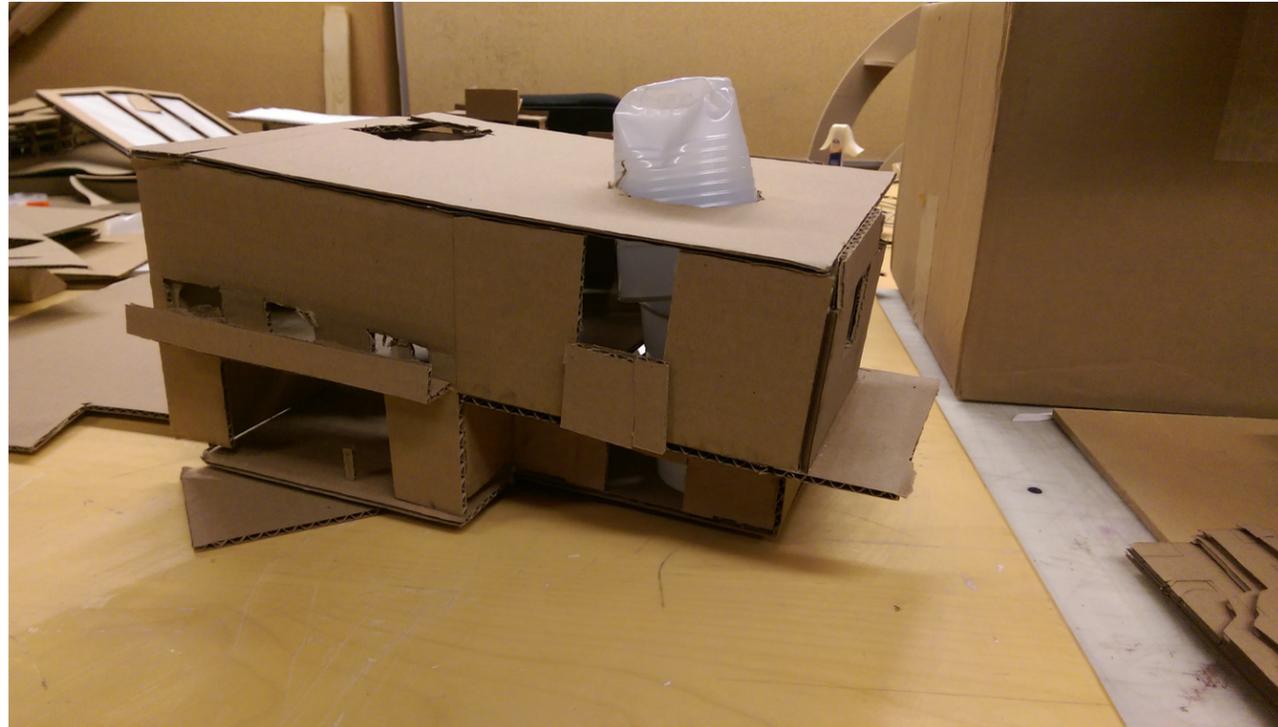
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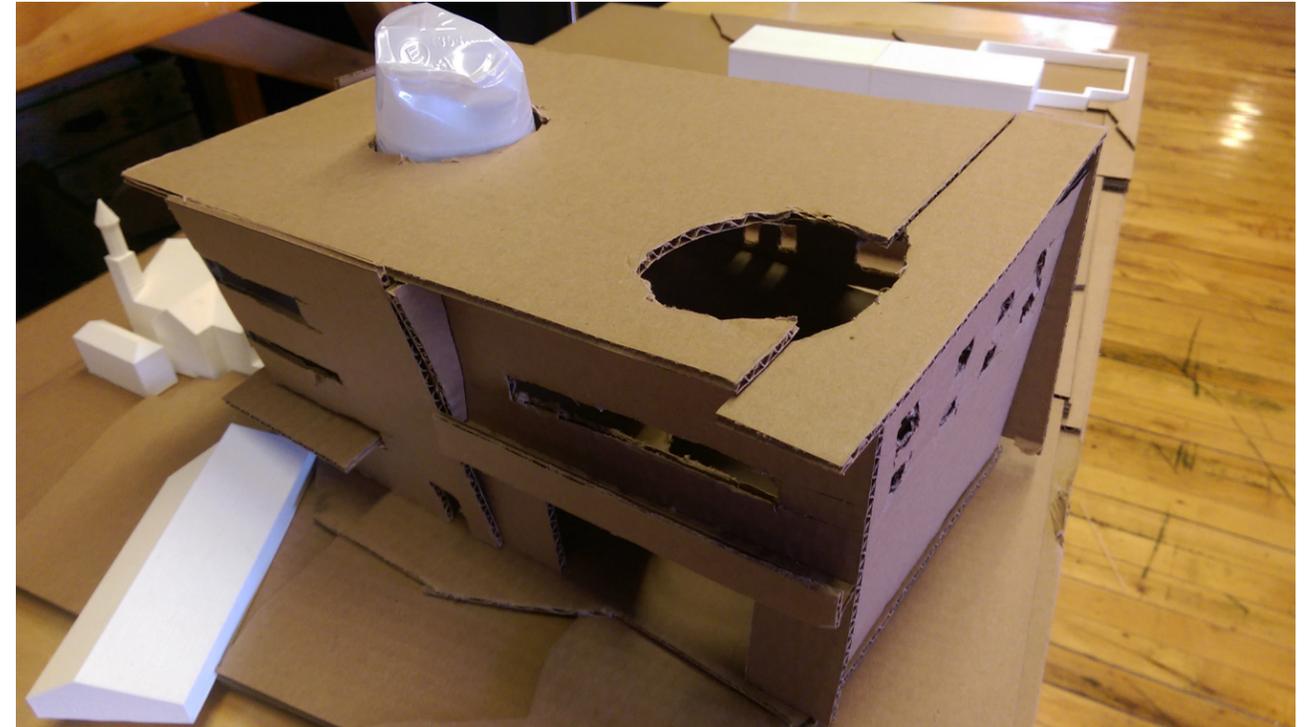
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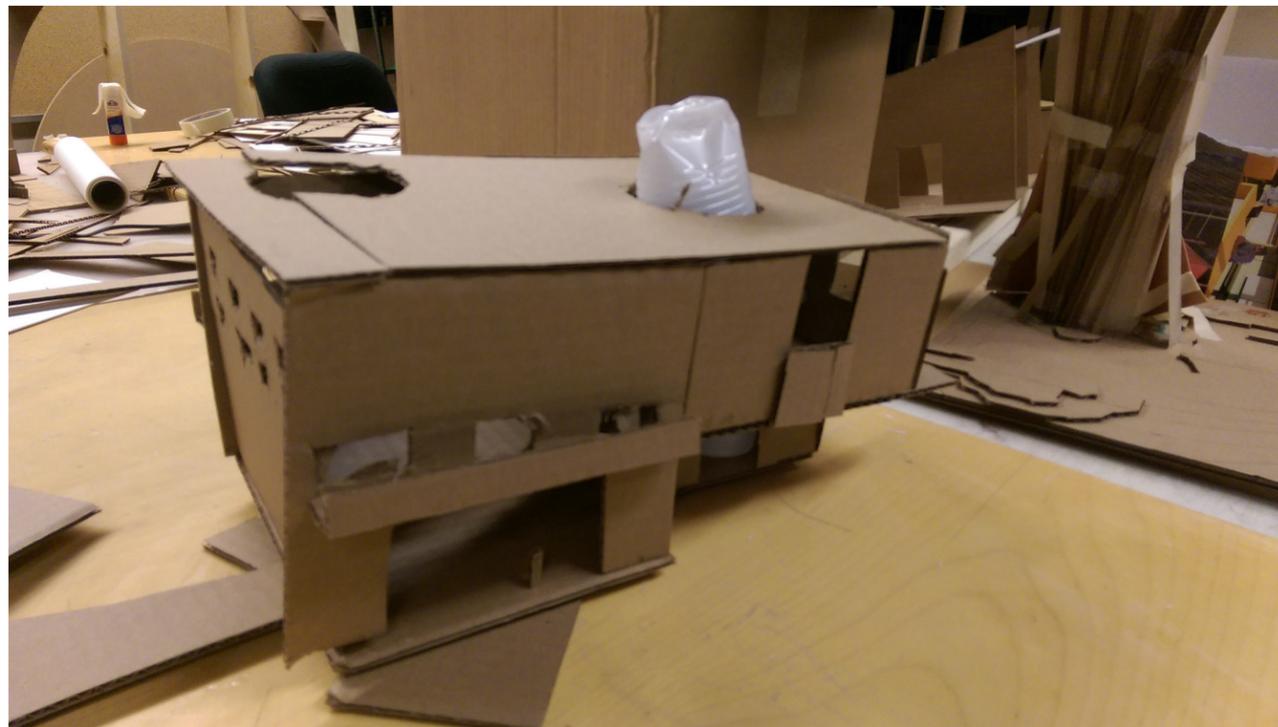
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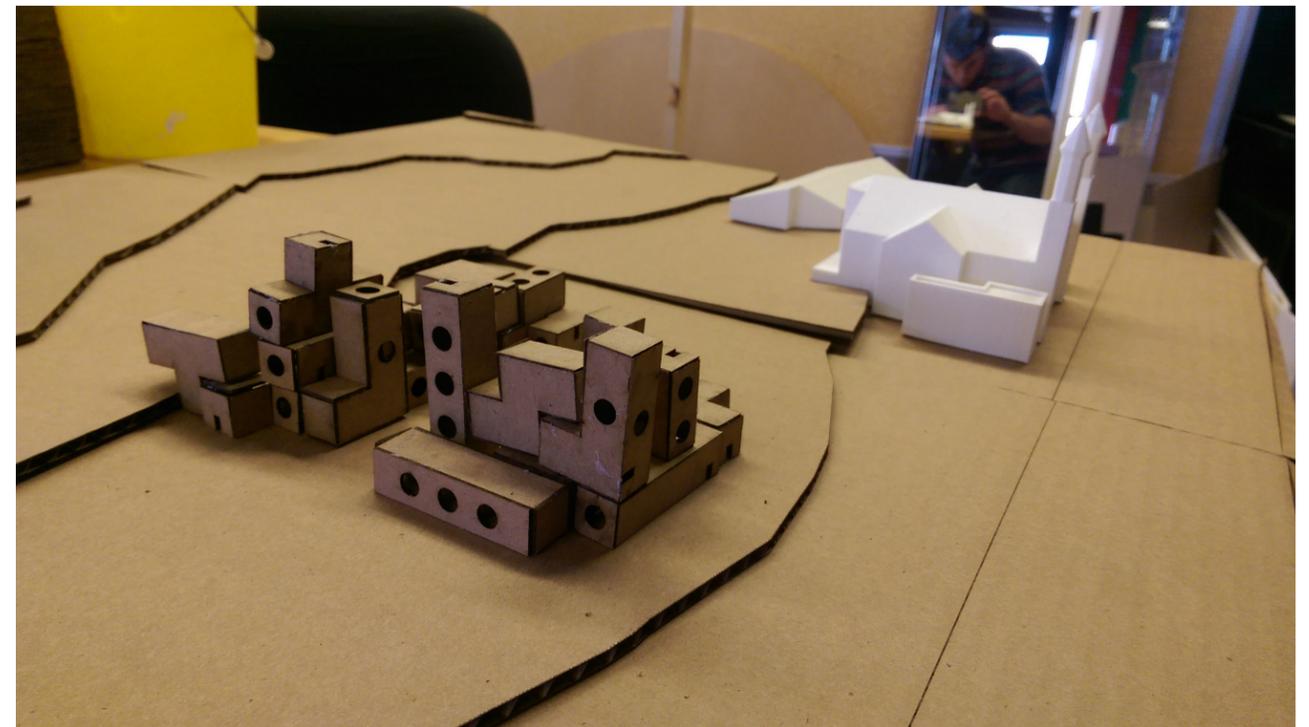
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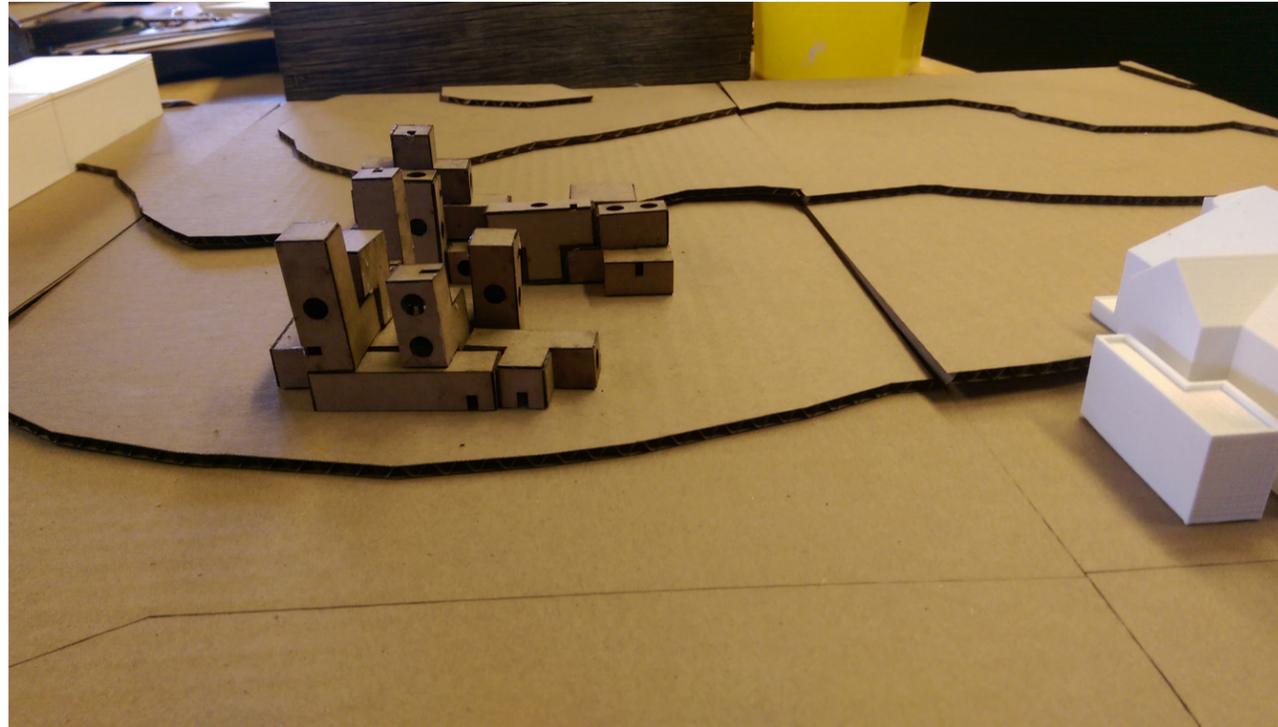
[Figure 119]



[Figure 118]



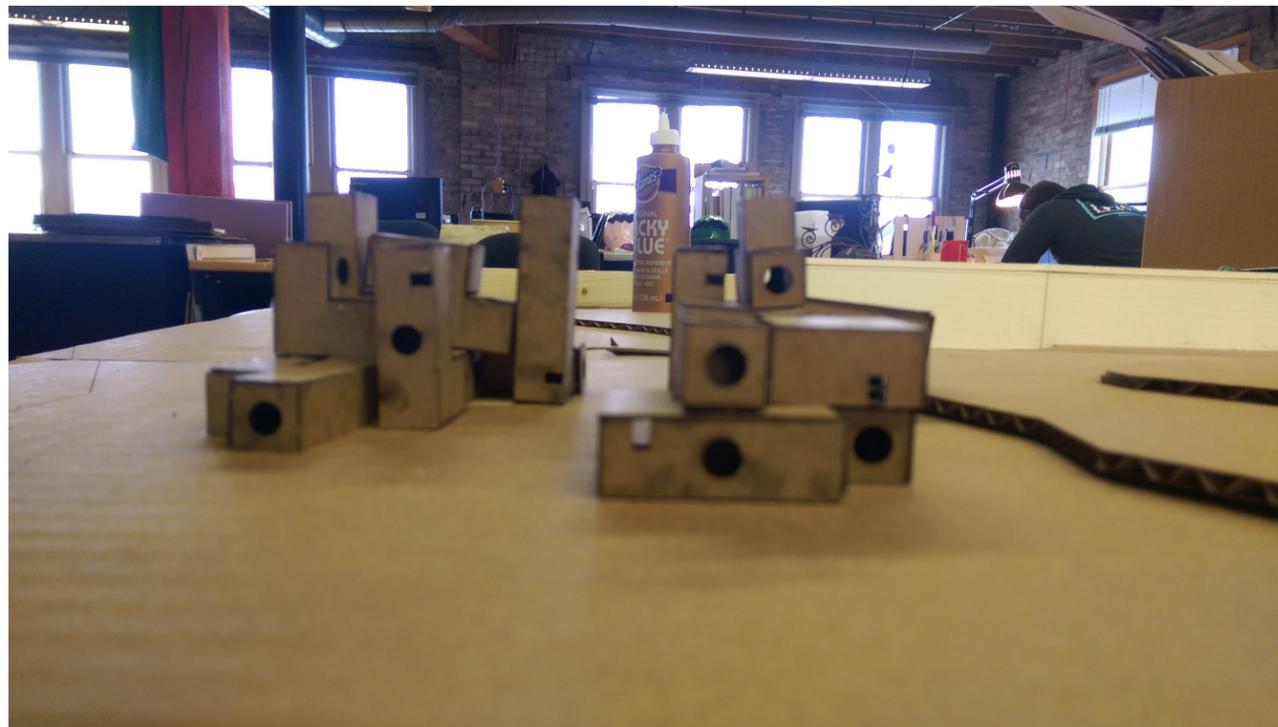
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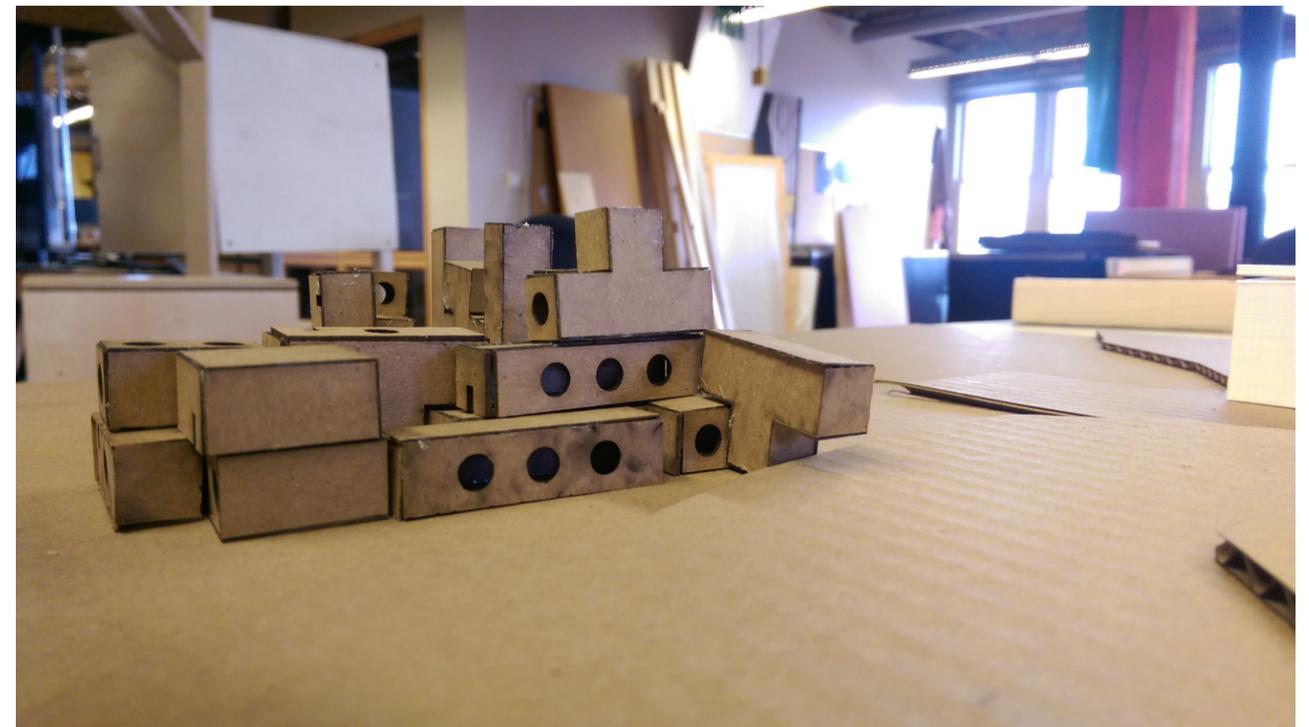
[Figure 121]



[Figure 123]

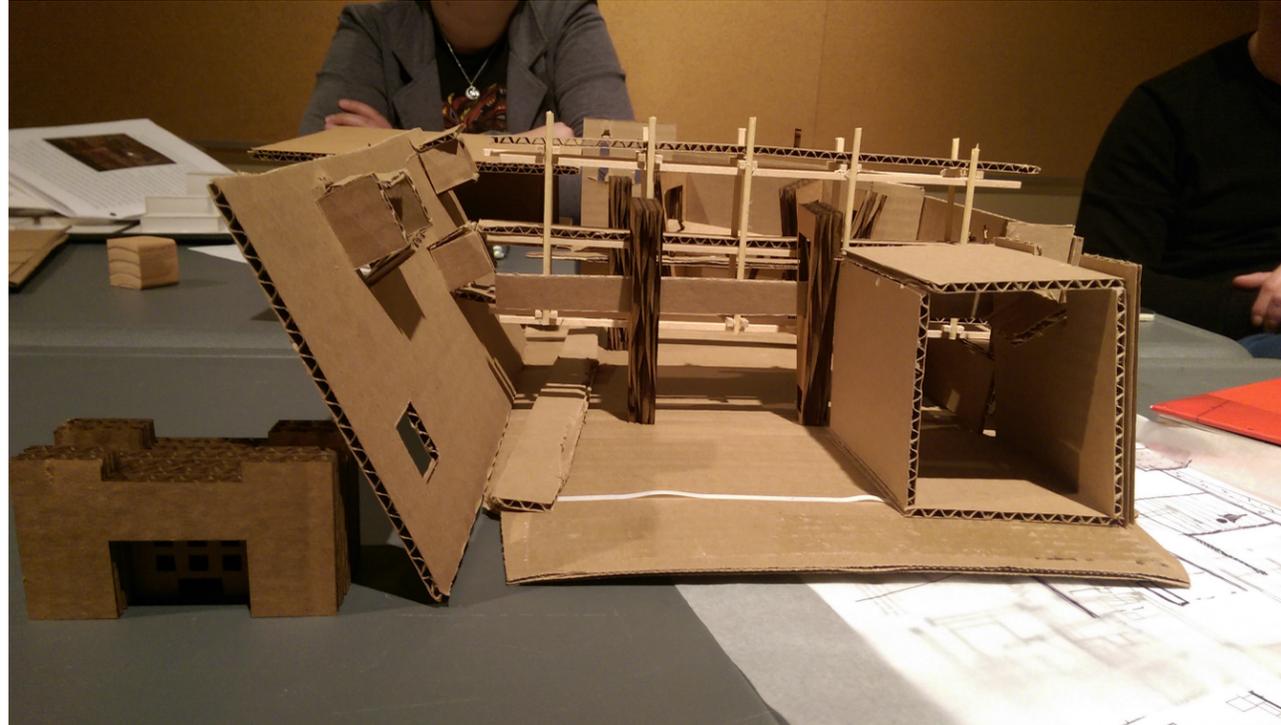


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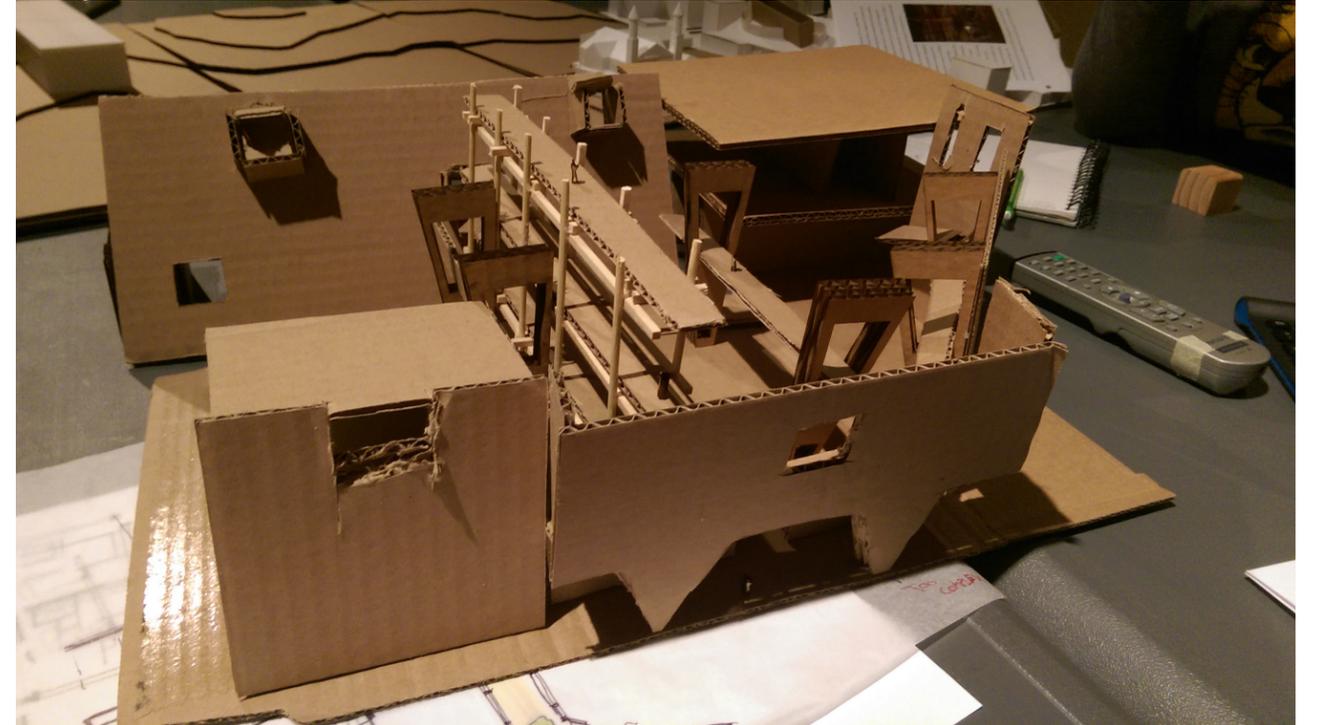


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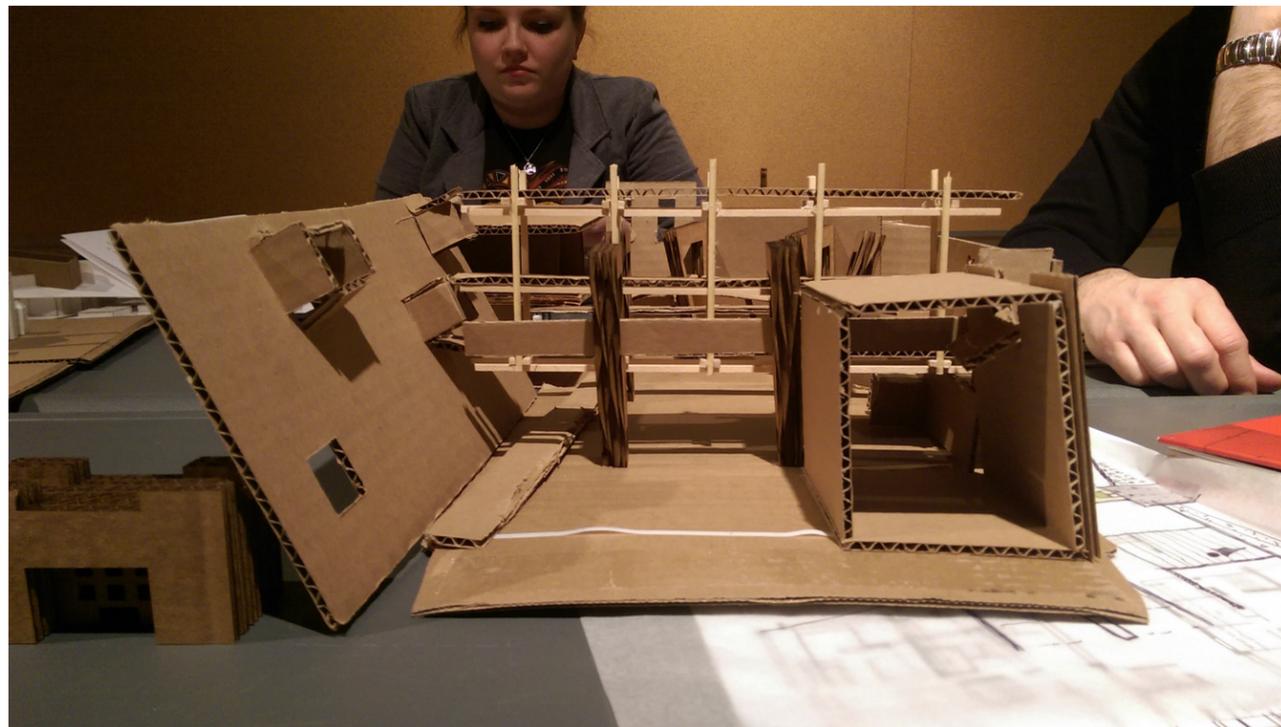
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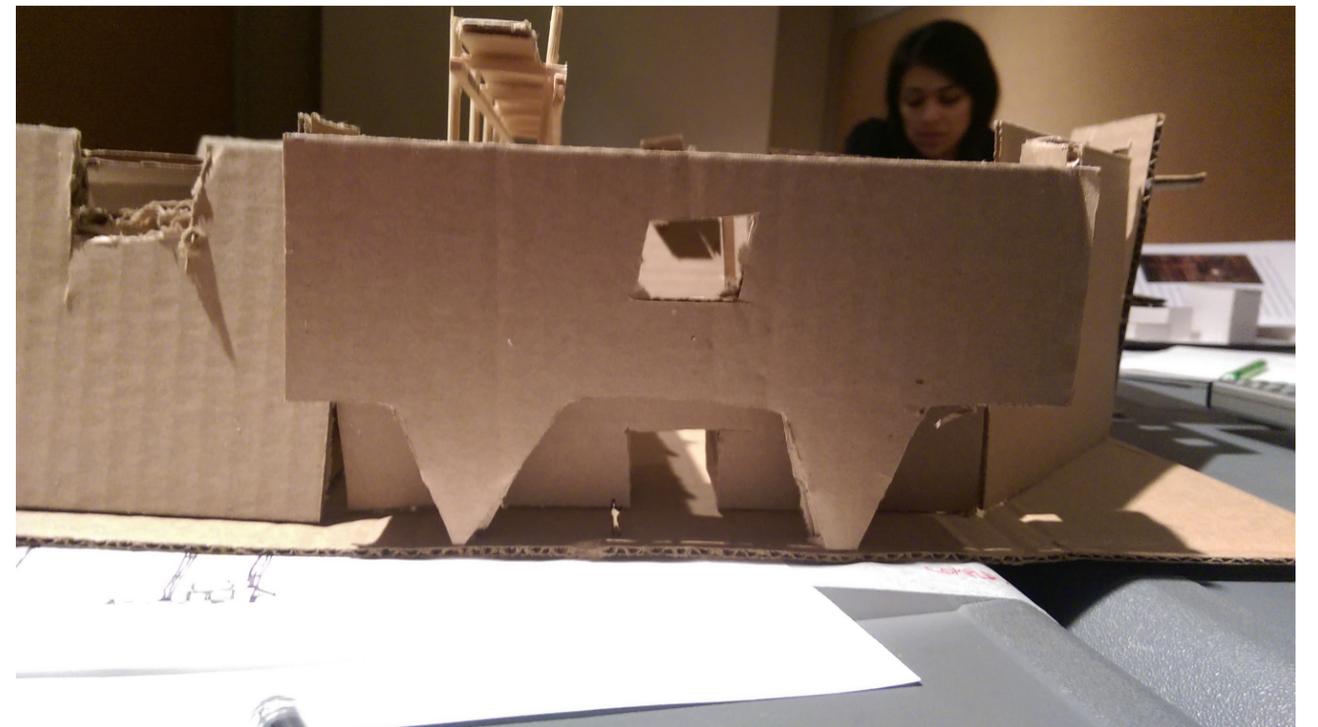
[Figure 125]



[Figure 127]

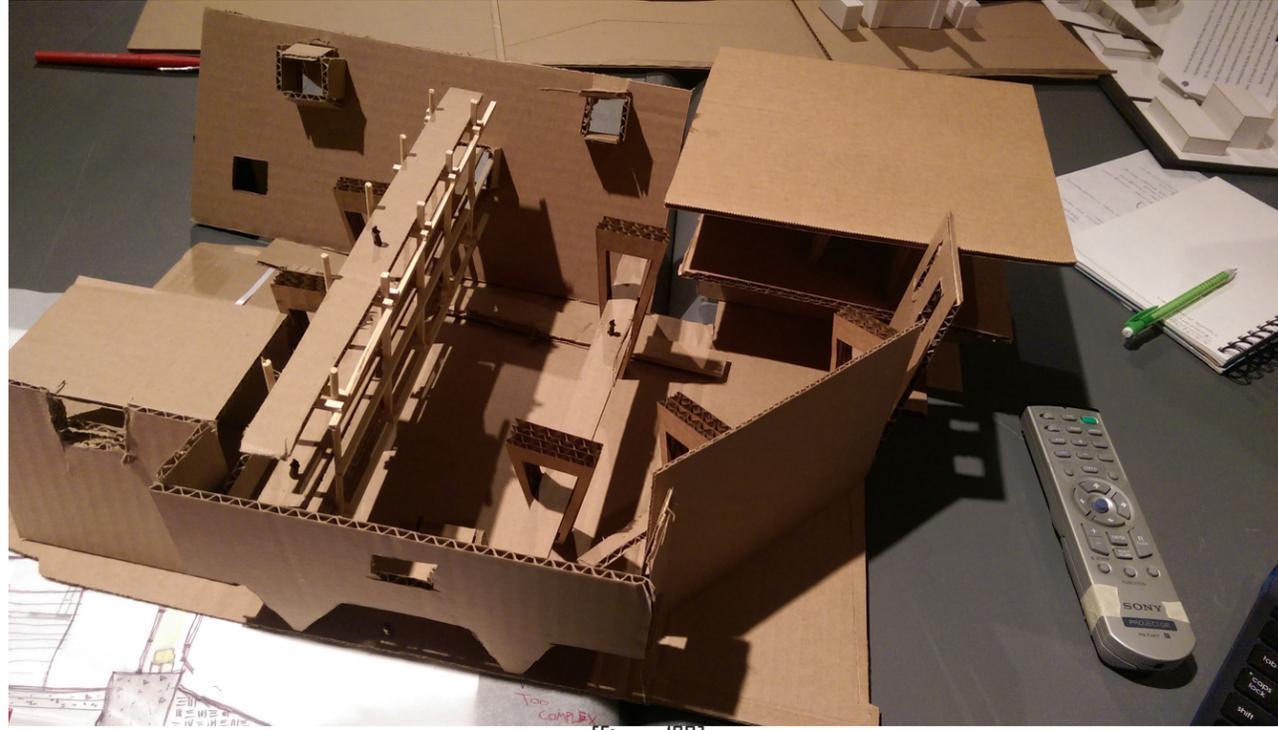


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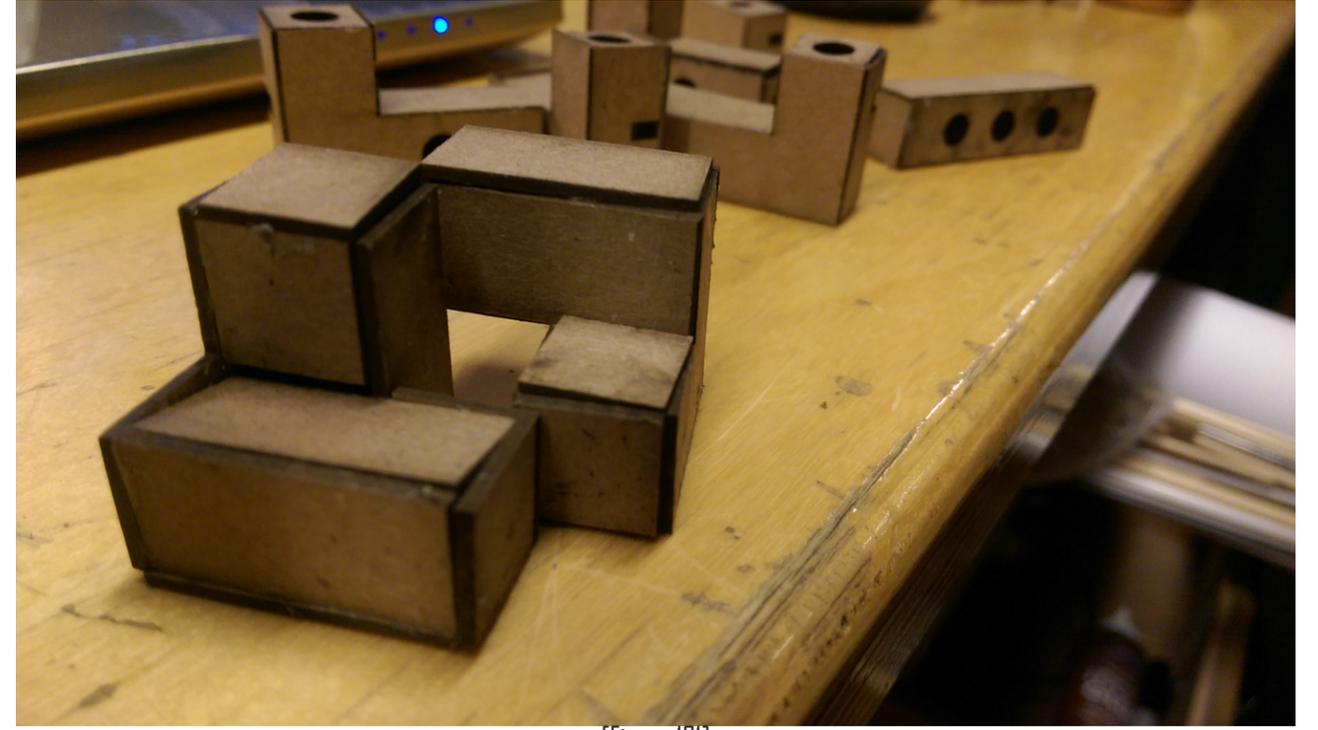


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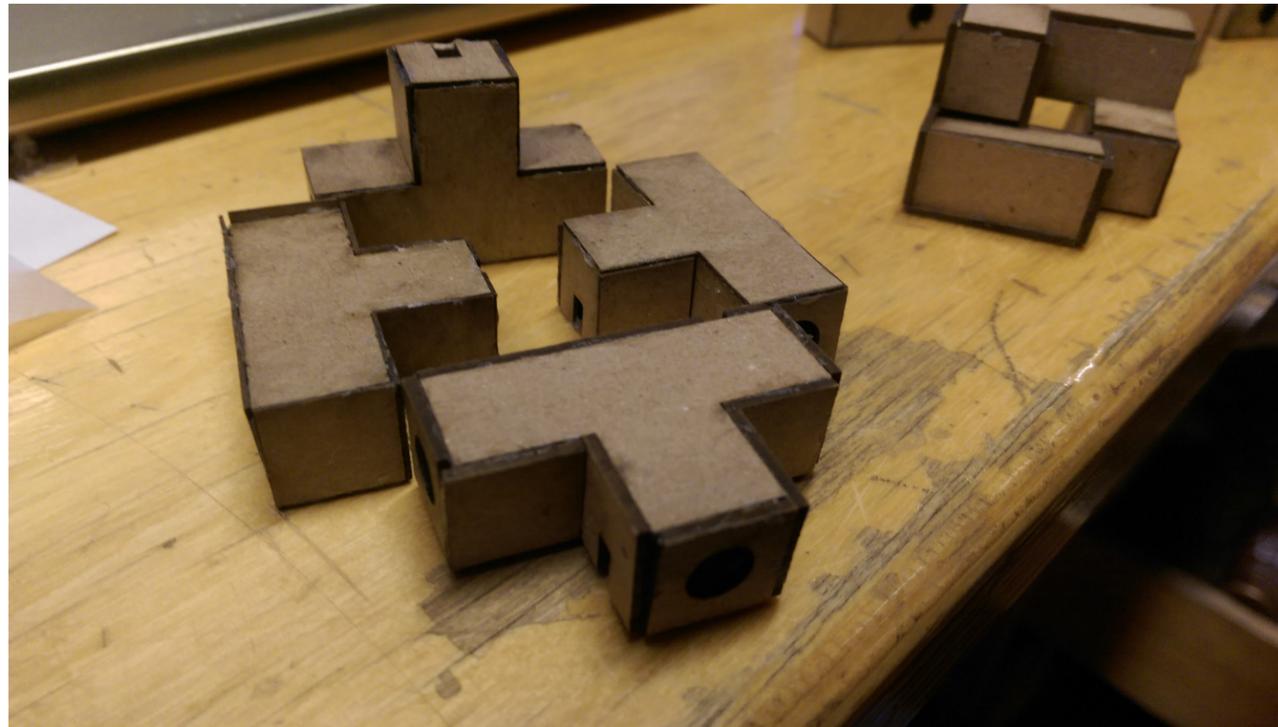
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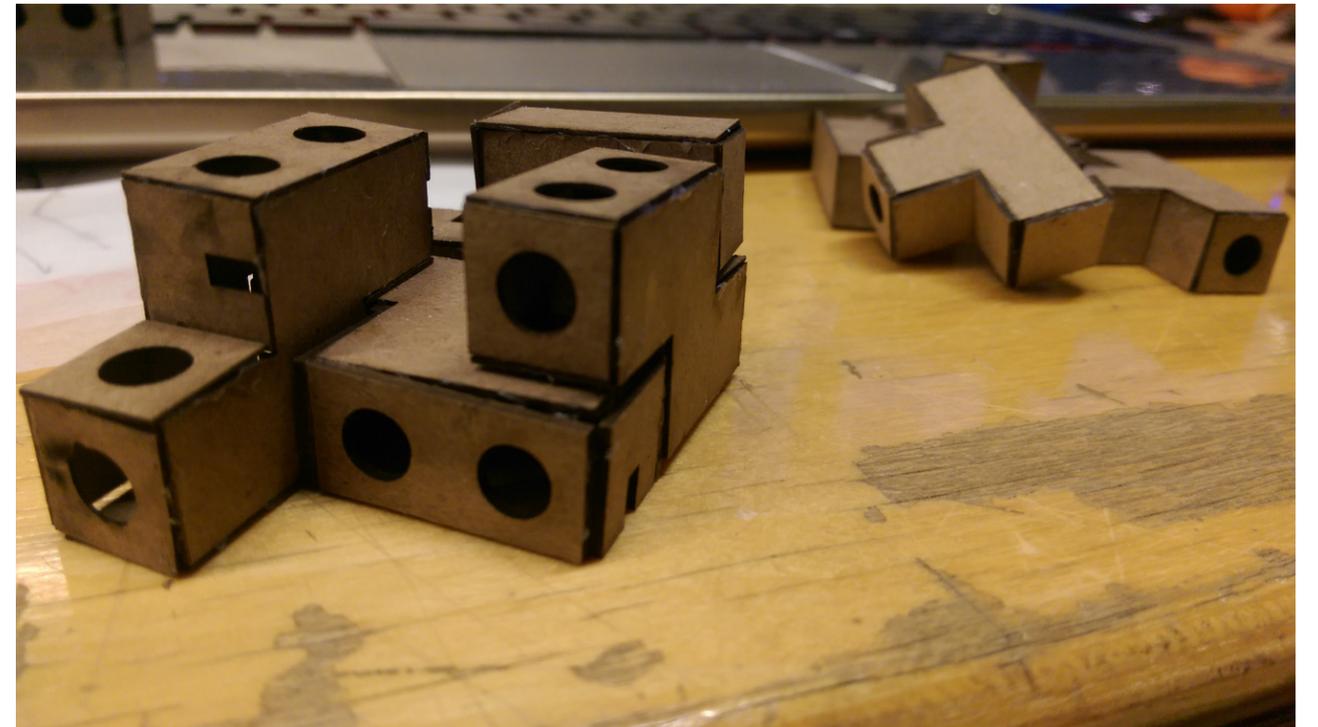
[Figure 129]



[Figure 131]

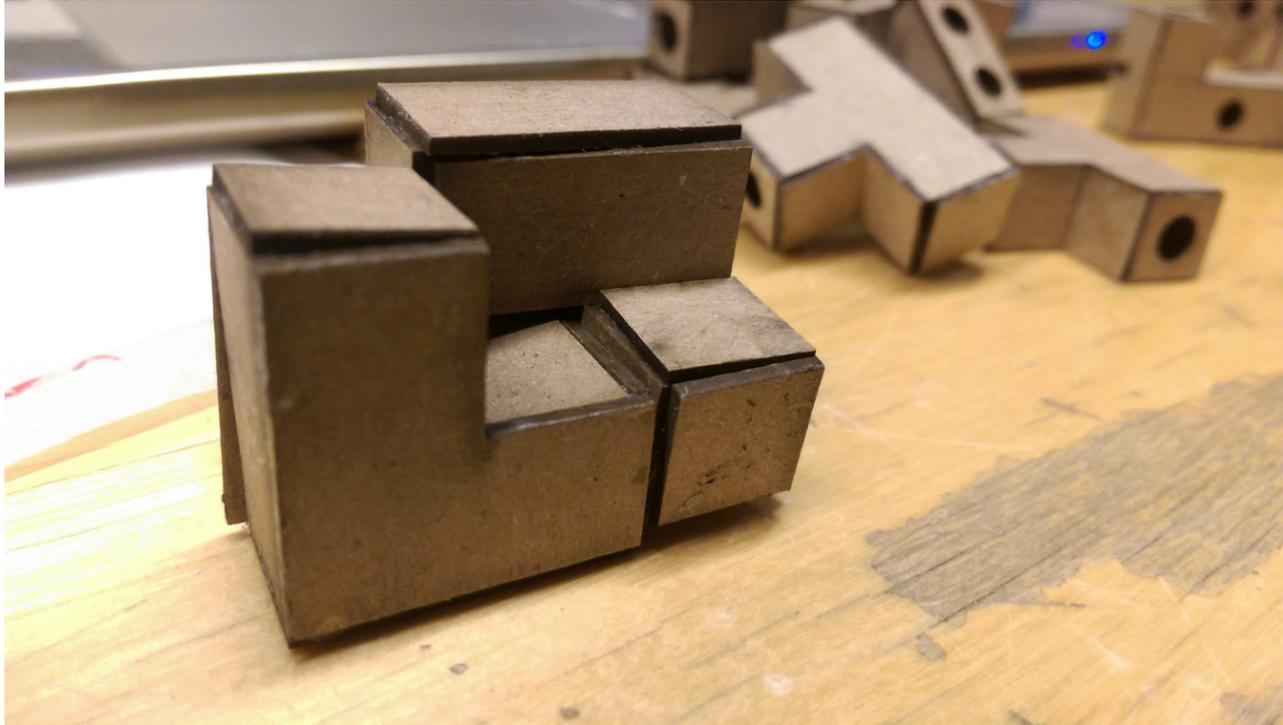


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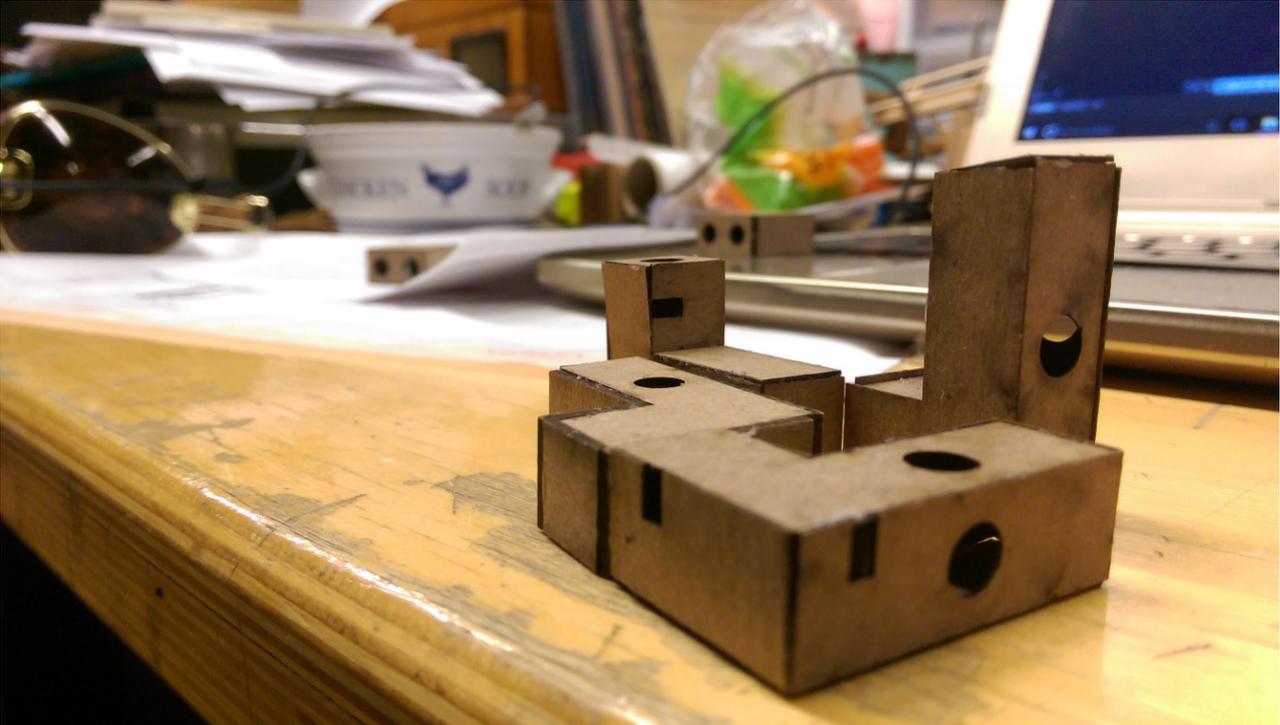


[Figure 132]

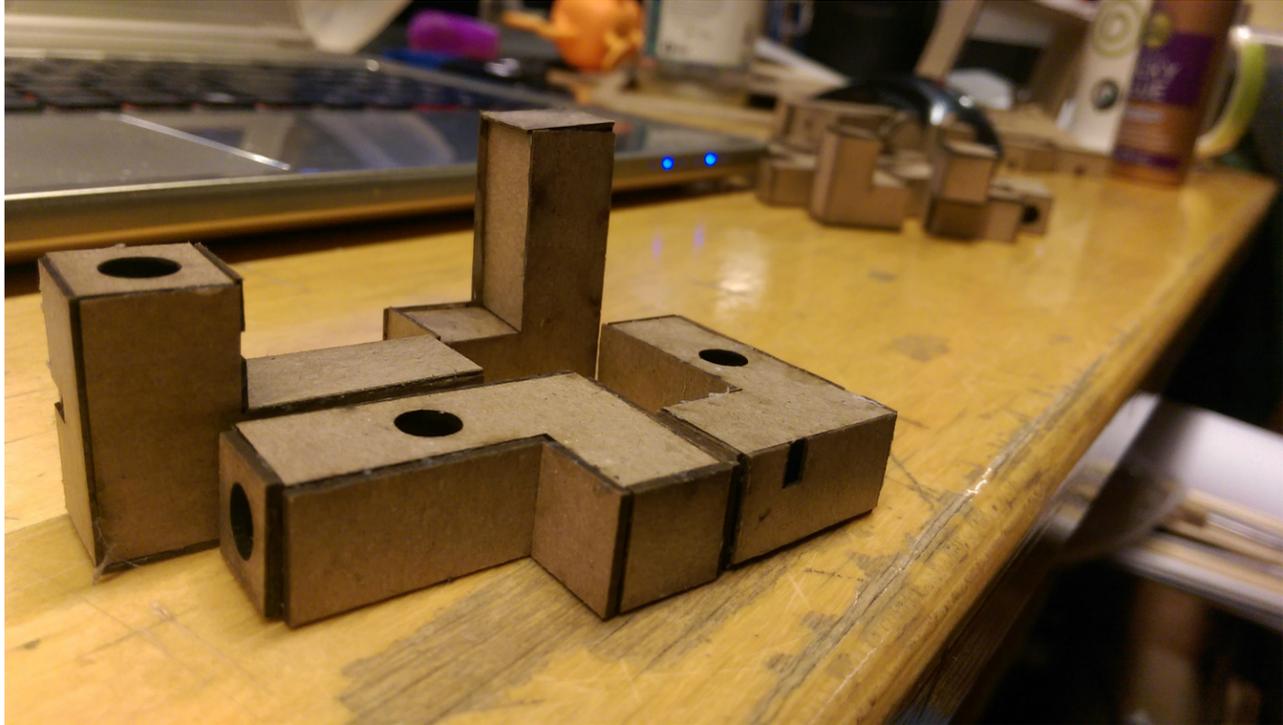
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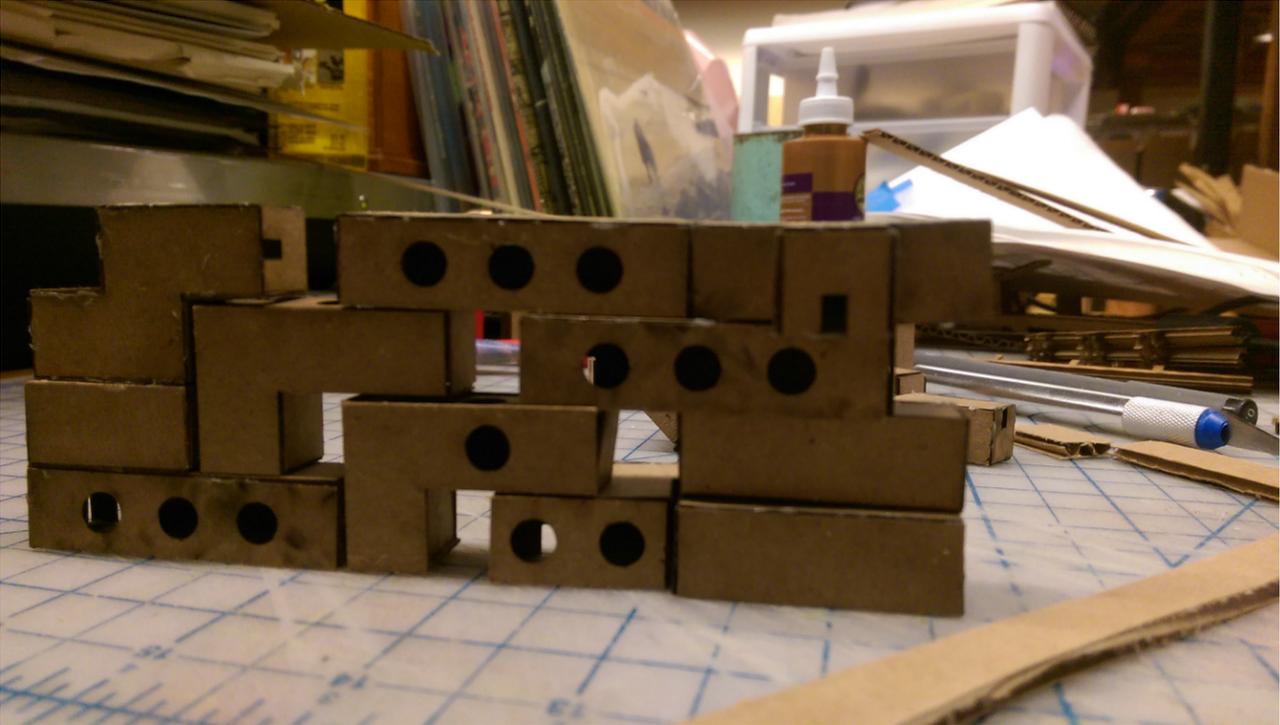
[Figure 133]



[Figure 135]

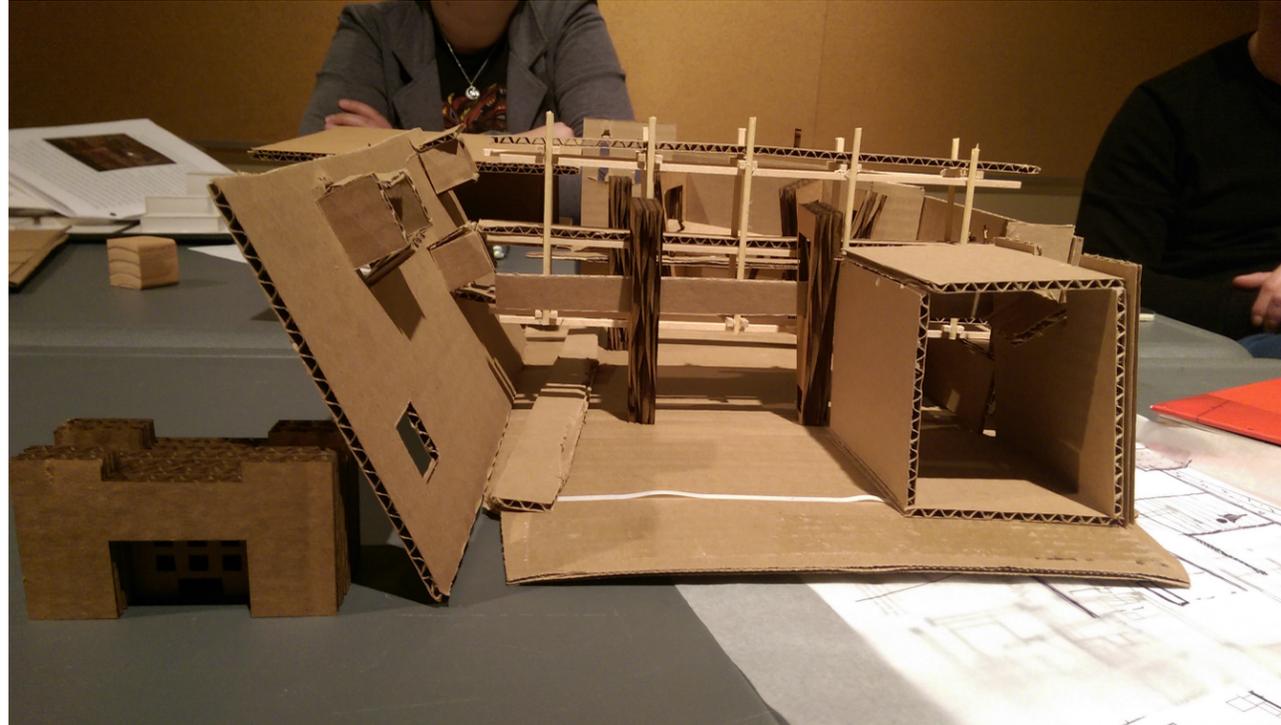


[Figure 134]

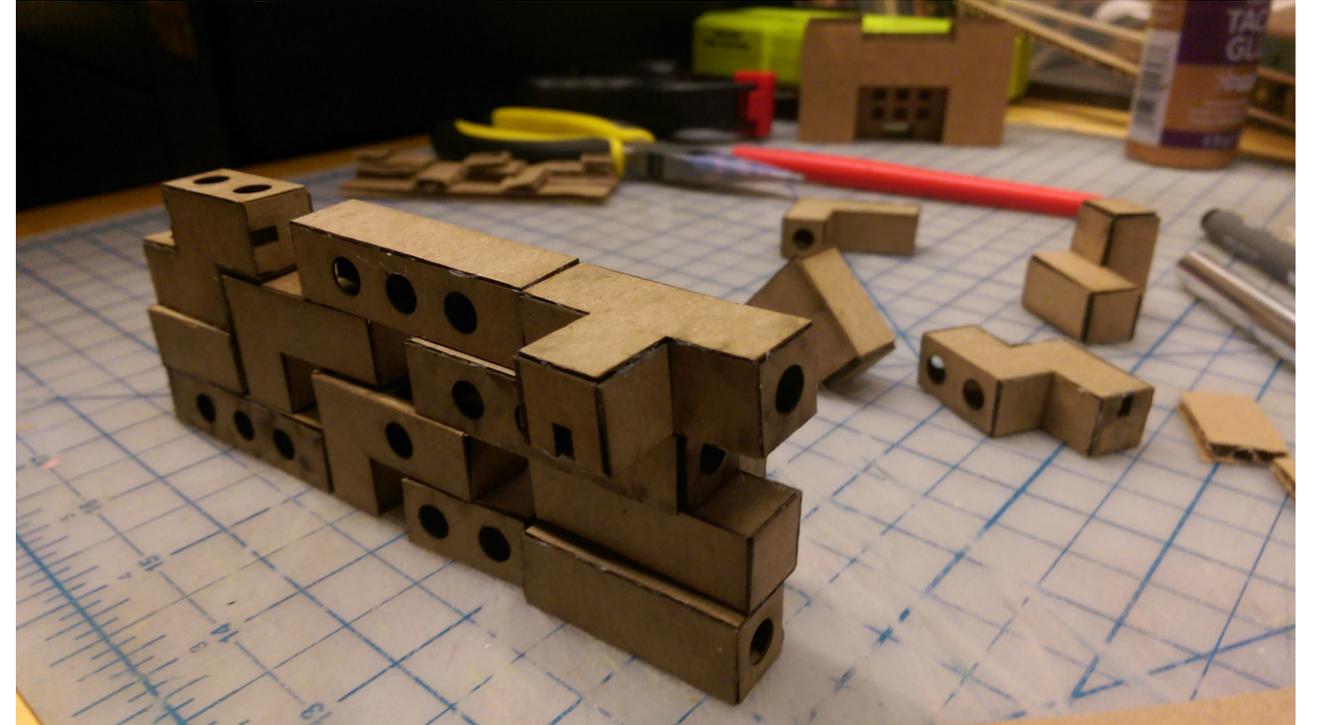


[Figure 136]

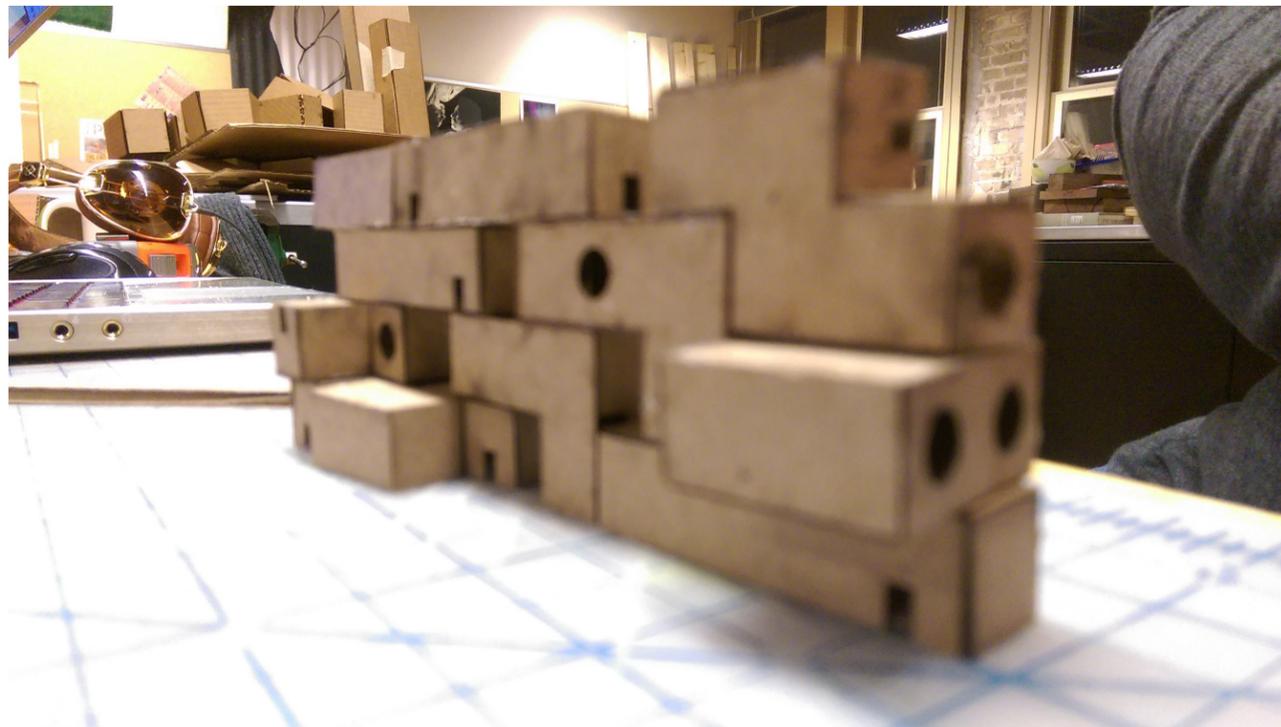
# DESIGN PROCESS



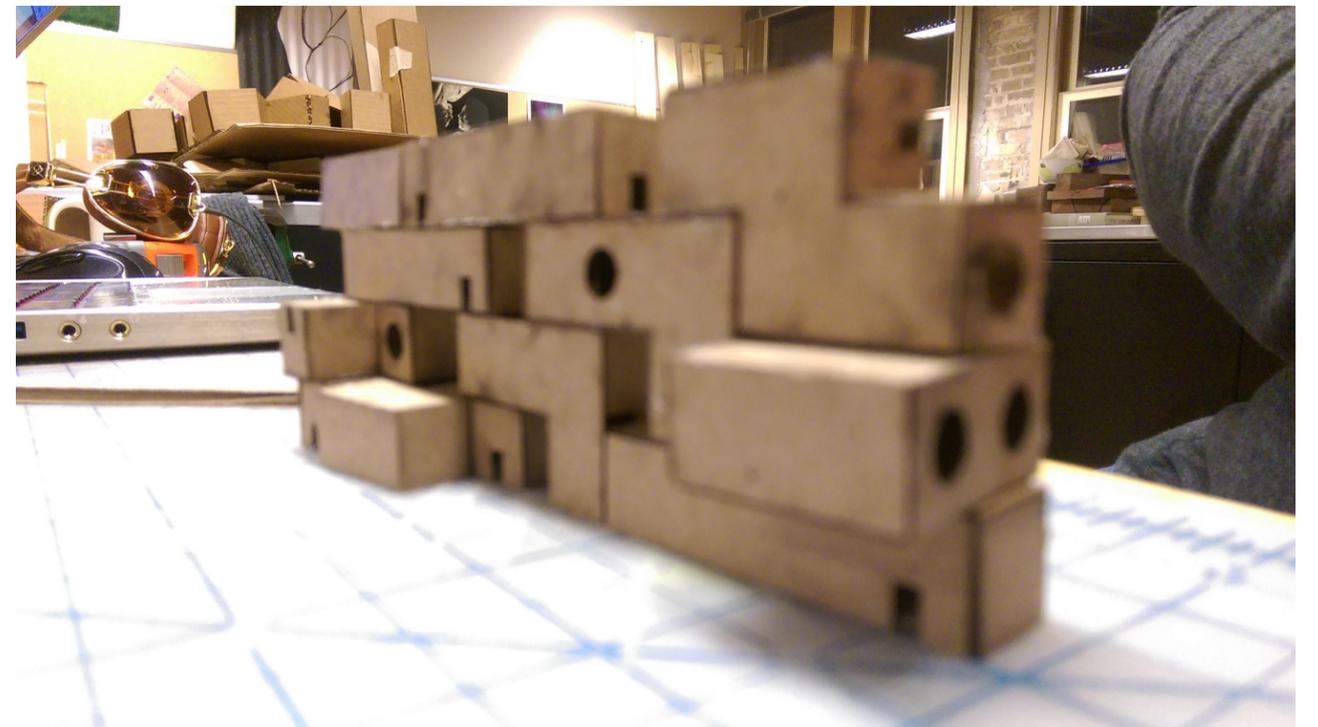
[Figure 137]



[Figure 139]

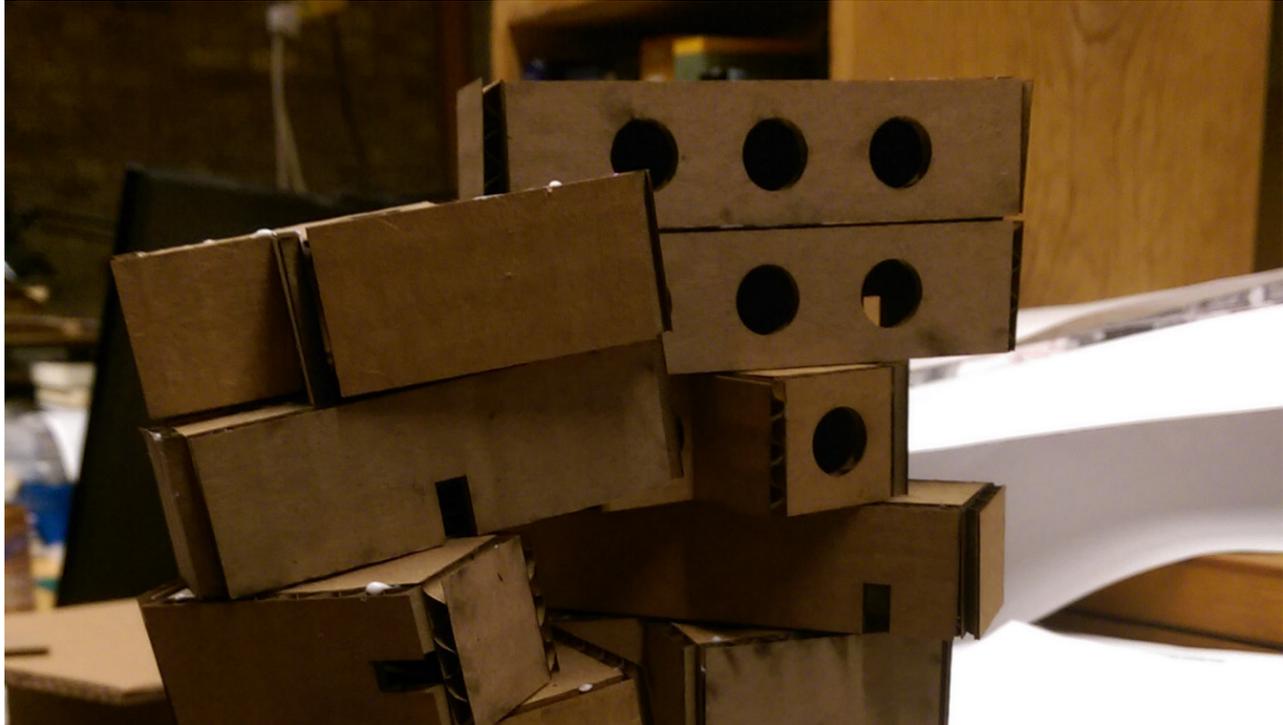


[Figure 138]

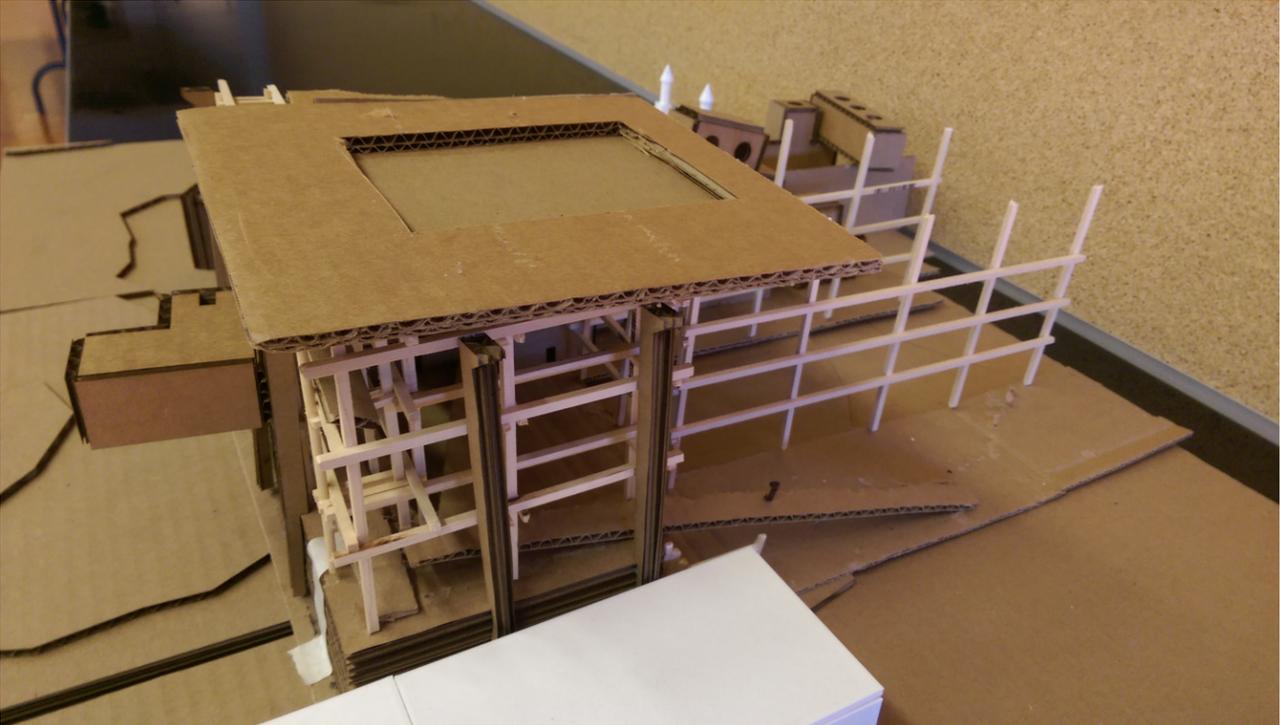


[Figure 140]

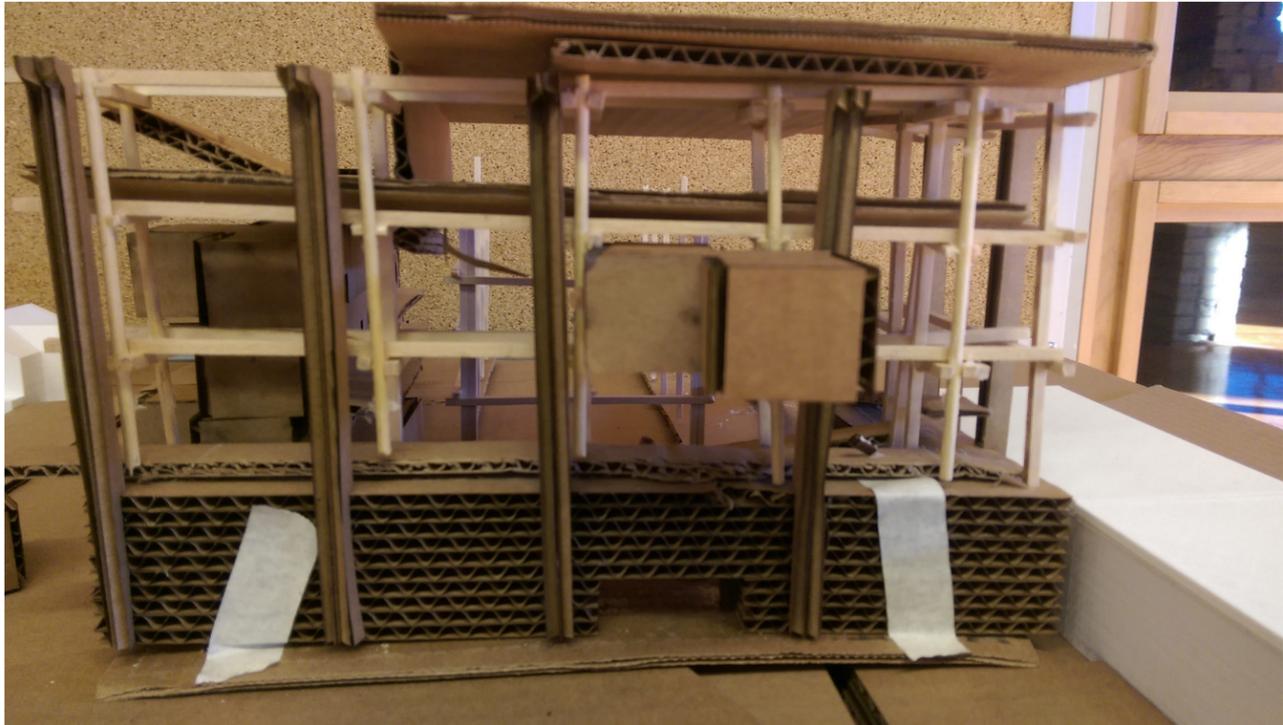
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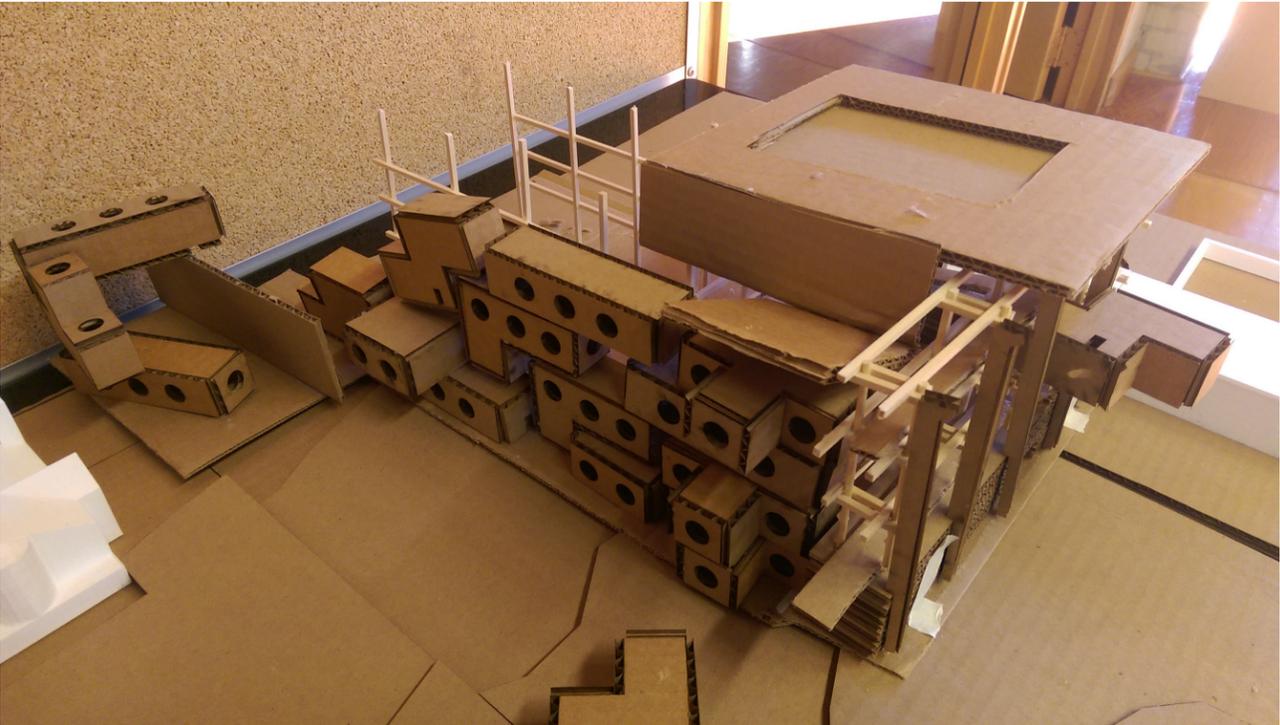
[Figure 141]



[Figure 143]

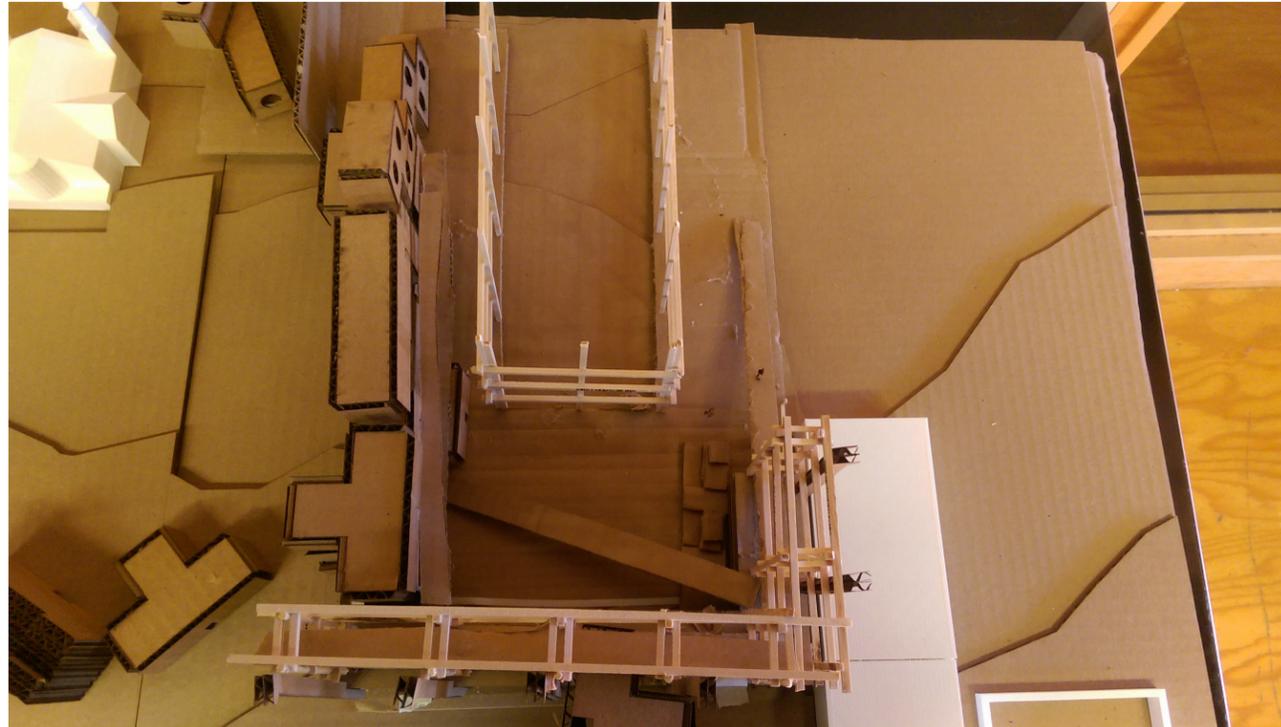


[Figure 142]



[Figure 144]

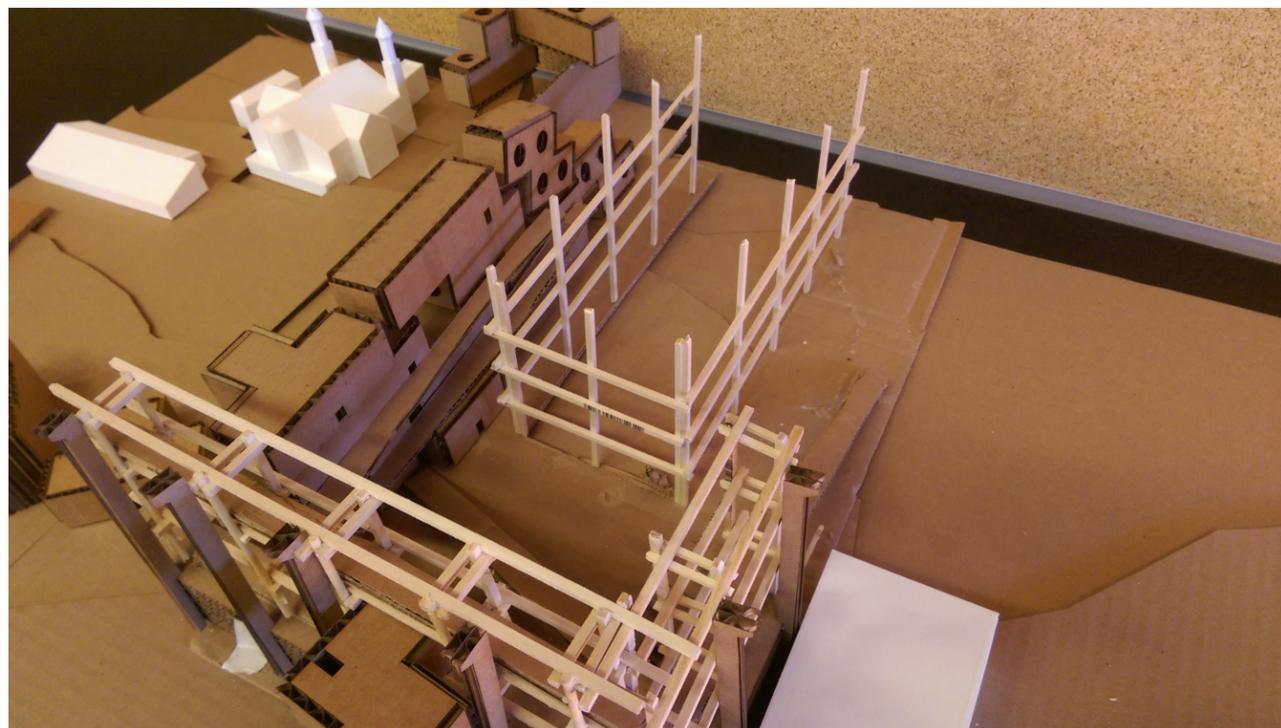
# DESIGN PROCESS



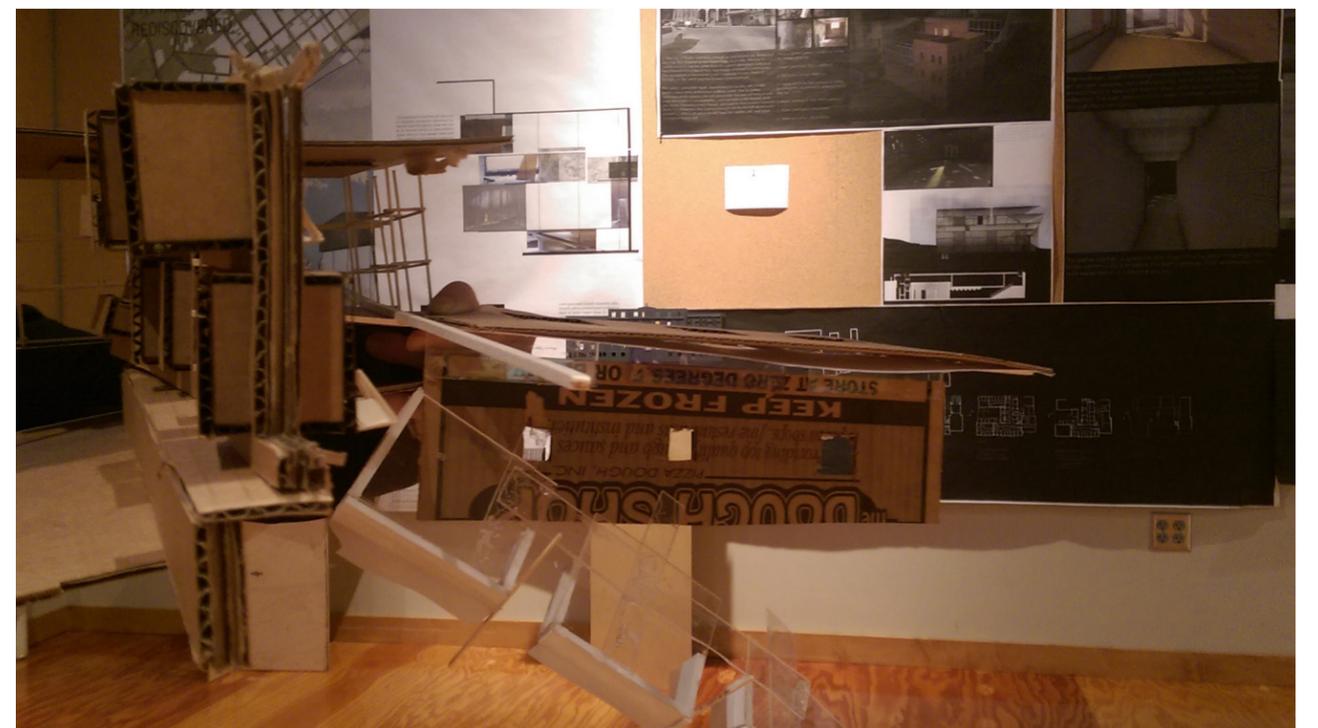
[Figure 145]



[Figure 147]



[Figure 146]



[Figure 148]

# FINAL DESIGN





[Figure 149]



[Figure 150]

# FINAL DESIGN

SCALE/SECTION

An ambitious project from the very beginning, and pushed even further by former St. Louis Mayor Joseph Darst, the scale of Pruitt Igoe was absolutely massive. 33 Buildings, each 11 stories high, and comprising a campus of 57 acres. The size of the development meant that it created a community of all its own, one so separate from the rest of the city that it compounded its own misfortunes. Additionally, the high rise form factor furthered the insularity from the rest of the community, and indeed, the city.

The design solution is scaled much differently, with only 5 stories and one building. Additionally, the scale of each room is considered on a more human level.



[Figure 151]

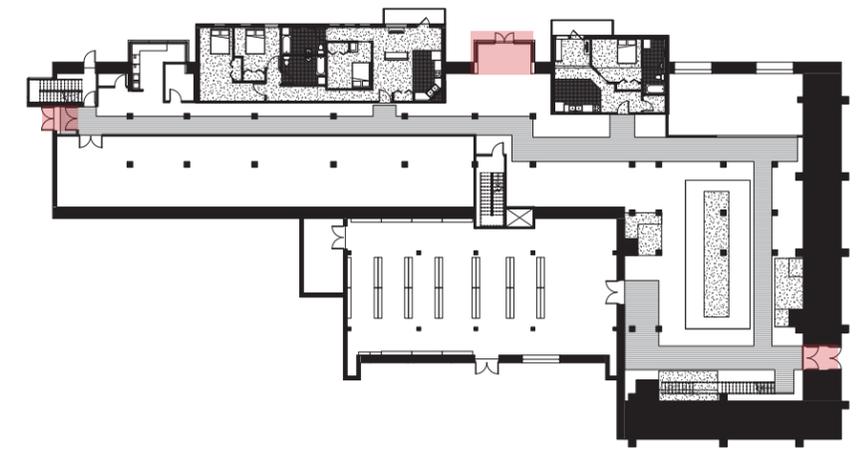


[Figure 152]

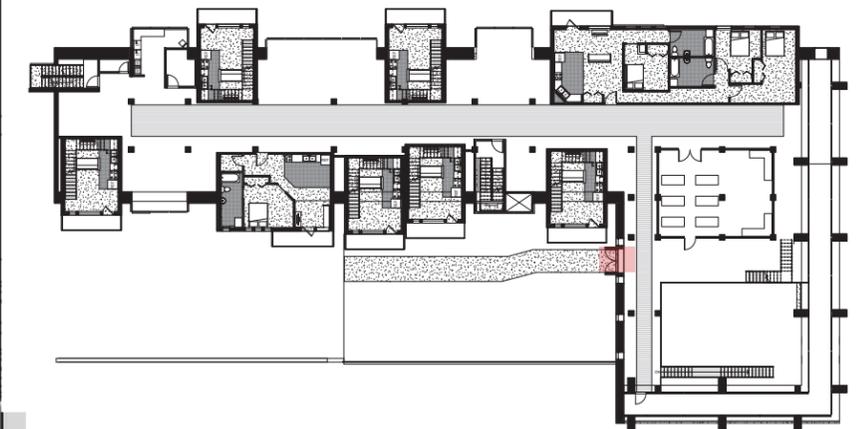
While the original public spaces were designed to be open, public galleries, they ended up being “gauntlets” that residents had to brave to get to their own homes. The solution to these infamous “gauntlets” lay in the site, and by literally taking the site and raising it up into the building, a new path was born that brought with it not only memory but also a better vantage point- the path stays outdoors up to the 2nd floor, and offers a view of the entire south side of the property. Additionally, other controlled entrances around the building provide options and ample visibility, increasing both the light brought into the building and the safety factor of circulation areas.



[Figure 153]



1F  
[Figure 154]

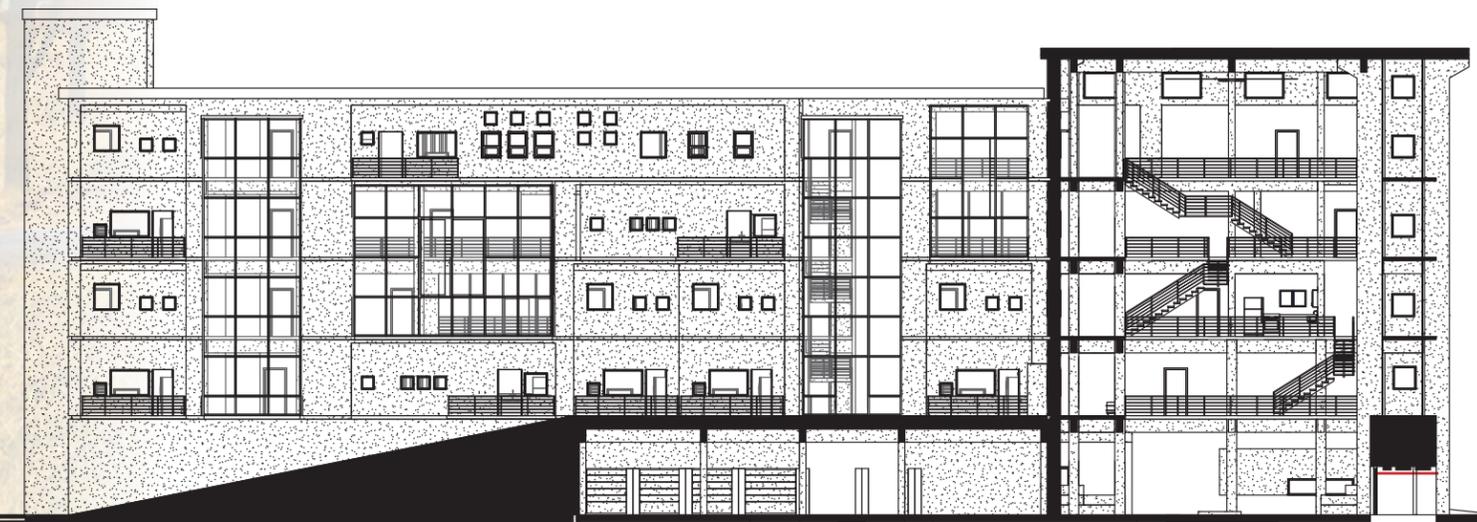


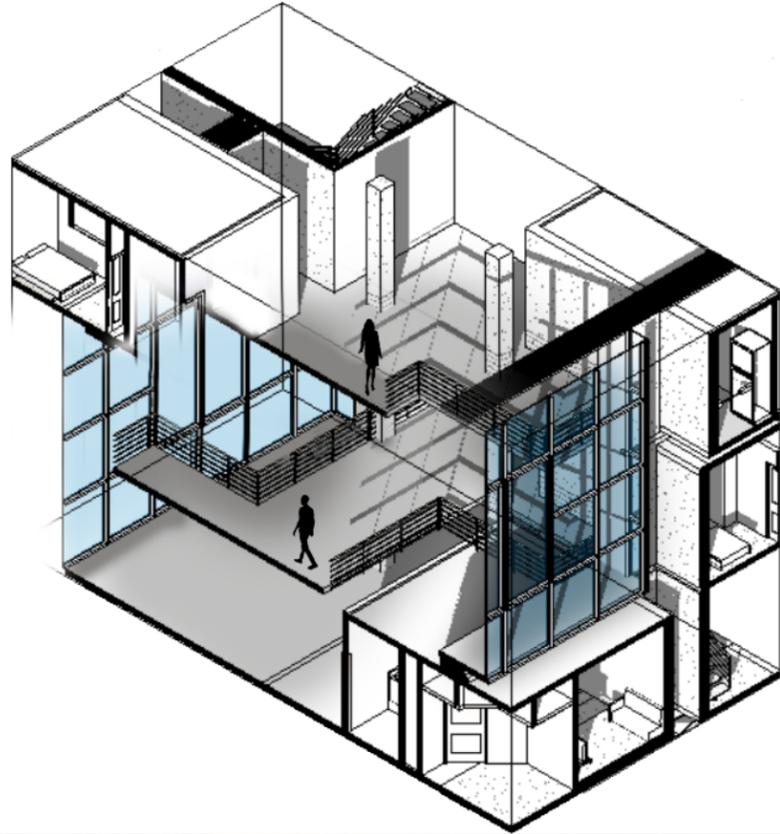
2F  
[Figure 155]



[Figure 156]

This section details the connection that the building has to the site through both the acquisition and "bringing up" of the site, as well as the proportional similarity between dwellings and monument. The monument lies on the site at junctions upon the former pathways of Pruitt Igoe, and reproduces pictorially the situations of its former inhabitants. The connection between past, present, site, and building manifest themselves in the relationship between these crucial pieces of the design.





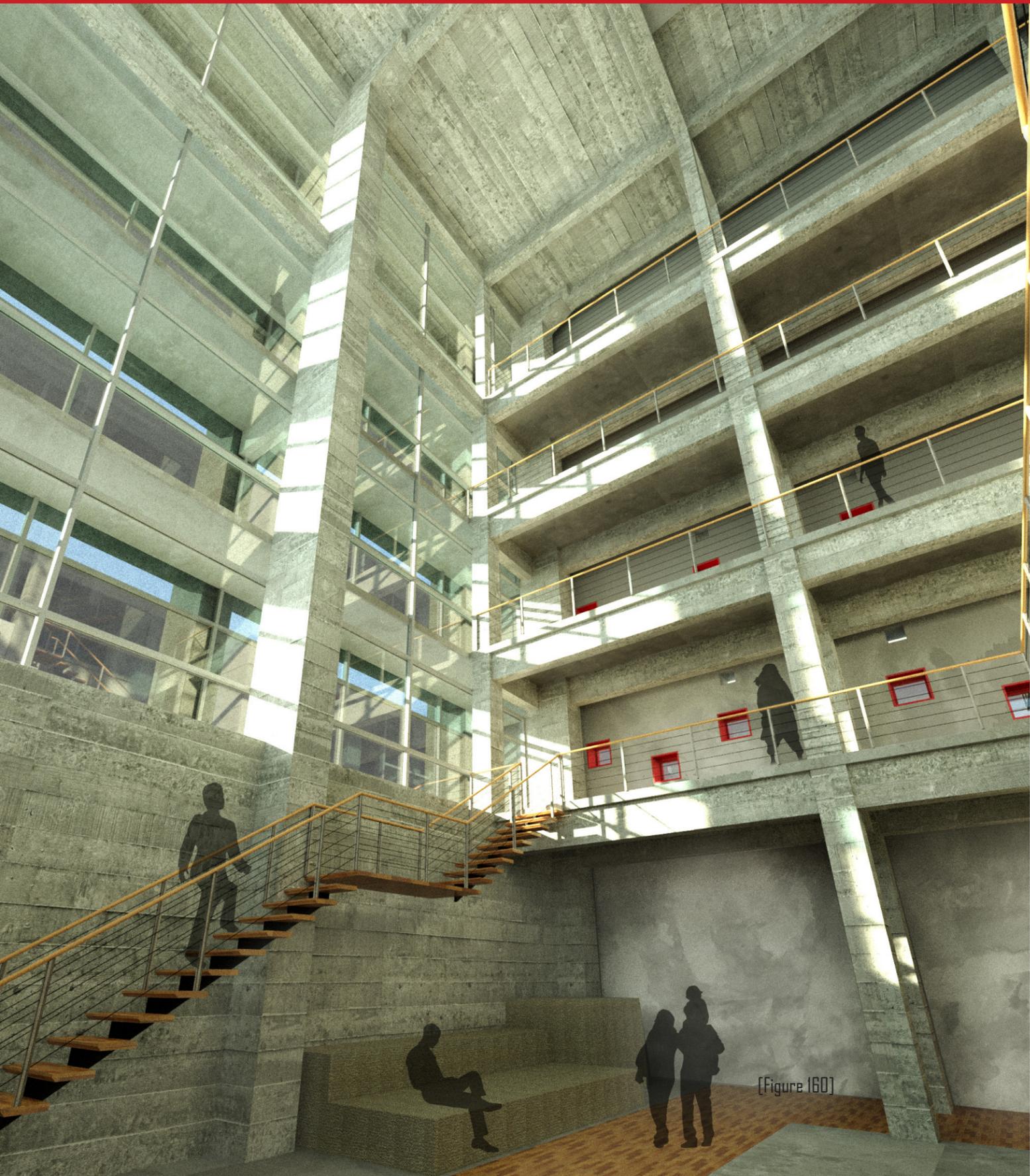
[Figure 157]



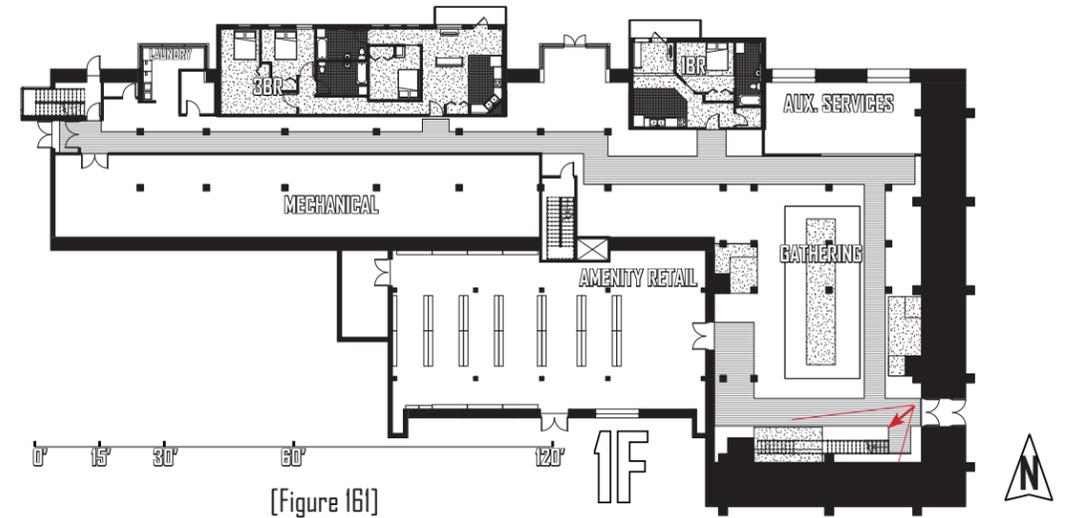
[Figure 158]



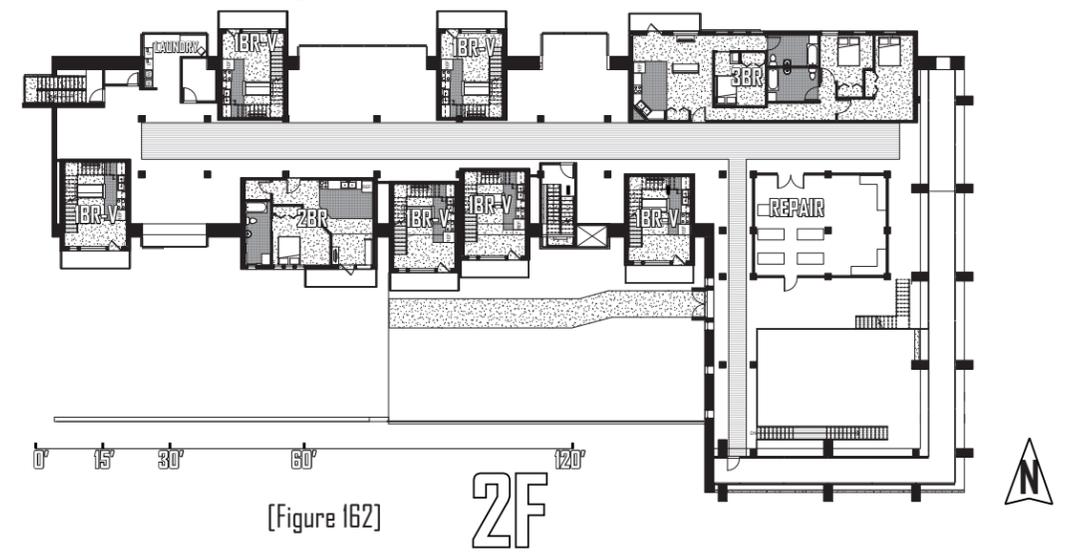
[Figure 159]



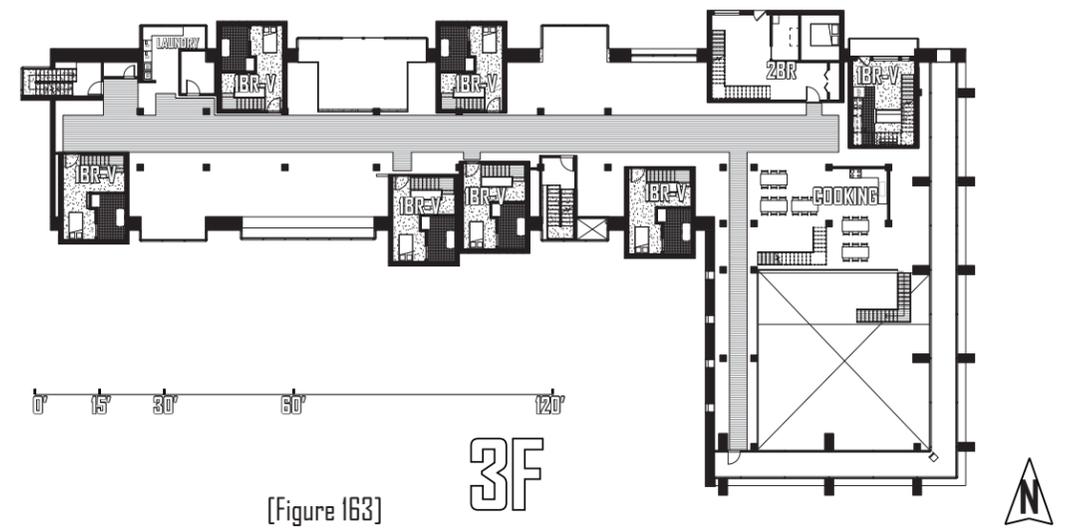
[Figure 160]



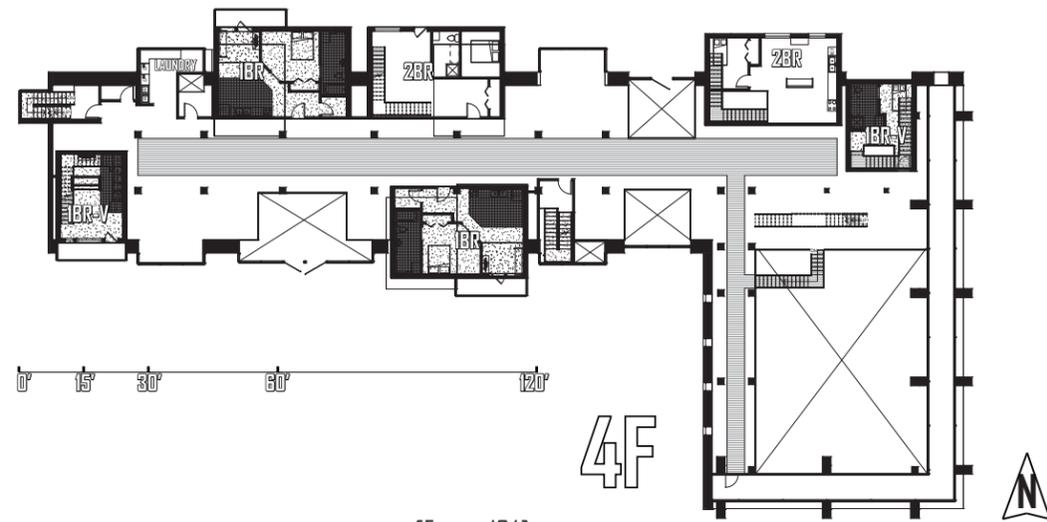
[Figure 161]



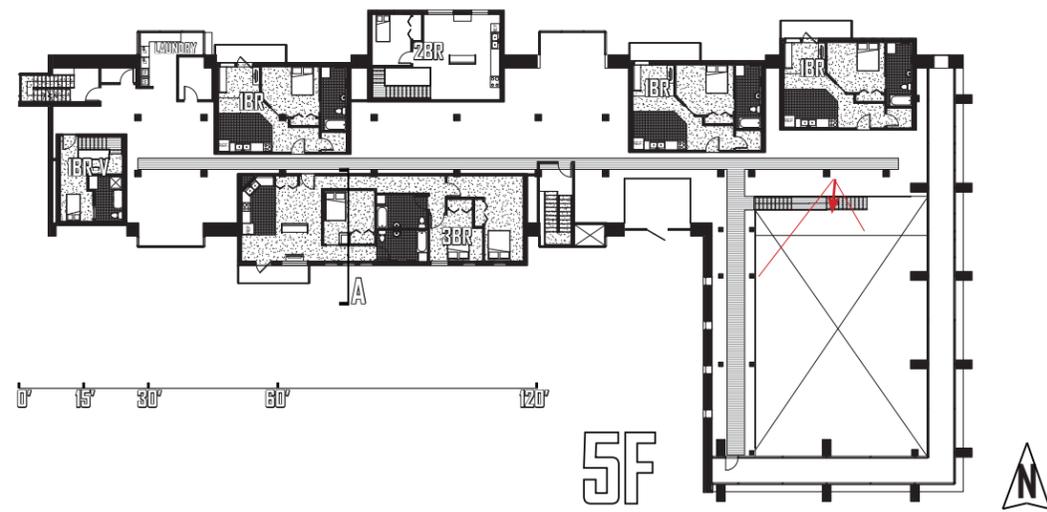
[Figure 162]



[Figure 163]



[Figure 164]

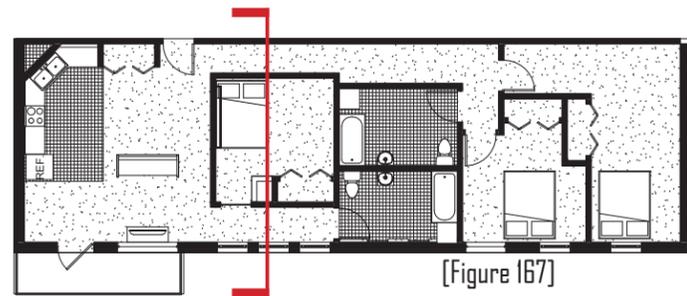


[Figure 165]

- Legend:
- 1BR = 1 Bedroom Apartment
  - 1BR-V = 1 Bedroom - Vertical (2-Story) Apartment
  - 2BR = 2 Bedroom Apartment
  - 3BR = 3 Bedroom Apartment



[Figure 166]

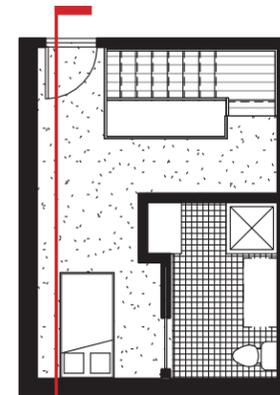


[Figure 167]

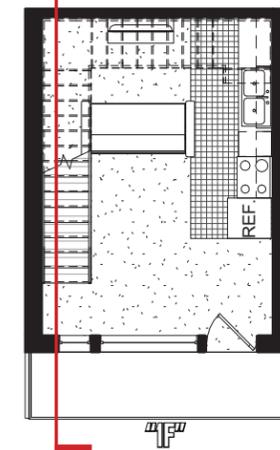


[Figure 168]

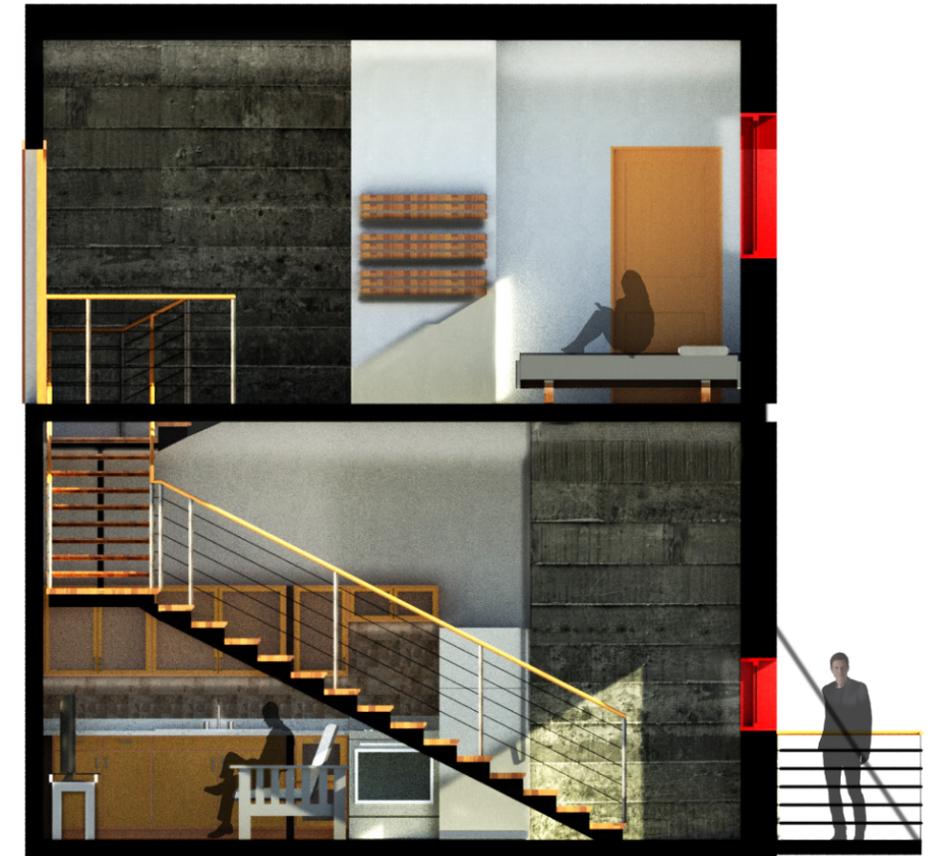
A focus has been placed spatially, as well as experientially in the occupant. Those who dwell here will encounter connections that link the unit, the act of dwelling, and the history of the site together in many experiences. Details such as the door handles, the forms, and the materiality provide a bridge between experiences.



[Figure 170]



[Figure 170]



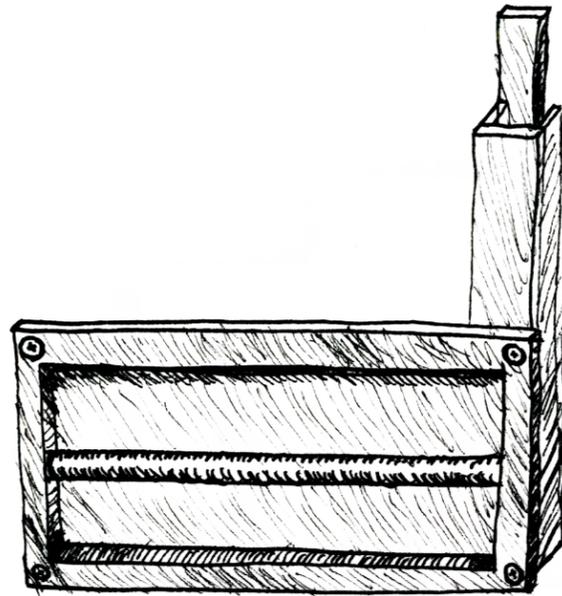
[Figure 171]



[Figure 169]



[Figure 172]

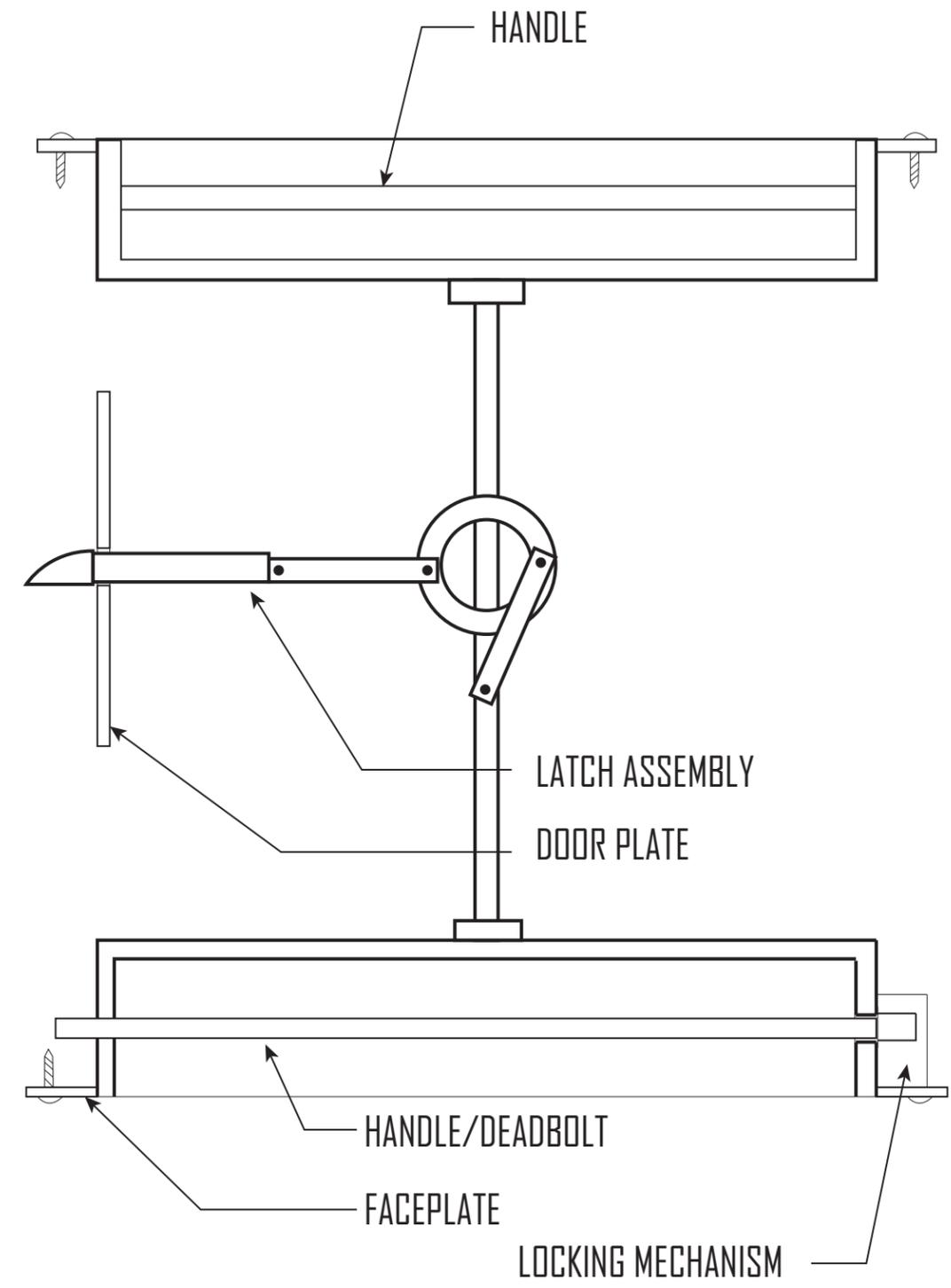


[Figure 173]

The door handle of the resident spaces were considered an essential part of every day dwelling. Interacting with the door handle requires a firm grip and a simple push or pull. This action lies in accord with the actions taken in the creation of the building, drawing from impressions within the metaphysical context of the site. In this way, residents participate in an action that regularly recalls the design and its history, as well as the connection to the surrounding site.



[Figure 174]



[Figure 175]

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## 2nd Year

- Fall 2013 - Joan Vorderbruggen  
-Tea House Project
- Spring 2014 - Cindy Urness  
-Dance Studio  
-Bird House  
-Small Dwelling

## 3rd Year

- Fall 2014 - Paul Gleye  
-Fargo Visitors Center  
-Downtown Mixed-Use Student Center
- Spring 2015 - Bakr Aly Ahmed  
-Steel Library  
-Concrete Laboratory

## 4th Year

- Fall 2015 - David Crutchfield  
-High Rise (Undergrad Capstone)
- Spring 2016 - Paul Gleye  
-Urban Redevelopment Design (Study Abroad)

## 5th Year

- Fall 2016 - Stephen Wischer  
-Thesis Contextualization



[Figure 176]

Robert Darling  
218.770.6064  
rob.g.darling@gmail.com  
Fergus Falls, MN

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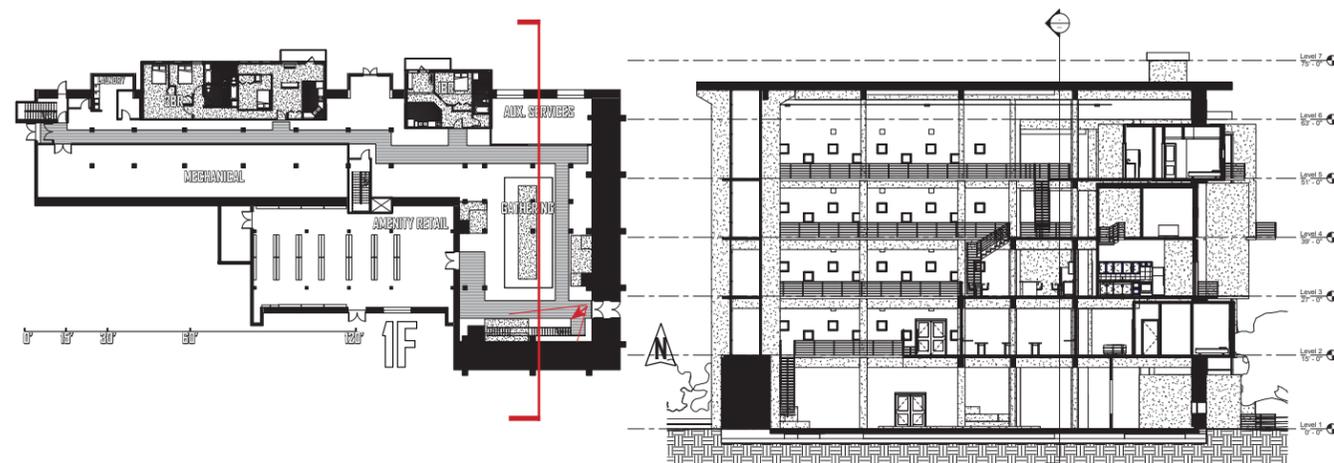
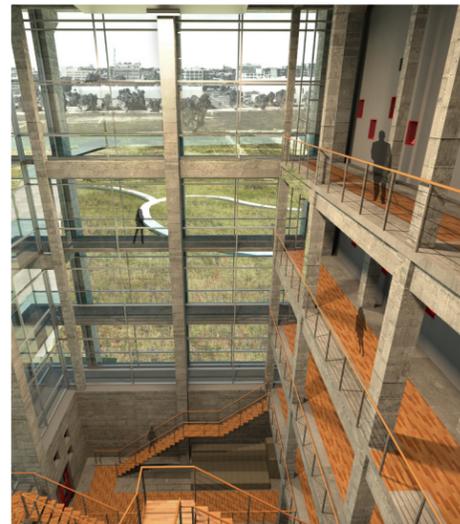
Architecture is our lived environment. We build it. We dwell in it. Good design is both the most ethical and sustainable things we can do as architects.

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NAAB Criteria

A.1 Professional Communication Skills - Ability

This thesis communicates its intent on levels approachable to both a layman and an experienced professional. Through numerous renderings and rendered sections, the experience of the building is communicated through perceived space and materiality. As a matter of constructability, the building is shown in a number of plans and sections with sufficient detail as to glean the mechanical and structural systems from the drawings.



A.6 Use of Precedents - Ability

This thesis revolves almost entirely around precedent and historical research. This thesis project examines the relationships that past and present, dwelling, and cultural memory have with the architecture of social housing. These relationships are studied within the broad context of Soviet and Western social housing, and specifically in relationship to the failure of Pruitt Igoe, a defunct project from the 1950's that was located in St. Louis. In an effort to succeed where it failed, the project is located on the same scarred plot of land.

Calling upon the history of the site and its precedents, the project places major emphases on public space and dwelling, with a focus on dwelling as an active participation between inhabitant and environment. Public space is managed in a way that is sensitive to the history of the site, cognizant of its failures and building on successful and meaningful strategies that integrate engaging public space into the project as a whole. Through this, the public housing design encompasses lessons both practical and poetic.

Ultimately, the project synthesizes collective memory, ruin, and knowledge of dwelling to create an experience rooted in the history embedded in the site.

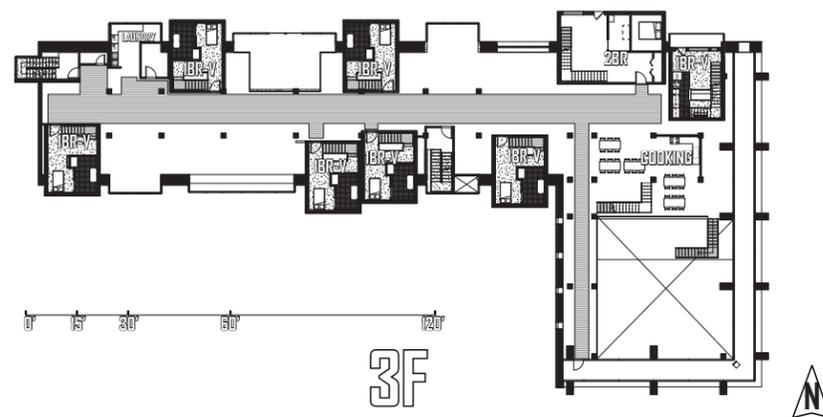
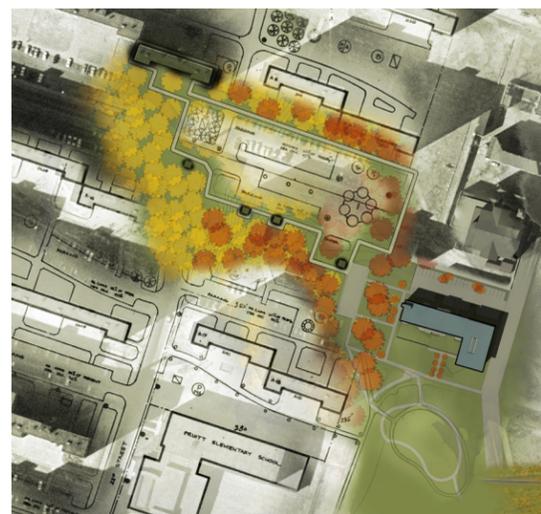


## B.1 Pre-Design - Ability

The programing, the result of the culmination of research, as well as discovery through the artefact, promises to deliver an experience to the occupant that has learned the lessons from the tragedy of Pruitt Igoe. With an emphasis on safety, quality of life, and a connection to the past, occupants can expect an experience within this social housing endeavor that delivers on the expectation of human dignity for every inhabitant.

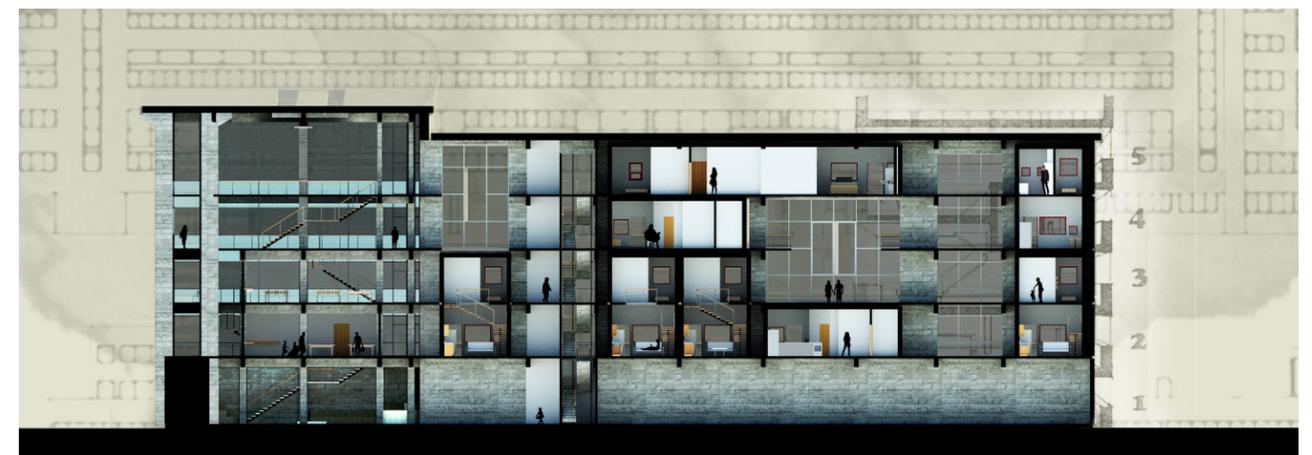
[See also: Code Analysis & Site Analysis segments]

- PRIVATE**
- 21 Individual Dwellings
- 28 Bedrooms
- 4 Dwelling Variations
  
- PUBLIC**
- Gathering Spaces
- Community Kitchen
- Repair Shop
- Breezeways
- Laundry Facilities



## C.2 Integrated Evaluations & Decision-Making Design Process - Ability

The benefit of this project extends beyond its hypothetical constructed presence: the fact that it could be made points to the possibility of investing in quality design for the economically disenfranchised population as a whole. Through the investigation of social housing, its precedents, and its possible implementation in St. Louis, a quality design that considers all aspects; site, history, sensitivity to dwelling etc., will succeed not only due to its orientation, materiality, and financial sustainability, but also because it means that this typology can be done better, like this, in the future.



**SVETLOE BUDUSHCHEE**