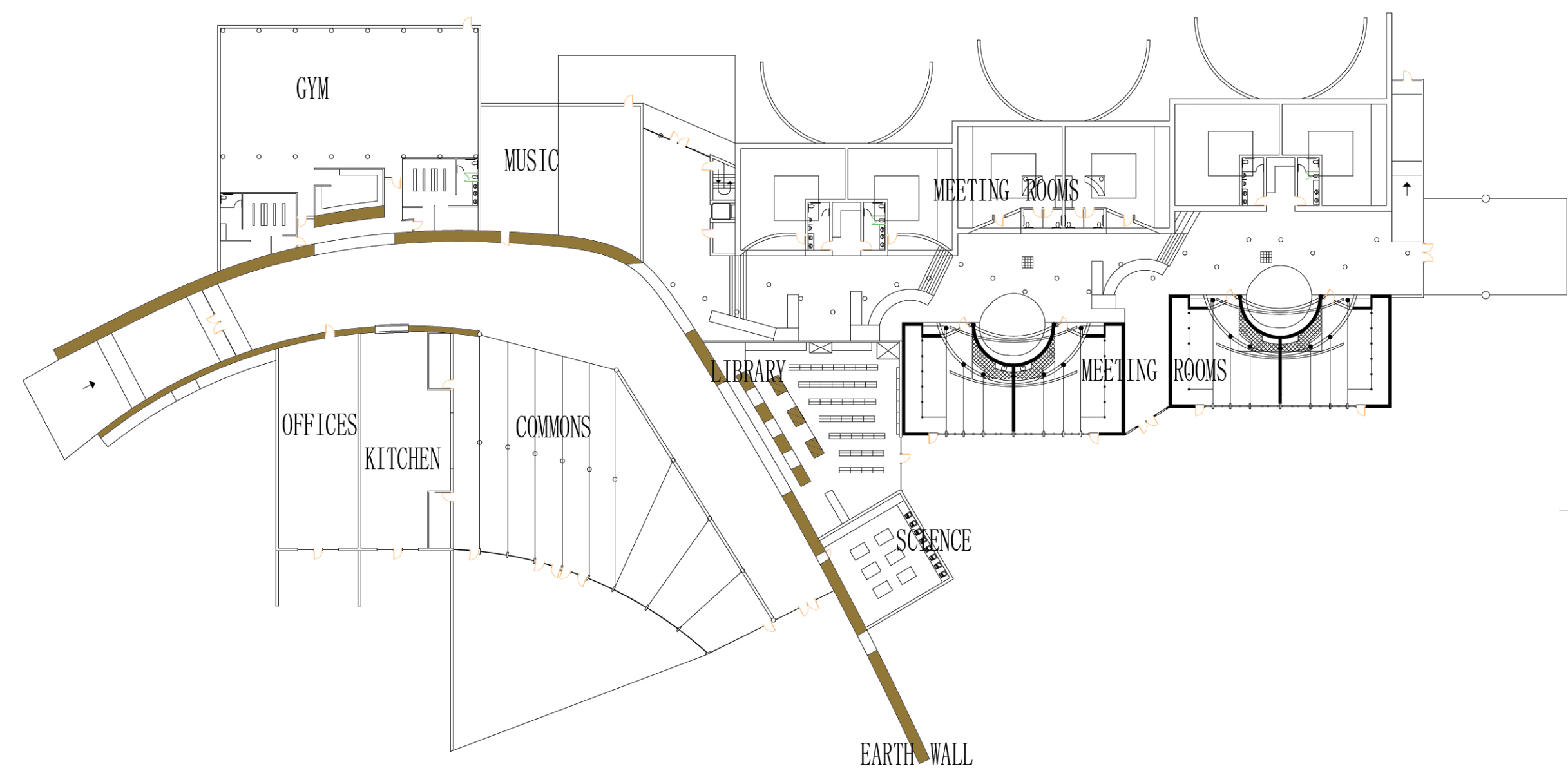


ABSORBANT MINDS, ABSORBANT LEARNING

MONTESSORI SCHOOL, SHAKOPEE MINNESOTA

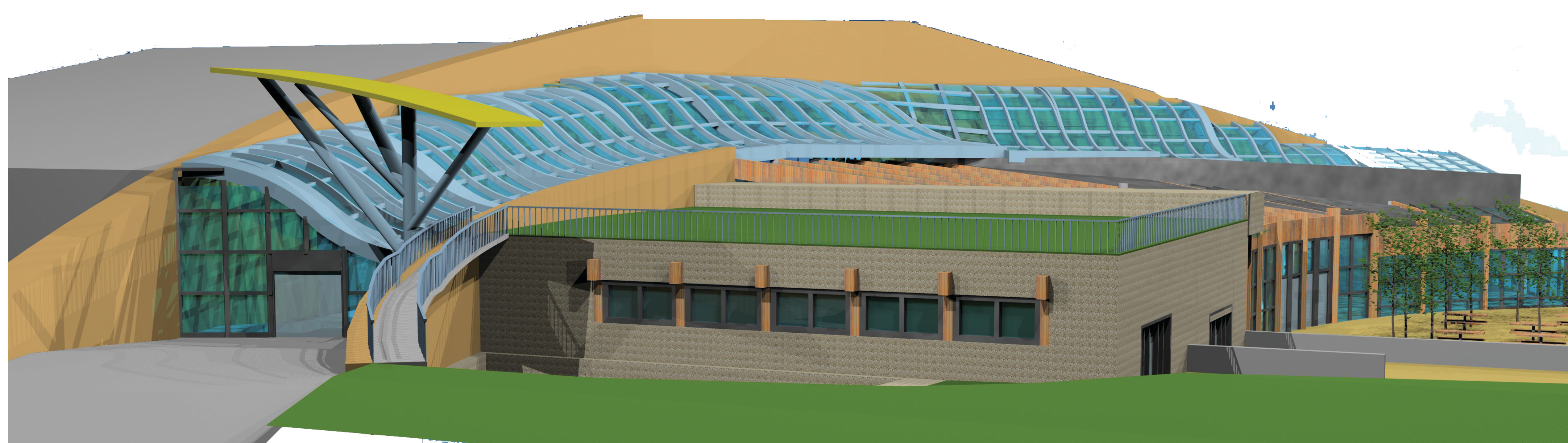
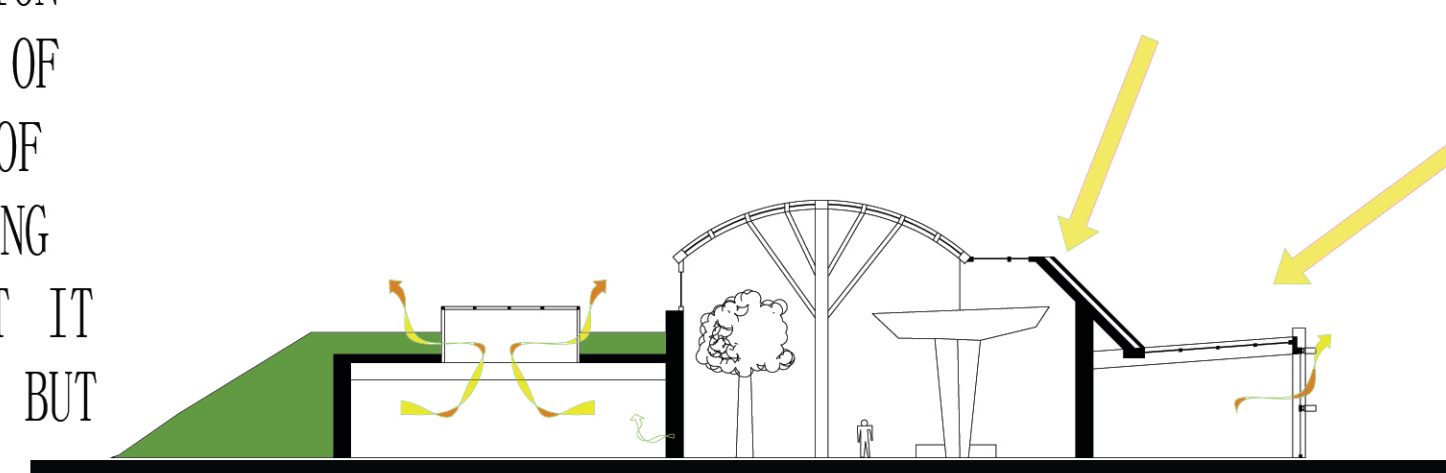
THE MONTESSORI METHOD IS A METHODOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY DEVELOPED BY DR. MARIA MONTESSORI. IT IS A WAY OF THINKING ABOUT WHO CHILDREN ARE. THE PHILOSOPHY STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUALITY IN THE CHILDREN. THE CHILD IS FREE TO UNDERGO A LEARNING EXPERIENCE, USUALLY THROUGH PLAY, TRIAL AND ERROR AND THROUGH DISCOVERY. THE STUDENTS ARE FREE TO SUCCEED WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS AND CRITICISM. THE CHILD CONTROLS THE PACE, TOPIC AND REPETITION OF LESSONS THEREFORE CREATING A JOY OF LEARNING. THE STUDENTS BEGIN TO LEARN SELF-RELIANCE AND THE POWER OF THEIR OWN INDEPENDENCY.

“I HAVE STUDIED THE CHILD. I HAVE TAKEN WHAT THE CHILD HAS GIVEN ME AND EXPRESSED IT AND THAT IS WHAT IS CALLED THE MONTESSORI METHOD.”
DR. MARIA MONTESSORI



IN THE MONTESSORI METHOD, THE CHILD LEARNS FROM HIS OR HER OWN SURROUNDINGS, THEIR ENVIRONMENT. THE TEACHER IS MERELY A GUIDE FOR THIS INTERACTION; THEREFORE THE STUDENTS HAVE THE FREEDOM TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES INDEPENDENTLY WITH THE ENVIRONMENT, AND IN DOING SO GAINS FURTHER KNOWLEDGE, AND A JOY FOR LEARNING. THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT THAT HOUSES THIS INTERACTION MUST PROMOTE THE LEARNING FROM AND RESPECT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. IT MUST ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT ACTIONS AND INTERACTIONS OF THE USERS. THROUGH THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD, THE STUDENTS ARE FURTHER ENCOURAGED TO INTERACT AND LEARN INDEPENDENTLY FROM THEIR SURROUNDINGS. THEREFORE, THE PROJECT MUST ENCLOSE THESE ACTIVITIES AND ALSO BE A SOURCE OF INFORMATION ITSELF.

THE IDEA THAT LEADS THIS PROJECT WAS THE METAPHOR FOR ABSORBENT LEARNING. THE TERM “ABSORBENT LEARNING” REFERS TO THE DUAL INTERACTION OF MAN (IN THIS CASE THE STUDENTS) WITH HIS ENVIRONMENT, AND ALL THE KNOWLEDGE GAINED FROM THIS. IT IS BEING ENGULFED IN THE ACTIVITY OF LEARNING AND INTERMINGLING BUILT ENVIRONMENT WITH THE NATURAL. THEREFORE THE DESIGN ABSORBS ITSELF INTO THE SITE. IT PULLS ITSELF OUT OF THE GROUND BRINGING WITH IT THE ORGANIC, THE EARTH WALL, PLANTS AND WATER. THE USERS ARE ALSO ENGULFED IN TO THE DESIGN BY IT RESPECTING THEIR INDEPENDENCE, THEIR THRUST FOR DISCOVERY, THRUST FOR KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITY TO INTERACT. RESPECTING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FOR WHAT IT HAS TO OFFER CAUSES US TO RESPOND BACK IN A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE WAY. THIS SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE, THE ENVIRONMENT, MUST BE PRESERVED, BUT WE AS HUMANS HAVE BEEN ABUSING IT. THIS BUILDING IS NOT ONLY SUSTAINABLE, IT TEACHES SUSTAINABILITY. TEACHING THIS IS THE SAME AS LEARNING ABOUT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BECAUSE KNOWING ALL THAT WE CAN ABOUT OUR SURROUNDINGS CAUSE US TO INTERACT WITH IT IN A HEALTHY WAY. THE DESIGN THEREFORE ALLOWS THE STUDENTS TO INTERACT WITH ITS SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES, AND IT ALSO STANDS AS A SYMBOL FOR WHAT AND HOW THINGS CAN BE DONE. SHOWING AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT CAN BE DONE ALLOWS PEOPLE TO FIND NEW WAYS OF HOW TO DO IT.

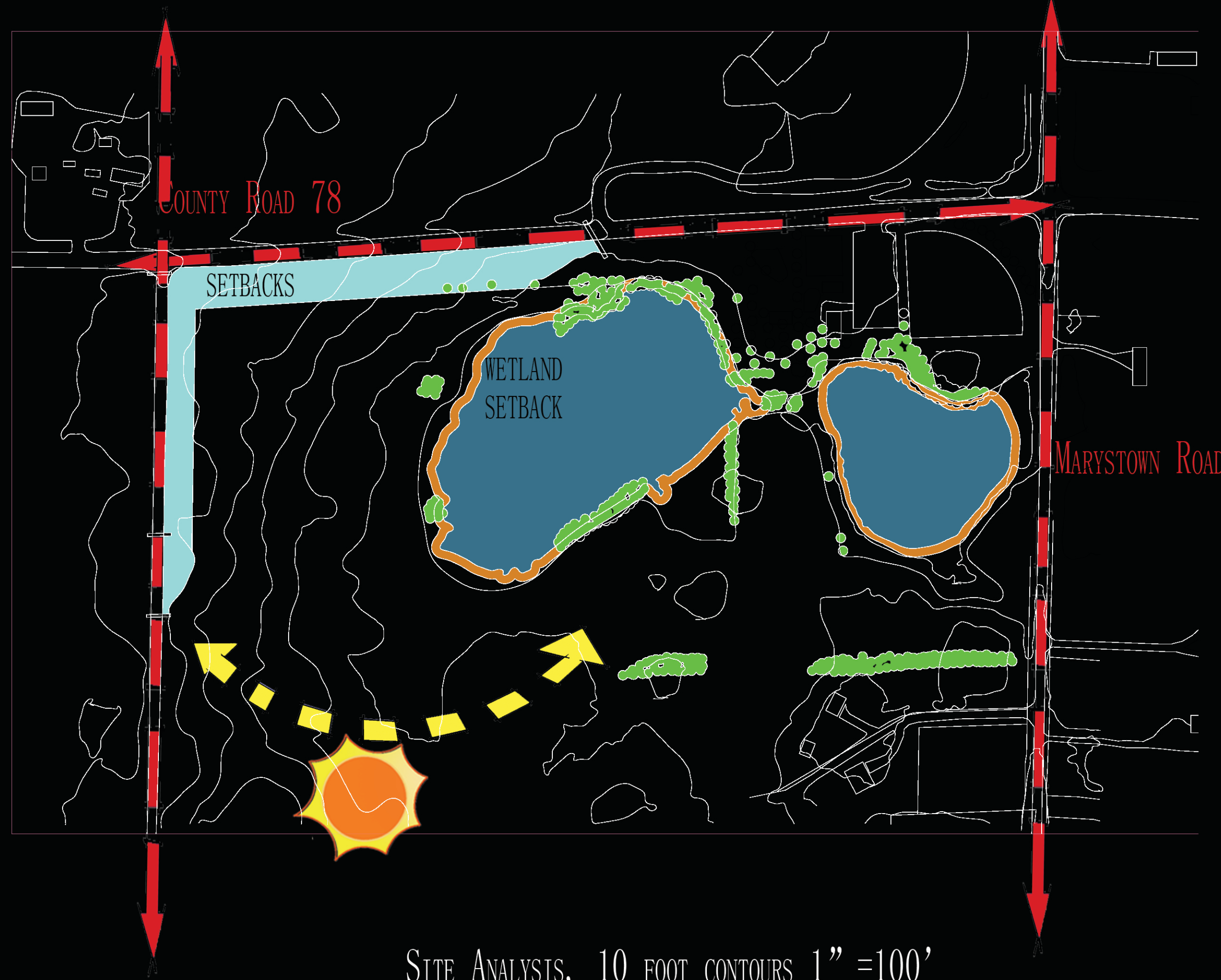
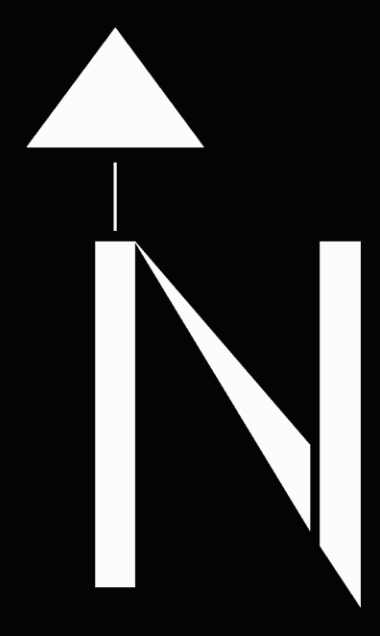


THE MEETING SPACES SET ALONG THE ORGANIC AND STRUCTURAL TREE CORRIDOR ARE VERY DIFFERENT DUE TO THEIR CARTESIAN POSITION, ONE SIDE FACING SOUTH THE OTHER NORTH. THE MAIN DIFFERENCE IS THE ACCESS TO THE SUN. SINCE FACING SOUTH ALLOWS FOR THE GREATEST ACCESS, THESE MEETING SPACES EXPLOIT THE SUN. THE SUN DOES FOUR THINGS FOR US, DIRECT HEAT, DIRECT LIGHT, MORE DAYLIGHTING AND ELECTRICAL POWER. THEREFORE TO BE TRUE SOUTH FACING ROOMS, THE SPACES MUST APPEAL TO ALL FOUR. THE NORTH SIDE DOES NOT HAVE SUCH OPTIONS, HOWEVER BEING A SPACE FOR HUMANS IT NEEDS DAYLIGHTING (ESPECIALLY FOR GROWING CHILDREN). ELECTRICAL POWER IS NOT OBTAINABLE. AS FOR HEAT, THE SPACES WILL STILL NEED TO RELY ON THEIR SOUTHERN MOST WALLS TO CAPTURE HEAT AND RADIATE IT INTO THEIR SPACE. BEING THAT DIRECT HEAT GAIN IS DIFFICULT; THE NORTH CLASSROOMS ARE HEAVILY INSULATED BY EARTH. THE PURPOSE IS TO SHOW THE USERS WHAT IT MEANS TO BUILD ON THE NORTH SIDE VERSUS THE SOUTH SIDE.

THE ROOMS ARE CALLED MEETING SPACES AS TO NOT GET TRAPPED INTO THE PRECONCEPTION OF THE TERM ‘CLASSROOM’. BY CALLING THE ROOMS MEETING SPACES, THE TIME SPENT INSIDE SEEMS TO BE MORE TEMPORARY, MEANING EQUALLY IMPORTANT TIME IS SPENT ELSEWHERE. THESE ‘ELSEWHERE’ SPACES ARE THE SPACES THAT THE STUDENTS CAN GO TO INDEPENDENTLY (AS ENCOURAGED THROUGH THE MONTESSORI METHOD) AND CREATE THEIR OWN TEMPORARY MEETING SPACE. THIS IS SHOWN THROUGH THE UNIQUE CORRIDOR SPACE, PLACES FOR DISCOVERY; AS IN THE OVER ALL LAYOUT OF THE DESIGN, PLACES FOR OBSERVATION; THE LEVEL CHANGES AND PIER, AND TO THE IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO THE EXTERIOR. THE CORRIDORS ARE FULL OF DIFFERENT SHAPED RAMPS, CORNERS, FOUNTAINS, PLANTS, THE DEPRESSED BLOCKS ALL WITH THE INTENTION OF ALLOWING THE CHILDREN TO DISCOVER AND CREATE THEIR NEW MEETING SPACE.



JASON PICKA



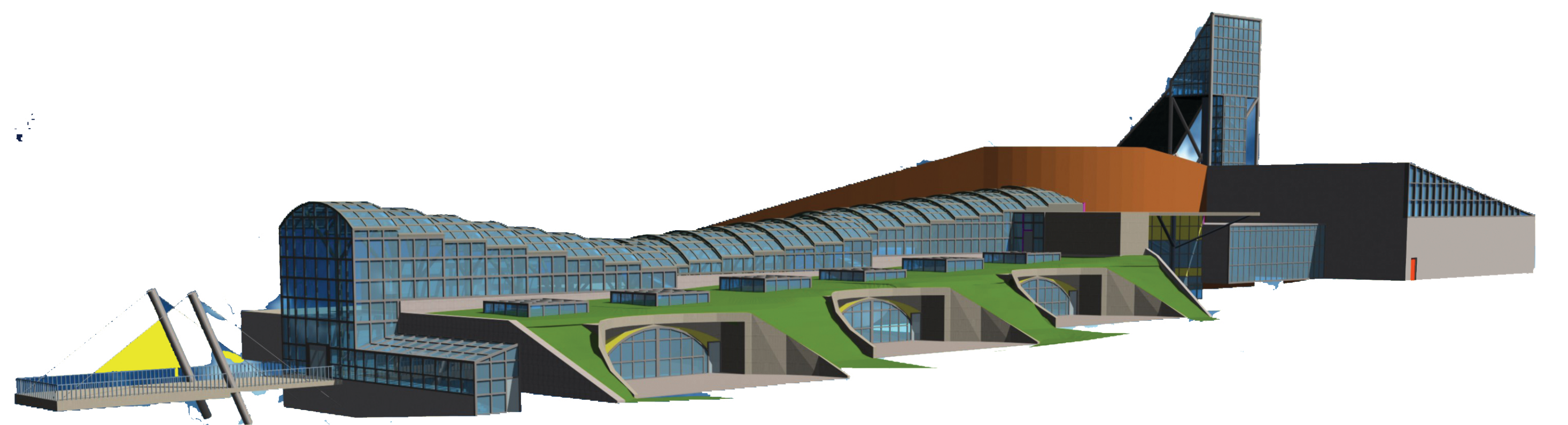
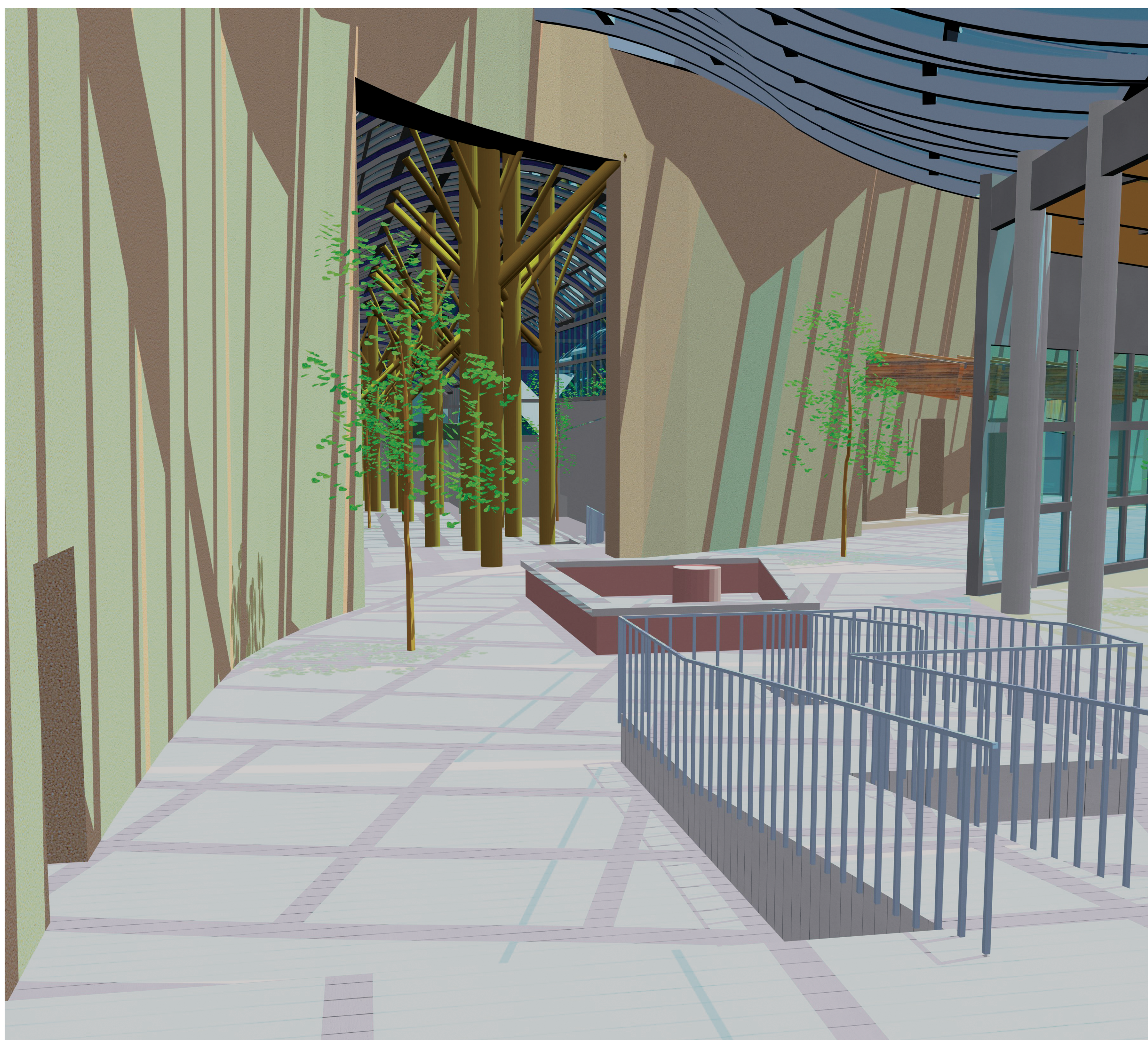
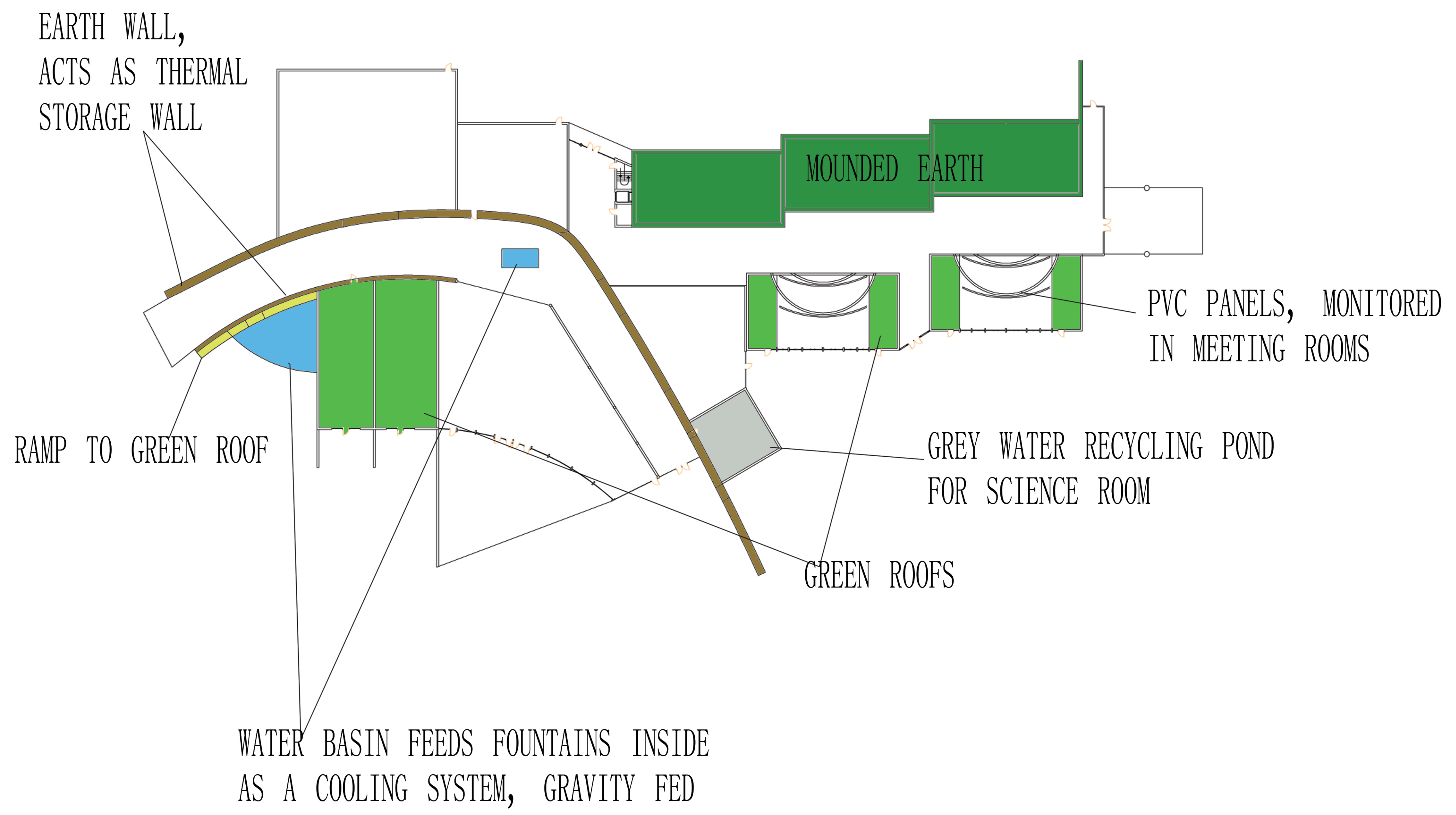
SITE ANALYSIS, 10 FOOT CONTOURS 1" = 100'

THE SITE WAS CHOSEN FOR THREE REASONS:

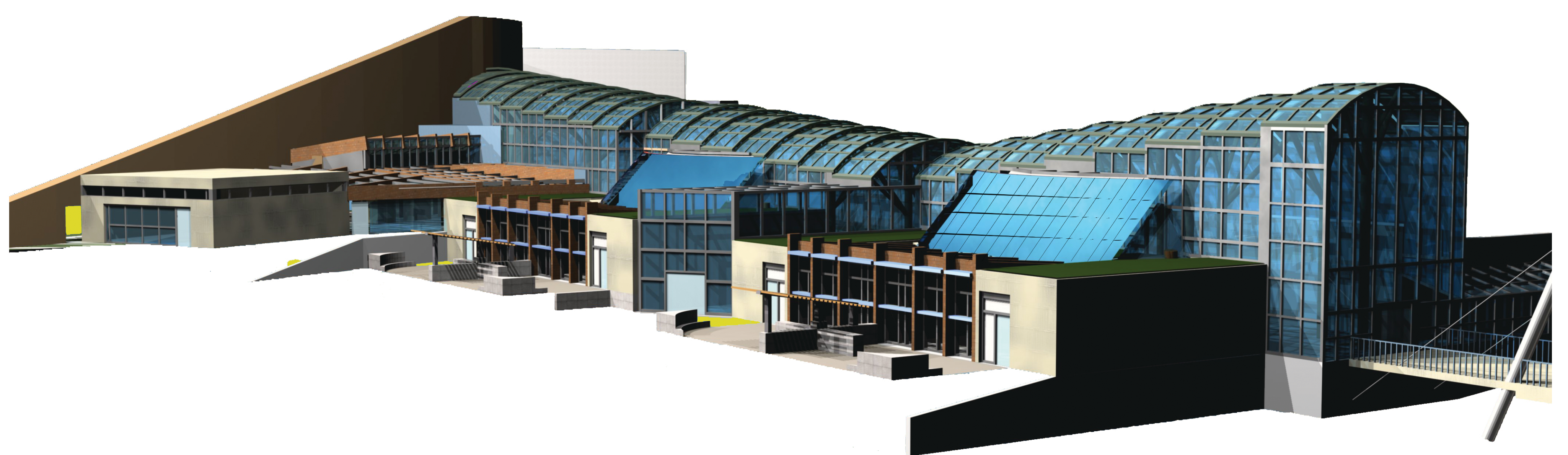
FIRST, THIS MONTESSORI SCHOOL, WANTING TO HOLD TRUE TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND STUDENT CONNECTION, PLACES ITSELF IN AN ORGANIC SITE. THIS ORGANIC SITE IS THE SAME PLACE A SCIENTIST (AS DESCRIBED FROM MARIA MONTESSORI) WOULD GO TO OBSERVE THE NATURAL HAPPENINGS OF HIS OR HER WORLD. THIS IS WHERE KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD FORMS.

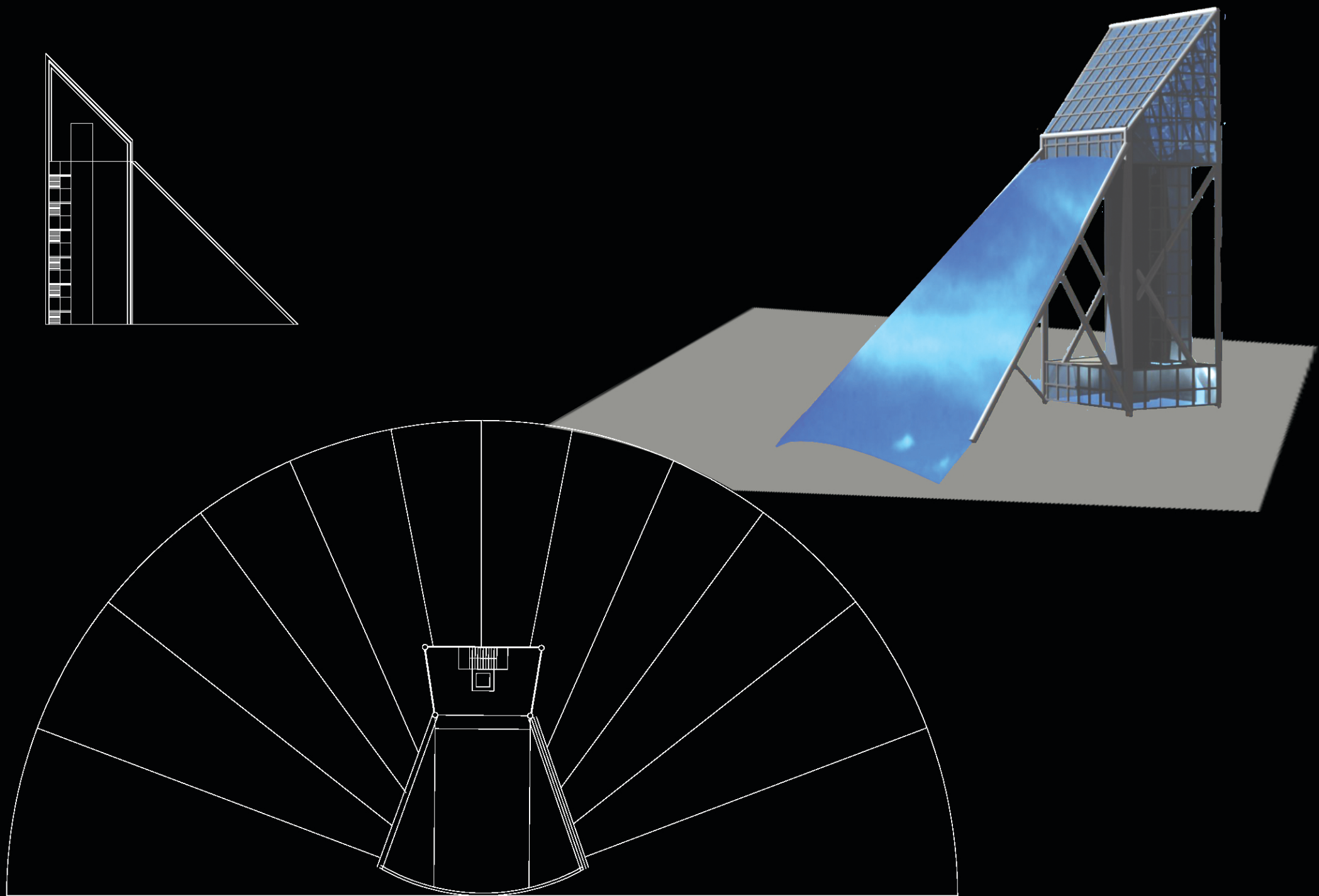
SECOND, THESE WORLD FORMS, THE PARTICULARS, ARE OUR ONLY WAY TO KNOW ANYTHING UNDER PLATO'S EPISTEMOLOGY. THE 'FORMS', FOR PLATO, ARE INTANGIBLE THINGS THAT ARE OUTSIDE OF OUR WORLD. WE RECOGNIZE THESE FORMS WHEN WE SEE THEIR PARTICULARS ON EARTH. THE CLOSEST WE CAN GET TO THE FORMS ARE FROM THESE PARTICULARS, AND ANYTHING THAT IS A COPY OF THESE PARTICULARS IS BAD. THEREFORE, THE BEST SITE IS ONE THAT IS FREE OF ARTIFICIAL COPIES OF THE PARTICULARS, A SITE THAT IS ORGANIC.

FINALLY, THE SITE HELPS TO PROMOTE A HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. THE SITE WAS CHOSEN FOR ITS TRANQUIL ATMOSPHERE. IT HAS VERY LITTLE EXAMPLES OF HUMAN INFLUENCES WITH RESPECT TO ANYTHING BUILT, (IT HAS BEEN HOWEVER SCULPTED BY MAN FOR MANY YEARS). THIS SITE IS SET OUTSIDE OF A LARGE CITY, WHICH OFFERS LESS DISTRACTION THAN A SCHOOL INSIDE THE CITY. IT ALSO HAS A COMPLETE ACCESS TO THE SUN, ACCESS TO WIND FOR VENTILATION AND VERY IMPORTANTLY, ATTRACTIVE VIEWS.



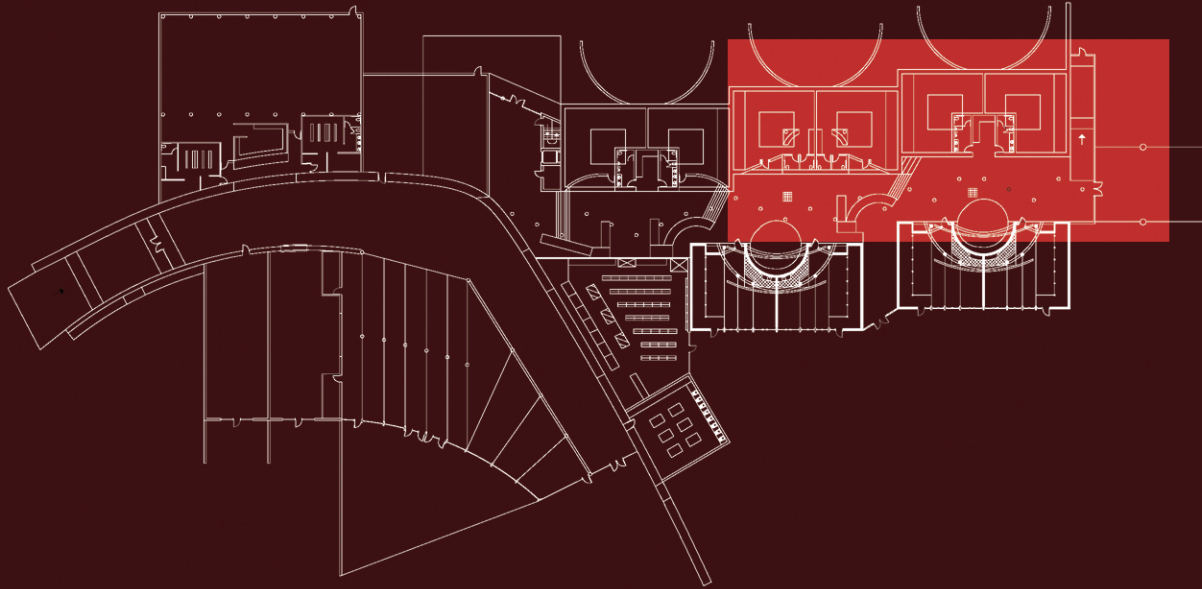
IF THE FOCUS IS ON THE ENVIRONMENT, THE BUILDING CANNOT PREVAIL OVER IT. SINCE MAN NEEDS SHELTER TO LIVE, THE BUILDING MUST BE JUST THAT, A SHELTER. HENCE THE BUILDING MUST BE LESS PRESENT IN A WAY THAT THE ORGANIC ENVIRONMENT WILL BE ABLE TO SHINE ITS FULL POTENTIAL ONTO THE STUDENTS.





THE TOWER ACTS AS A BEACON FOR THE BUILDING. IT ALSO ACTS AS THE GNOMON OF THE LARGE SITE SUNDIAL. THE SOUTH FACING SLOPE IS COVERED WITH PVC PANELS. THESE PANELS PRODUCE THE ELECTRICITY THAT WILL RUN THE LIGHTS ELEVATOR AND HEATING. THE BODY OF THE TOWER IS SMALL TO LOWER THE AMOUNT OF VOLUME THAT NEEDS TO BE HEATED. THE OBSERVATION FLOOR AT THE TOP IS FOR STAR GAZING AND TO GET A AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE. THE OBSERVATION FLOOR IS HEATED DIRECTLY BY THE SUN.

SECTION MODEL 1/4" = 1'



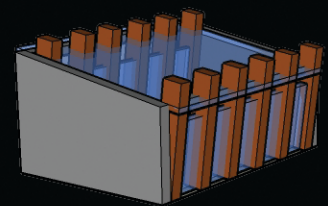
SITE ENTITIES

PLAYGROUND AND SANDBOX



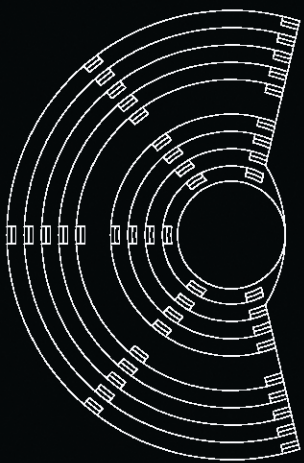
ROCKS FOUND ON SITE DURING CONSTRUCTION WILL BE USE IN PLAYGROUND SANDBOX AREA

GREEN HOUSE



THE GREEN HOUSE CAN BE DISMANTLED AND ALTERNATE BUILDING MATERIALS CAN BE ADDED SUCH AS STRAWBALES

GREEK AUDITORIUM



VIEW FROM AUDITORIUM LOCATION

