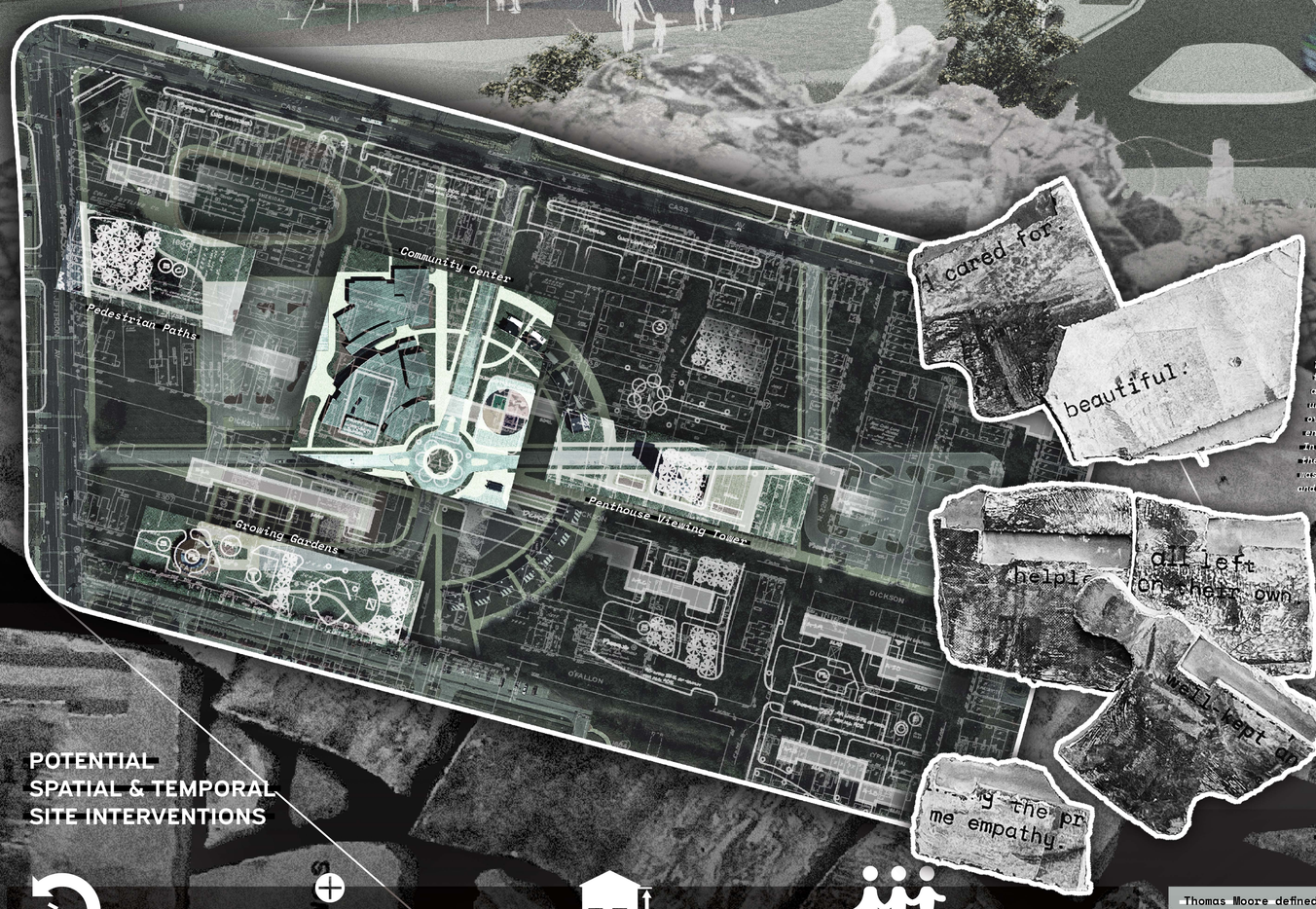
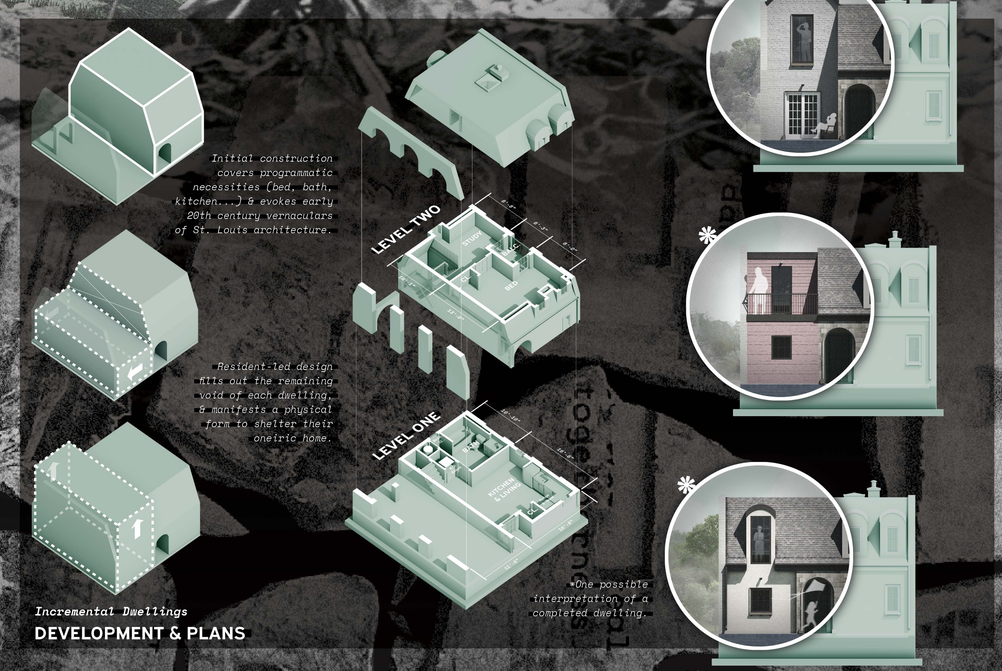
RETURNING HOME

Collective Dwelling Through Incremental Architecture



Architectural plans act as puzzles, and architects as puzzle-makers. In the process of putting together a puzzle, the player may think they understand everything there is to know about a single piece — its colors, patterns, and the shape it takes — but once joined with another piece, a whole new understanding must be made over and over again until the entire picture is reconnected. In the case of Pruitt-Igoe, the image created by the puzzle was one of economic efficiency and inhumanity, and the pieces that made up its composition were scattered to obscure the faults of the plan. By shattering the old top-down approach of architectural planning, the fragments of stories from past residents of Pruitt-Igoe can be recontextualized by present day architects & residents in St. Louis through a cooperative design approach. By offering agency to the residents over the creation of their homes, an inherent link is formed between the way people dwell and the environments that they dwell within, which returns culture, history, and people back to the architecture of home.



Initial construction covers programmatic necessities (bed, bath, kitchen...) & evokes early 20th century vernaculars of St. Louis architecture.

Resident-led design fills out the remaining void of each dwelling, & manifests a physical form to shelter their oneiric home.

One possible interpretation of a completed dwelling.

Incremental Dwellings

DEVELOPMENT & PLANS

POTENTIAL SPATIAL & TEMPORAL SITE INTERVENTIONS

RENEW HISTORY

Pruitt-Igoe consisted of 33 11-story highrise apartment blocks. The project began as a revolutionary success for urban renewal, yet was demolished within decades due to its failures. Since 1976, the northernmost 33 acres of the old site have sat empty and abandoned.

CREATE OPPORTUNITY

After clearing the site of debris and overgrowth, new streets can reconnect the site to the St. Louis grid, while creating a focal point to orient the new dwellings around. The new Carr Neighborhood Community Center acts as the heart of the emerging collective.

BUILD TO DWELL

New interventions between the site, its residents, and their lives begin to emerge through the built-environment. As domestic shelters create space to dwell intimately, so to do site amenities and features which link intangible bridges between time, people and place.

MAKE EQUITY FROM AGENCY

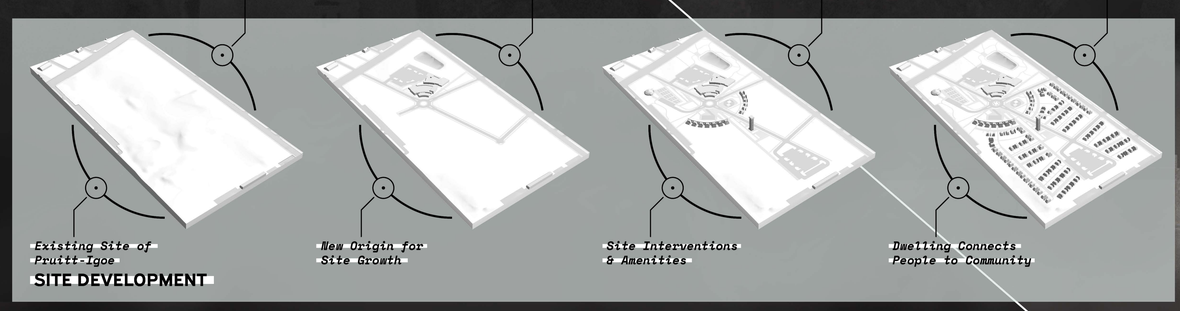
The design process of the site is shared between its residents and planners to allow subsidized self-agency. Through the creation of incremental dwellings and site interventions, a culturally rich, equitable community comes to life.

Thomas Moore defined home at three scales: the psyche which shelters our souls, the physical place that we make domesticity in, and the broader metaphysical context in which we find our culture, history, and selves within. Today however, housing in the United States is birthed by economic interests, creating modernized "units" that are detached from humanity and the way we dwell. Consequently, the "American Dream" for new generations has been disintegrated, and our built environment has lost its ability to relate to the broader contexts of our lives.

To combat the consequences of an inflating housing market, the federal government has created economically reductive social housing projects, exacerbating the issue through "efficient" architecture and inhumane impositions that manifest even more inhumane conditions. The most notorious examples of this approach are the failed housing projects at Pruitt-Igoe, in St. Louis, Missouri.

This thesis reexamines the process of creating home as one intrinsically related to dwelling. By providing a community with foundational facilities to support its growth over the old site of Pruitt-Igoe, this project explores the possibility for incremental interventions across the site that may be developed to create tangible connections between the residents themselves and the broader context of home at its various scales.

Parti - Stories from Pruitt-Igoe



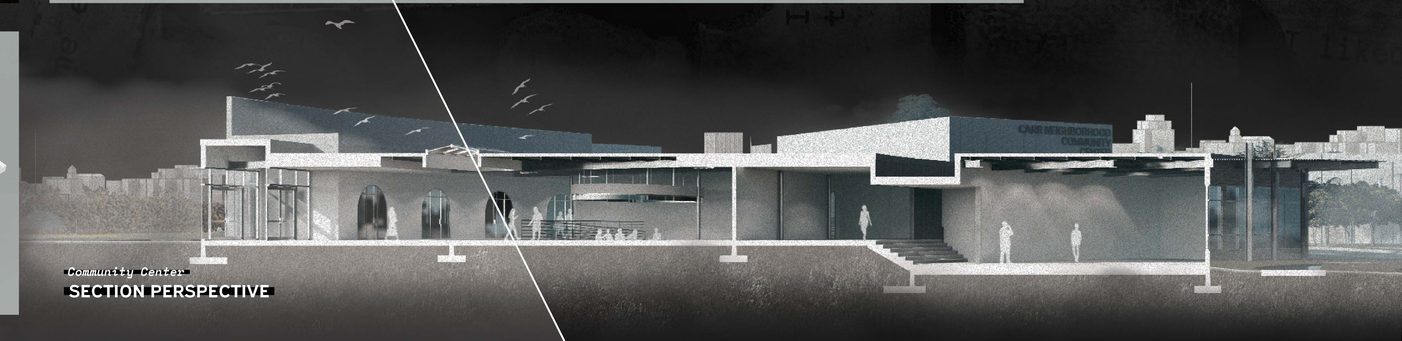
Existing Site of Pruitt-Igoe

New Origin for Site Growth

Site Interventions & Amenities

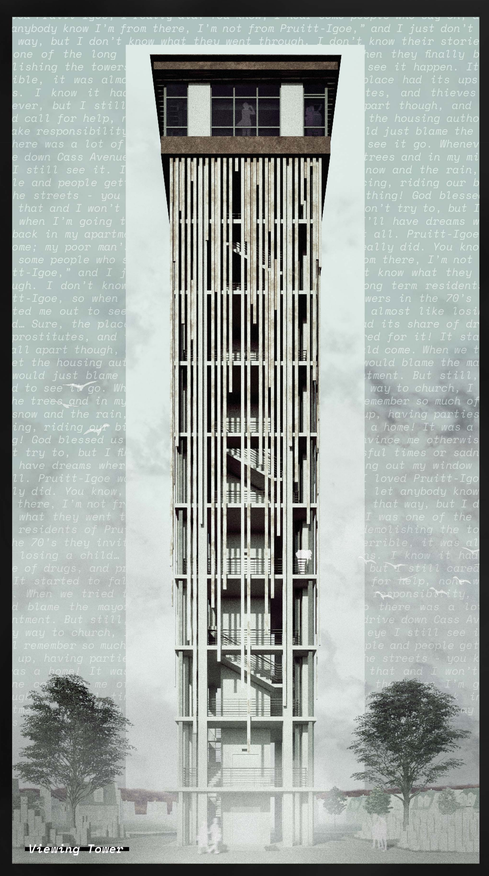
Dwelling Connects People to Community

SITE DEVELOPMENT



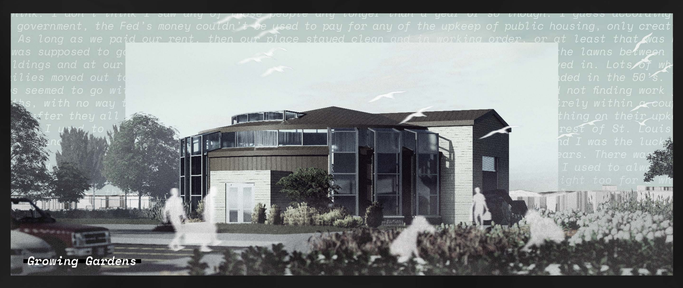
Community Center

SECTION PERSPECTIVE



Viewing Tower

Dwellings



Growing Gardens

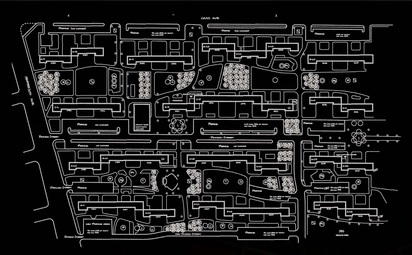
Community Center

Before Pruitt-Igoe

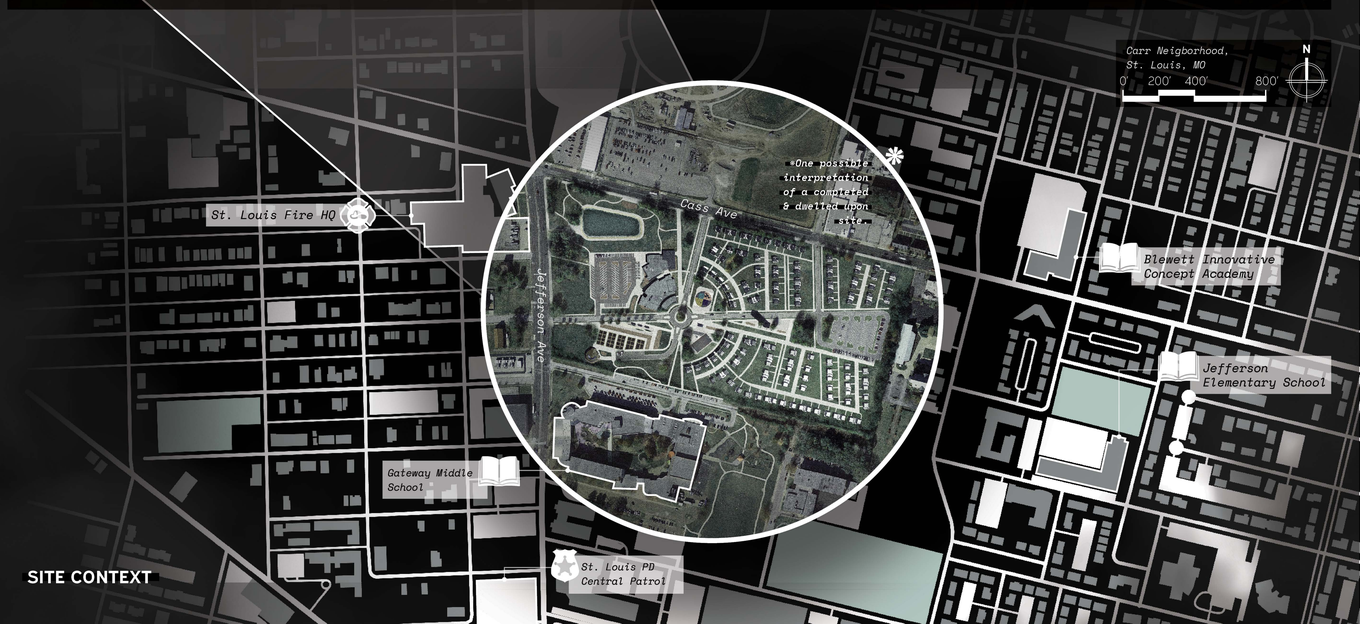
In the late 19th century & first half of the 20th, the then-future site of Pruitt-Igoe was filled with hundreds of vernacular style townhomes. With the vast migration of Black Americans to the north during this time, the area became overcrowded as many of these families were forced into the northern part of St. Louis through racist zoning ordinances imposed by the city. By mid century, the area was considered a slum & a blight on St. Louis.

Pruitt-Igoe's Plans

In an effort to clean the city and offer better living accomodations, the Pruitt & Igoe towers were designed as a social housing project over the 57-acre site. In their initial vision, the towers were a modernist's utopia. Through economic and political impositions however, the project missed out on many of it's intents, and was ultimately left in disarray by its managing powers, leading to the destruction of itself and the homes of many within decades.



SITE PLANS



SITE CONTEXT