
Illuminating Connections: A Theatrical Intervention in Urban Loneliness

By: Carter Huber

Thesis Goals

My thesis project aims to explore how to reduce loneliness by fostering connections and community within urban neighborhoods through theater and urban intervention. I would like to understand how the concept of public life has evolved over time and explore the reasons behind this shift, with a particular emphasis on the diminishing emotional connections within urban communities.

“Understanding the problem in a longer historical perspective is important to help us contemplate possible alternatives in the age of telecommunications.”



Alberto Perez- Gomez
Architecture: The Space
of Participation



“Even cursory historical knowledge reveals that the primary function of pre-nineteenth-century architecture was to open up communicative spaces for focal actions: disclosing a political, social or mythological order to a community, making a good life possible.”

Alberto Perez- Gomez
Architecture: The Space
of Participation



Piazza San Marco
Venice Italy
Late 1720's

“Ever since the late eighteenth century, cities stopped being articulations of ritual places and became mere circulation...”



Alberto Perez- Gomez
Architecture: The Space
of Participation

“Rather than experiencing cities by “circulating” (usually today in some sort of vehicle), it is indeed rather crucial to walk and linger, and to engage in focal actions, while recognizing our place in the labyrinth and our openness to desire.”

Alberto Perez- Gomez
Architecture: The Space
of Participation



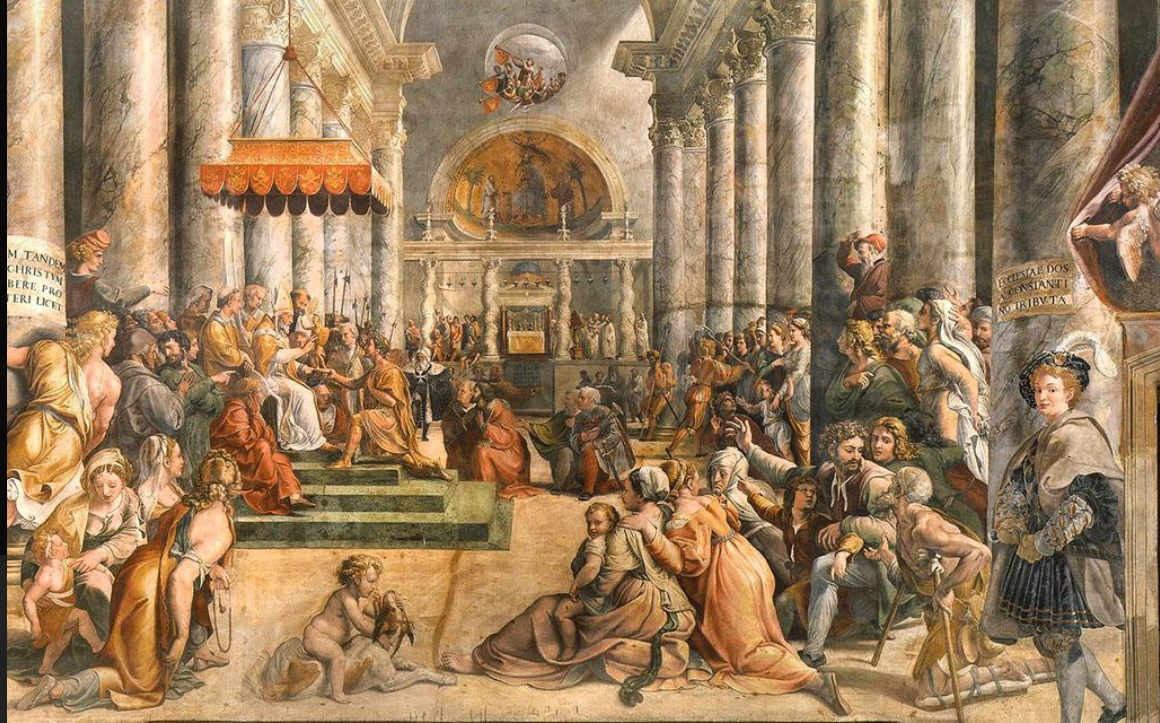
“There is a rough parallel between the crisis of Roman society after the death of Augustus and present-day life; it concerns the balance between public and private life.”

Richard Sennett
Fall of Public Man



“As the Augustan Age faded, Romans began to treat their public lives as a matter of formal obligation. The public ceremonies, the military necessities of imperialism, the ritual contacts with other Romans outside the family circle, all became duties”

Richard Sennett
Fall of Public Man



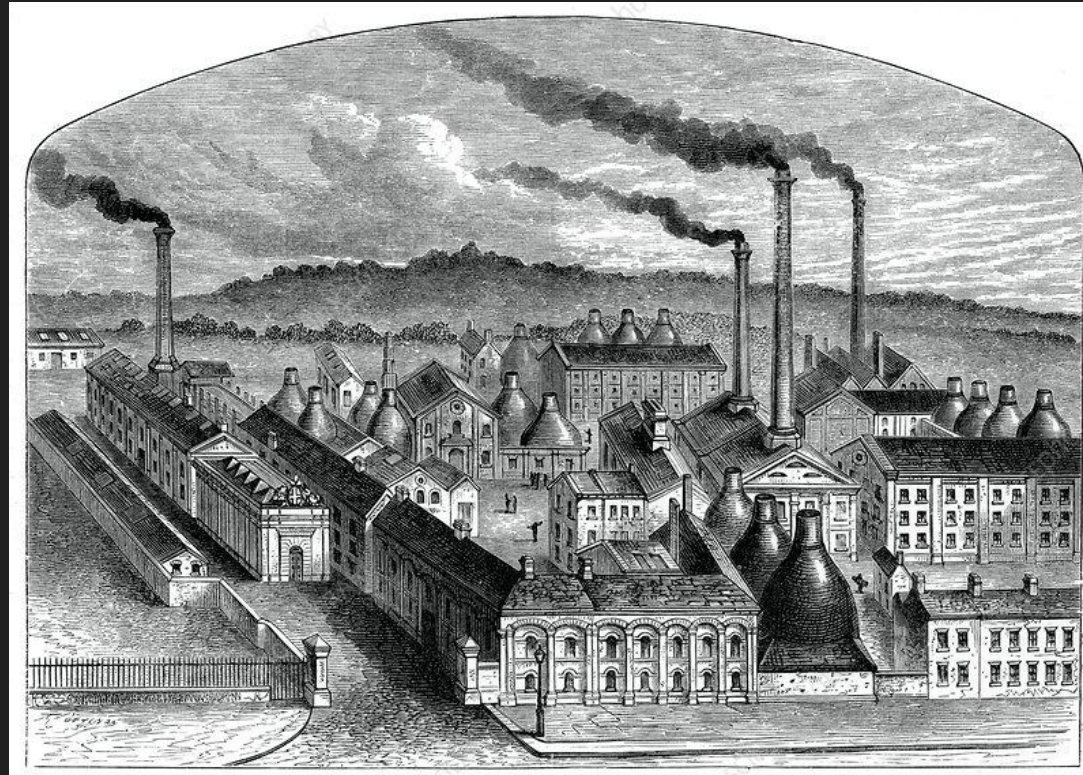
“Inside the theater...the lights never went out...every theatrical performance was like a celebration...a ritual that unified the body politic. Everyone spoke and commented, and even addressed the actors showing pleasure or displeasure at their performances.”

Alberto Perez-Gomez
On The Fall of Public Man



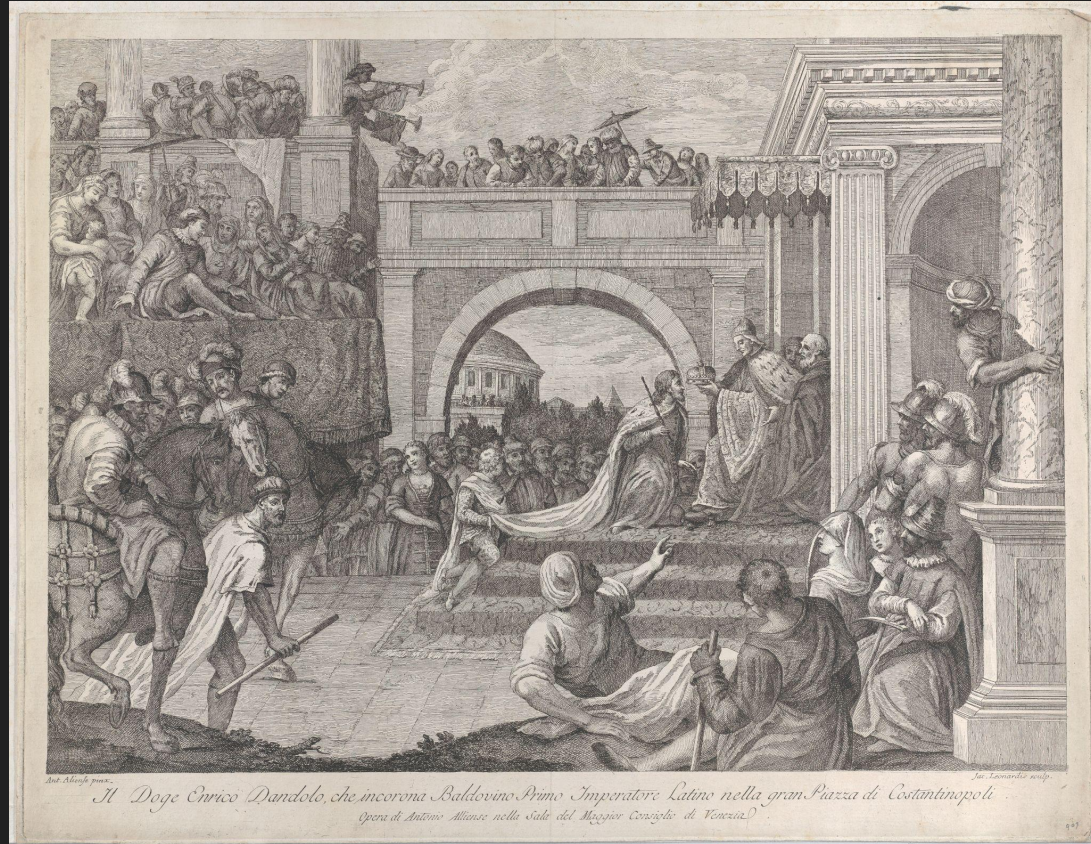
“The disregard of language by architects in the process of designing is not as recent as it may appear. In the wake of nineteenth-century positivism and its increasing acceptance of specialization in all areas of knowledge as the only way “forward” professional disciplines such as architecture became driven by instrumental efficiency.”

Alberto Perez- Gomez
Poetic Language and
Architectural Meaning



“The city is a great playground where unusual intersections of people, objects, and places become the basis for a narrative structure that reveals an otherwise invisible dimension to the city - an intermingling of individual and collective narratives.”

Graham Livesey
Fictional Cities



“Our lives as a continuous sequence of more or less memorable events take on the qualities of a story; and the writing of our life stories has, in the past, often coincided with the larger and essential stories of the collective through participation in public events.”



Graham Livesey
Fictional Cities

“A distressing feeling that occurs when someone perceives a gap between their desire for social connection and their actual experiences. It can also be described as a subjective feeling of lack or loss of companionship.”



Psychology Today

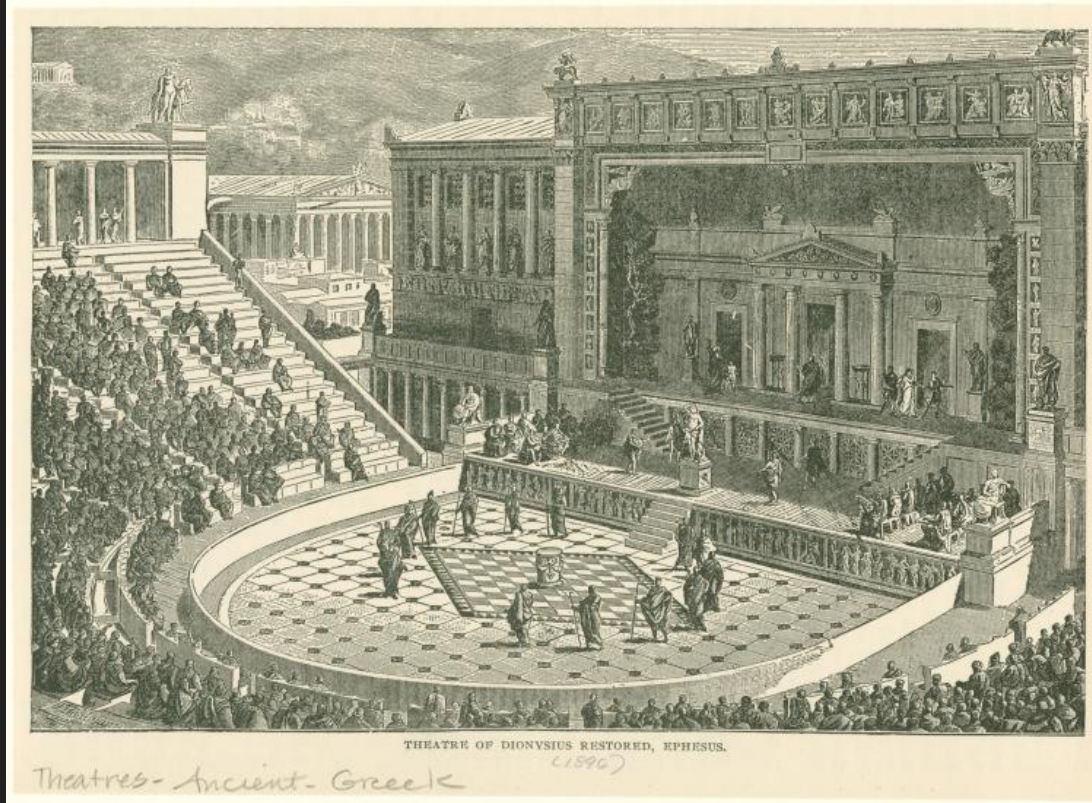
“Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling—it harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death...”

Dr. Vivek H. Murthy,
Surgeon General



Early Greek Theater

These theaters were not only venues for dramatic performances but also democratic spaces where citizens engaged actively...



Origins of Shadow Tracings

The story on the origins of painting is said to have come from tracing the outline of shadow. Although it is not certain who invented painting and when, this story has led to numerous works of art, much like this one throughout the 1700's.



The Invention of Drawing, Joseph-Benoît Suvée (Belgian, 1743 - 1807)

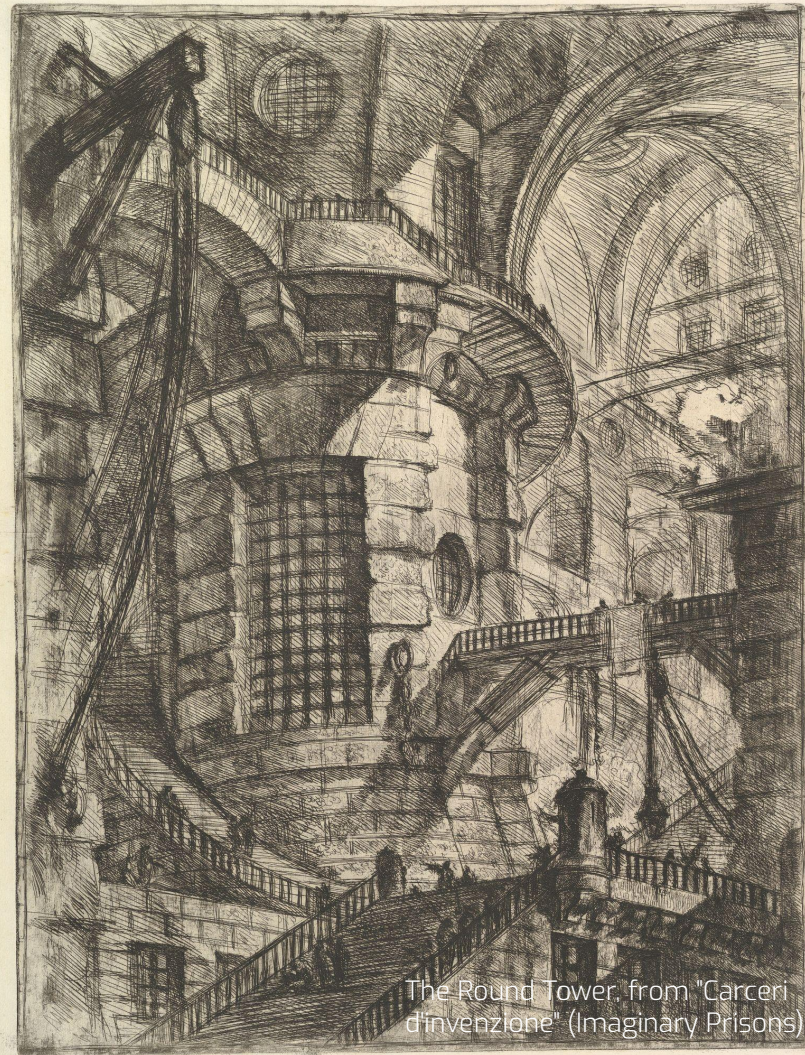
Cubism Movement

Cubism involves breaking down the subject's main characteristics and reassembling them to offer multiple or new perspectives.



Piranesi Drawings

The intricate drawings of ruins and fantastical architecture invites viewers to wander through imagined spaces, exploring the layers and depths of the architectural past through the use of light and shadow.



The Round Tower, from "Carceri d'invenzione" (Imaginary Prisons)

Southern Stand Bars

“As soon as the weather permits, the facade between indoors and outdoors is removed, enticing people of all ages and social classes to stop their course through the city for a minute and join each other at the counter for a cup of coffee or a drink. The stand-up bar in the south is far more than an arbitrary segment of three-dimensional urban architecture. It is a distinct cultural place whose constellation of interior and exterior life, young and old clients, visitors and residents, men and women, rich and poor could hardly be reinvented in northern Europe or America.”

Henrik Reeh
Fragmentation,
Improvisation and Urban
Quality in Chora Vol 3



7.2 Barcelona, 1993.



7.3 Barcelona, 1993.

Villagrande Strisaili

The village's layout promotes regular interaction among residents, fostering a strong family spirit and a close-knit community reminiscent of the past. This daily crossing of paths for basic needs contributes to the village's supportive atmosphere, a tradition passed down through generations.

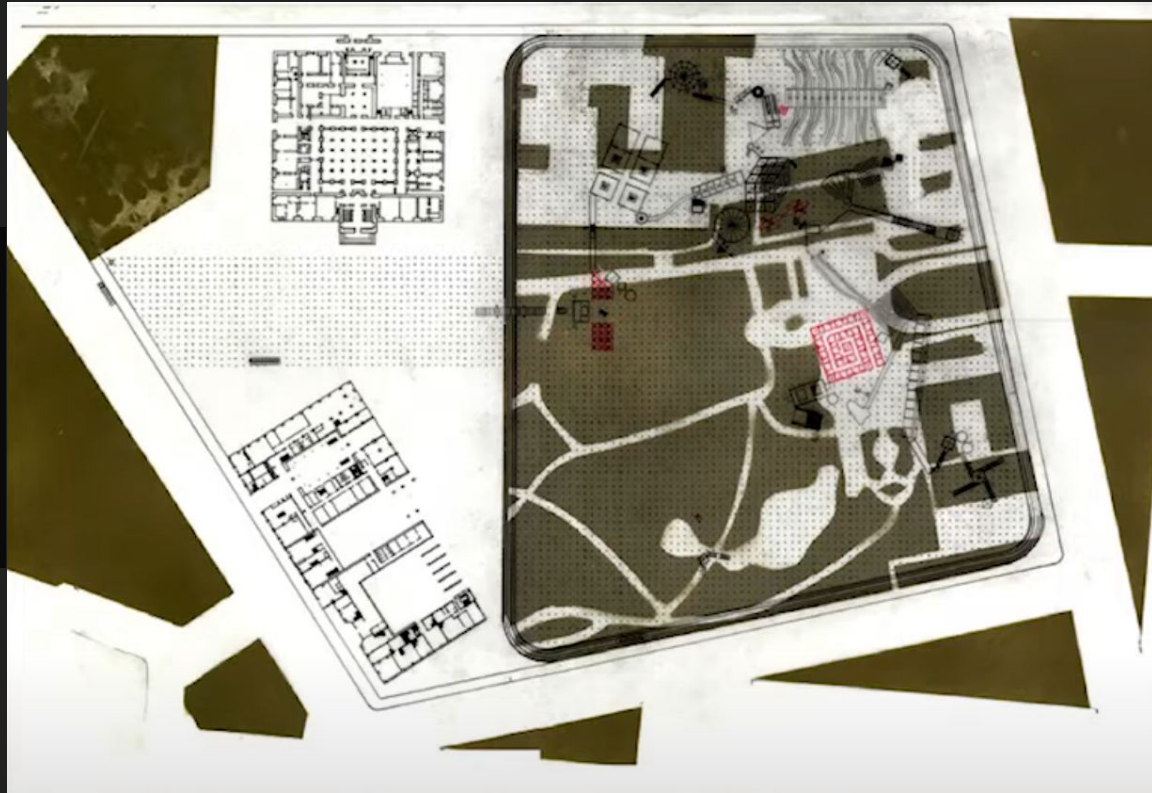


Via Roma - Piazza Municipio

Victims - John Hejduk

“The presence of one time takes the form of a shadow within another time. Each victim inhabits both worlds at the same time.”

Prof. David Gersten
On John Hejduk's Victims



"All the pigeons have taken refuge on the gutter of the district council building.

A 96 passes by. An 87 passes by. An 86 passes by.

A 70 passes by. A "Grenelle Interlinge" truck passes by.

Lull. There is no one at the bus stop.

A 63 passes by. A 96 passes by.

A young woman is sitting on a bench, facing "La demeure" tapestry gallery; she is smoking a cigarette.

There are three mopeds parked on the sidewalk in front of the café

An 86 passes by. A 70 passes by.

Some cars dive into the parking lot

A 63 passes by. An 87 passes by.

It is five after one. A woman is running across the square in front of the church.

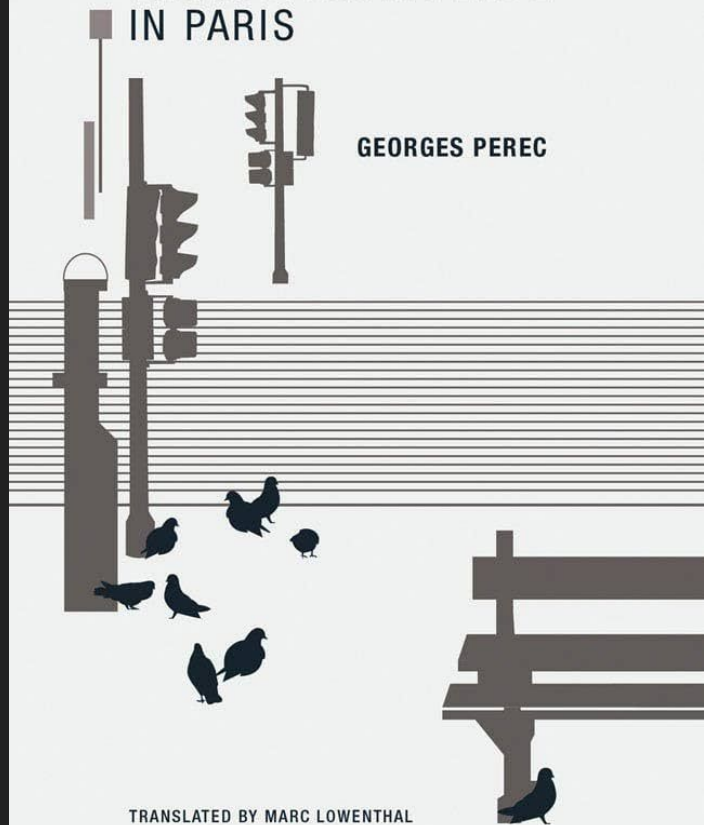
A deliveryman in a white smock comes out of his van parked in front of the café des glaces (food) where he is making a delivery on rue des Canettes.

A woman is holding a baguette in her hand

A 70 passes by."

AN ATTEMPT AT EXHAUSTING A PLACE IN PARIS

GEORGES PEREC



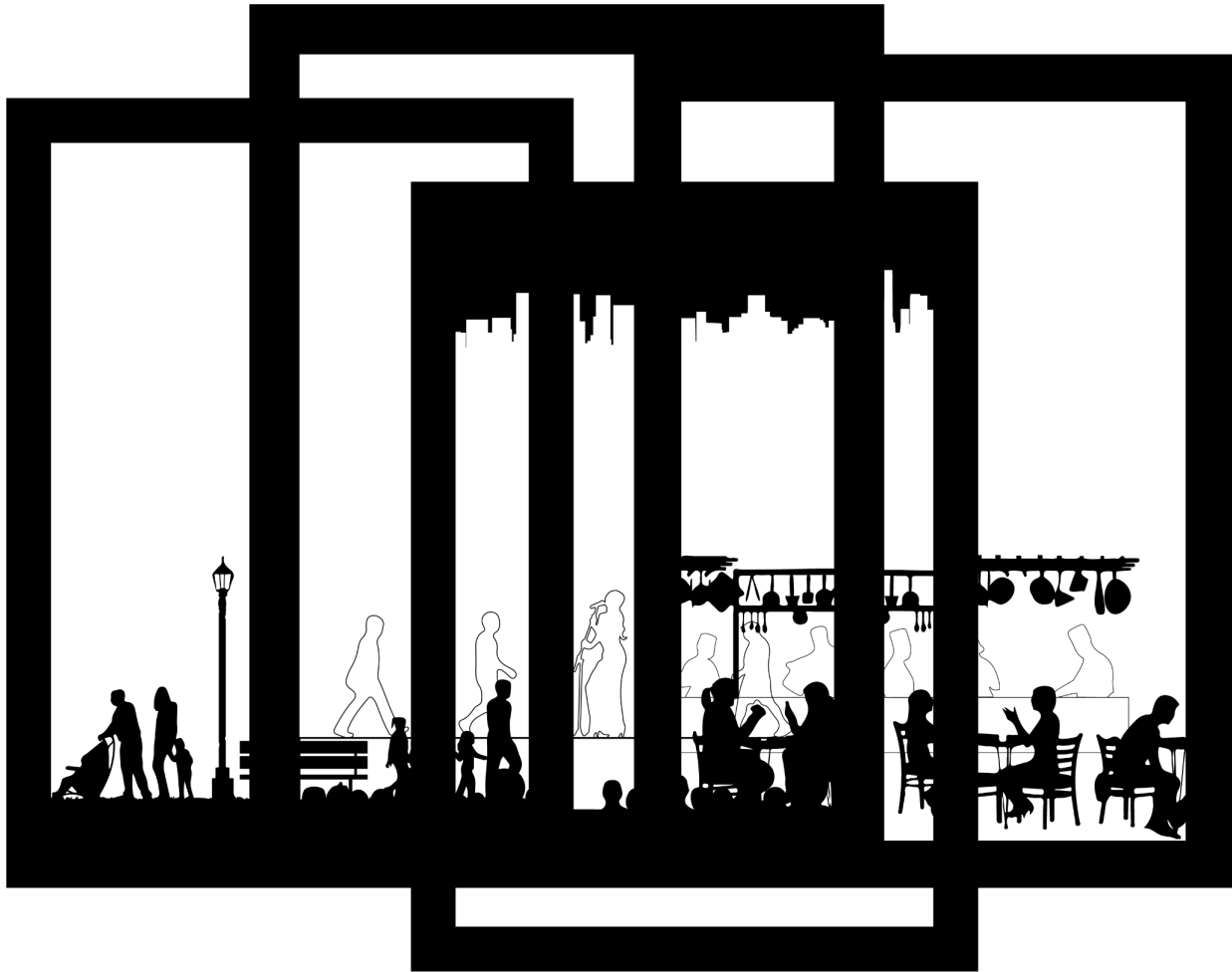
TRANSLATED BY MARC LOWENTHAL

Artefact

The intention of my artefact is to frame the moments of theatrical intervention seen throughout urban neighborhoods. It illuminates the everyday connections between people in urban areas and showcases the layers through shadow. It also allows the viewer to participate in this story by casting their own shadow into these moments.









Cabrini-Green Chicago

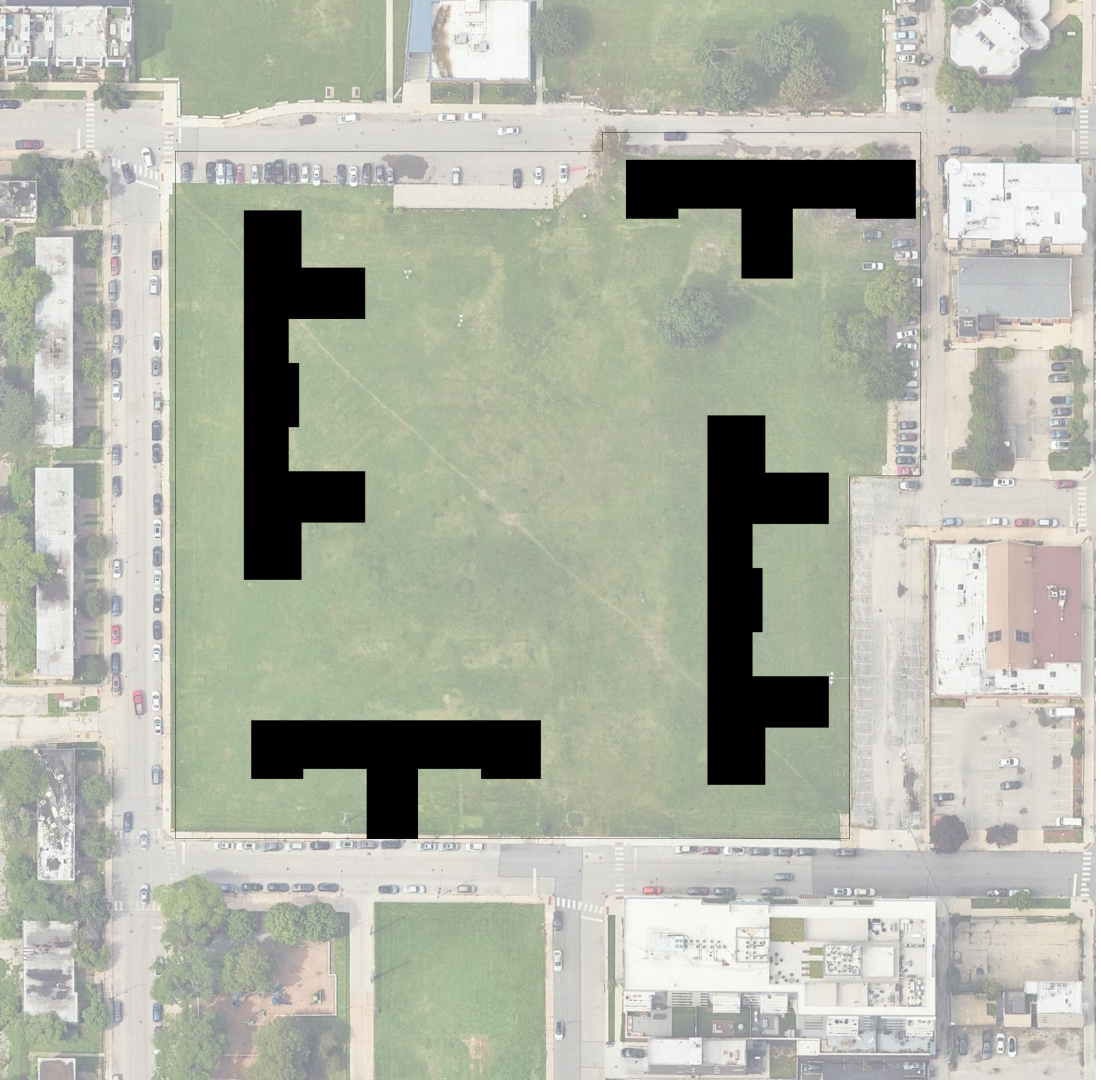


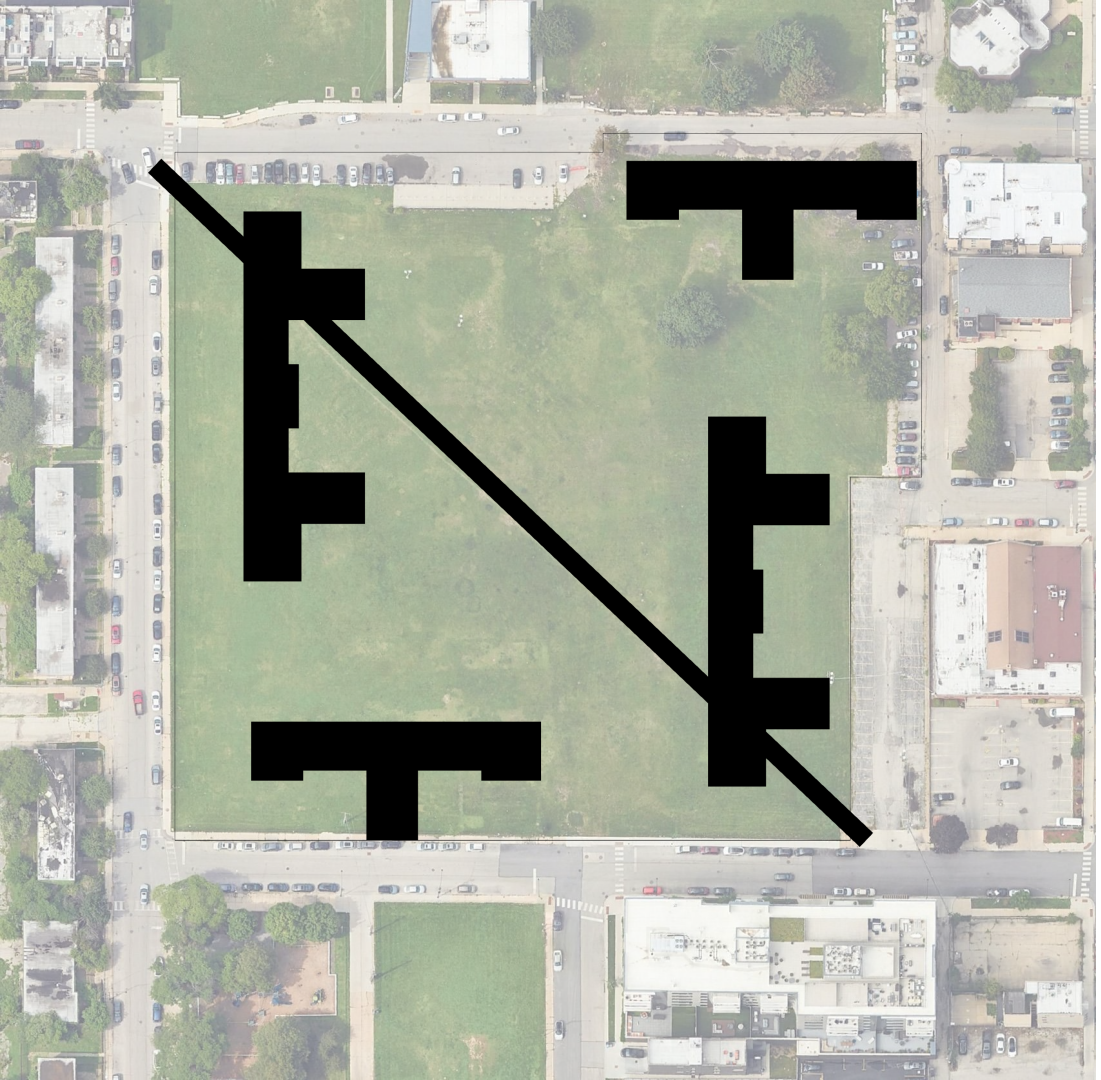


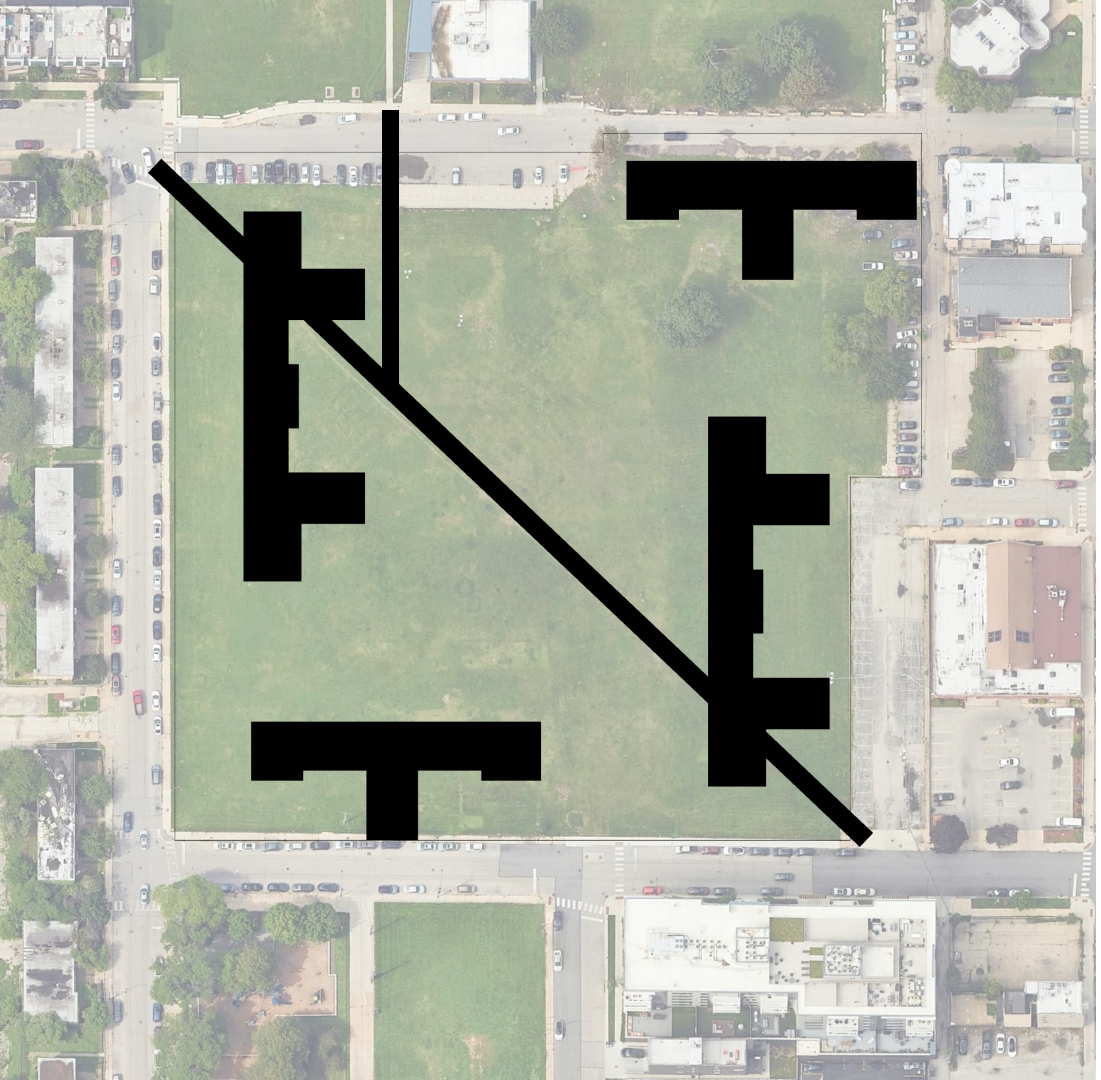


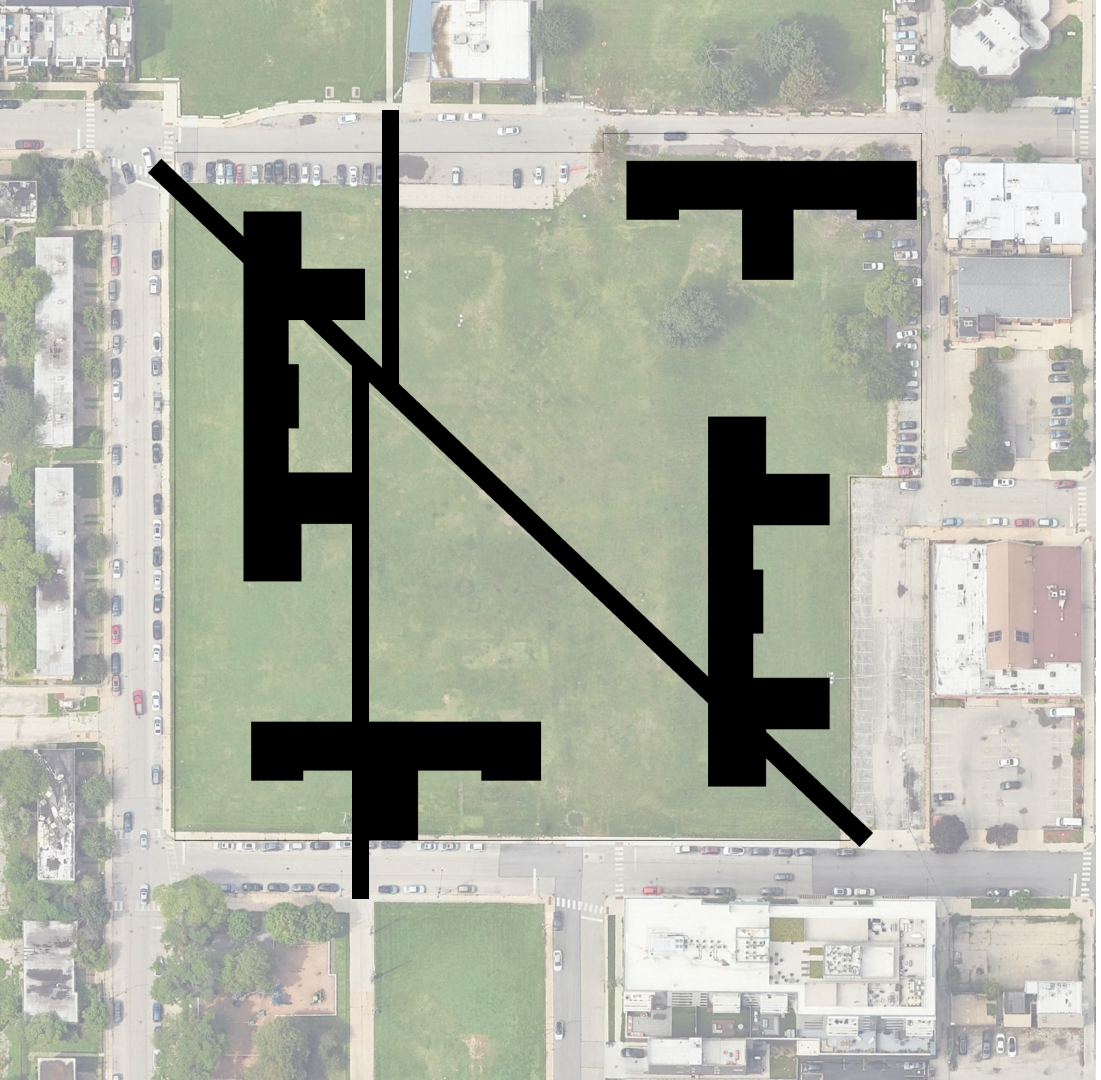


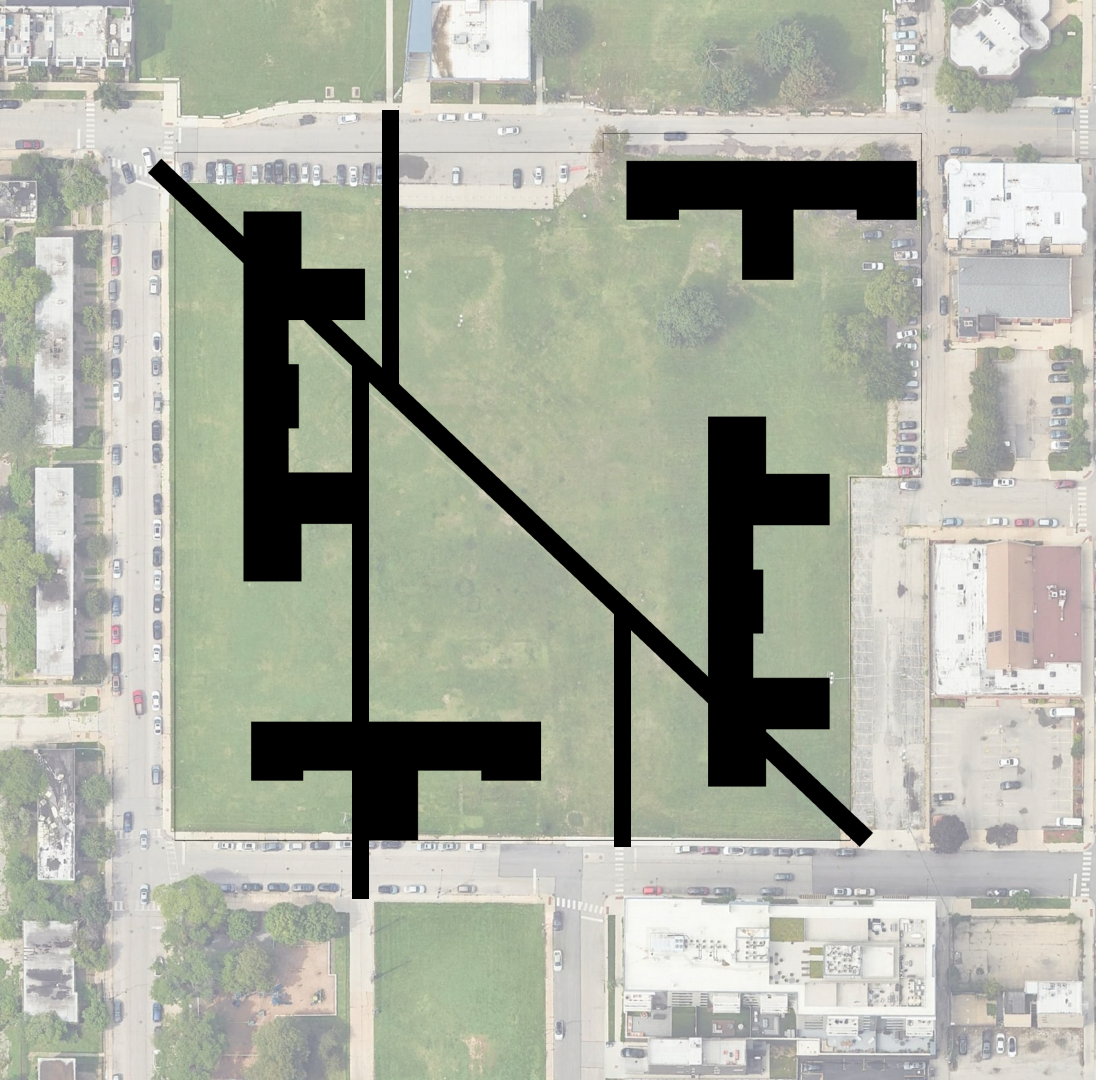


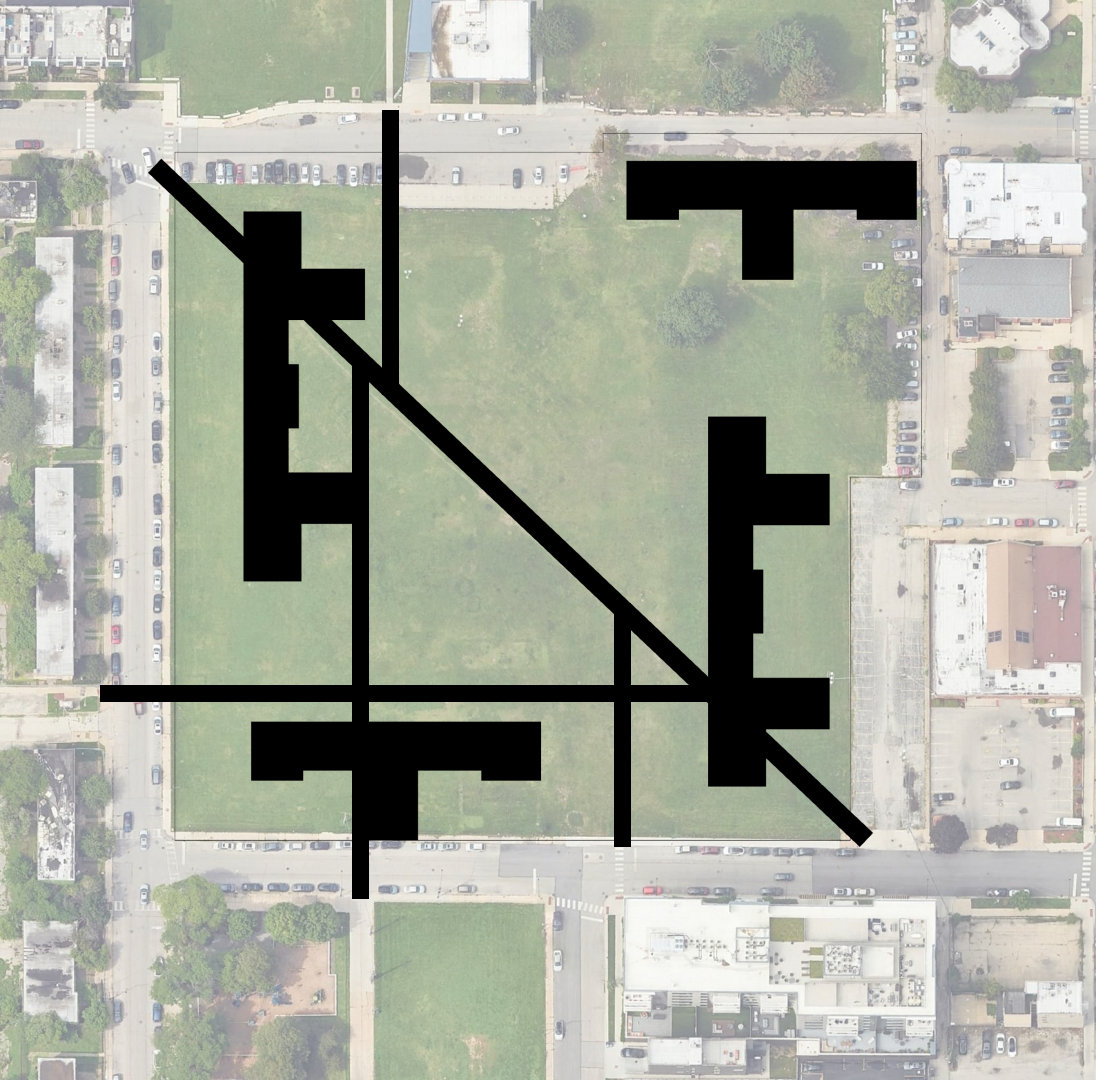


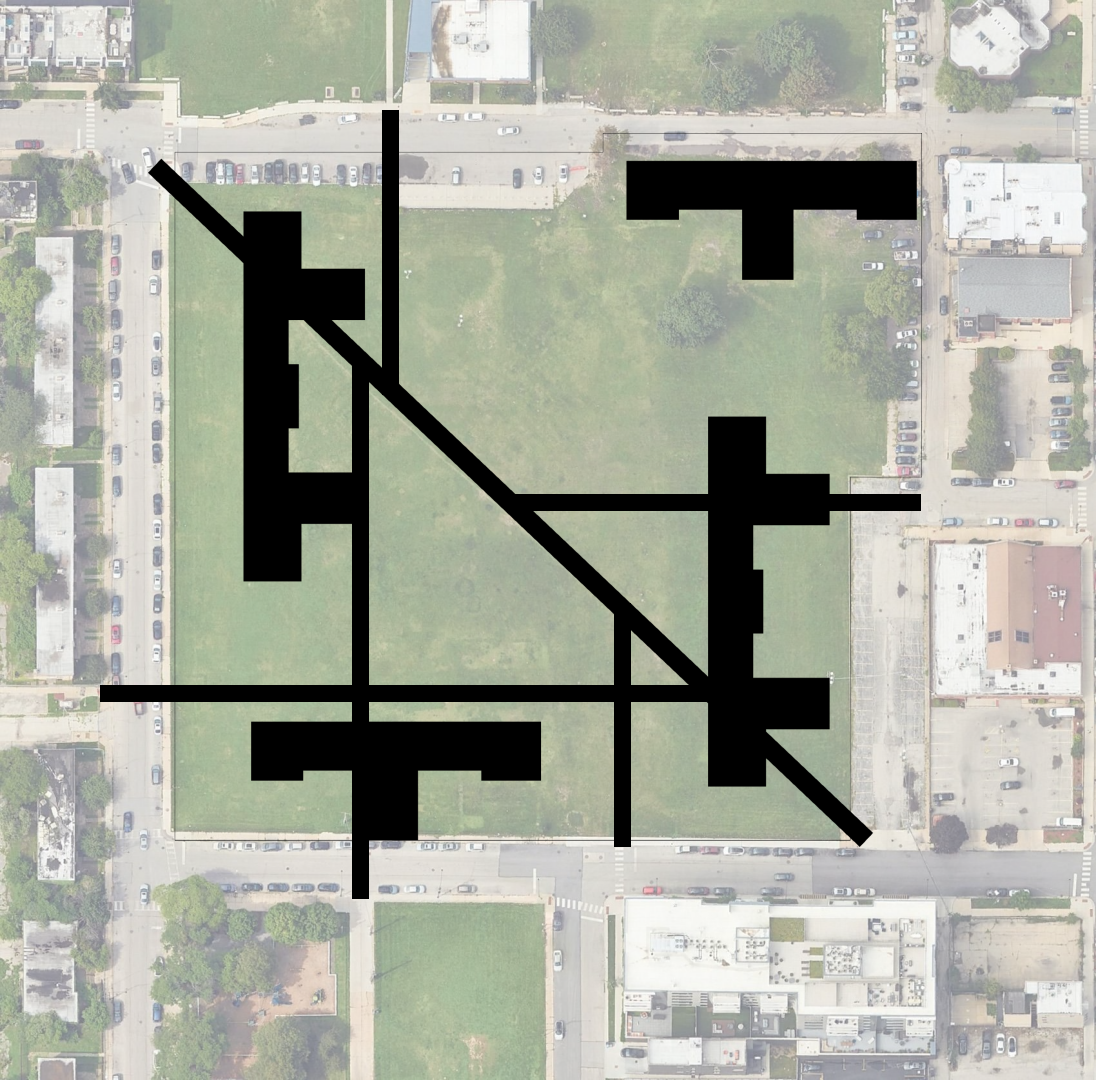


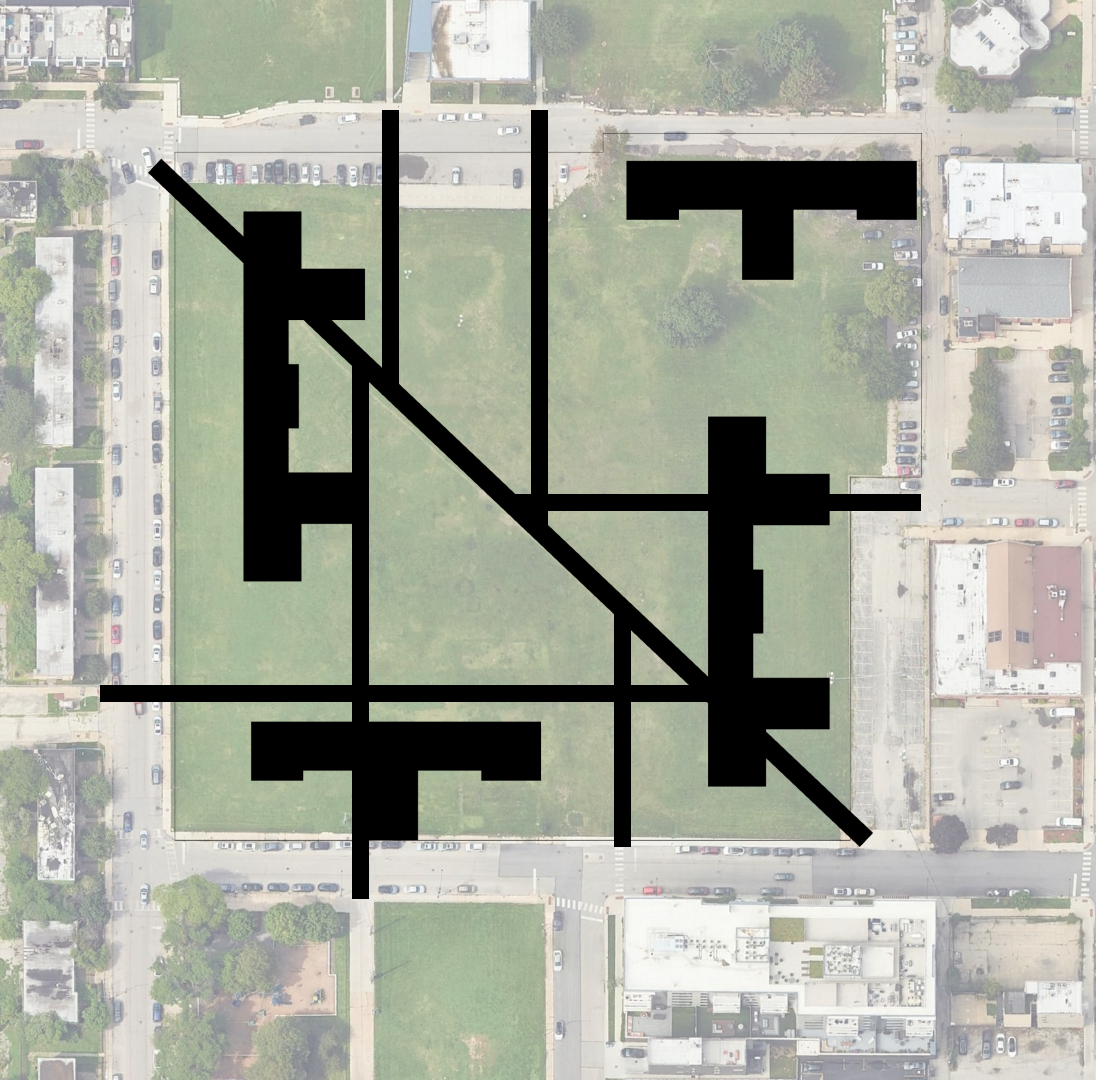


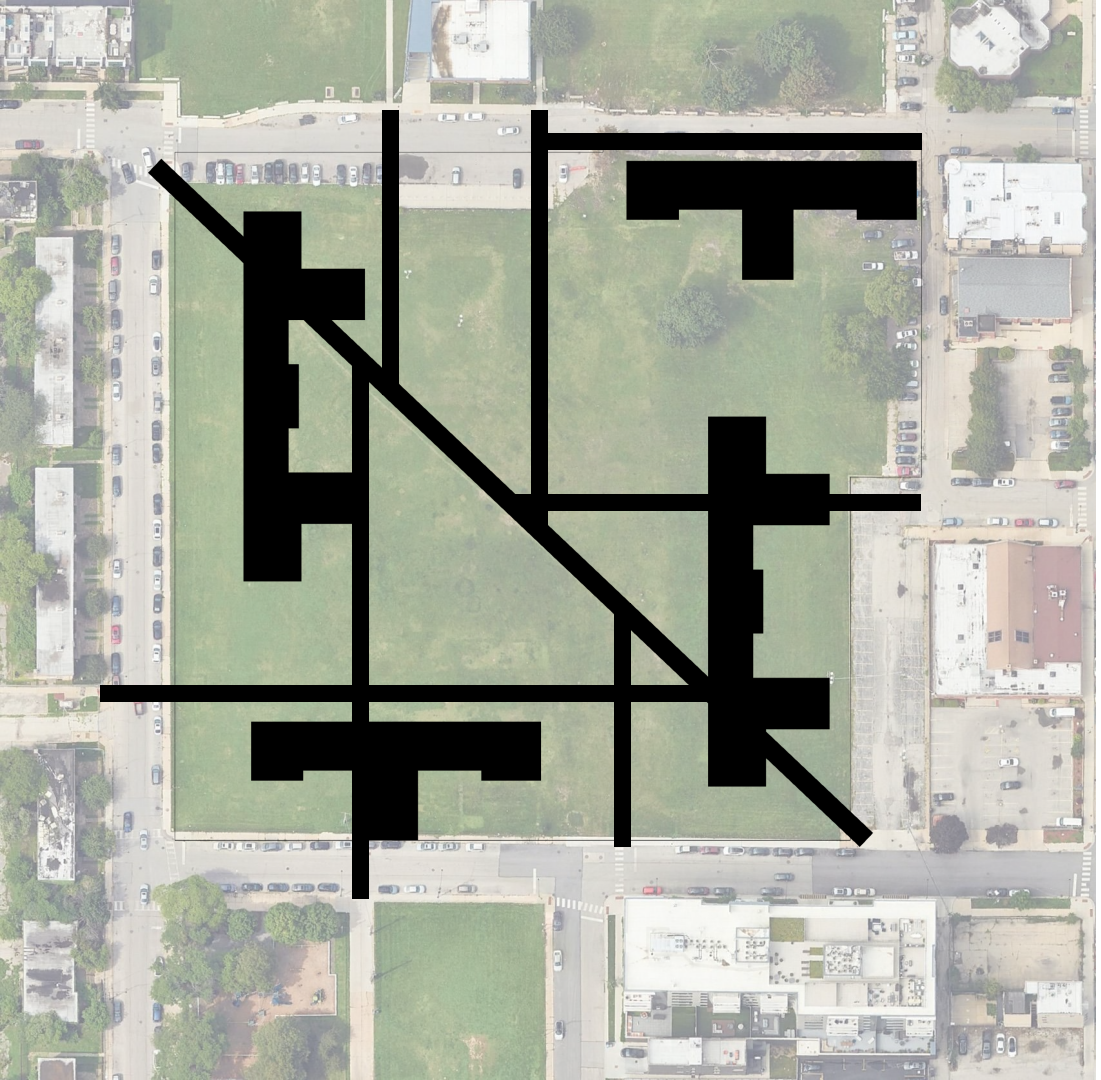


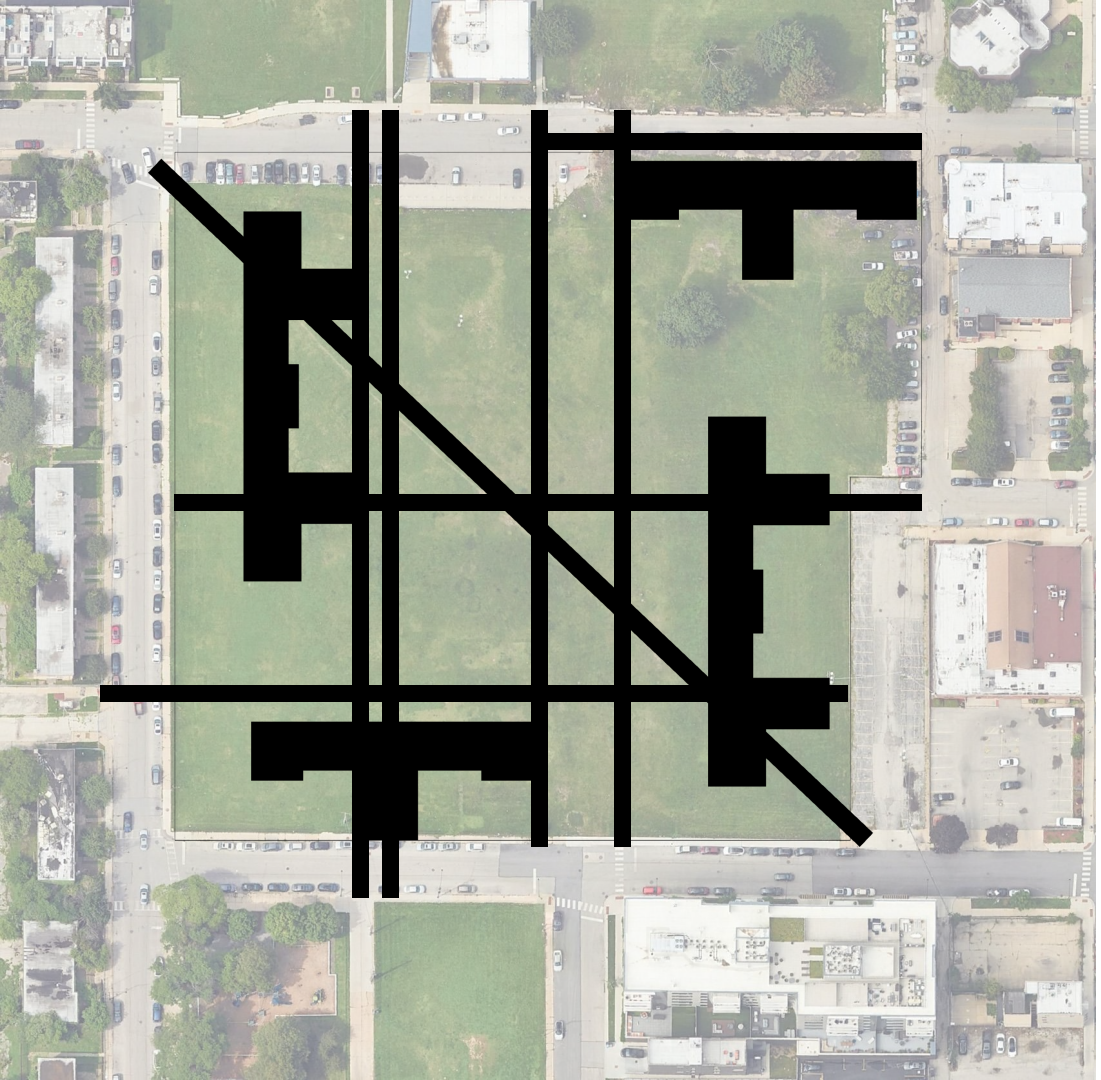


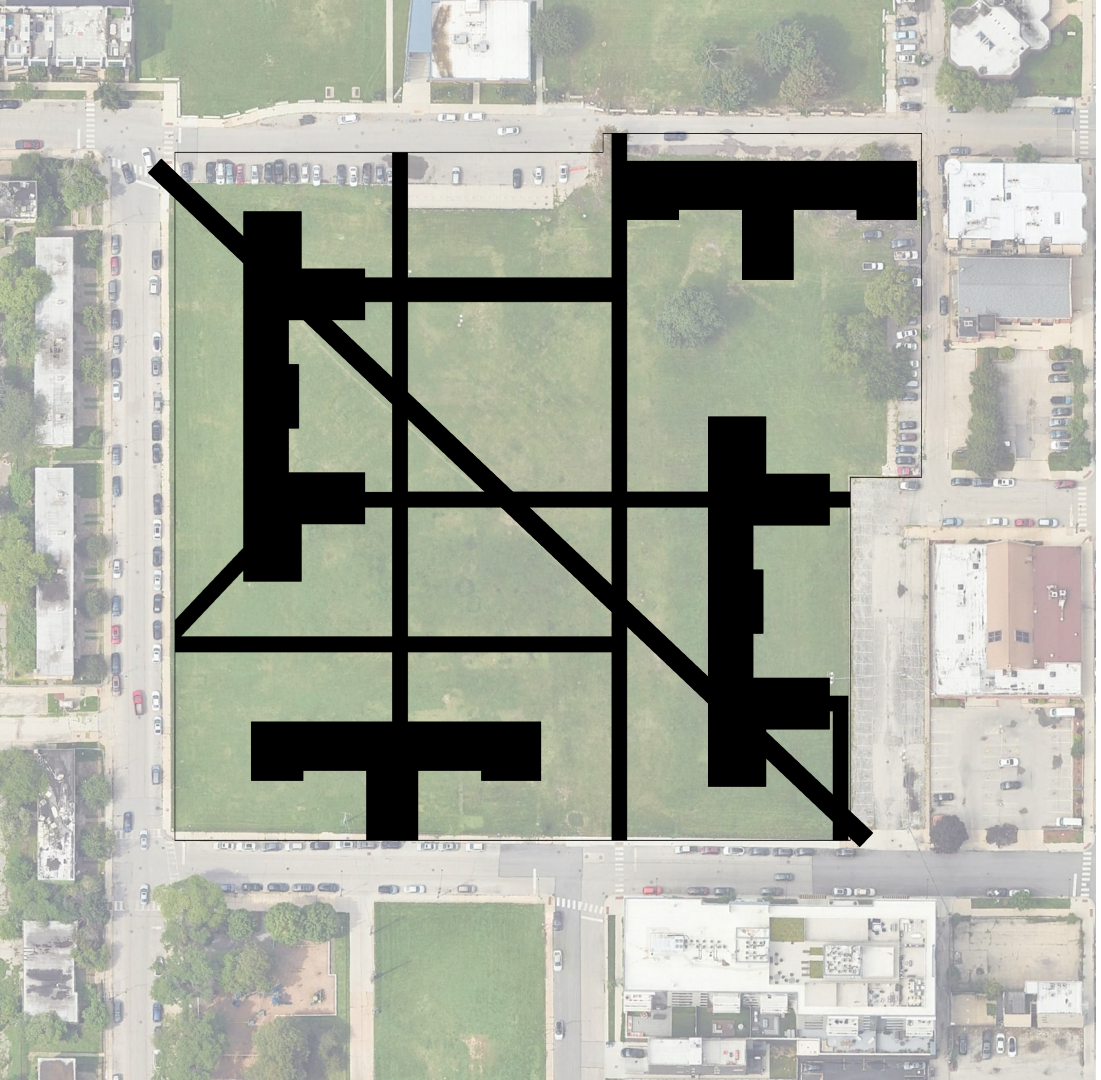


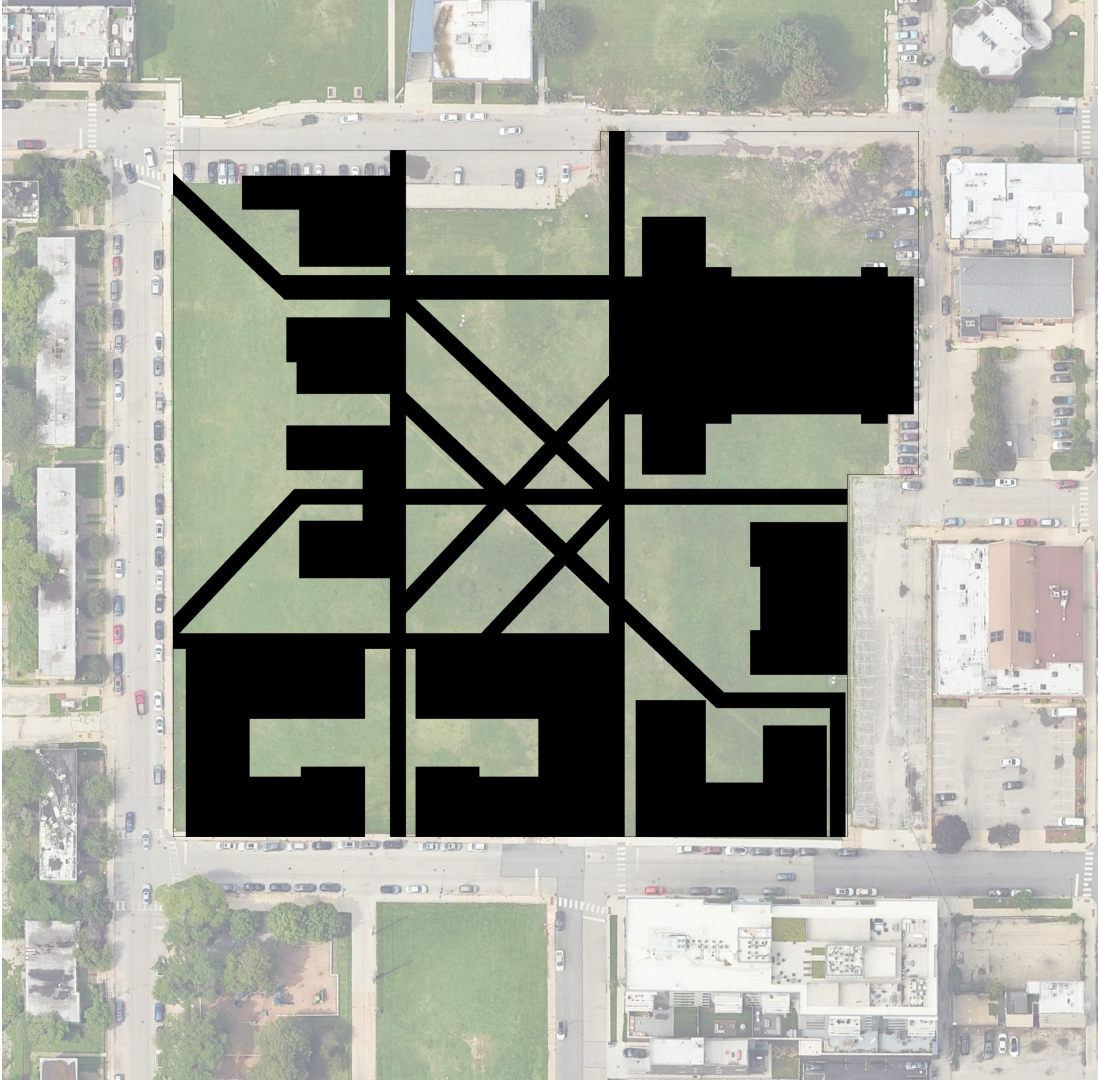












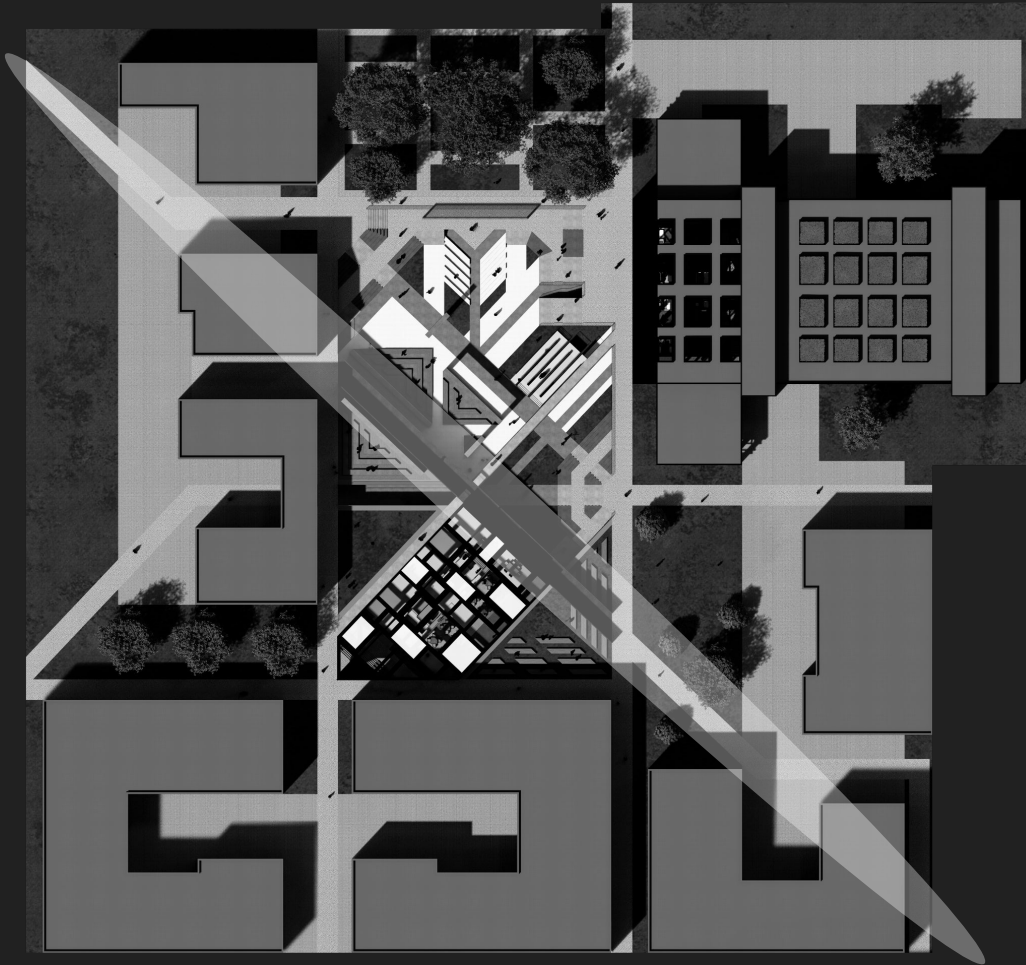


Site Plan

- 1. Original Path
- 2. Outdoor Stage
- 3. Cabrini-Green Performing Arts Center



- 4. Outdoor Theater Portals
- 5. Studios and Workshops
- 6. Covered Plaza





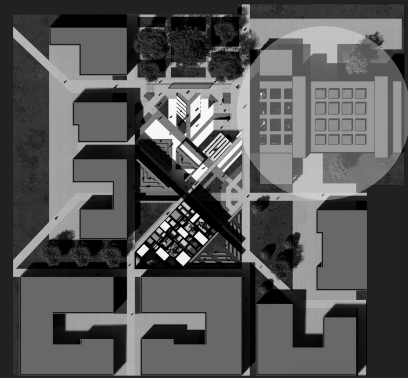
Original Path







Performing Arts Center



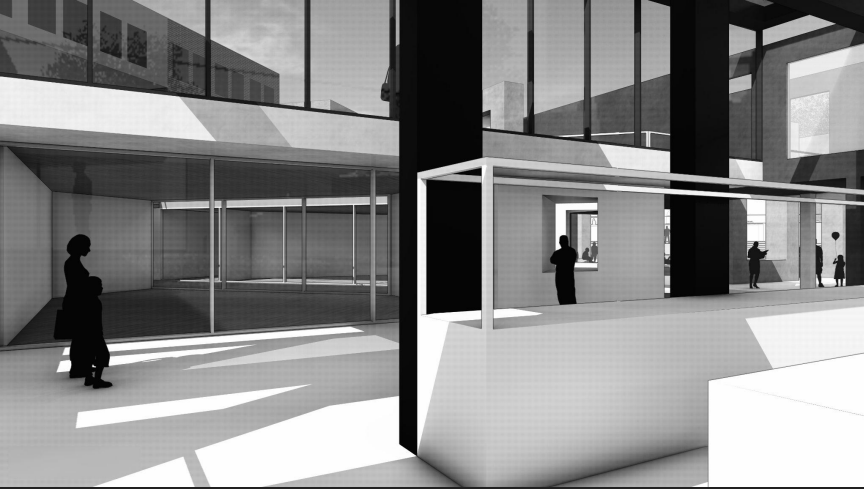




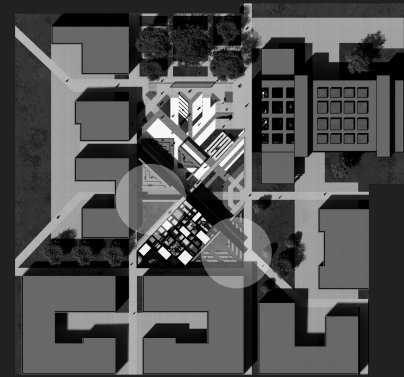
Community Cooking Areas







Studios and Workshops





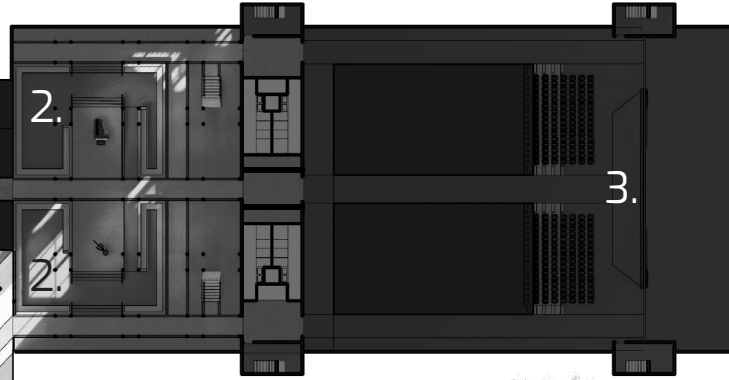
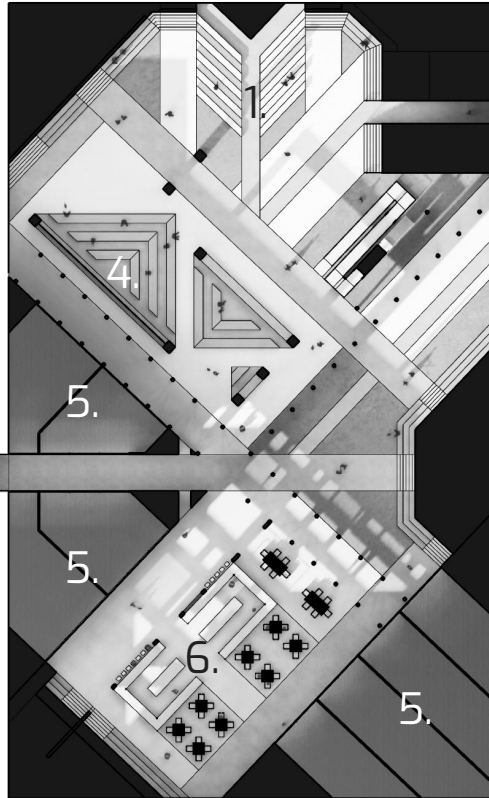


Other Spaces Around the Site





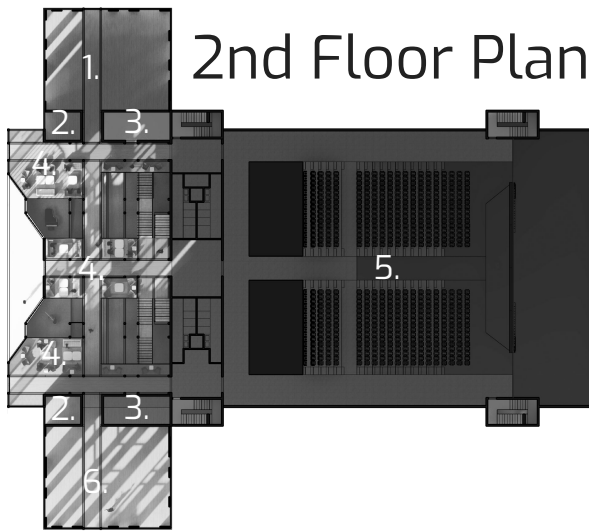
1st Floor Plan



1. Outdoor Stage Seating
2. Conversation Pits
3. Theater
4. Theater Portal & Seating
5. Artist Studios & Workshops
6. Community Kitchen & Seating



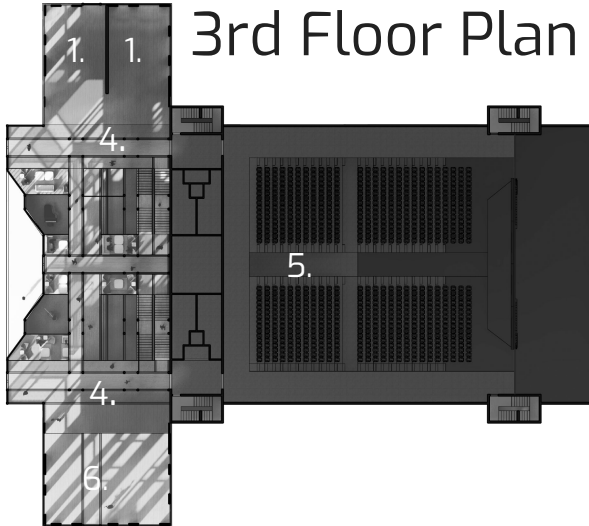
2nd Floor Plan



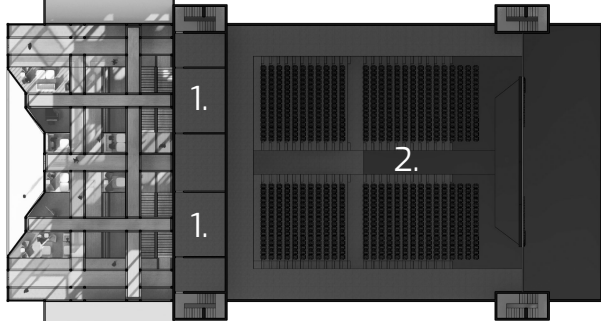
1. Practice Space
2. Information Booths
3. Food & Drinks
4. Lobby / Lounge
5. Theater
6. Small Performance Room



3rd Floor Plan



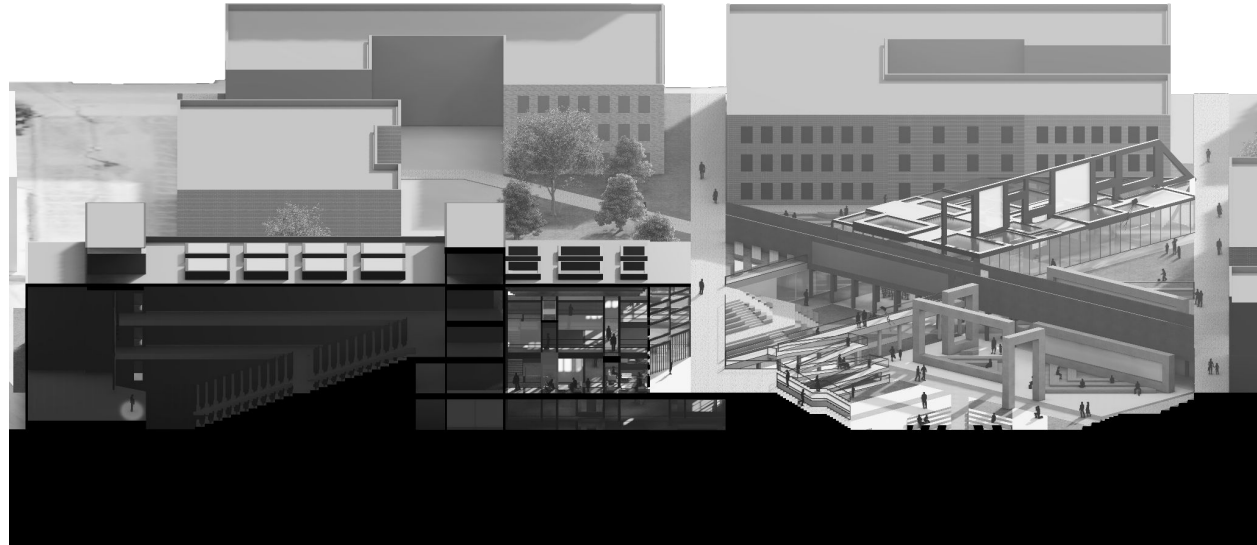
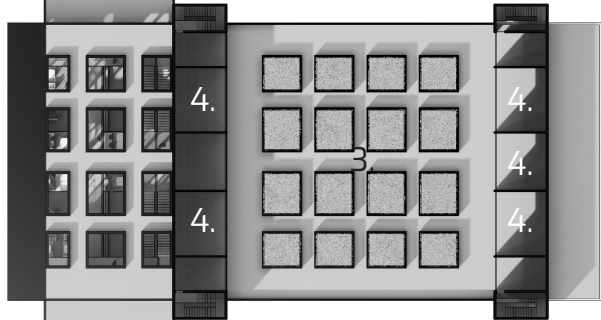
4th Floor Plan



1. Mechanical/Theater Control Rooms
2. Theater
3. Roof Gardens
4. Garden Storage



5th Floor Plan



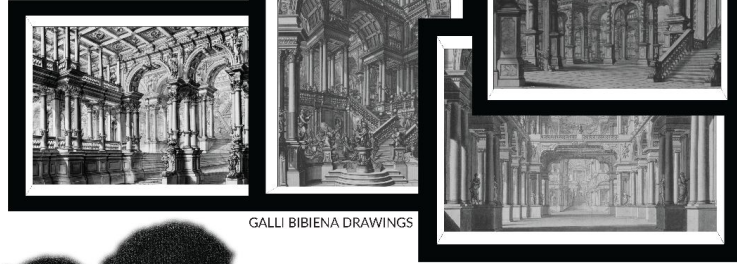
ILLUMINATING CONNECTIONS

A Theatrical Intervention in Urban Loneliness

Amidst the hustle of urban life, an epidemic of loneliness grips our modern cities, casting shadows upon the once vibrant display of community. Before the 19th century, public spaces thrived as stages where every encounter was a theatrical exchange, a space to recognize oneself through the presence of others. However, with time, the cityscape shifted, veiling the human connection behind privatization and specialization.

This project intertwines theater and urban intervention to capture the fleeting moments of human connection. Each scene serves as a bridge between solitude and community, inviting audiences to rediscover the beauty of shared experiences. Through storytelling, we can reignite the flame of interaction, breathing life into forgotten urban corners.

Located in the once-vibrant neighborhood of Cabrini-Green in Chicago, IL, this project will act as a new foundation for this redeveloping community, offering a beacon of hope amidst its storied past. It will function as a community hub, a stage for the play of urban life, where all are invited to participate. This redevelopment marks a unique opportunity to honor the past while forging a new path forward, bridging divides, and fostering belonging for generations to come.

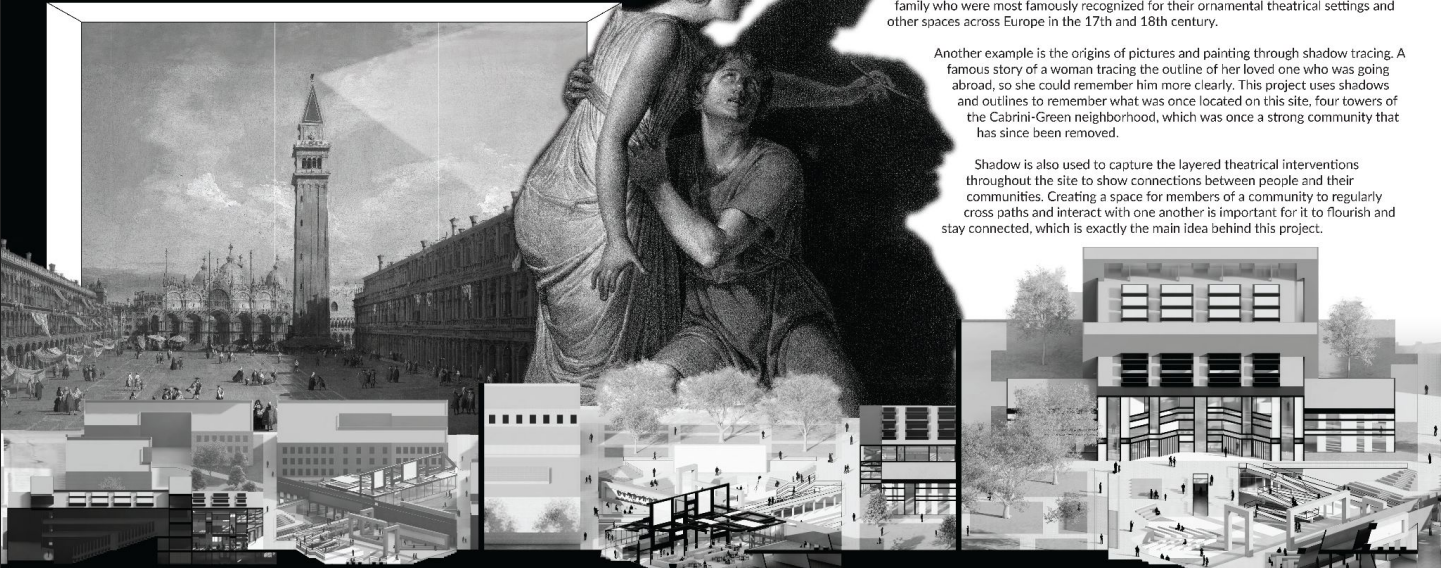


GALLI BIBIENA DRAWINGS

Inspiration for this project comes from historical examples from before the 19th century, which helps us to understand the differences in how people interacted and how poetic language influenced design. One of these examples comes from the Bibiena family who were most famously recognized for their ornamental theatrical settings and other spaces across Europe in the 17th and 18th century.

Another example is the origins of pictures and painting through shadow tracing. A famous story of a woman tracing the outline of her loved one who was going abroad, so she could remember him more clearly. This project uses shadows and outlines to remember what was once located on this site, four towers of the Cabrini-Green neighborhood, which was once a strong community that has since been removed.

Shadow is also used to capture the layered theatrical interventions throughout the site to show connections between people and their communities. Creating a space for members of a community to regularly cross paths and interact with one another is important for it to flourish and stay connected, which is exactly the main idea behind this project.



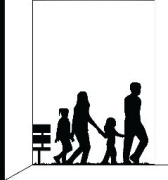
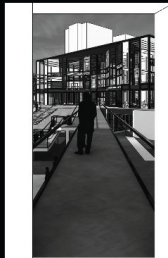
1.

2.

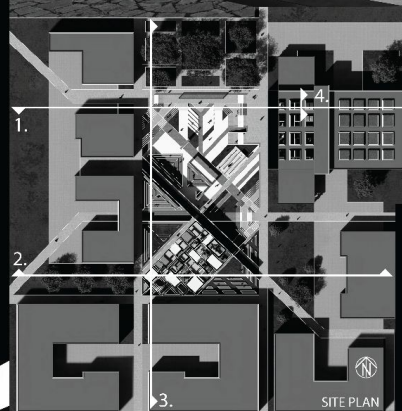
3.



Throughout this project, screens are intentionally positioned to enhance our awareness of presence, absence, and return. This concept is inspired by the site's history, which once housed a vibrant community rich in connections. Unfortunately, flawed urban planning led to the community's displacement. Now, with this project, the aim is to restore and strengthen these bonds.

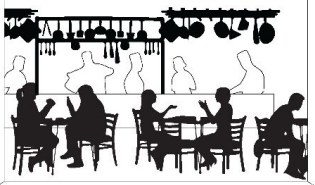


This project frames everyday urban interactions to highlight the evolution of theater and public spaces. Before the 19th century, theater was a communal activity, mirroring the inclusive nature of public life where everyone actively participated. In contrast, modern theater typically involves an audience quietly observing from their seats—a reflection of today's public life, where individuals often move through spaces in silence.



SITE PLAN

The southern half of the site is a blur between indoor and outdoor space which houses two community kitchens with seating nearby. Surrounding these kitchens are studio and teaching spaces for artists to create and community members to build new skills. These spaces serve as hubs for artistic expression and skill sharing, fostering community growth by offering a diverse array of both practical and artistic learning opportunities.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



FOURTH FLOOR PLAN



FIFTH FLOOR PLAN

The Cabrini-Green Performing Arts Center features a grand lounge area where guests can gather before and after performances, creating a welcoming atmosphere for social interaction. Additionally, the center has multiple practice spaces, an intimate performance area, and a large theater with seating for approximately 1,000 people, accommodating a range of events from small recitals to grand productions.



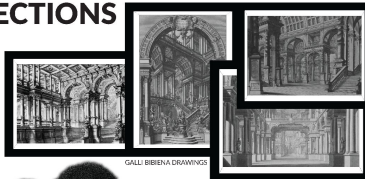
ILLUMINATING CONNECTIONS

A Theatrical Intervention in Urban Loneliness

Around the globe urban life, an epidemic of loneliness grips our modern cities, casting shadows upon the once vibrant life of our streets. Before the 17th century, public spaces thrived as places where many individuals would find common ground. A sense of recognition existed through the practices of shared behaviors, with time, the Chicago skyline, with the human connection faded, privatized and specialized.

This project intertwines theater and urban intervention to capture the fleeting moments of human connection. Each scene serves as a bridge between solitude and community, inviting audiences to rediscover the beauty of shared experiences. Through storytelling, we can reimagine the fabric of interaction, bringing life to forgotten urban corners.

Located in the once-vibrant neighborhood of Cabrini Green in Chicago, IL, this project will act as a new foundation for this redefining community, offering a beacon of hope amidst its troubled past. It will function as a community hub, a stage for the play of urban life, where all are invited to participate. This redevelopment marks a unique opportunity to honor the past while forging a new path forward, bringing tradition and listening alongside for generations to come.

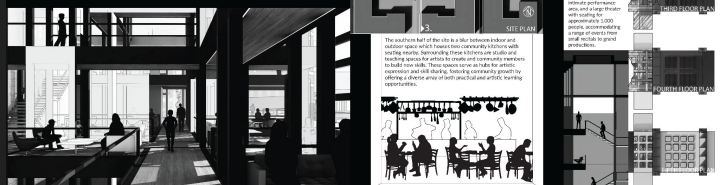
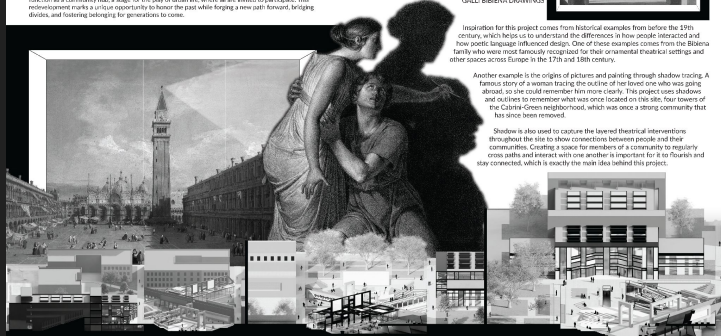


GALLIBIENA DRAWINGS

Inspiration for this project comes from historical examples from before the 17th century, which focus on affirming the differences between people, interactions and how poetic language influenced design. One of these examples comes from the Bibiena family who were most famous for creating theatrical settings and other spaces across Europe in the 17th and 18th century.

Another example is the origins of pictures and painting through shadow tracing. A famous story of a woman tracing the shadow of the loved one who was gone, so she could remember him more clearly. This project uses shadows and light in its intervention which was once located on the site. The houses of the Cabrini Green neighborhood, which was once a strong community that has since been removed.

Shadow is also used to capture the layered theatrical interventions throughout the site to show connections between people and their communities. Creating a space for moments of community to regularly cross paths and interact with one another is important for it to flourish and stay connected, which is exactly the main idea behind this project.



Through our 3D digital intervention, we aim to provide a visual and experiential understanding of the proposed architectural forms and spaces. This visualization is intended to be used as a tool for communication and collaboration, allowing stakeholders to explore and engage with the design process. The goal is to create a shared vision and foster a sense of ownership and investment in the project.



The Cabrini Green Redevelopment Center will be a multi-phase project that will include a mix of residential, commercial, and public spaces. The project is designed to be a model of sustainable and inclusive development, with a focus on creating a vibrant and thriving community. The project is expected to be completed by 2025, with a total investment of \$200 million.

The outdoor market will be a key feature of the development, providing a space for vendors and customers to interact and enjoy the local products. The market will be located in a central area of the development, with a mix of outdoor seating and shade structures. The market is expected to be a popular destination for residents and visitors alike, providing a unique and authentic experience.



Thank you

Sources

The Craft of "Then and Now" Photography,
https://www.fourmilab.ch/images/lignieres_then_and_now/craft.html By
John Walker

Piazza San Marco,
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/435839> By
Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal), Late 1720's

<https://pxhere.com/en/photo/546336>

A Dance in the Country,
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437812> By
Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo, 1755

The Martyrdom of St. Agnes in the Roman Forum,
<https://www.wikiart.org/en/joseph-desire-court/the-martyrdom-of-st-agnes-in-the-roman-forum> By Joseph Desire Court, n.d.

The Donation of Rome,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:La_Donazione_di_Roma.jpg
By Gianfrancesco Penni, 1520-24

Mozart Berlin,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mozart_Berlin_1789.jpg
By Unknown, 1789

The Ideal City of Chaux by Claude-Nicolas Ledoux,
<https://socks-studio.com/2016/11/09/the-ideal-city-of-chaux-by-claude-nicolas-ledoux-1773-1806/> By Claude-Nicolas Ledoux,
1773-1806

Doge Enrico Dandolo crowns Baldovino the first emperor of the
Latin Empire of Constantinople,
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/814778> By
Giacomo Leonardis, 1745-94

The Triumph of Aemilius Paulus,
<https://www.wikiart.org/en/carle-vernet/the-triumph-of-aemilius-paulus>
By Carle Vernet, 1789

Loneliness in the City,
<https://gemmaschiebdefineart.wordpress.com/tag/photography/> By
gemmaschiebdefineart, 2014

From The New York Public Library. Retrieved from
<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e4-0f0f-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

The Invention of Drawing,
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph-Beno%C3%AEt_Suv%C3%A9e_\(Belgian_-_The_Invention_of_Drawing_\(recto\);_Sketch_of_Lower_Leg_Bones_of_Human_Skeleton_\(verso\)\)_-_Gogle_Art_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph-Beno%C3%AEt_Suv%C3%A9e_(Belgian_-_The_Invention_of_Drawing_(recto);_Sketch_of_Lower_Leg_Bones_of_Human_Skeleton_(verso))_-_Gogle_Art_Project.jpg) By Joseph-Benoît Suvée, 1791

The Round Tower, from "Carceri d'invenzione" (Imaginary Prisons),
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/337725> By
Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1749-50

Sources (cont.)

Le Canigou. (1921)

<https://buffaloakg.org/artworks/rca19475-le-canigou>

Galleria fotografica.

<https://egov5.halleysardegna.com/villagrande/zf/index.php/galleria-fotografica/index/album/album/13> By Unknown, n.d.

Vergara, C. J., photographer. (1988) Cabrini Green Homes, view SE from W. Division St. and N. Cleveland St., Chicago. United States Illinois Chicago, 1988. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2020703770/>.

Vergara, C. J., photographer. (1998) View SE from 534 Division St., Cabrini Green, Chicago. United States Illinois Chicago, 1998. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2020695596/>.

Engraving of The Royal Worcester porcelain works beside the Worcester and Birmingham Canal

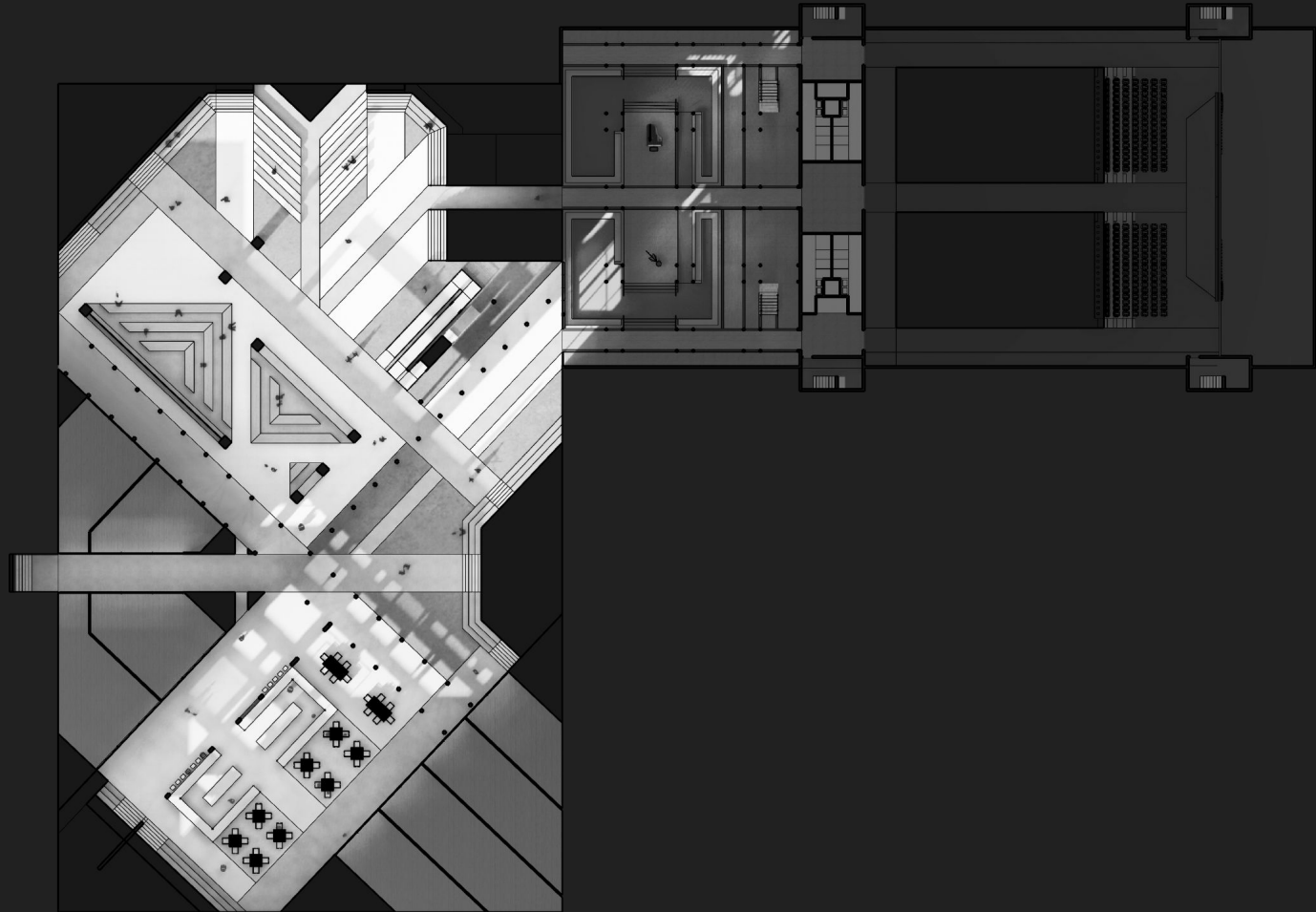
<https://www.sciencephoto.com/media/988579/view/the-worcester-royal-porcelain-works-c1880>, Public Domain,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=109678963>

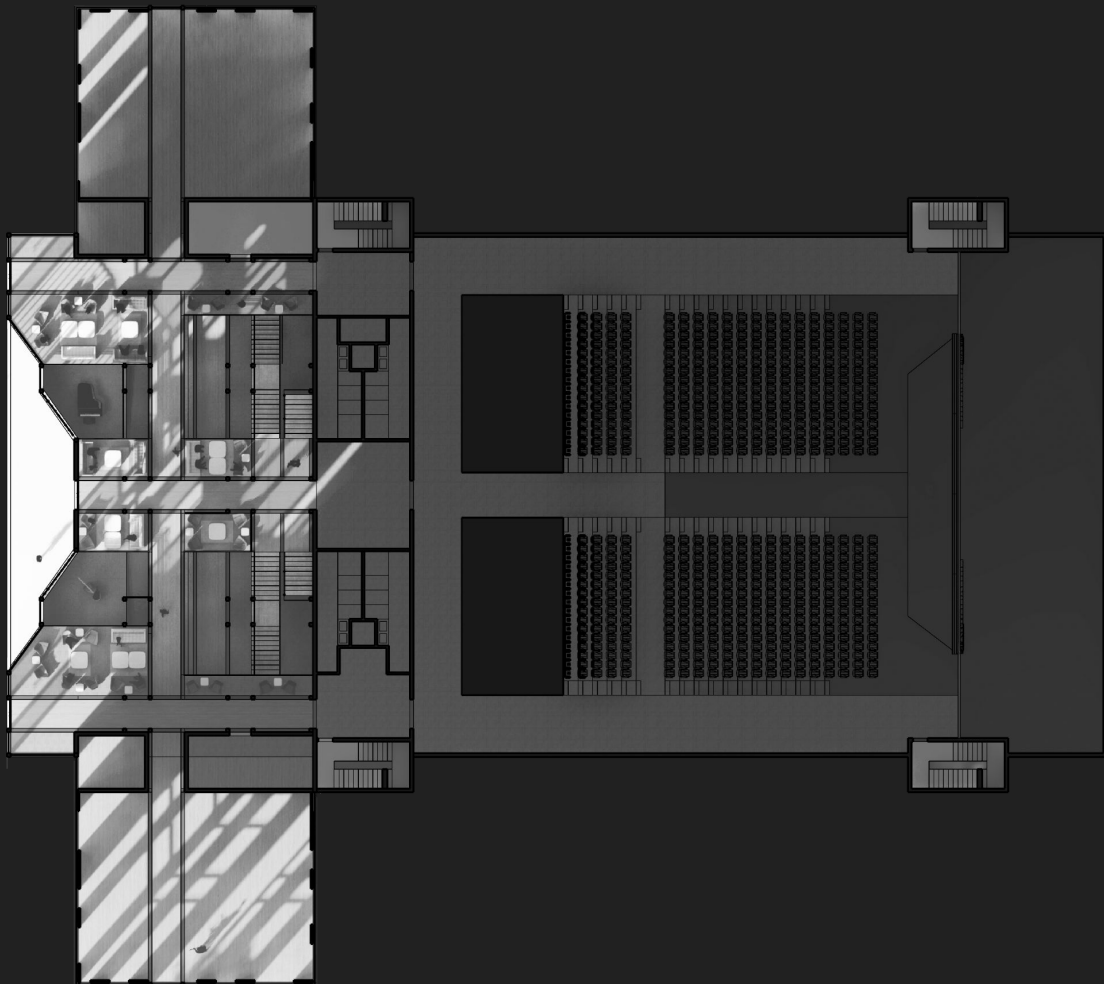
By Unknown Victorian era engraver 1880

Additional Information

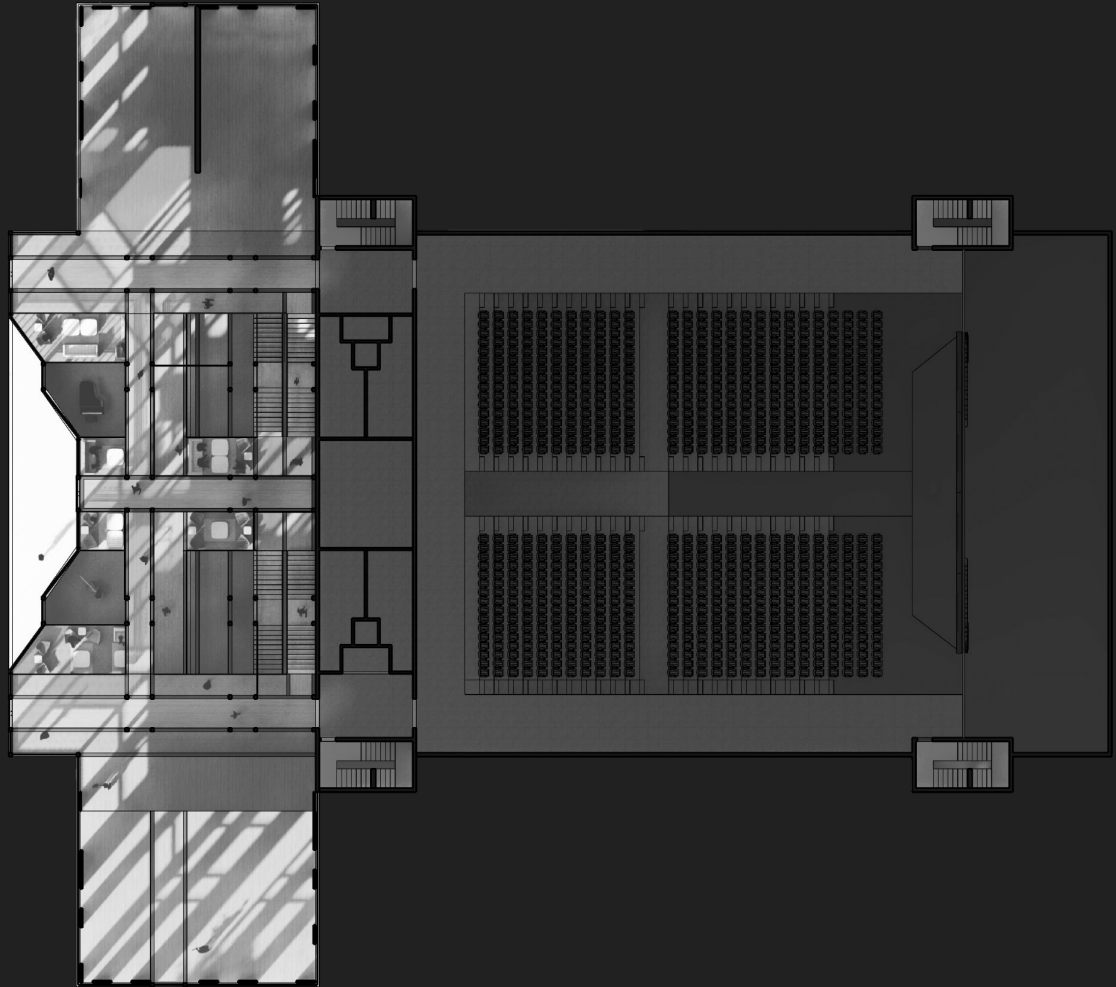
1st Floor Plan



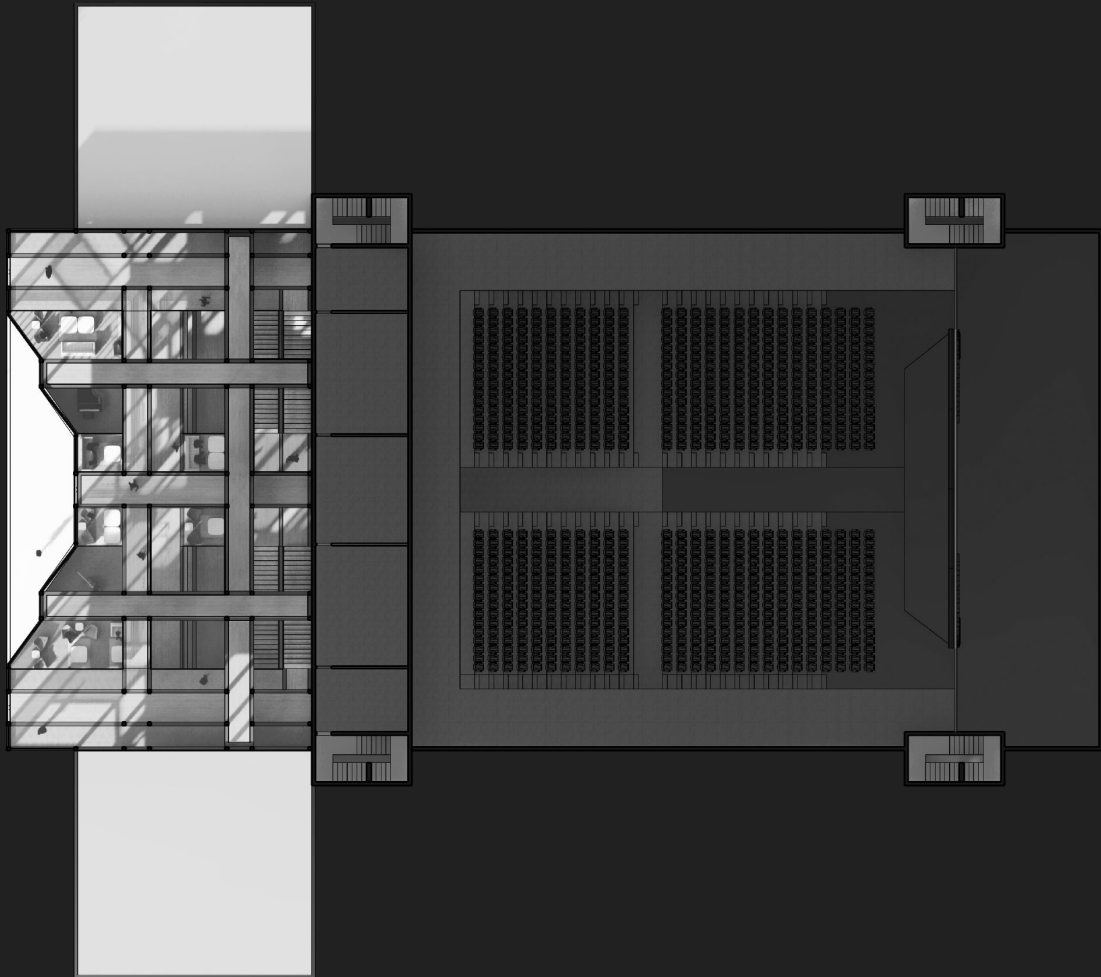
2nd Floor Plan



3rd Floor Plan



4th Floor Plan



5th Floor Plan

