

RECLAIM  
REFRAME  
REIMAGINE

LESLIE LI   GSAPP   2022-2025

This portfolio presents a series of architectural interventions that begin with reclamation—not only of space, but of social relevance, cultural memory, and ecological potential. Through reframing the familiar—from silos to schools, shelters to urban voids—each project questions the boundaries of typology, use, and public identity. In doing so, they propose alternative futures: spaces reimaged not as isolated objects, but as systems of care, resistance, and transformation embedded in the city. This is a practice of architecture as agency—one that listens, adapts, and acts.

# RECLAIM

Reclaiming space, systems, and meaning from the remnants of the past.

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# REFRAME

Reframing urban conditions to address climate, equity, and visibility.

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# REIMAGINE

Reimagining futures through radical speculation and systems redesign.

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From Silo to Soil, From Monument to Movement



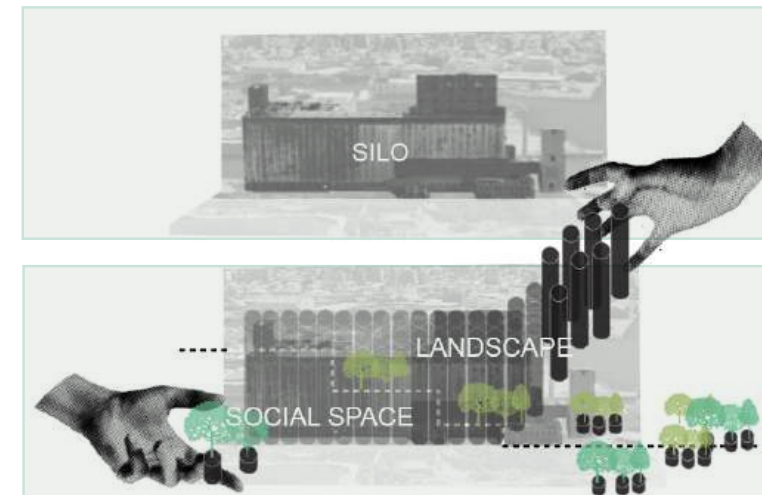
GBX Gowanus Bay Terminal, 699 Columbia St South, Brooklyn, NY

# SiloScape: Reclaiming Red Hook Grain Terminal as Urban Landscape Infrastructure

Individual Project

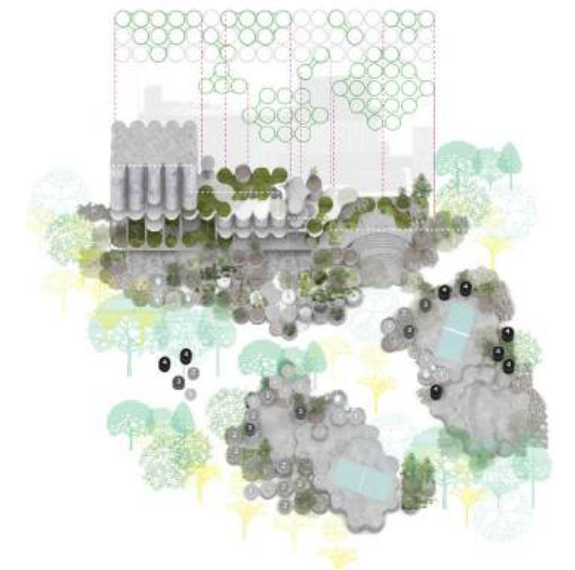
Instructor: Laurie Hawkinson

Project Type: Adaptive Reuse | Community Center & Urban Landscape  
Columbia GSAPP Advance VI Studio Project



Red Hook has long been defined by its industrial waterfront identity, marked by massive infrastructures like the Grain Terminal—monolithic, defensive, and spatially detached from the surrounding neighborhood. As the community evolves and demands for public space grow, the site presents an opportunity to reclaim a silo not as a relic of isolation, but as a catalyst for urban integration and environmental renewal.

This project proposes to strategically cut and reclaim portions of the existing concrete silo structure, transforming the removed material into a new landscape infrastructure. These reclaimed elements will be reused on-site to create terraced green spaces, ecological buffers, and public gathering zones that reconnect the site with its bayfront and adjacent sports fields. Simultaneously, parts of the silo will be opened to restore visual and spatial permeability, offering bay views and human-scale experiences previously blocked by the massive industrial volume.



At the heart of this transformation is the principle: Social Space = Landscape. The project dissolves the boundary between architecture and landscape, creating a continuous field that supports markets, performances, and communal life—while grounding its material practice in sustainable reuse and adaptive urbanism.



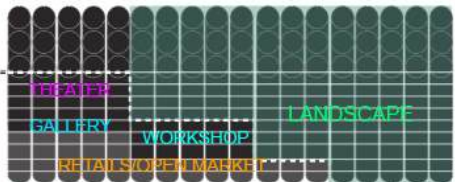
The site is positioned at a key intersection of circulation between campus, public institutions, and adjacent neighborhoods. Existing spatial barriers limit programmatic connections and block critical visual corridors. The surrounding fabric is fragmented, with cultural, academic, and administrative programs dispersed across disconnected zones.



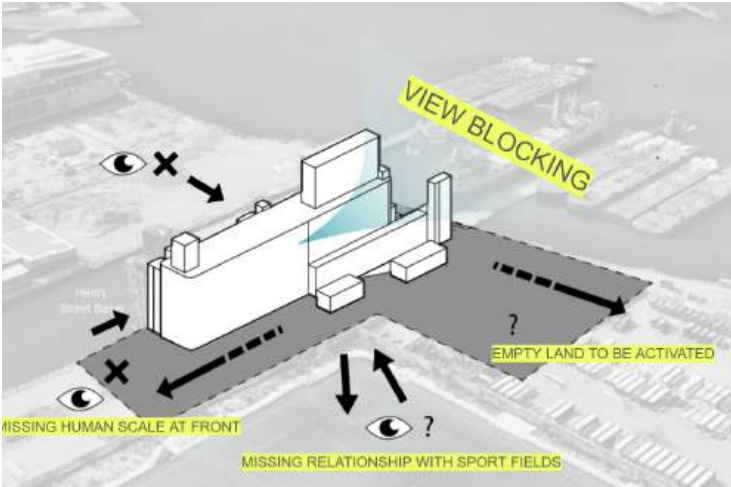
Site: Schools, Sports, Factory, Ikea



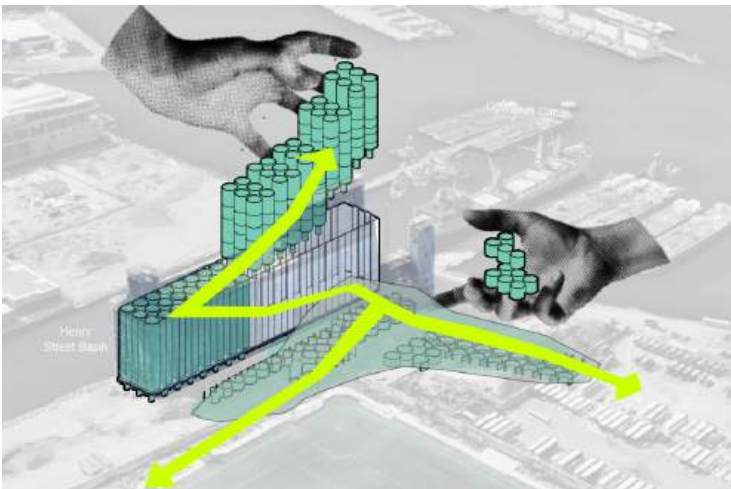
Site & Needs



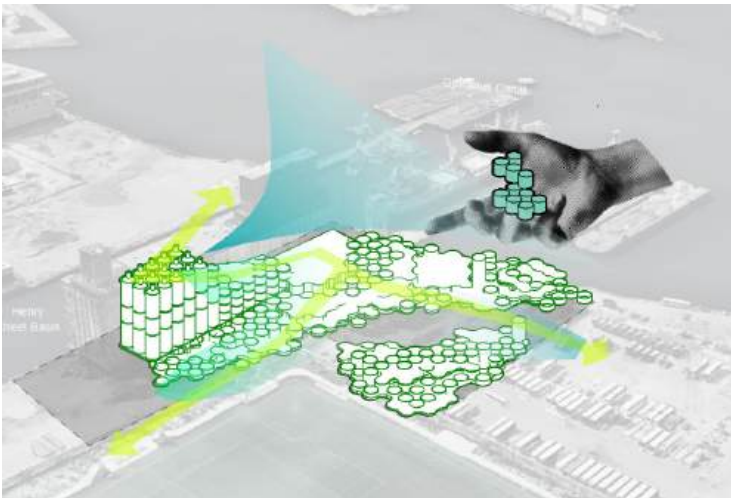
New Programs Reflected Needs



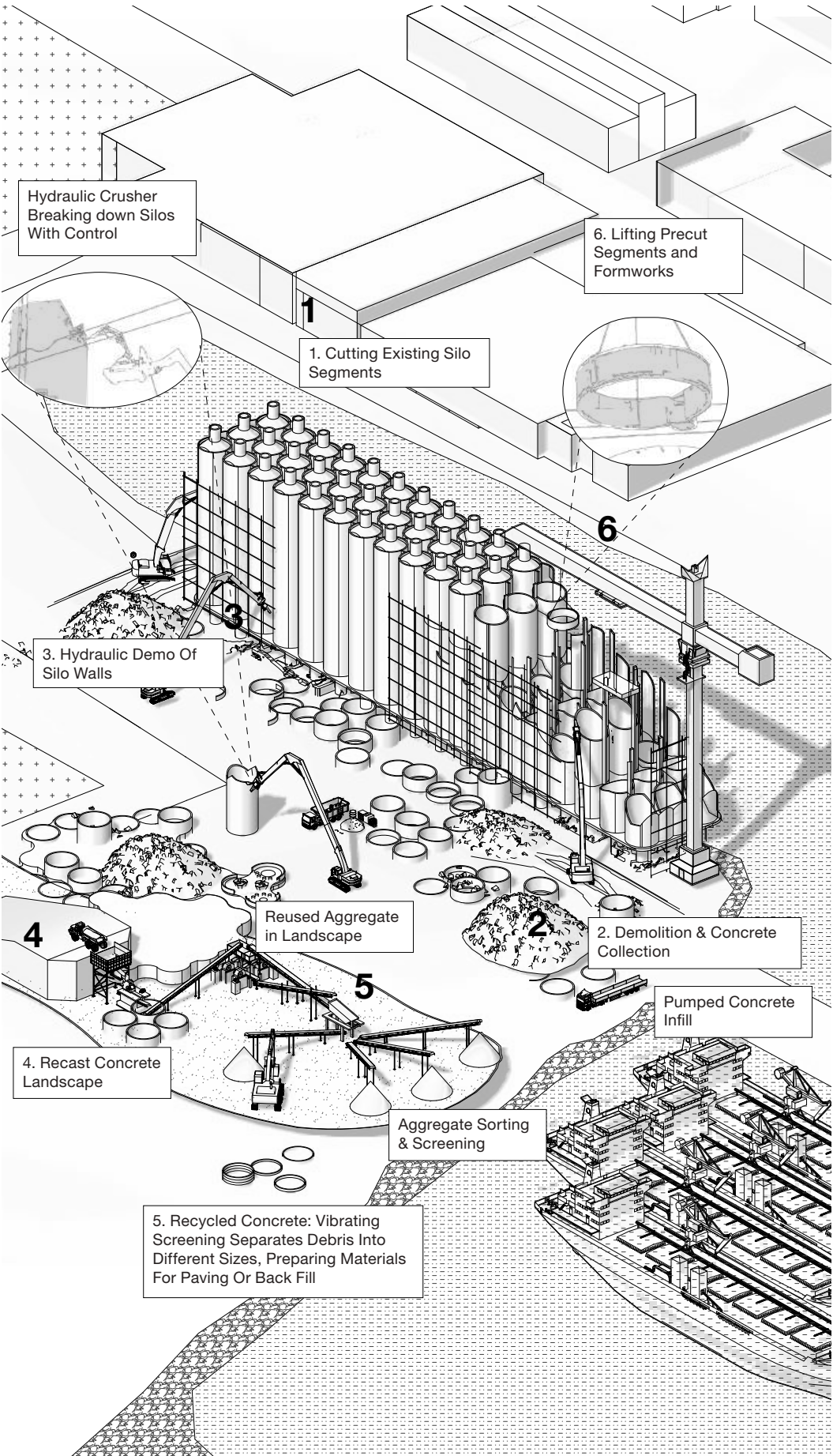
Existing: View Bloking, Mass Scale



Silo Factory As Material Inventory



Cut Down and Re-use Materials



Adaptive Demo + Material Recovery Process



Existing 48 Silos



Revealing The View, Reducing The Mass

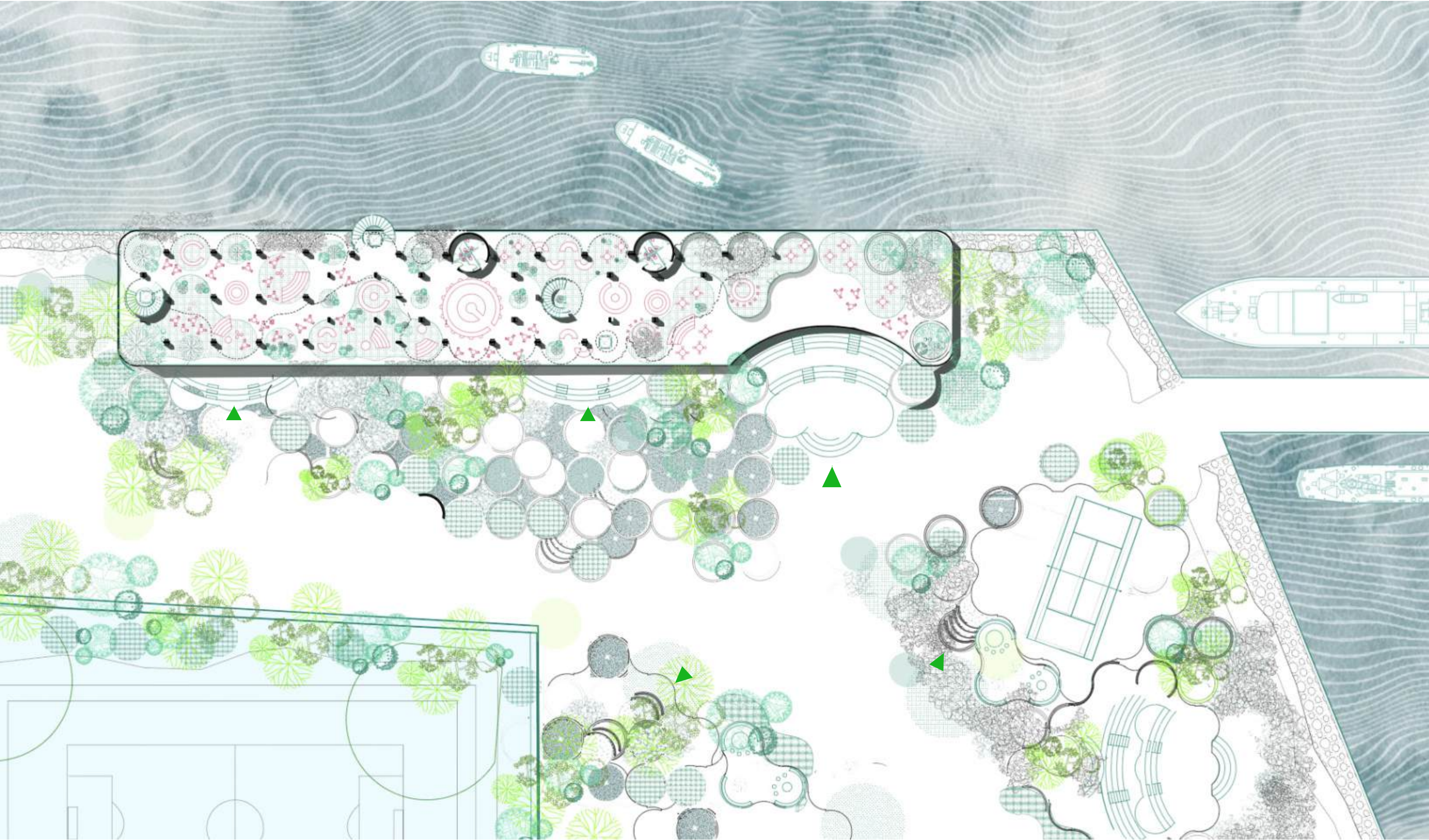


Re-using Materials into Landscape



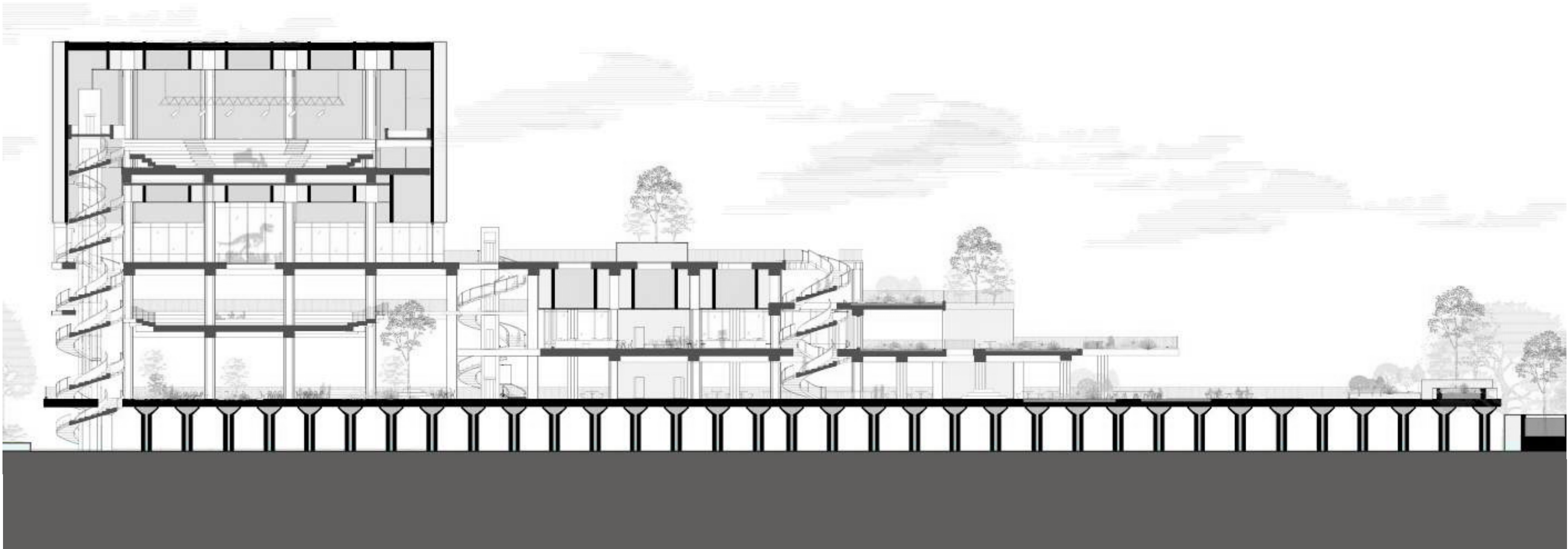
Building New Relationship With Site





Site & Ground Level Open Market Floor Plan









West Facing Elevation View













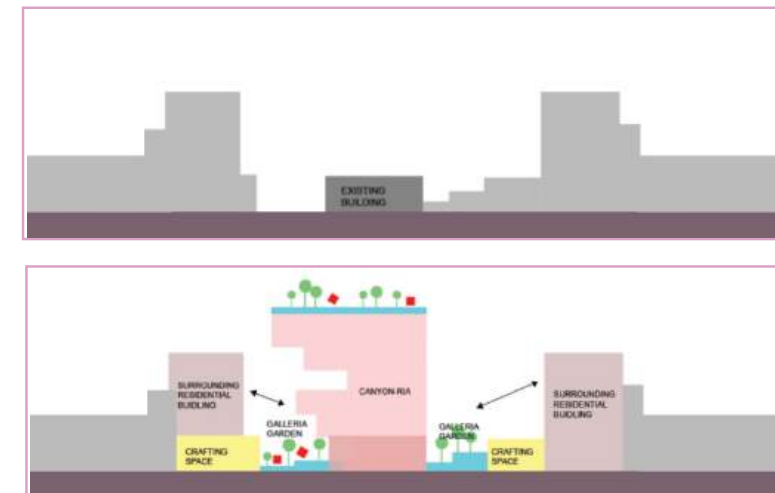
## Gallery Meets Valley: The Convergence of Art and Residence

Collabrator: Anson Lee

Instructor: Eric Bunge

Project Type: Adaptive Reuse | Mixed-use Residential Complex

Columbia GSAPP Core III Studio Project



“Canyon-ria” is an architectural project that reimagines the Roman arcade within the design of new housing. It mixes various housing types with shared living spaces, creating a seamless blend of private, public, and open areas. This design fosters community engagement.

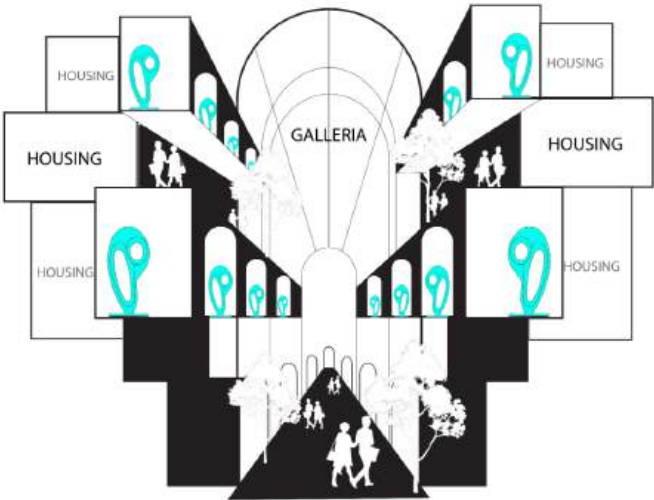
Canyon-ria combines traditional red brick with steel and glass, respecting Harlem’s architectural heritage while introducing a new communal aesthetic, described as a “gentle handshake” with neighboring buildings. More than just housing, it re-shapes urban interactions, blending residential, educational, and artistic spaces. This layout encourages a natural flow of urban life from West 128 Street to Convent Avenue.



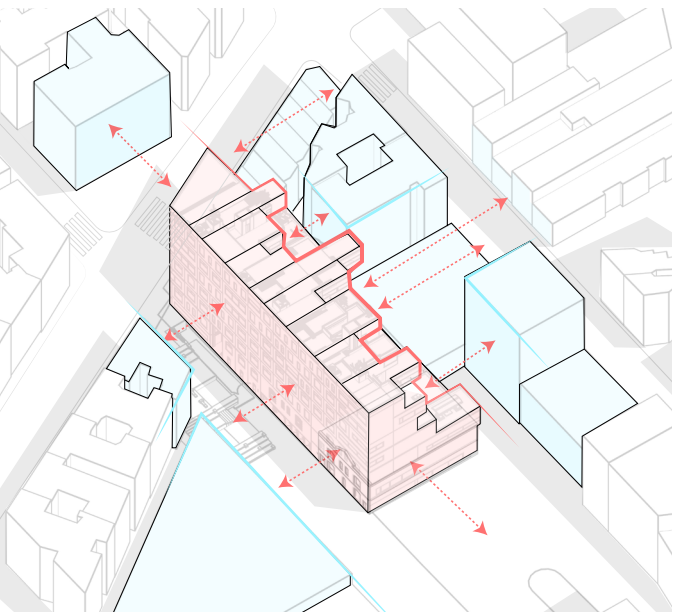
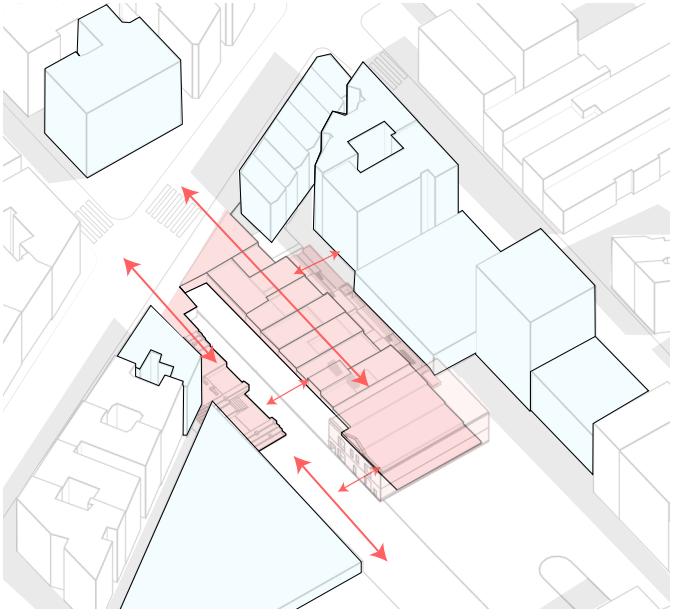
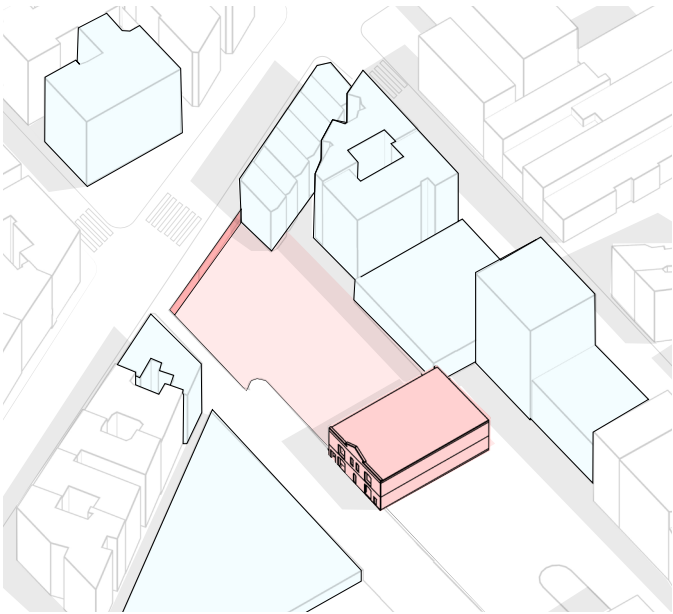
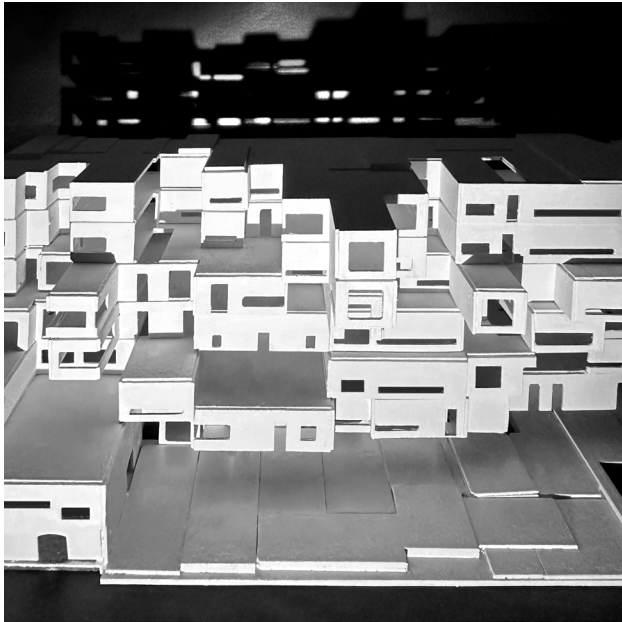
Inspired by the blend of traditional corridor galleries and arcade streets that merge exterior environments with interior programs, this design weaves housing into the mix to form a novel space for art and living.



Art & Galleria, Indoor & Outdoor

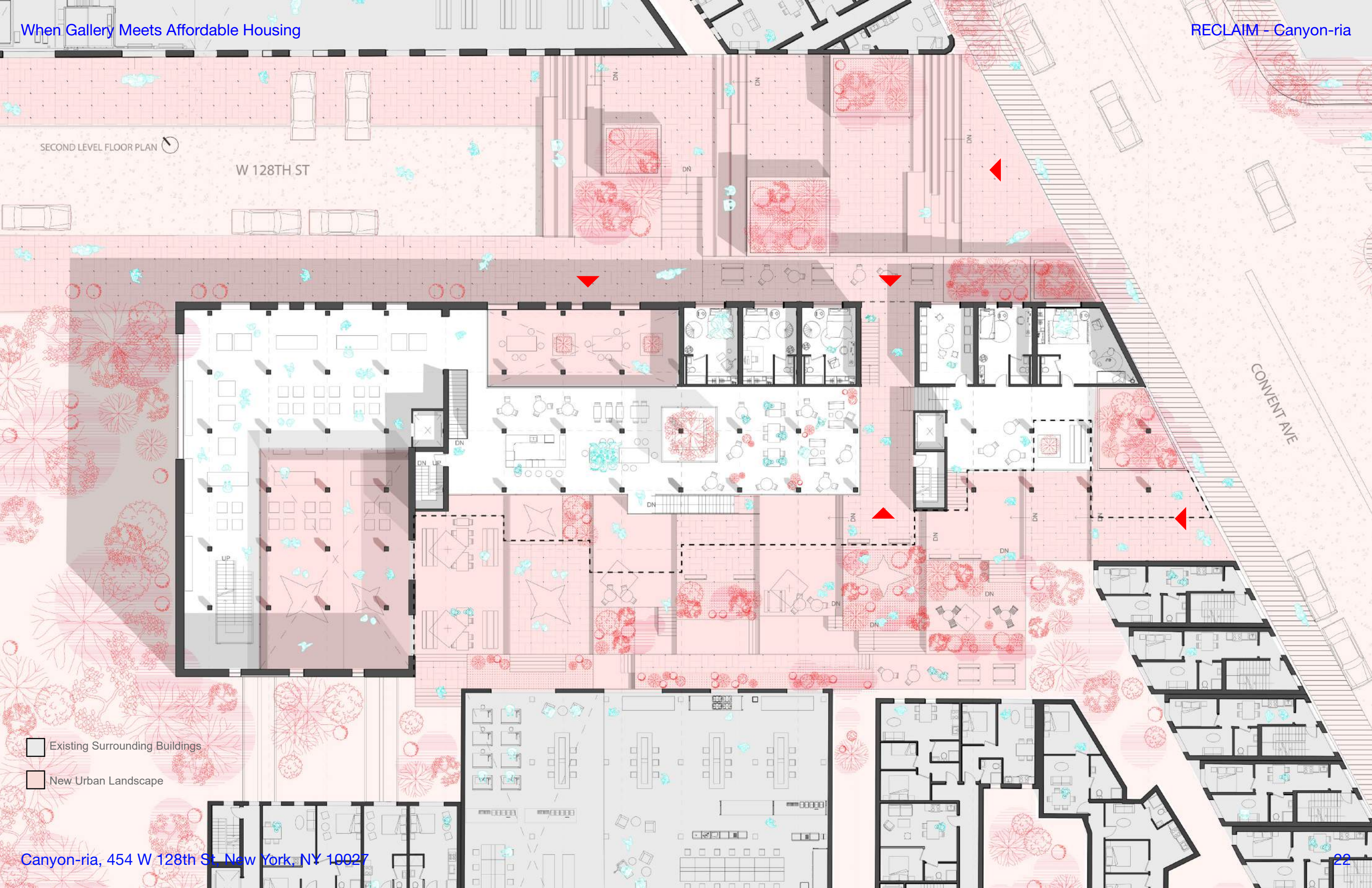


Galleria & Housing,  
Art & Living, Indoor & Outdoor



The existing 12-foot elevation difference between the former factory building and the adjacent street level becomes a critical design catalyst. Rather than leveling the site, the proposal embraces the topographic condition by transforming it into a stepped landscape that layers circulation, public programming, and residential access. This stepped intervention not only softens the threshold between building and ground but also introduces new spatial porosity—blending vertical movement with programmed terraces to activate both the roofscape and the urban edge.







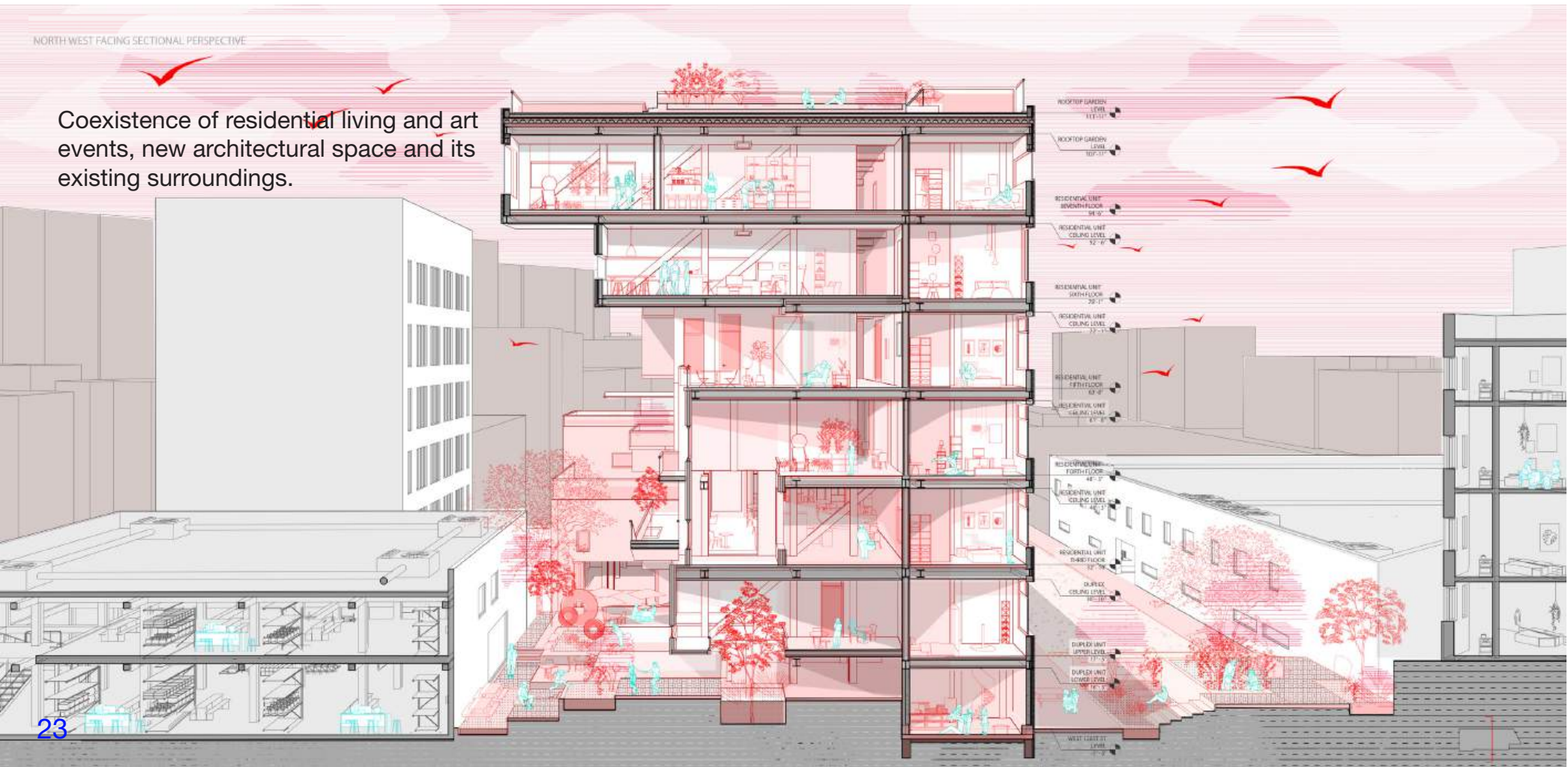
W 128TH ST

Extruded communal areas encompass the residents' living spaces.

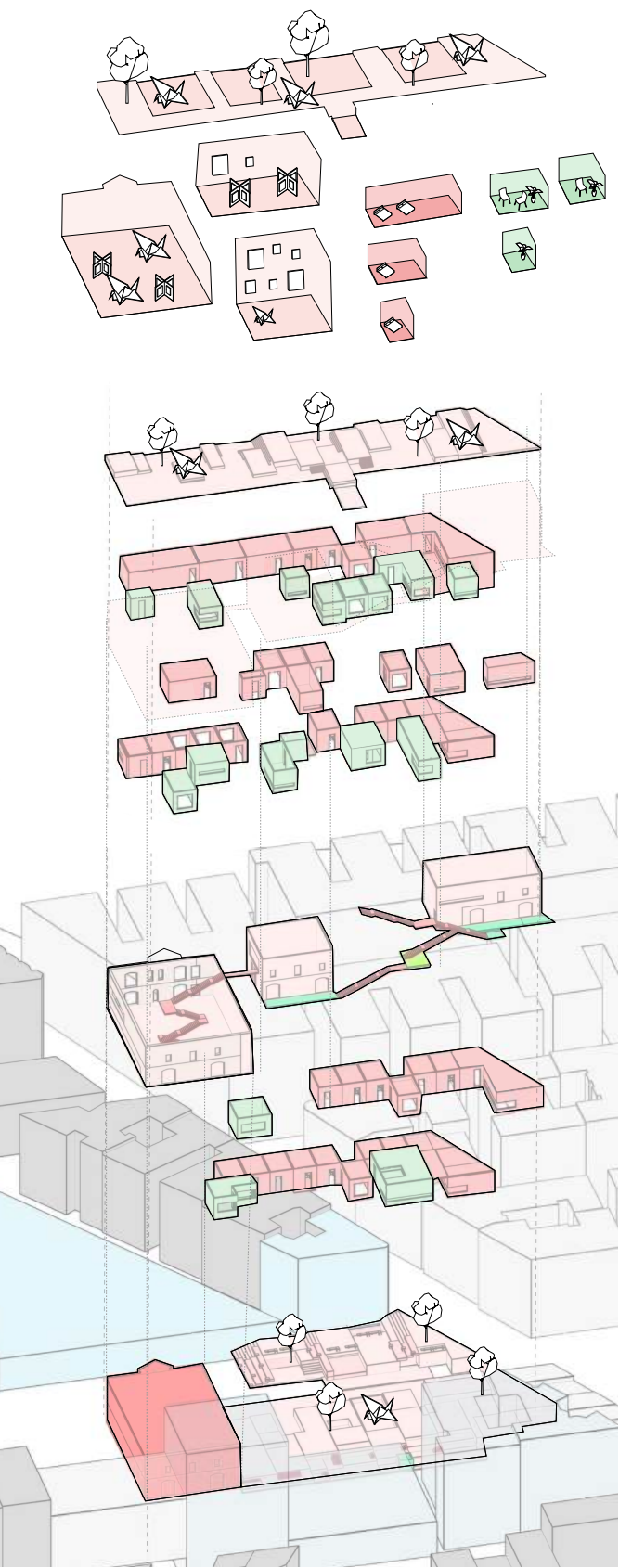


NORTH WEST FACING SECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Coexistence of residential living and art events, new architectural space and its existing surroundings.



- Garden/ Art Exhibition/ Event Area
- Residential Area
- Existing Building
- Communal Program
- Existing Surrounding Buildings









Turning the previous 12-foot level difference into a fresh urban relaxation area, providing a new entrance to the building and the neighborhood.







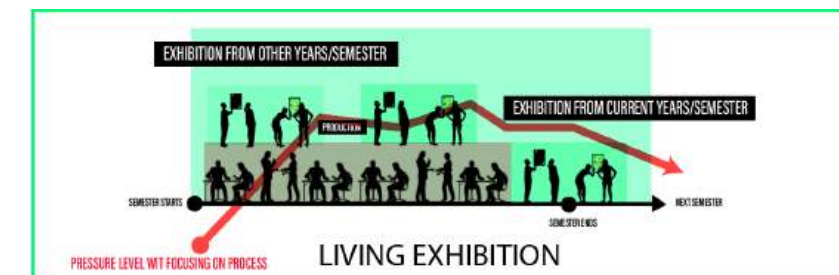
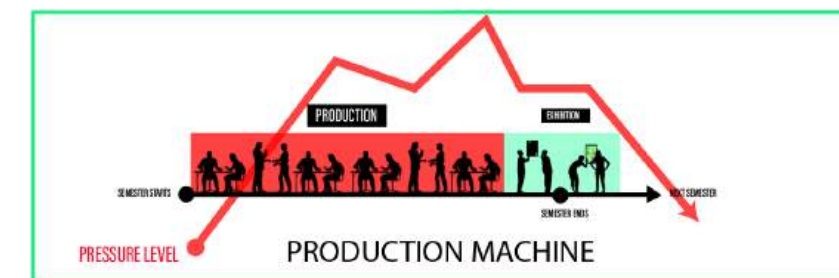
## Living Exhibition: An Architecture School as a Living Archive of Collective Effort

Individual Project

Instructor: Bryony Robert

Project Type: Adaptive Reuse | Education Institution Renovation

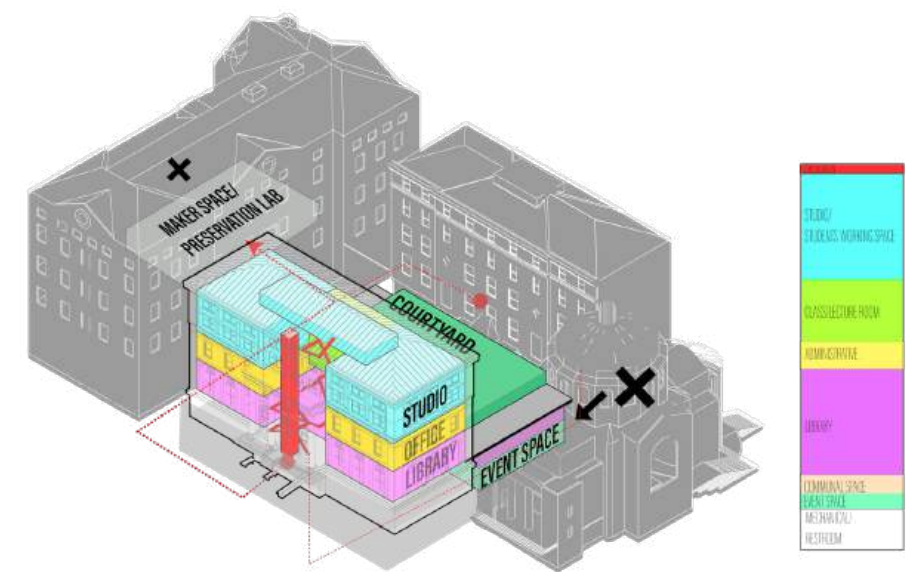
Columbia GSAPP ADV V Studio Project



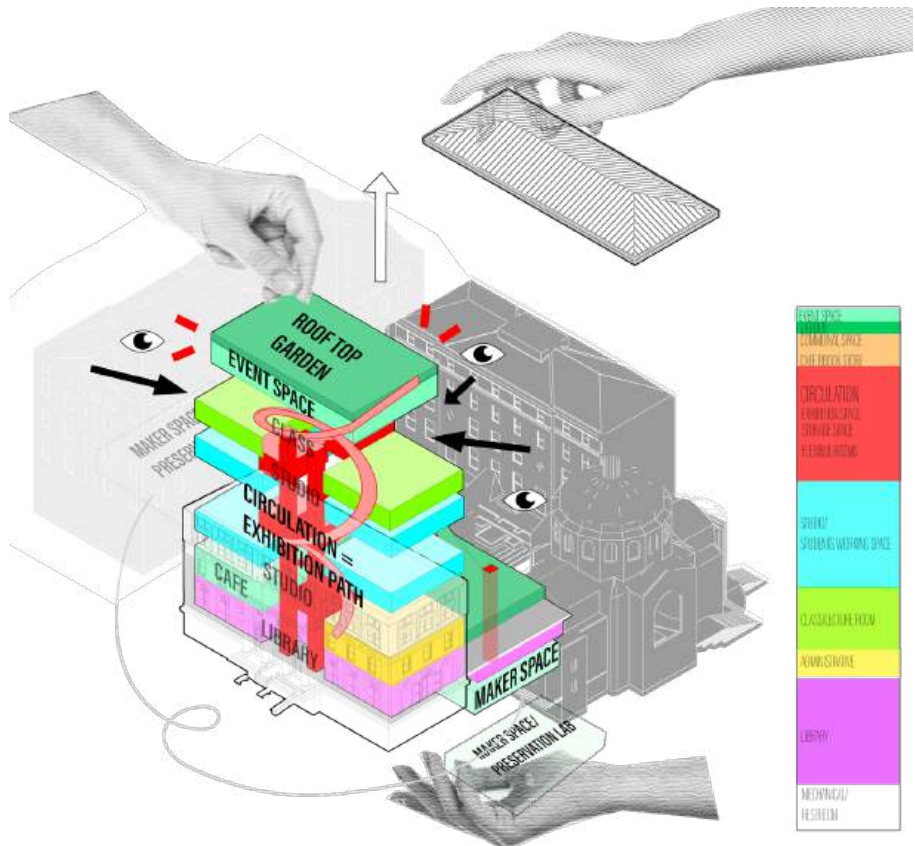
The current condition of Avery Hall limits opportunities for students to engage in communal discussions and exchange ideas, as the existing layout isolates studios and classrooms across different floors. To address this, the project proposes an extension that creates dedicated communal spaces to foster interaction and collaboration.

By adding an extension to the top of the building and relocating public event programs such as lectures and exhibitions there, the journey to these events becomes an experiential path. This circulation route intentionally passes through all studios and classrooms, transforming it into a dynamic exhibition of students' work and processes. This approach not only enhances connectivity within the school but also celebrates the collective creativity and intellectual exchange of the architecture community.





Existing Programs Spatial Distribution:  
Enclosed & Isolated

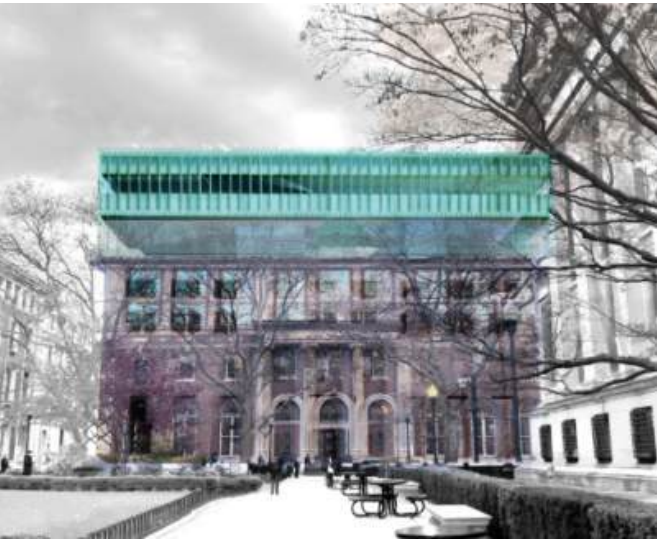


New Program Spatial Distribution:  
Exposed Exhibition of Moments In Avery Hall

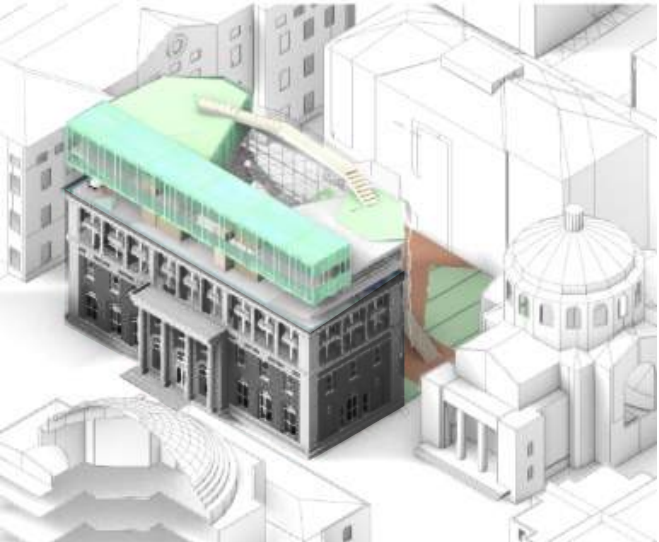
The original spatial capacity of Avery Hall has reached its limit, forcing many related programs to relocate elsewhere. While preserving the Avery Hall Library as a core feature, this project introduces a new addition to expand functionality and address the space limitations.



Existing Building VS. New extension



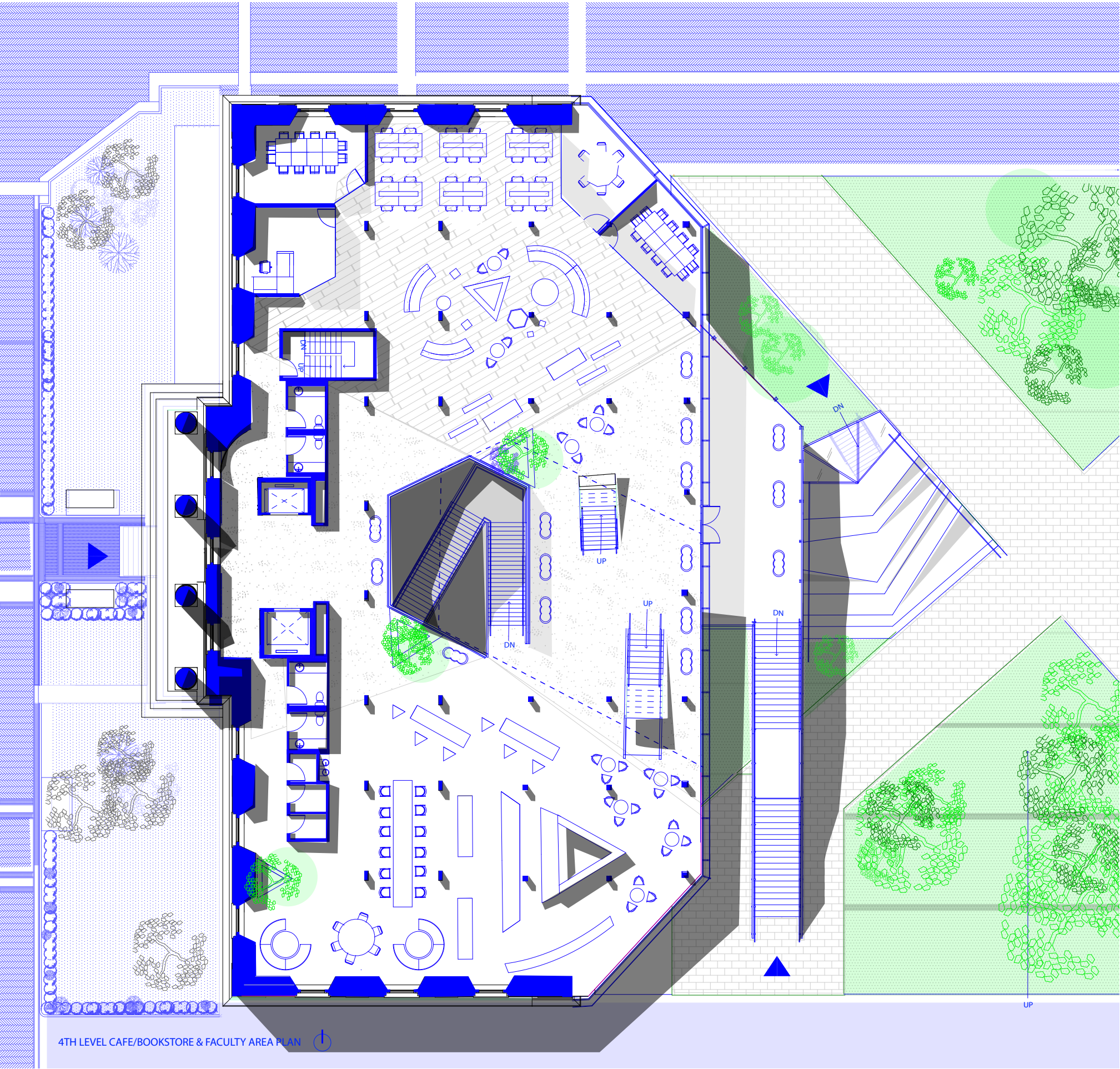
Front & Back Facade



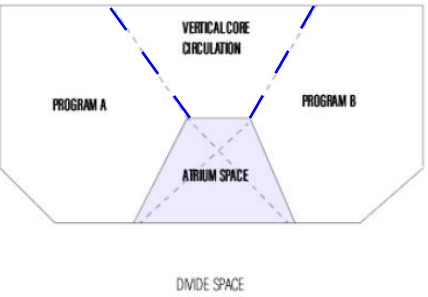
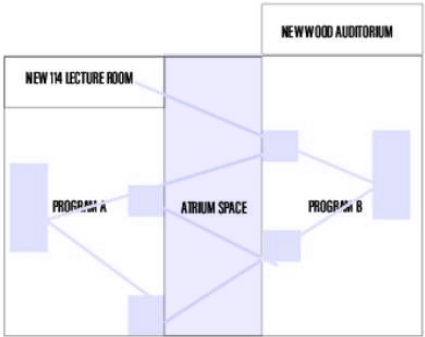
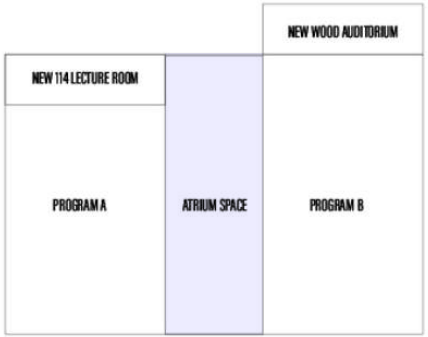
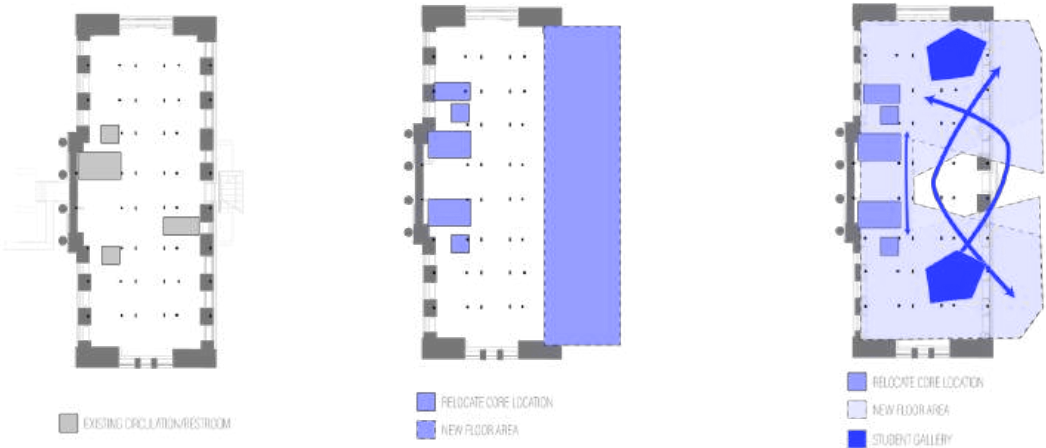
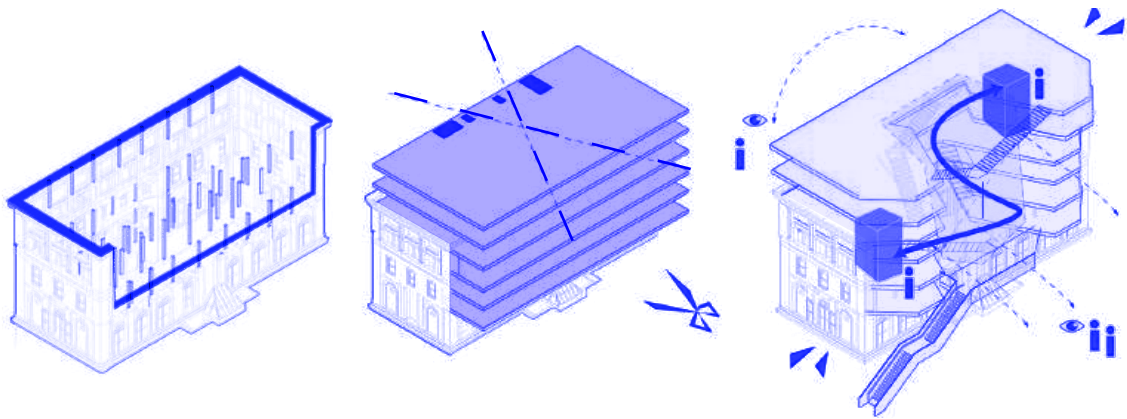
New Extension & Surrounding Buildings



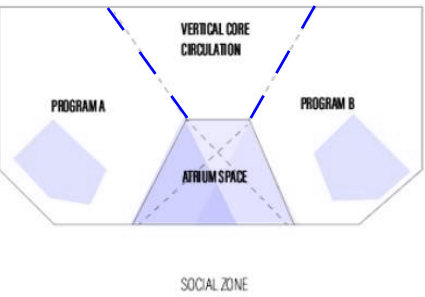




4th Floor Plan

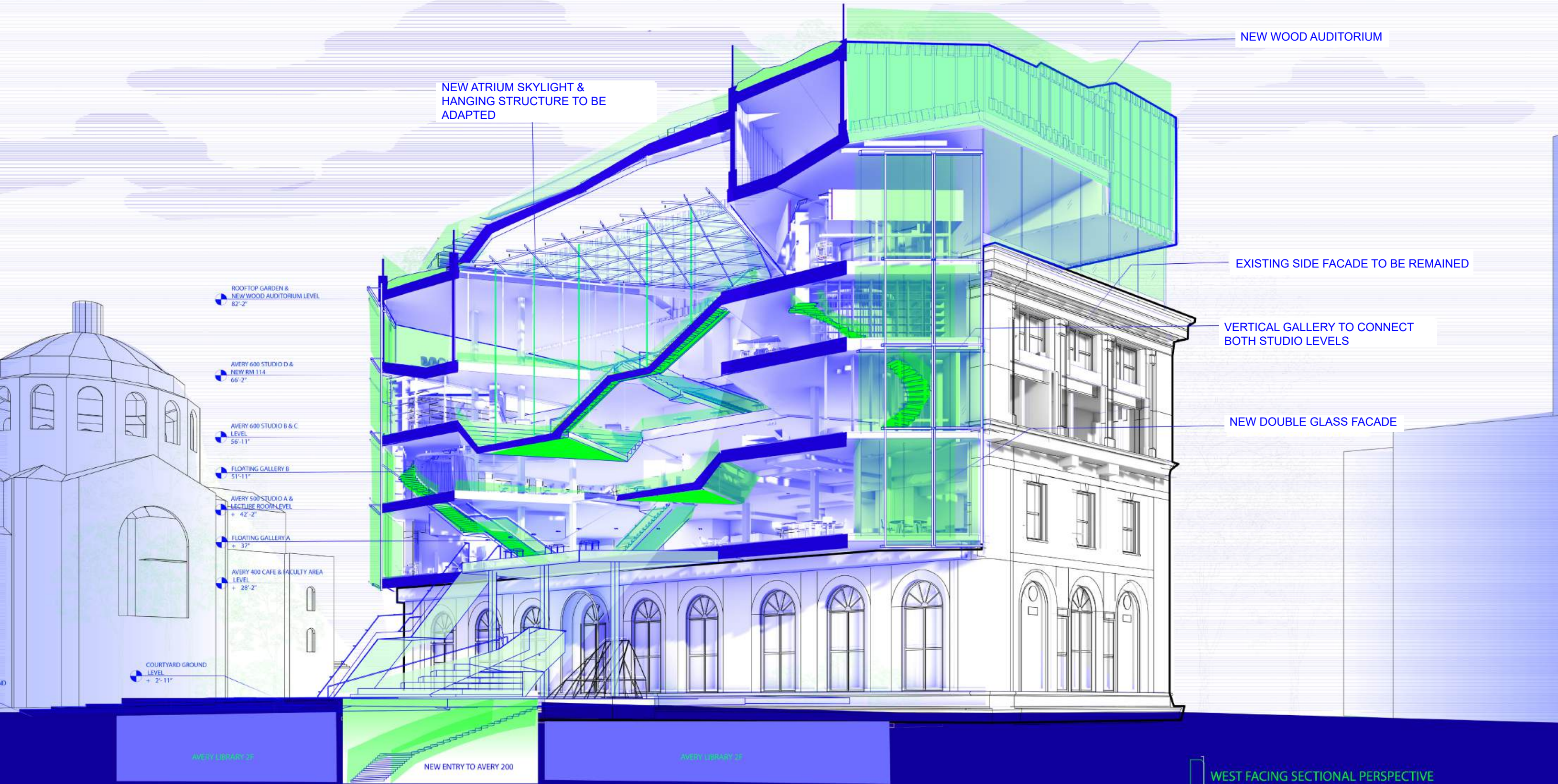


DIVIDE SPACE

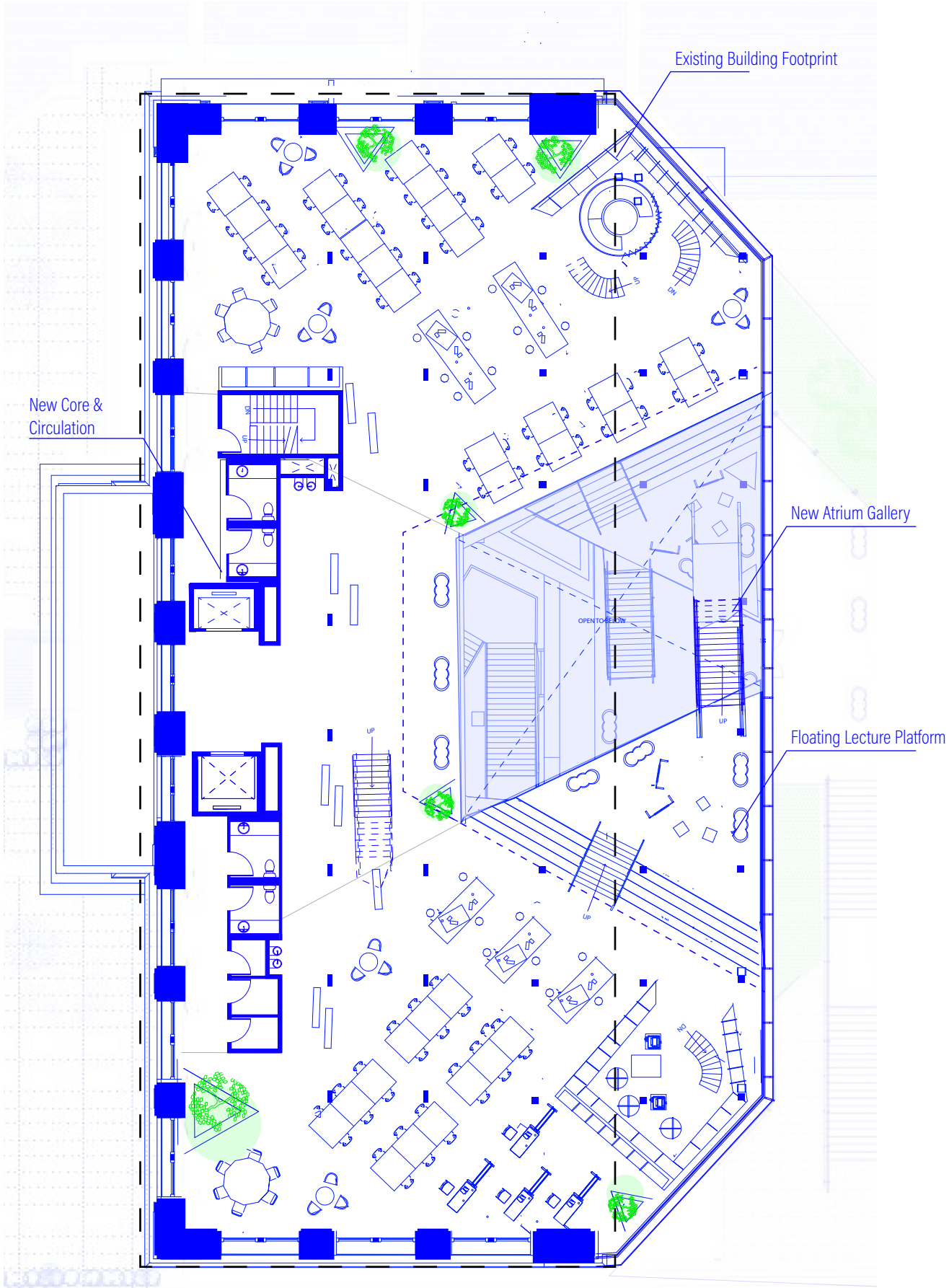


SOCIAL ZONE









6TH LEVEL STUDIO PLAN











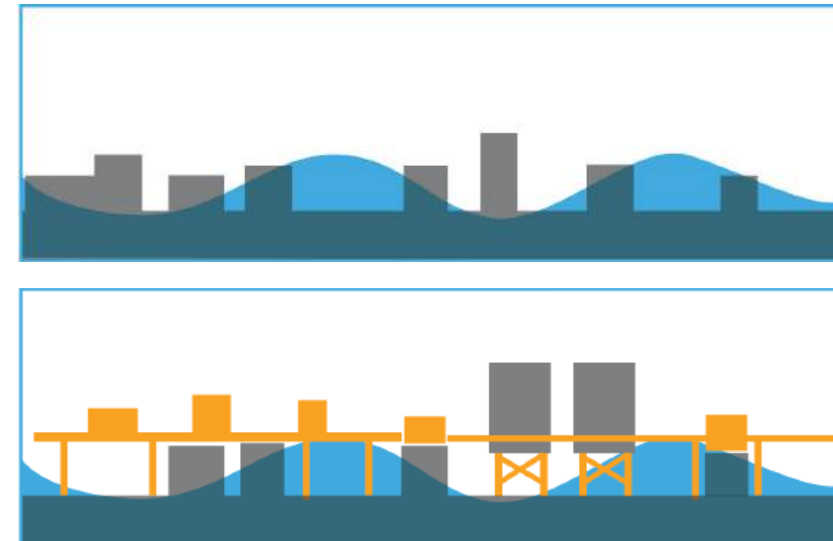
# Raising Water: Reframing Rockaway Beach Resiliency Community

Individual Project

Instructor: Feifei Zhou

Project Type: Urban Research & Design

Columbia GSAPP Advance V Studio Project



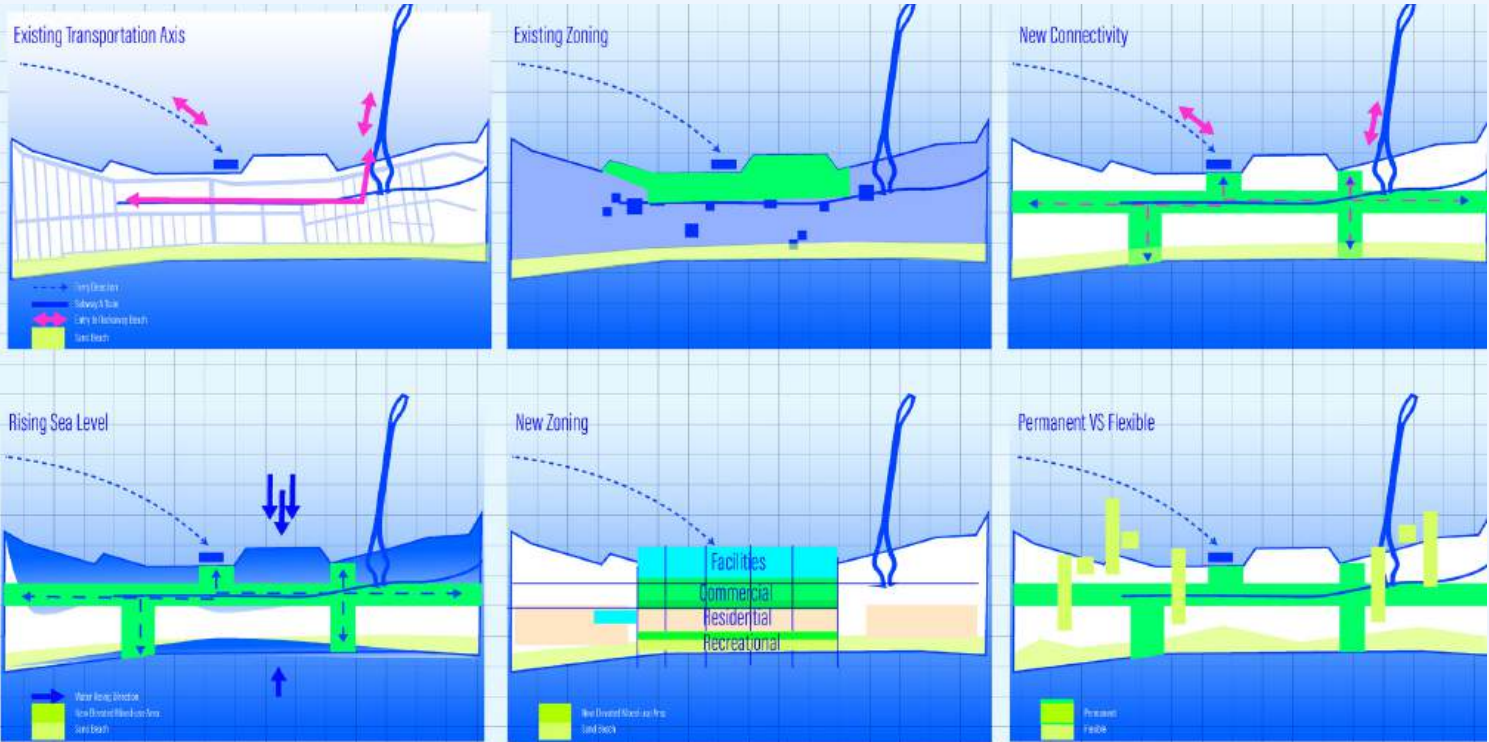
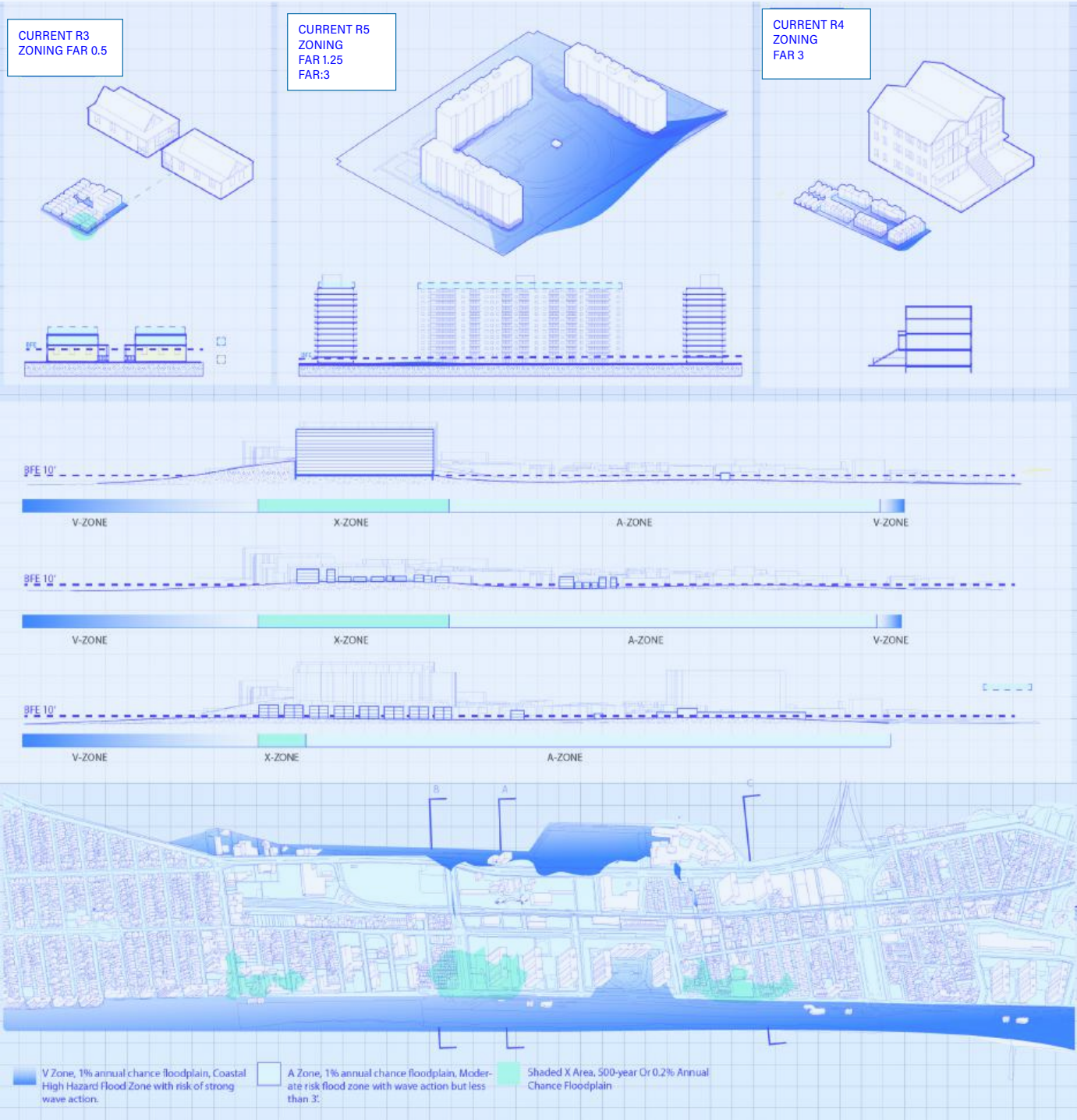
Rockaway Beach has always been a juxtaposition of nature and urban life, a community where tourists and the endangered piping plovers share a vibrant beachfront. Post-Hurricane Sandy, the area witnessed considerable commercial development, yet it still faces the looming threat of rising sea levels—a challenge for both its human and avian residents. This project represents an exploration into urban design, considering the delicate balance needed between development and environmental sustainability.

With ample underutilized land, including expansive parking areas, the project proposes transforming these spaces into recreational and leisure facilities, lacking outside the beach area. For the piping plovers, ensuring sufficient undisturbed habitats is crucial for their survival and breeding. This plan will assess infrastructure longevity and community flexibility in phases, integrating green spaces and habitats within urban planning to serve both humans and wildlife.

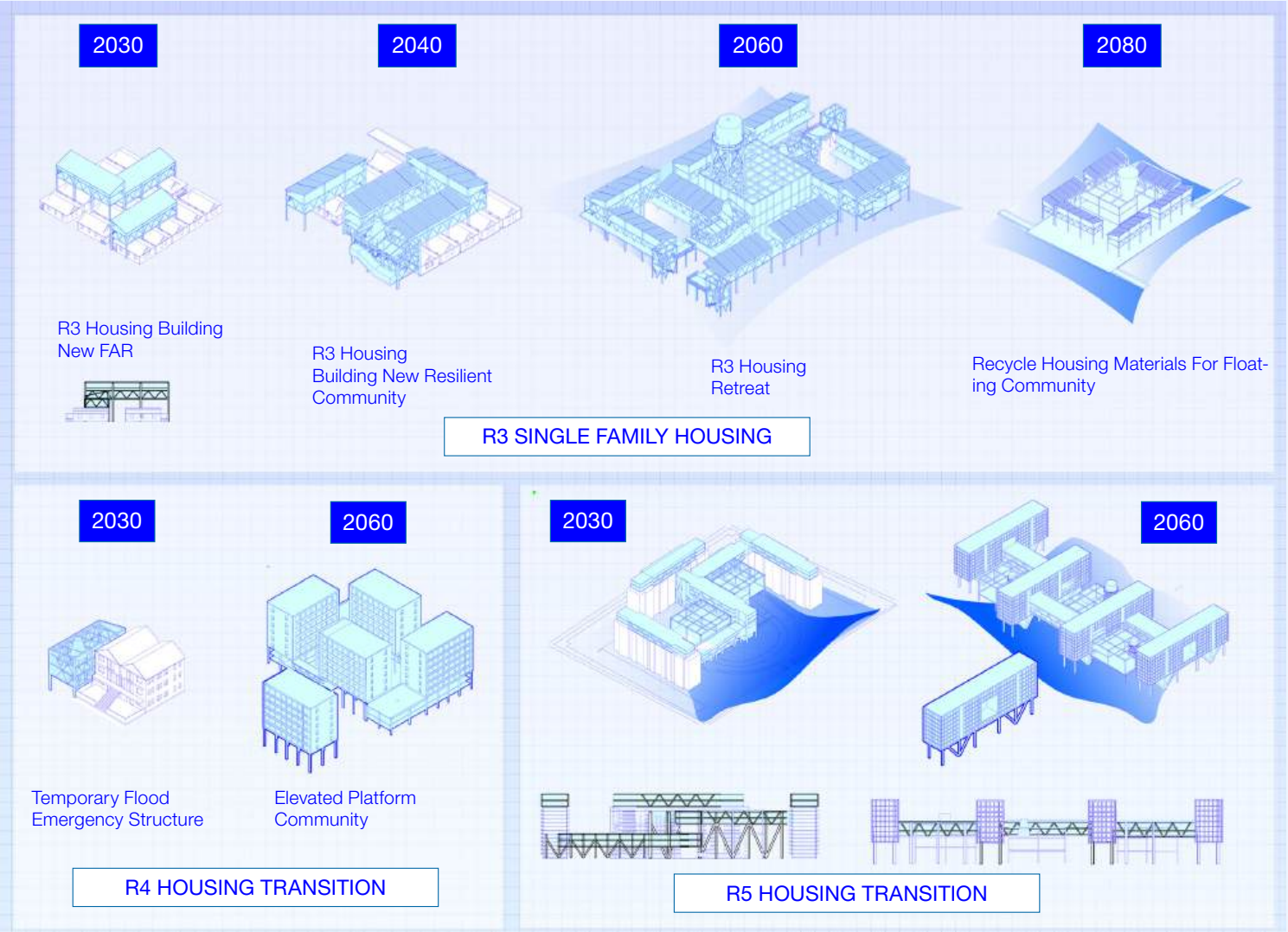


ZONING, HOUSING, FLOOD ELEVATION

Rockaway Beaches part of the barrier island, suffering from constantly high tides and flooding. In order to preserve this piece of land, the project will define both the permanent and adaptable in 3 different phases.

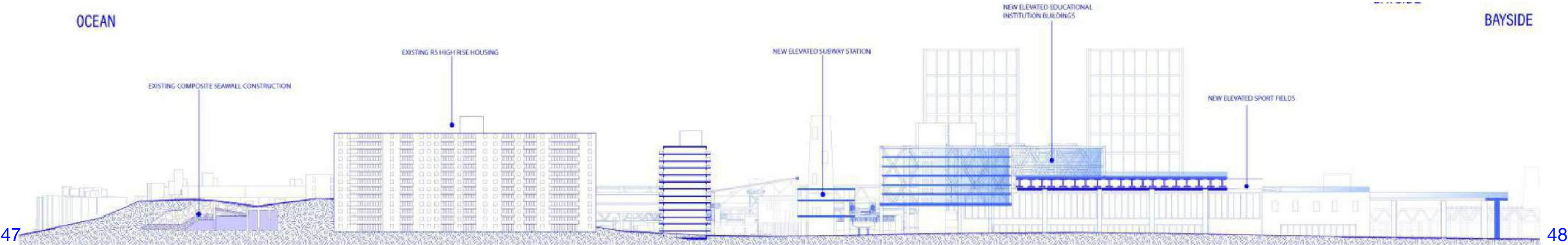


Urban Study



Adaptive Housing Structure For Different Density



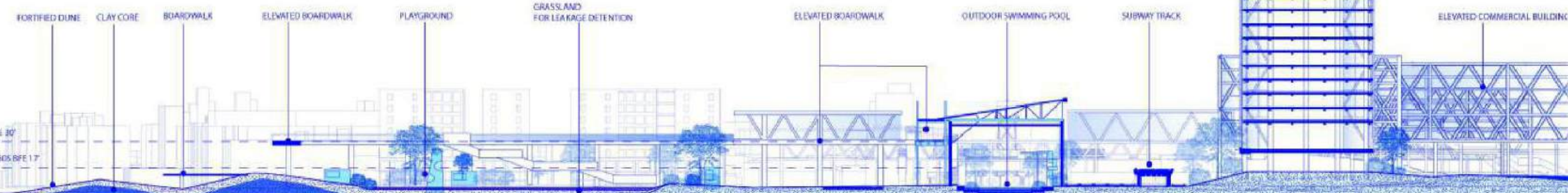






OCEAN

BAYSIDE

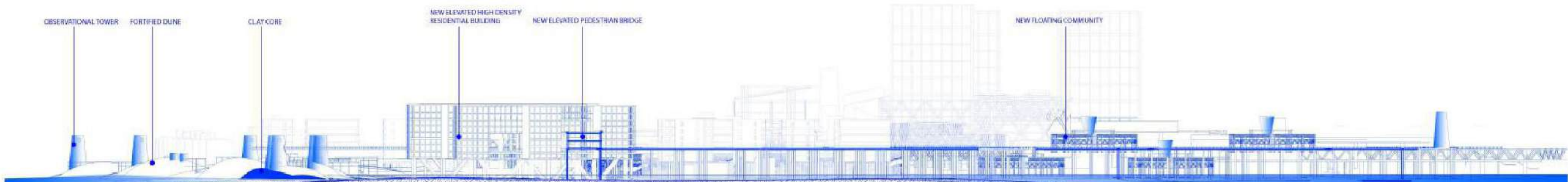






OCEAN

BAYSIDE











# Beyond Shelter: Envisioning a Cohesive Future For Chinatown

Collabrator: Rui Chen

Instructor: Jelisa R. Blumberg

Project Type: Visual Research & Concept Proposal

Columbia GSAPP Visual Study Power Tool



This research focuses on the community conflict surrounding the conversion of Hotel 91 at 91 East Broadway in New York into a homeless shelter, and its impact on the native Chinatown area. We examine the social repercussions of introducing a shelter into this historic and culturally rich neighborhood, known for its close-knit community.

Utilizing interviews, media analysis, and policy review, our project aims to unravel the complex relationship between the new shelter's integration and Chinatown's efforts to maintain its cultural integrity. We scrutinize city planning and community engagement processes, assess the balance between social welfare and cultural preservation, and propose solutions to align urban development with the community's values. This study contributes to the discourse on urban policy, social equity, and the safeguarding of cultural communities.



本日頭條

原金匯酒店轉為收容所：本地居民抗議白熱化

Intense Public Opinion on Hotel 91 Shelter Construction: A Balance of Support and Opposition

# HOTEL 91

## 何去何從？

HOTEL 91 AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITY CONTROVERSY: STAKEHOLDERS CLASH OVER FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN NYC

異議激烈成熱門話題多次刊登紐約時報頭版

Fierce Debate on Shelter Policy Sparks From Paper of The New York Times Repeatedly

"We cannot have 10 shelters": Chinatown pushes back on planned Grand St. homeless site

**1879**  
The City's Oldest Homeless Organization

**1930**  
Early Shelter in Chinatown: Mutual Aid for Newly Arrived Chinese Immigrants

**1982**  
Early Protest Against Juvenile Detention Center in Chinatown

**1985**  
Early School Turned Into Shelter

**2006**  
Adults Shelter Entered Chinatown

**2009**  
Another Adults Shelter Entered Chinatown

**2022** 8th Shelter Entered Chinatown

City plans plan for second Chinatown homeless shelter amid community opposition

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**FOOD CULTURE**  
Site is located in East Broadway where all the Chinese restaurants located.



**FOOD MALL**  
Ground Floor will work as a food festival event space that allows new comers be part of the community that bonds by food.



**PAST**  
Former Hotel 91, affordable stay for tourists.

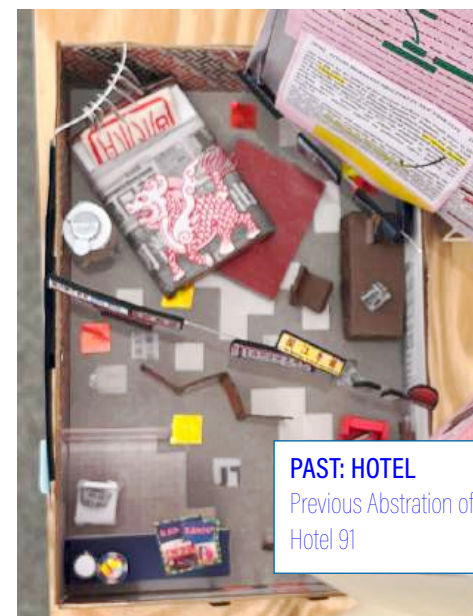


**CURRENT**  
Currently accepting single adult male homeless into the facility, which providing shelter service and educations.



## FUTURE

By helping the new comers to the neighborhood quicker adapt to Chinatown, the shleter will have higher chance to be given back to the community as affordable housing



**PAST: HOTEL**  
Previous Abstraction of  
Hotel 91



### UNFOLD HISTORY

How many shelters had entered Chinatown?







Final Booklet & Model: Front View Of Hotel 91







## ToiletScape: Times Square Public Restroom For Inclusive Sanitation

Individual Project  
Instructor: Mustafa Faruki  
Project Type: Public Infrastructure  
Columbia GSAPP Core II Studio Project

This project mainly focused on the public restroom's function and its societal expansion. It explored the potential of billboard advertising to fund public restrooms in Times Square, thus enhancing the experience of locating and using these facilities.

The goal was to transform the traditional role and function of public restrooms and cater to the needs of overlooked populations in busy areas of New York, such as delivery workers, tourists, leaflet distributors, and food cart operators. I believe that providing access to public restrooms for these individuals is our society's responsibility.



# The Invisible Public Toilet In NYC



## Only Dogs can pee free

The stark contrast between dogs' unencumbered relief and the scarcity of free public restrooms for humans.

### Retail Restrooms

Access to store restrooms often requires navigating commercial lures and consumption demands

### Occupational Restroom Barriers

Parking constraints exacerbate restroom access challenges for delivery workers and drivers..

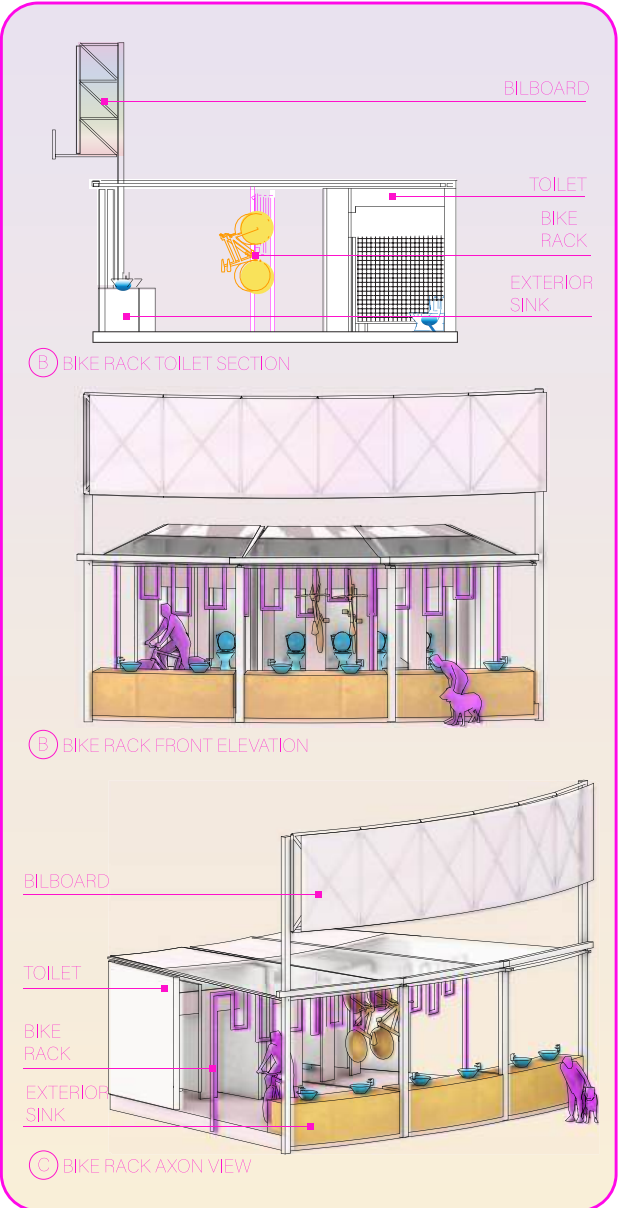
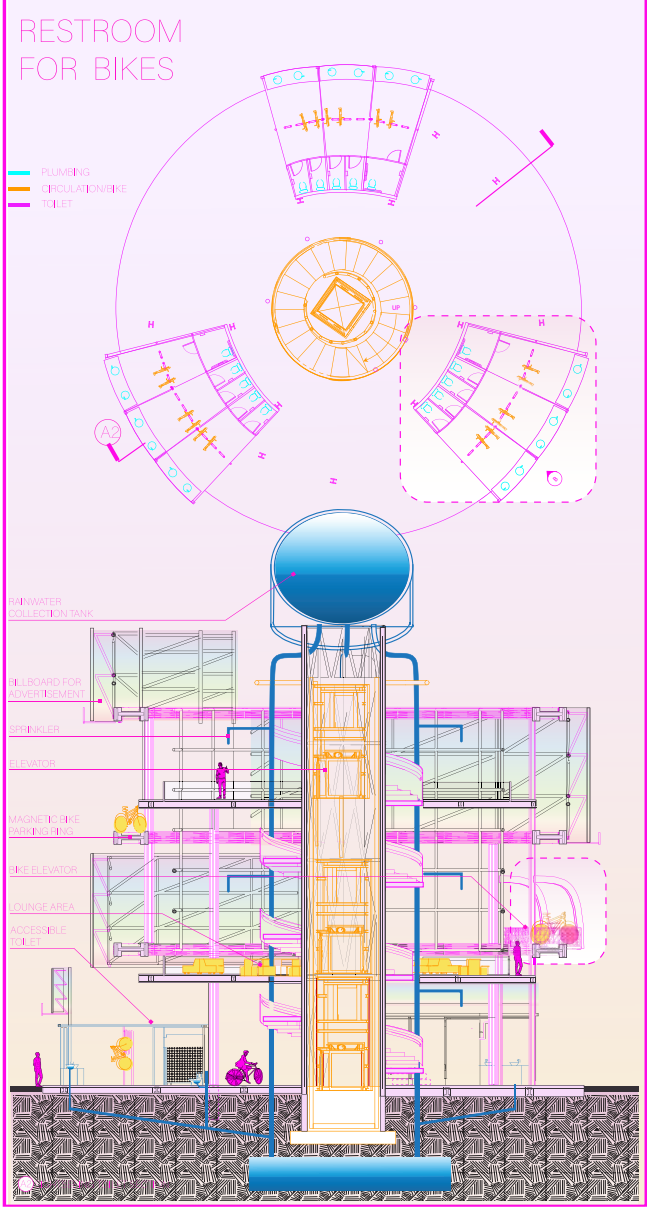
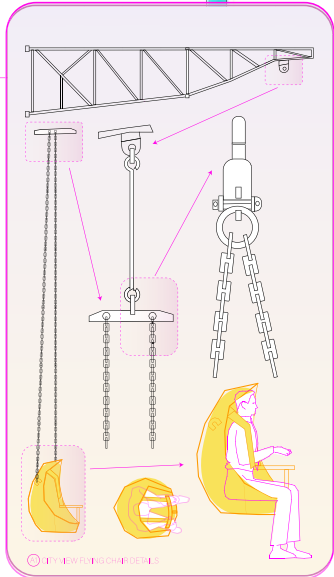
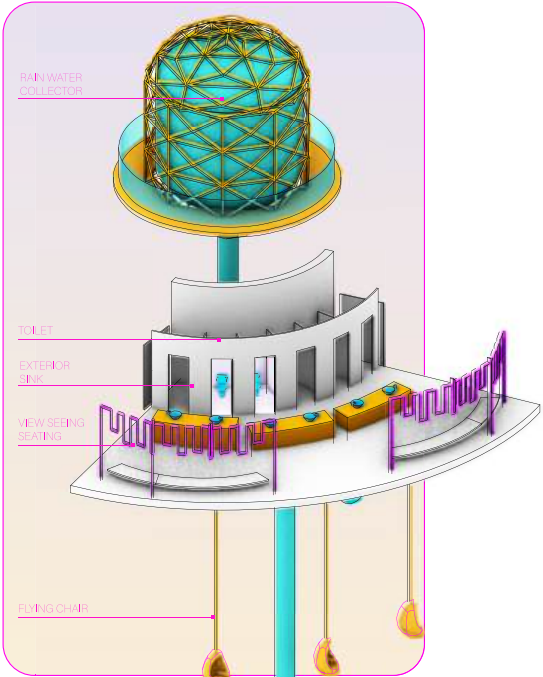
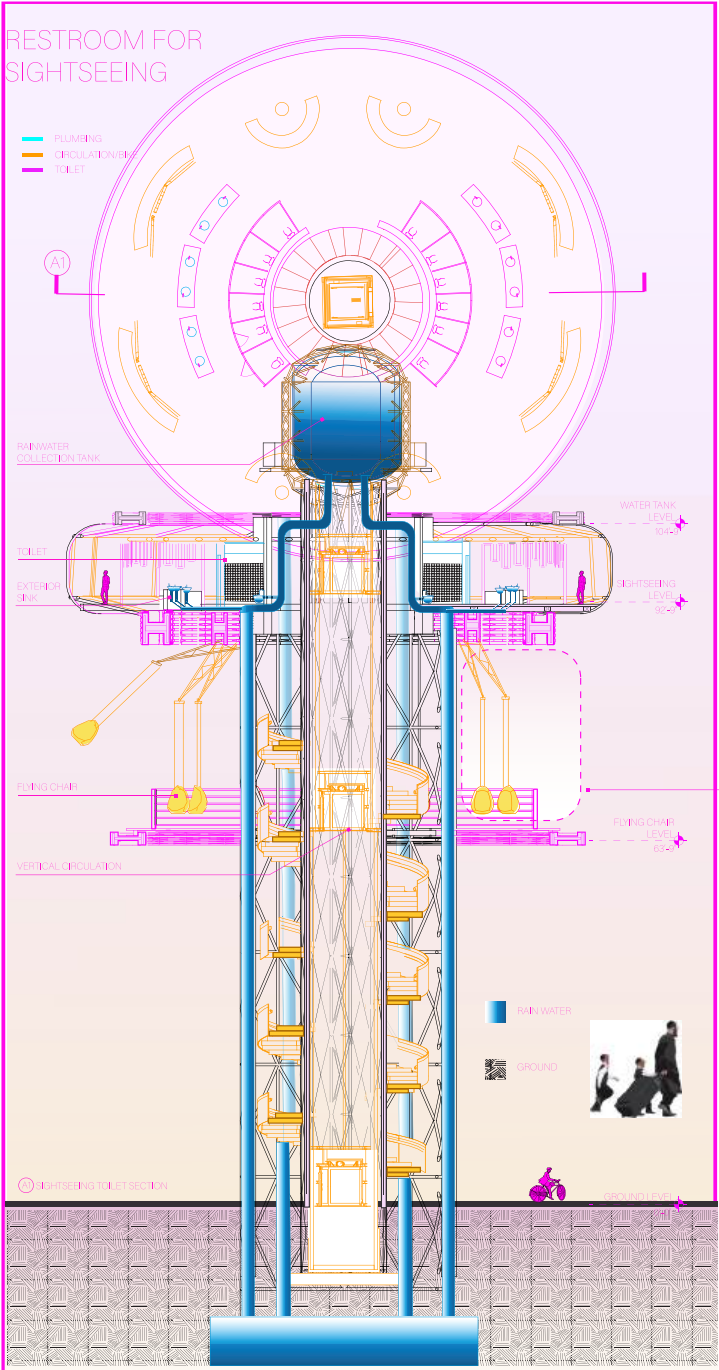


RESTROOM

## OTHER PLUG IN

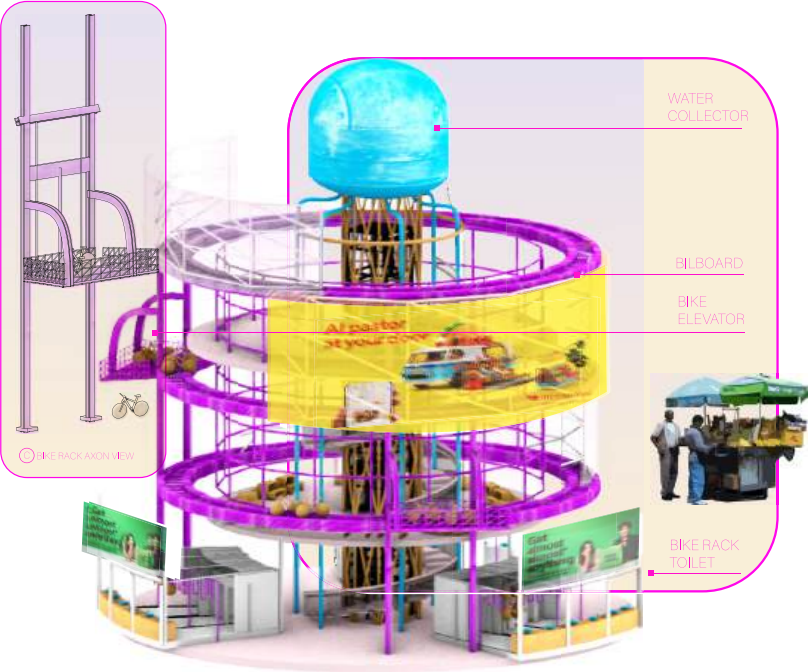
REST ROOM





**Delivery-Sponsored Restroom:  
A Safe Harbor For Deliverers And  
Street Vendors**

Sponsored by delivery companies, this restroom design incorporates bike parking to cater specifically to delivery workers in the bustling heart of New York. It offers them a chance to rest assured, knowing their bicycles are secure. Simultaneously, it accommodates nearby street food vendors, providing a shared space that addresses their vital needs in the midst of their demanding routines. This initiative underscores the importance of taking care of the city's essential workforce, one restroom at a time.



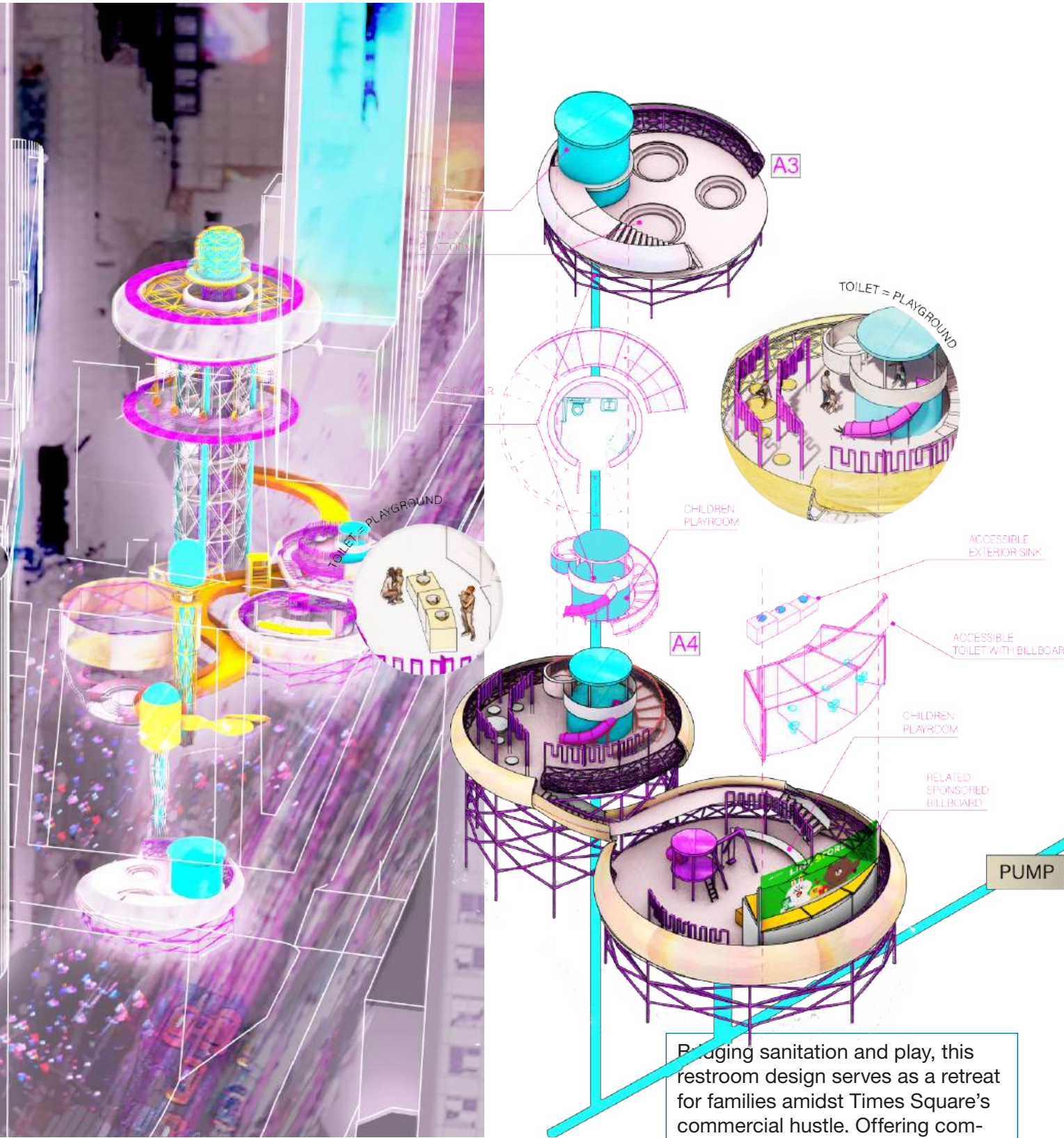
**The Sightseeing Restroom:  
A Unique Blend Of Utility And Entertainment**

Times Square, a hotspot for tourists, lacks sufficient public restrooms. This design, a landmark tower, fuses a rainwater collection system, restroom facilities, and a revolving chair ride. It not only serves as an identifiable public restroom but also transforms the entire restroom-seeking and usage experience into an unforgettable part of the journey.



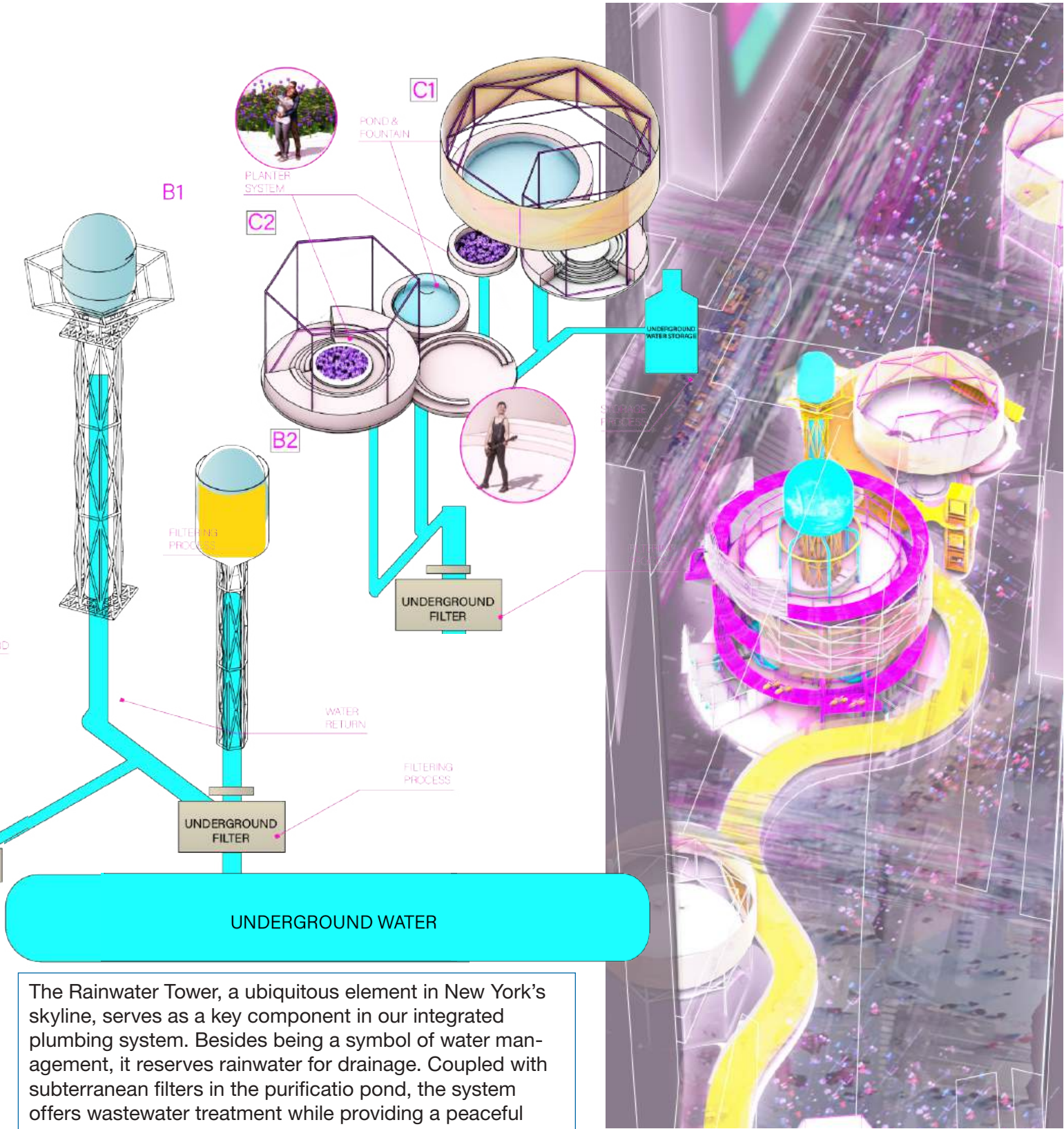


Family Oasis: Playful Restroom In Times Square



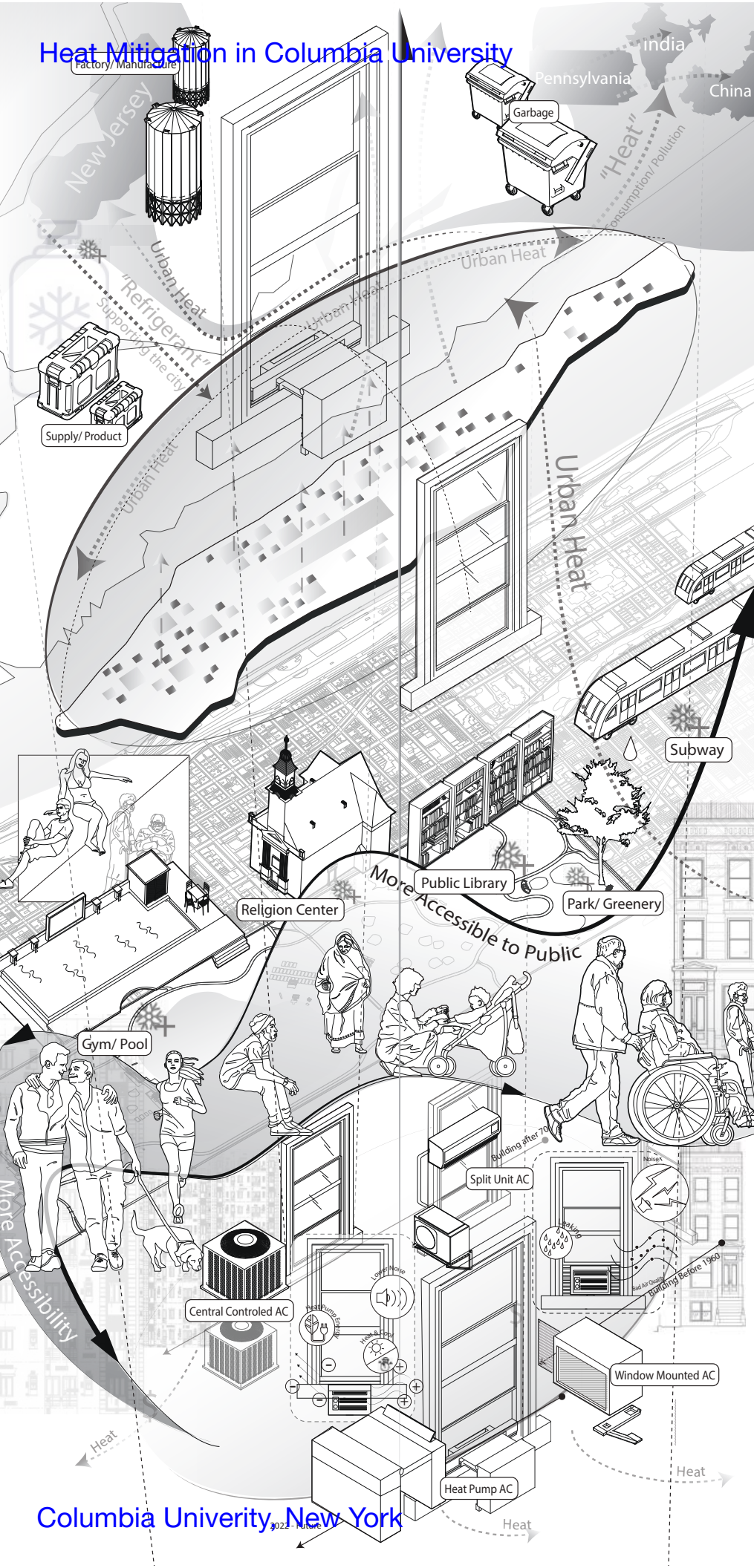
Blending sanitation and play, this restroom design serves as a retreat for families amidst Times Square's commercial hustle. Offering comfort for parents and a playground for kids, it eases urban navigation strains for families.

Rainwater Tower And Purification Ponds



The Rainwater Tower, a ubiquitous element in New York's skyline, serves as a key component in our integrated plumbing system. Besides being a symbol of water management, it reserves rainwater for drainage. Coupled with subterranean filters in the purification pond, the system offers wastewater treatment while providing a peaceful respite for passersby and visitors.





# Urban Cooling Solutions: Columbia University's Potential Role in Heat Mitigation

Individual Project  
Instructor: Galen Pardee  
Project Type: Public Infrastructure  
Columbia GSAPP Core I Studio Project

## Large Scope: Where did all the Heat go?

New York City, a veritable heat island, radiates energy into its surroundings, with excess warmth dissipating into neighboring locales. This thermal output is mirrored by the city's waste production, with refuse and debris shuttled to adjacent areas like New Jersey. The overflow, too burdensome for the local or even national facilities, often ends up in developing countries. Conceptually, this heat can be seen as a metaphor for societal burdens, cascading from the upper echelons to the lower strata, where it is ultimately borne by the most vulnerable communities. Crafting spaces that mitigate this heat, both literally and figuratively, is essential for social equity and environmental sustainability.

## Micro Scope: Window-mounted AC

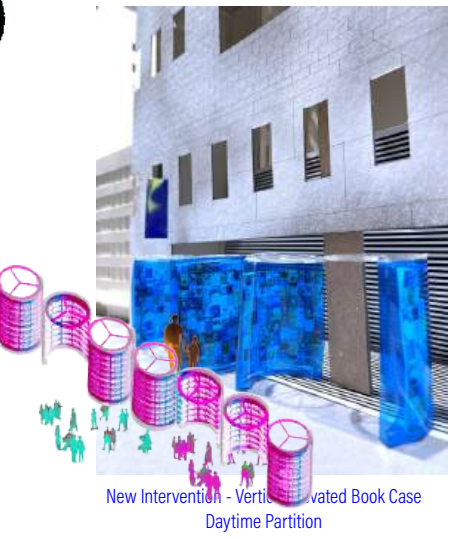
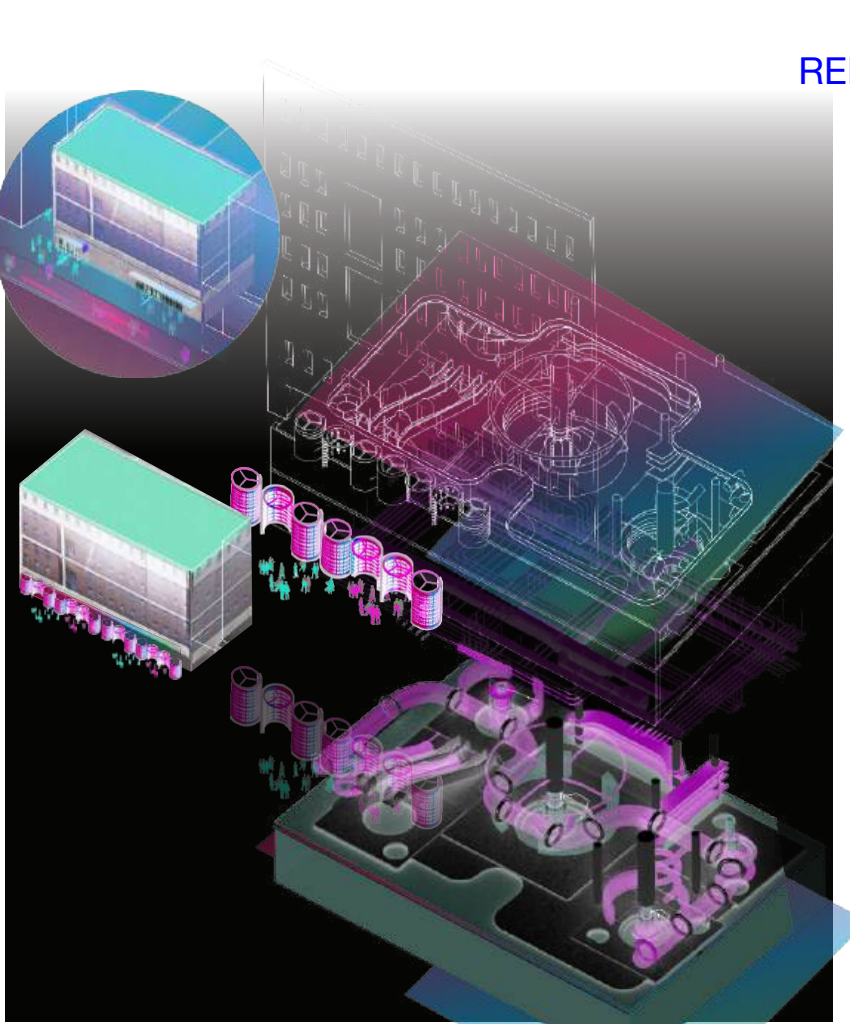
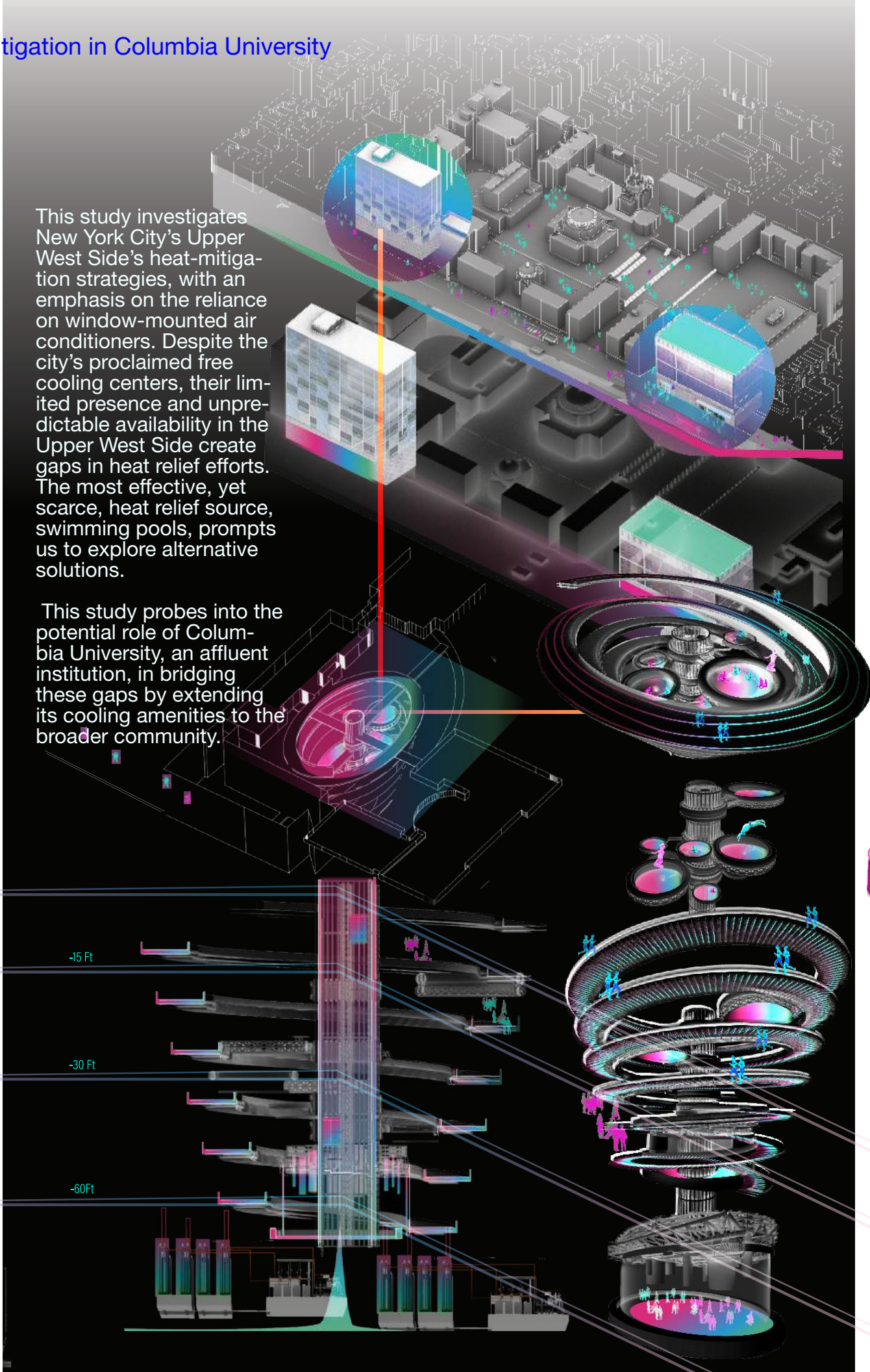
As New York grapples with rising temperatures, air conditioning has become a seasonal necessity. Many residences now retrofit with split AC units, while older buildings, constrained by design, depend on window-mounted air conditioners. Yet, this fix assumes a home to install them in. For the city's homeless, finding respite from the heat remains a critical issue. The efficacy of city-provided cooling centers is in question, prompting a search for additional spaces in the Upper West that could offer relief during the city's increasingly intense summers.

This study investigates New York City's Upper West Side's heat-mitigation strategies, with an emphasis on the reliance on window-mounted air conditioners. Despite the city's proclaimed free cooling centers, their limited presence and unpredictable availability in the Upper West Side create gaps in heat relief efforts. The most effective, yet scarce, heat relief source, swimming pools, prompts us to explore alternative solutions. This study probes into the potential role of Columbia University, an affluent institution, in bridging these gaps by extending its cooling amenities to the broader community.

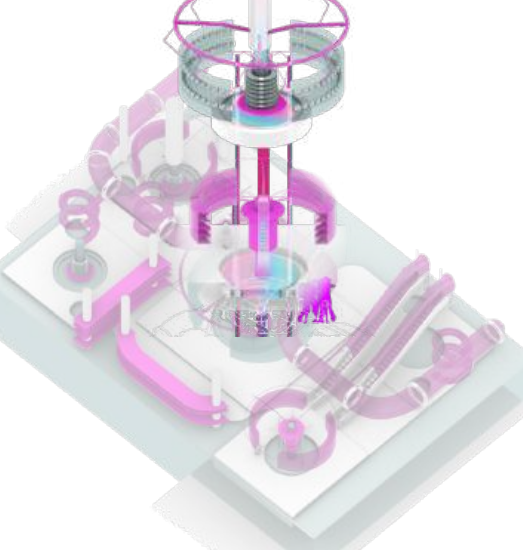
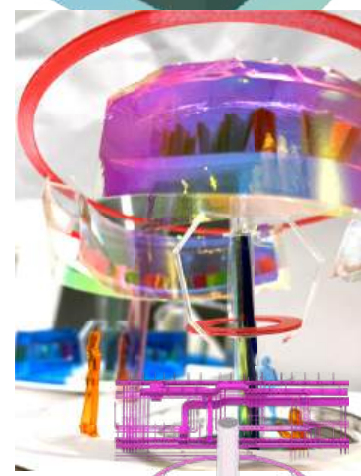


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New Intervention - Vertical Rotating Book Case Daytime Partition







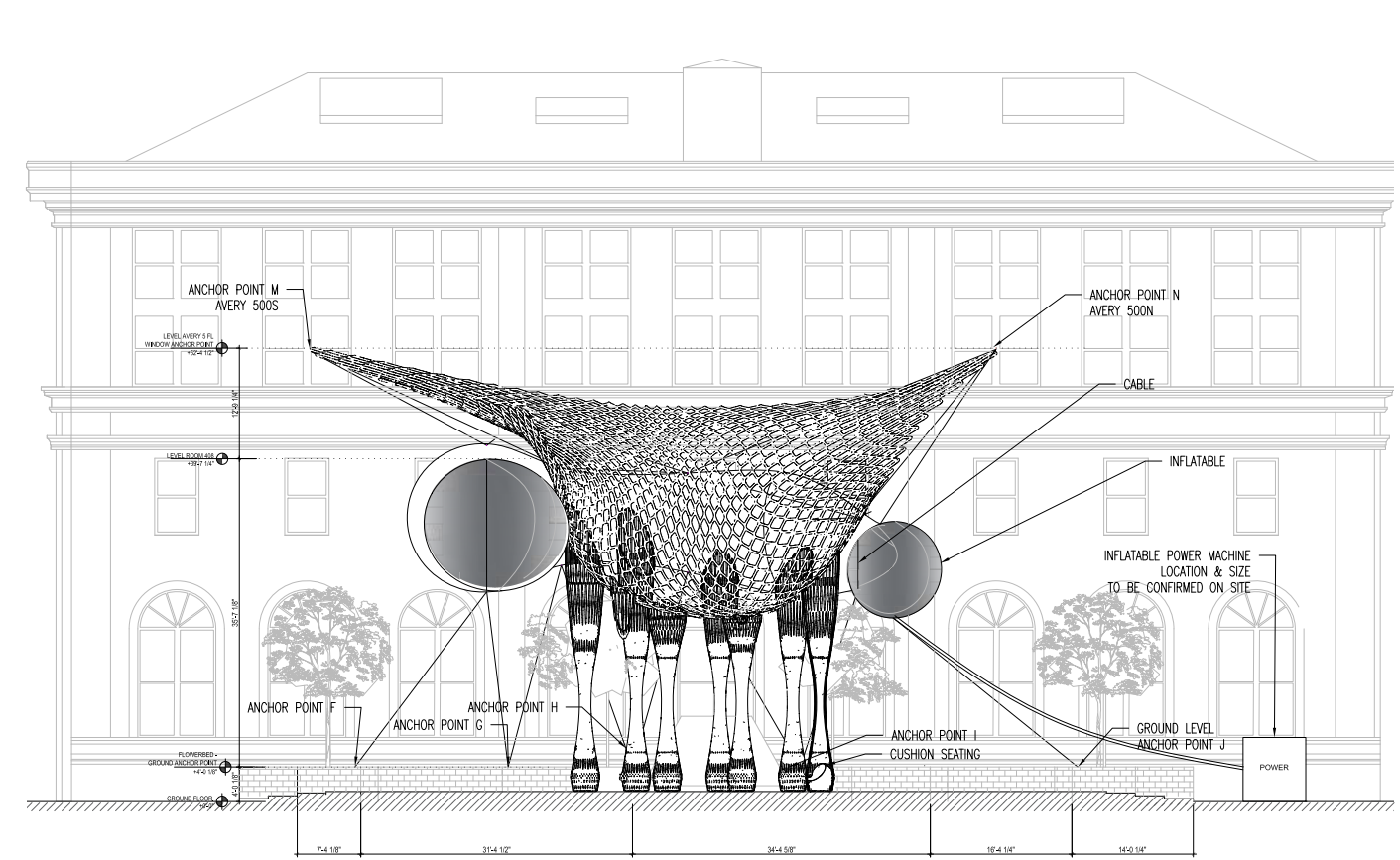
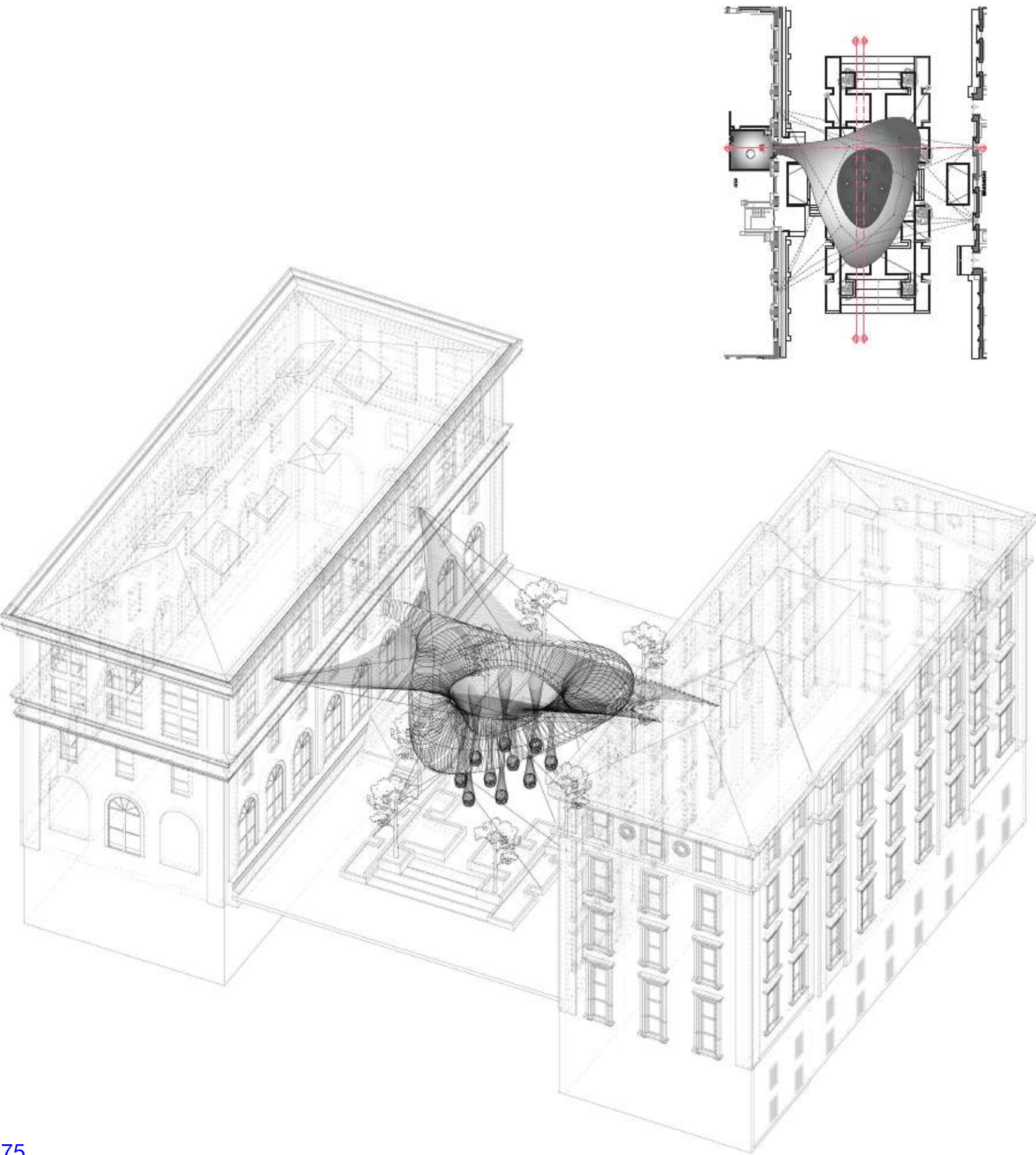
## The Cloud: The Interconnectedness Of Peoples' Actions In Shared Spaces

GSAPP SP24 & FA24 OUTSIDE IN Project  
Instructor: Galia Solomonoff & Laurie Hawkinson  
Project Type: Installation  
Role: Drawing Documentation Team

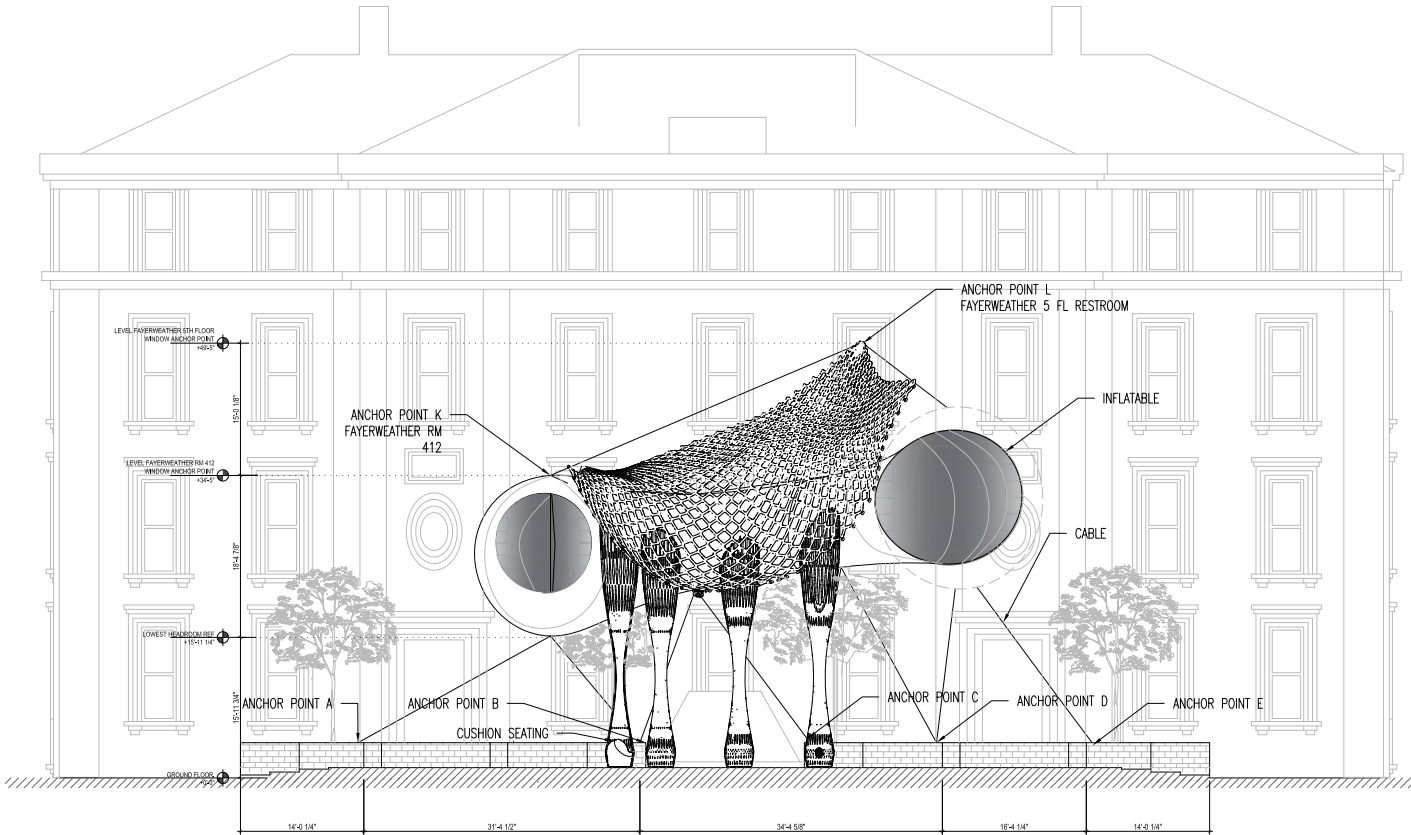
The semester began with a design charrette where student team's presented design ideas for the 2024 Inflatable Pavilion. Students created concept drawings and models to communicate these ideas. Among many remarkable concepts, the ideas were narrowed down to the concept of a large, circular inflatable with a central oculus, connecting to and occupying Room 408, on Avery Hall's 4th floor. Further iterations of the chosen class-wide concept were studied in an exercise for finalizing the inflatable's form. Once determined, the students collaborated with AreaCubica, the seminars manufacturing partner in Barcelona, to refine and shape it's manufactured final design. The Cloud inflatable was manufactured during the Spring semester, for the Fall class to further program, and install.

Zackary E. Bryson  
Ken Hata Farris  
Aishwarya Garg  
Candelaria Gassiebayle  
Eric Julian Hagerman  
Conrad John Hiller  
Inbal Himmelblau-Denman  
Kelsey Jewel Jackson  
Mariam E. Jacob  
Rilka Li  
Noah Hirsch Miller  
Rena Okamoto  
Jared Antonio Orellana  
Shrey Bindeshkumar Patel  
Carmen Chan  
Jillian Katz  
Andrea Jang  
Preethi Ganesh  
Yuan Chen, Xavier Zhapan  
Harshini Ashok  
Aashka Ajmera  
Jahanci Hinge  
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Steven Gan  
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Jason Li  
Jinjian Chen  
Han Qin  
Yilin Huang  
Xinyi Liu  
Erisa Nakamura  
Steven Gan  
Jianyu Zheng  
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Yansong Wang  
Ammar Rassai  
Dewanshi Arya  
Karim Baba  
Qizhen Chen  
Lula Chou  
Daniel Hahn  
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Martina Hollmann  
Laurent-Shixun Huang  
Ka Heun Hyun  
Lauren Jian  
Adi Klein  
Teymour Khoury  
Leslie Li  
Lucy Li  
Lajja Mehta  
Franco Daniel Nocioni  
Matija Pogorilic  
Maria Paula Rico  
Khushi Rakesh Saraiya  
Anna Maria Schmitz  
Longjiu Sun  
Nikoletta Zakynthinou Xanthi  
Hanyin Zhang  
Joe Zhang  
Yunhao Zhong





WEST FACING SECTION  
3/16" = 1'-0"

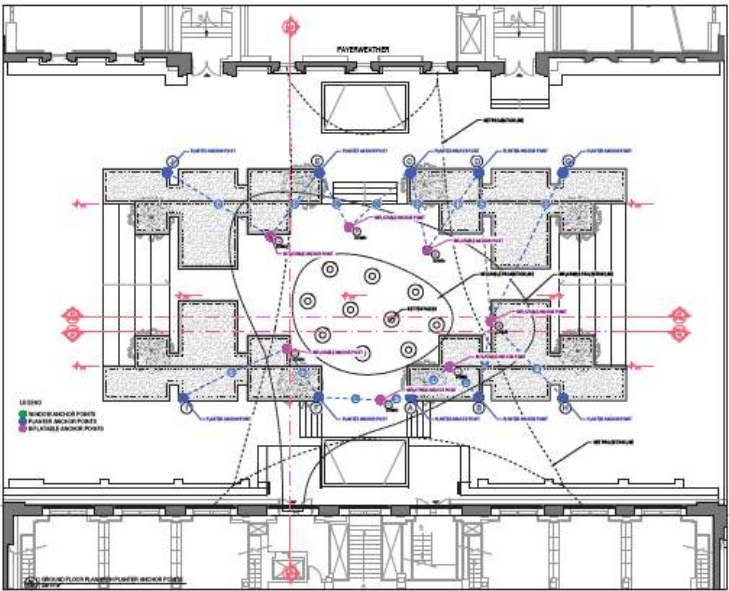
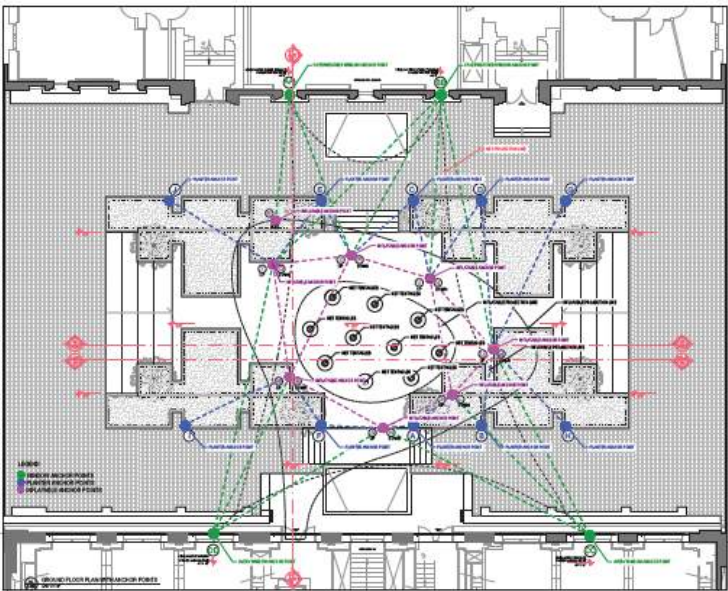
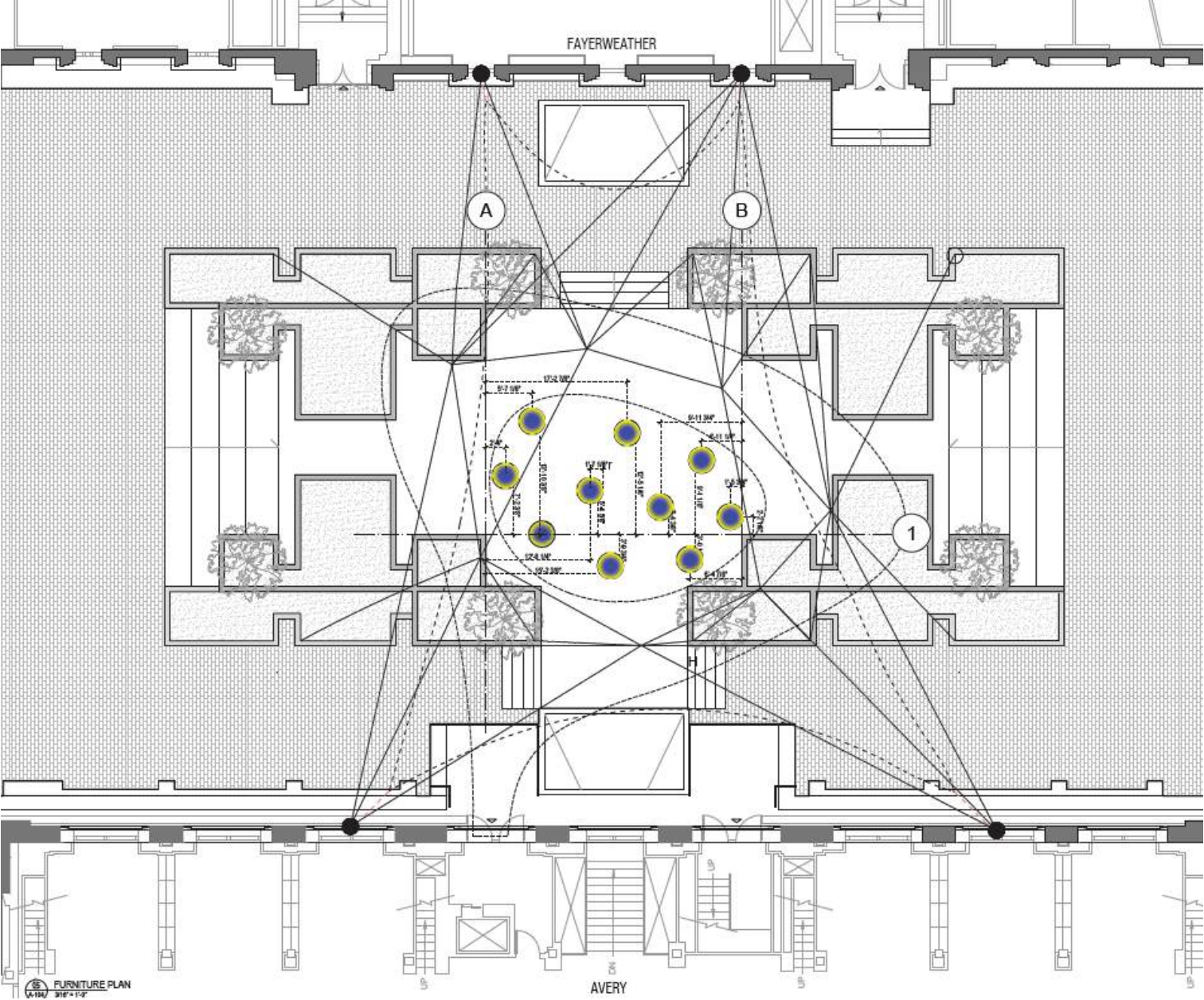


EAST FACING SECTION  
3/16" = 1'-0"





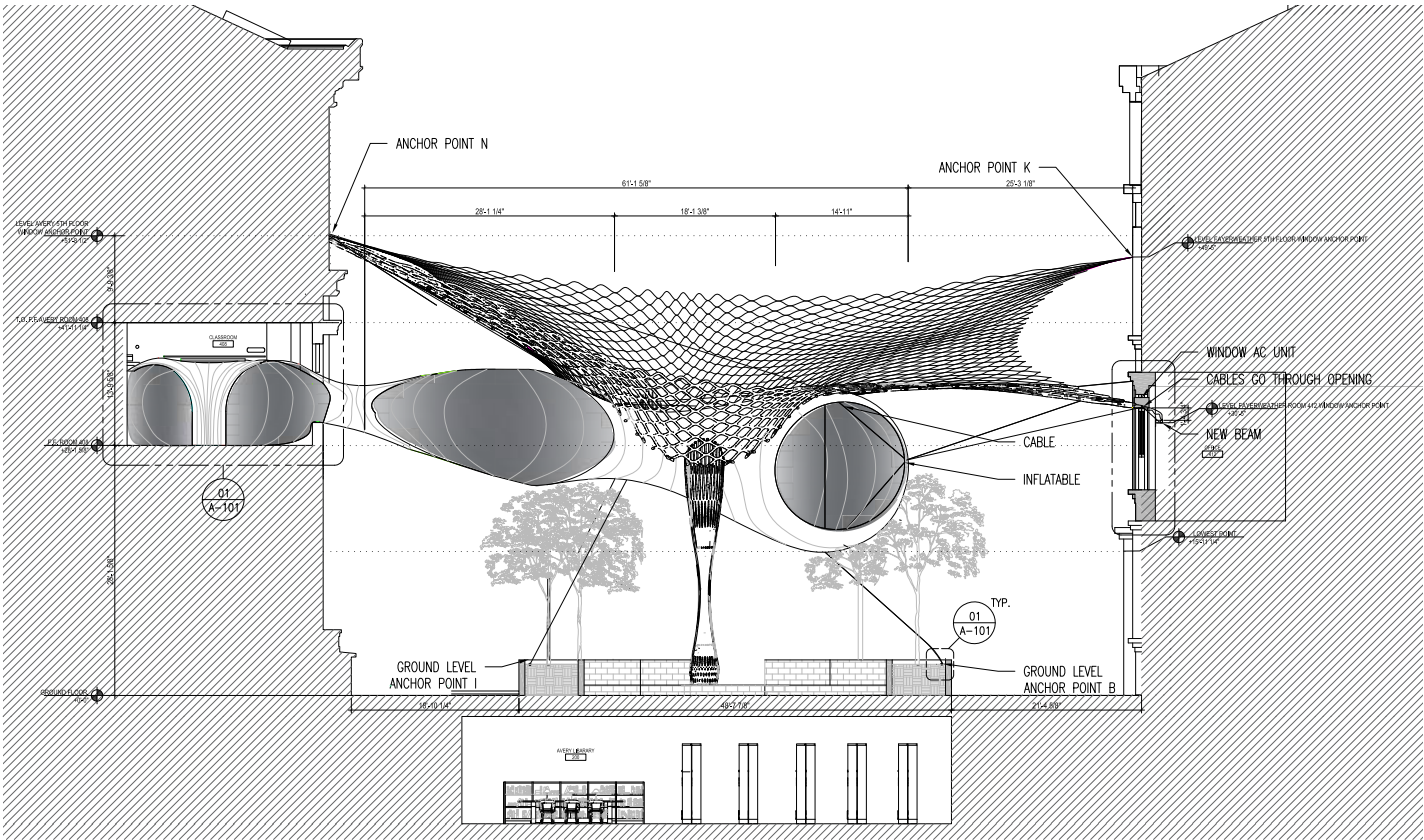
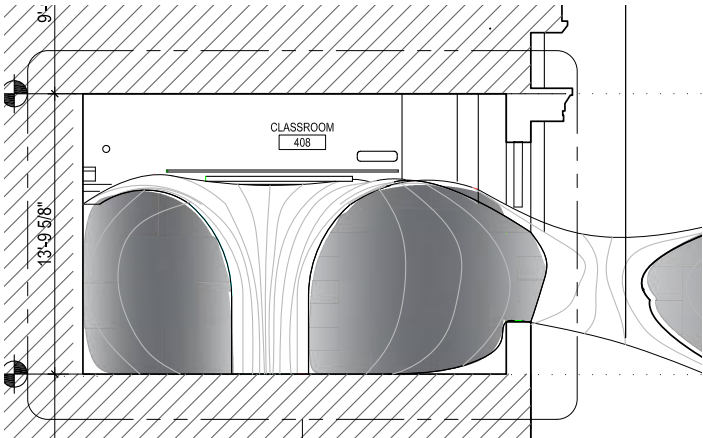
Installation Process







Interior of The Cloud Indoor Installation





This portfolio presents a progression across spatial scales—from interior environments, to architectural interventions, and toward urban-scale strategies. Across this trajectory, architecture is examined not as an isolated form, but as a mediator embedded within larger urban systems.

Through projects that engage with varied conditions and textures of the city, the work explores how space can be structured to support new forms of circulation, occupation, and public interface. Each phase—reclaiming existing assets, reframing site-specific challenges, and reimagining broader spatial systems—reflects a design approach grounded in contextual responsiveness and strategic adaptation.



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