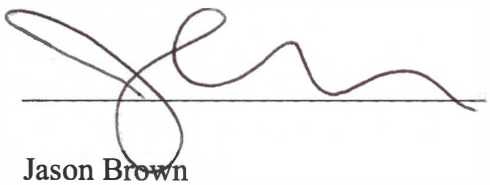
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by John Charles Sanders Mixon entitled "Thresholds." I have examined the final paper copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture with a major in Architecture.

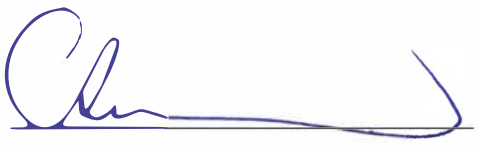


TK Davis, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:



Jason Brown



~~Barbara Klink~~hammer

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Thesis
2006
.M58

THRESHOLDS

A Thesis Presented for
the
Master of Architecture Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

John Charles Sanders Mixon
August 2006

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Rebecca Mixon my partner, spouse, and best friend.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to expand the meaning of the threshold in order to conceptualize and design architecture that is able "to reconcile conflicting polarities" (Smithson, 96). The program of the investigation is an art center for community and learning to be used by professionals, students, and the public. A senior year public highschool school program, professional art studios, and a community center are designed for a site in downtown Nashville, Tennessee, on two blocks on either side of Jefferson Street at the base and below the Jefferson street Bridge. The threshold is explorded as a conceptual and physical place relating to program and site.

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I. CENTRAL PROPOSITION

"To establish the in-between is to reconcile conflicting polarities. Provide the place where they can interchange and you re-establish the original twinphenomena."

- Jan Van Eyck (Smithson 1968, 96)

Statement of Purpose

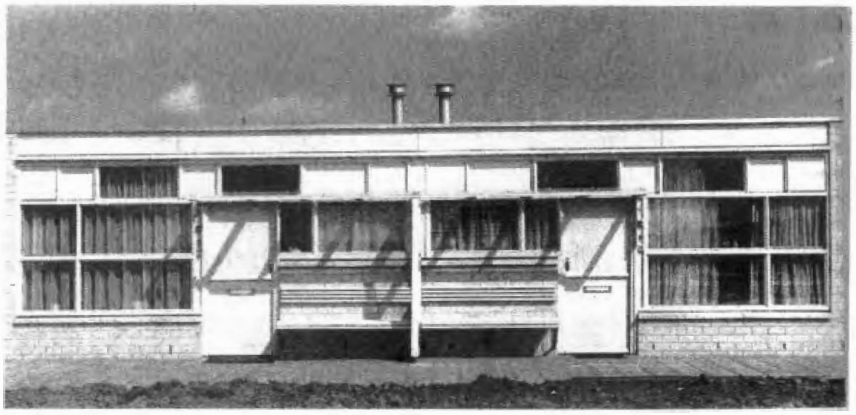
This thesis is an investigation of the threshold. The threshold is defined by three things, without which there would be no threshold. First, there must be a perceived or real division or separation. This separation defines differences between two or more places. The wall is a quintessential example. Second, there must be a compromise in this perceived or real division. This breach of the separation connects the divided places by providing access, perceived or real, from one to another. The doorway is the most quintessential example. Third, and most importantly, in order for the wall and the door to become a threshold, there must be an experience. This experience conscious or subconscious is described in many ways, but arrival and departure are the most quintessential examples.

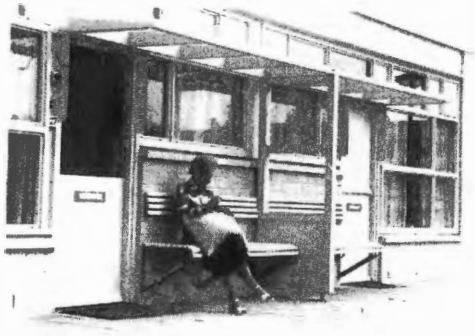
We live our lives in the in-between always reconciling dichotomies, birth and death, day and night, etc. This reciprocity defines our experiences from delivery room to death bed. We live in this in-between. The architectural threshold provides a physical and conceptual place to experience this in-between. The constituent parts of the threshold are, the barrier, the compromise and the experience of how the two meet. The threshold provides a place for experience. The experience of these reciprocities create thresholds. Community, learning, and art are experienced through reconcilliations of their respective dichotomies: Individual and Collective, Desire and Action, and Consciousness and Subconsciousness. **Architecture has the power to provide an environment in which to experience community, learning, and art not only by providing but by becoming a physical and conceptual threshold.**

Defining the Threshold

The threshold provides physical transitions and connections between different areas. The purest example of a threshold is the entrance to a home with the public street on one hand and the private dwelling on the other. The threshold is created from the reciprocal relationship of these public and private forces. At the De Overloop Home for the Elderly, by Herman Hertzberger, a bench is placed beneath a sheltered area at the front door (see figure 1). This bench is outside the private home and within the public street. This place, however, is clearly part of both the private and public realm. Both realms have given of themselves. The private realm has given up some privacy in order to enter the public realm. The public realm has allowed the extension of the private into its realm. This is a threshold and results from reciprocity between the two dichotomies, public and private. Hertzberger refers to this seating area as the beginning of the threshold, the "place where you say hello and goodbye…" (Hertzberger 1991, 34).

Hertzberger is building upon the ideas of Jan Van Eyck, a charismatic founder of Team 10. Van Eyck investigated the importance of the threshold in his poetic dialogue regarding the doorstep. He expands the meaning of the doorstep in order to determine the role of architecture. He looks beyond the physical doorstep to find the "greater reality" of the door (Smithson 1968, 96). The door is a physical object through which one must consciously enter and depart and within which one's coming and going is framed. The door is the physical manifestation of these concepts. Van Eyck takes his point a step further. The door is also a place, "a place made for an act that is repeated millions of times in a lifetime between the first entry and the last exit" (Smithson 1968, 96). Hertzberger reiterates these ideas, defining the threshold, physically and conceptually, "as a place in its own right..." (Hertzberger 1991, 32). Threshold is a physical and conceptual place that establishes the in-between.





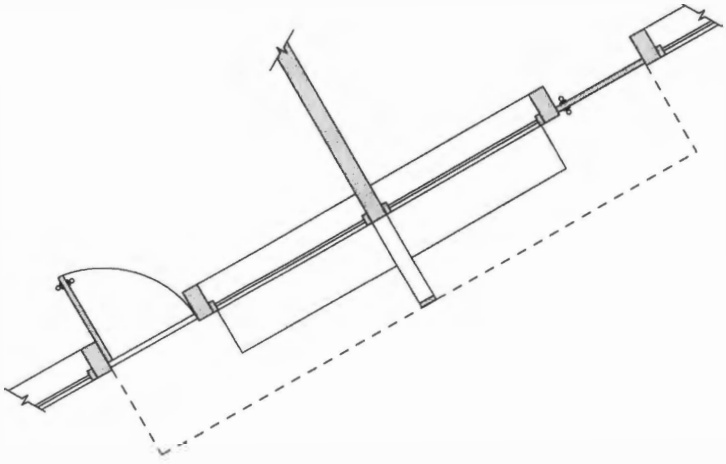


Figure 1. Threshold at the De Overloop Home for the Elderly by Herman Hertzberger
Source: Hertzberger 1991 and Author

Threshold as Place

In the Montessori College at Oost, Herman Hertzberger pays special attention to incidental spaces and circulation (see figure 2). At Oost, what could be an ordinary double loaded corridor is a vibrant place, split-leveled and multi-storied, that connects closed classrooms to the open hall on the ground level. This in-between space is a threshold between Herman Hertzbergers two main goals: "a building for the school, and a hall for personal encounter, celebrations, and other events" (Hertzberger 1991, 230).

Similarly, the overriding idea of Bernard Tschumi's Le Fresnoy, the National Studio for Contemporary Arts in Tourcoing, France, is the establishment of the in-between as a place (see figure 3). The negative space left between the protective roof and the historic structures, establishes a physical space between disciplines that becomes a physical and conceptual threshold for contemporary arts education (Tschumi, 145-157). Herman Hertzberger expands the corridor to establish the in-between. Bernard Tschumi establishes the in-between in a new wholly imagined place free of the expected design constraints in order to reconcile the dichotomies of an art school: 3D and 2D media, performance and studio art, and traditional and digital techniques.

The Laban Dance Center by Herzog and de Meuron also establishes the in-between using not only spatial definition but also materiality. The threshold exists as a physical place thoughout the interior streetscape and reconciles creation and production, presentation and discussion, and the individual and the collective. The materiality of the Dance Center also establishes a physical threshold, either transparent, transluscent, or opaque and in many colors.

Threshold Experiences

This thesis investigates three experiences that take place in the in-between: community, learning, and art. Each experience depends on a reconciliation of opposed

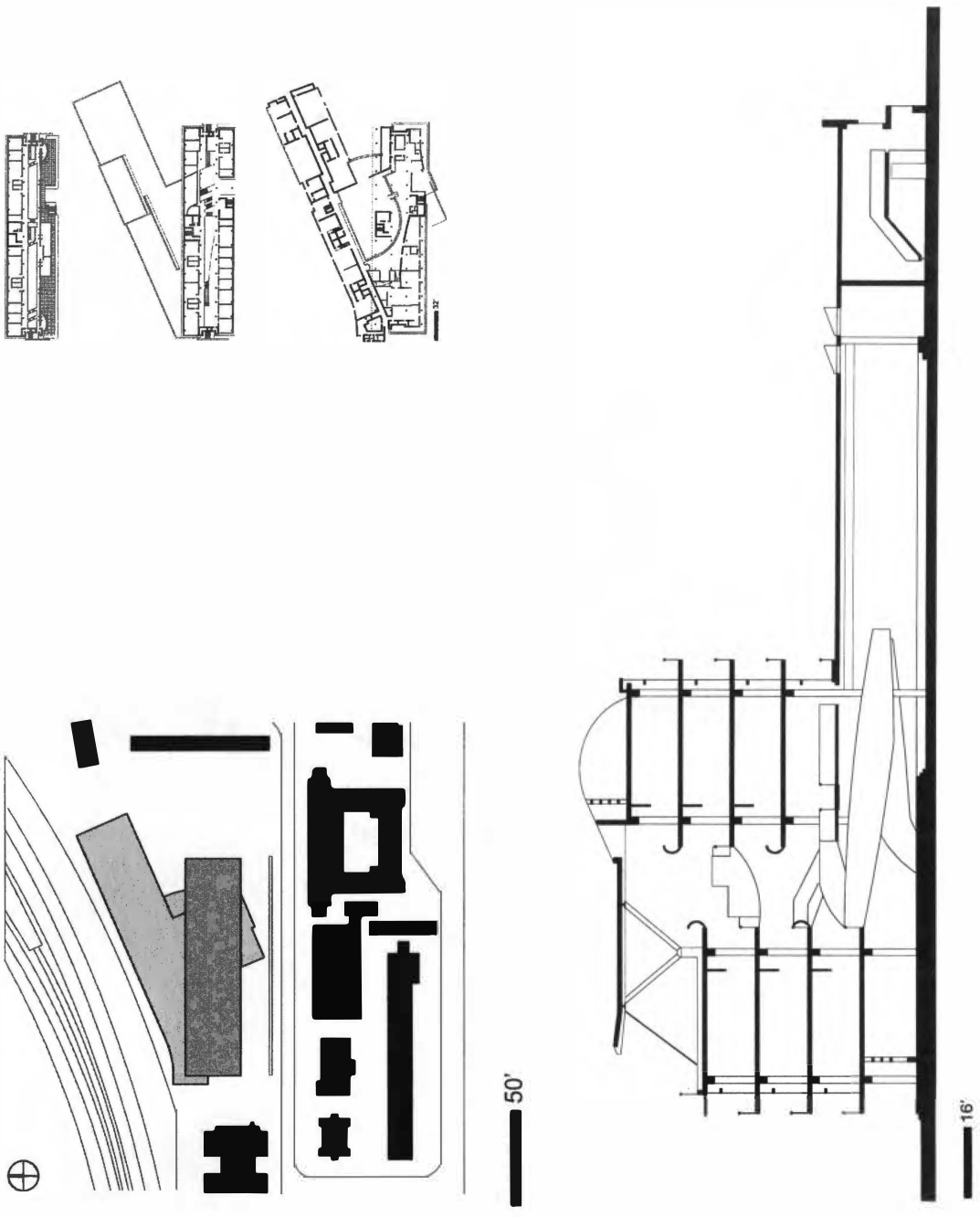


Figure 2. Sectional Diagram of In-Between at Oost
Source: Author

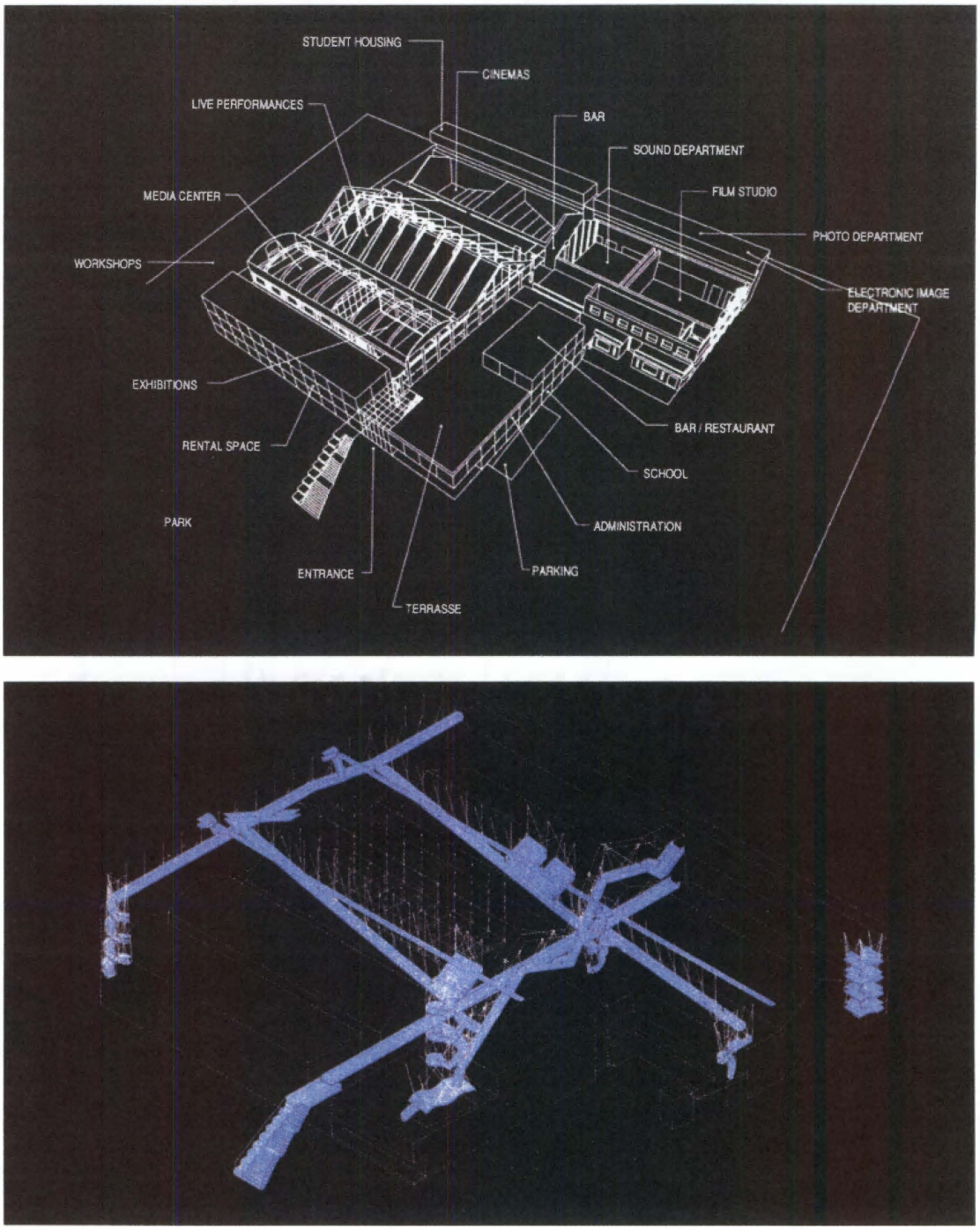


Figure 3. Programmatic Spaces of Le Fresnoy
Source: Tschumi

polarities. Community reconciles the individual and the collective; learning reconciles desire and action; and, art reconciles the conscious and the subconscious. Just as Van Eyck explains, that the doorstep "re-establish the original twinphenonena" between, for example public and private, the threshold experiences, community, learning, and art, re-establish the nature of their corresponding original twinphenomena (Smithson 1968, 96).

Community

In the essay "Altruism and Egoism: The Garden and the Citadel," Abraham Akkerman discusses modern architecture through the myth of the garden and the citadel. The garden represents a place of "guileless coexistence" with nature and society. The citadel represents a place to live protected from the environment to "stave off external attack and suppress internal mutiny." The garden is the conceptual place of the collective. The citadel is the conceptual place of the individual. Through mass transit, communications, and urban sprawl, the 20th Century signaled the decline of the citadel. Aldo Van Eyck challenged architects and designers to re-establish the in-between, Akkerman challenges architects and designers to revive the garden. He writes:

> The architectural challenge for the twenty-first century does not abide in reconstituting the Citadel but in reviving the Garden. The task is to re-create the city square, to bring it back as a genuine open space, an authentic shared place. The charge of architects and designers is to help bring the myth of the Garden into the corporeality of the Citadel. If we succeed in bringing back an authentically public, shared space within the city, we will have endowed the city with an old-new urban artifact, a bequest for generations to come. (Akkerman, 65-72)

If architects succeed in bringing the myth of the Garden into the corporeality of the Citadel, the original twin phenomena of the individual and the collective will be revived.

Aldo Van Eyck worked with the public authority of Amsterdam to create over

700 playgrounds in the thirty years following World War II (see figure 4). By turning the empty spaces of the city into places for play, Van Eyck established the in-between (see figure 5 through 8). What results from Van Eyck's place making is a new threshold where once there was a void. The architecture, site, and program create a conceptual and physical threshold between a place for play and the street. The threshold is neither three dimensional nor precisely definable, but none-the-less, the place of the child and the place of the city are reconciled through this redefinition of the in-between.

The creation of these playgrounds took decades and involved many people. While a central agency gave the authority for their creation, the underlying structure for the playgrounds is polycentric. The playgrounds in this structure are part of an open-ended pattern. Within this constellation, each individual playground is a threshold reconciling its own individuality and its place in a greater collective (Lefaivre, 24-57).

The polycentric structure disperses the thresholds associated with community spaces (see figure 9). With public spaces all over the city, the individual is given greater access to the collective and likewise more responsibility. The twin phenomena, individual and collective, is re-established in all these playgrounds. Therefore, every neighborhood experiences the threshold of community.

Learning

The urban school has the power to 'bring the myth of the Garden into the corporeality of the Citadel.' Learning, as John Dewey clearly explains, is experiential. The experiences that constitute learning exist on a threshold between on one hand an original impulse and on the other observation and judgment. As John Dewey writes, "The crucial educational problem is that of procuring the postponement of immediate action upon desire until observation and judgment have intervened." In order to learn, one must "procure the postponement of immediate action." In other words, one must

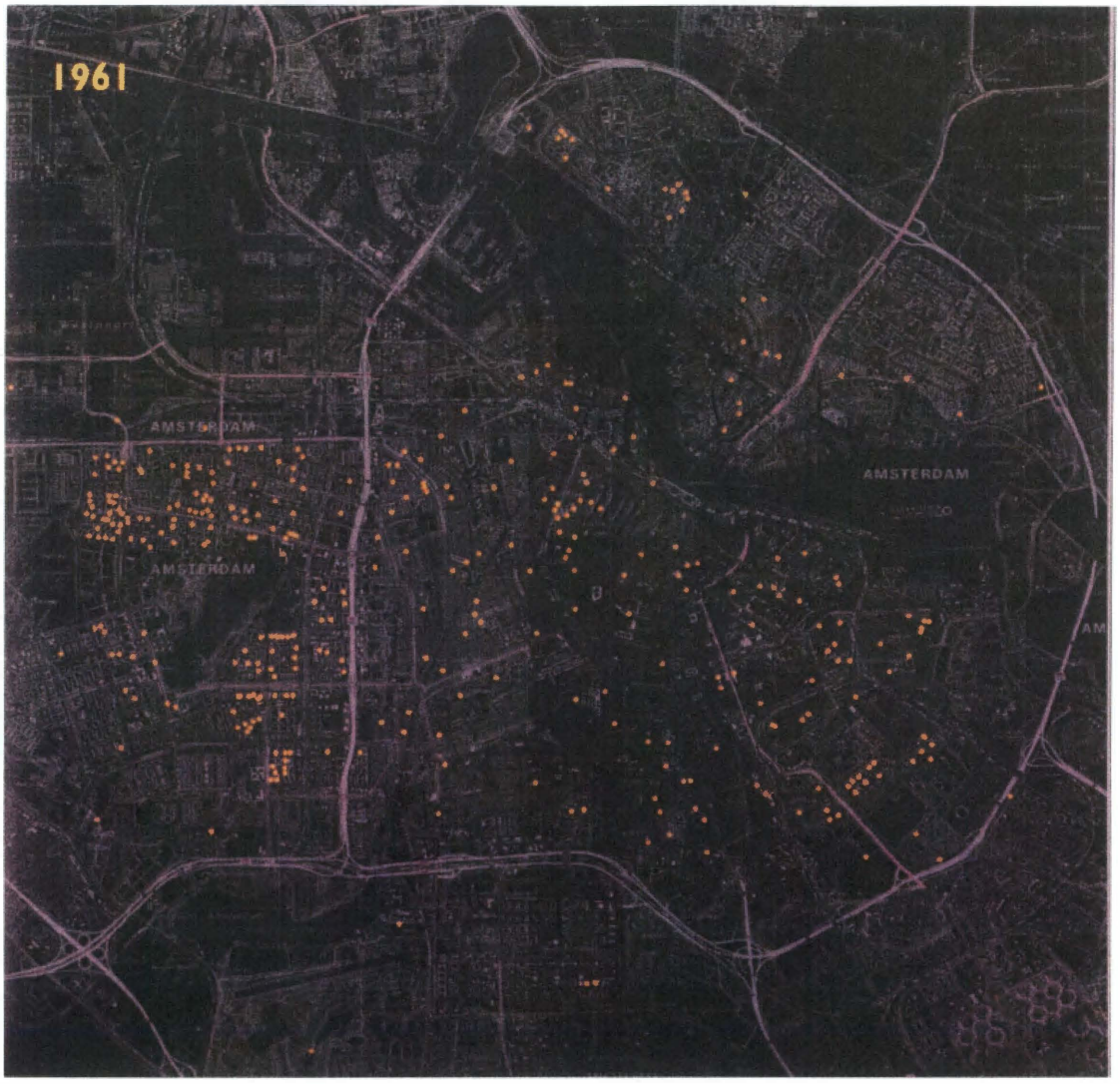


Figure 4. Constellation of Playgrounds in Postwar Amsterdam
Source: Lefaivre



Figure 5. Site in Amsterdam Before Playground
Source: Lefaivre



Figure 6. Site in Amsterdam After Playground
Source: Lefaivre

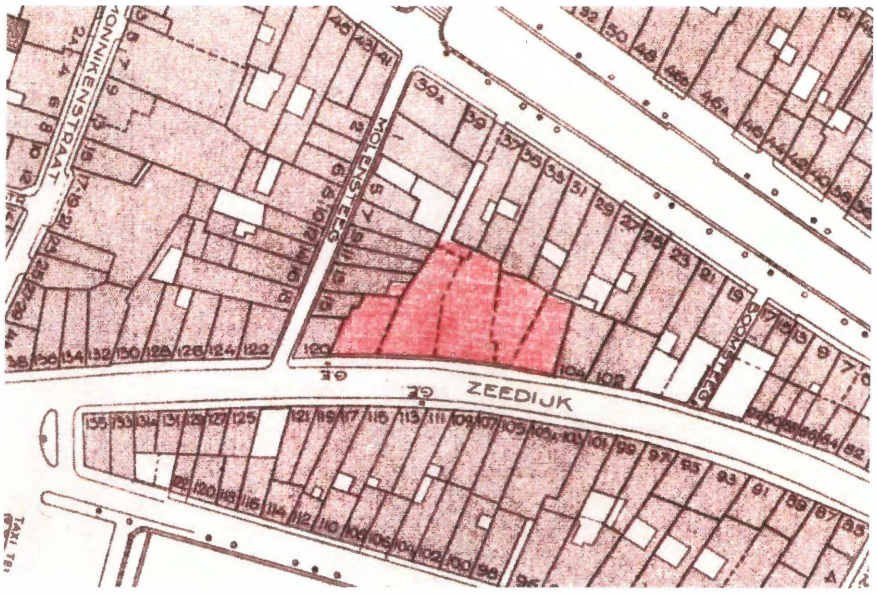


Figure 7. Interstitial Site Marked for a Playground in Amsterdam
Source:. Lefaivre

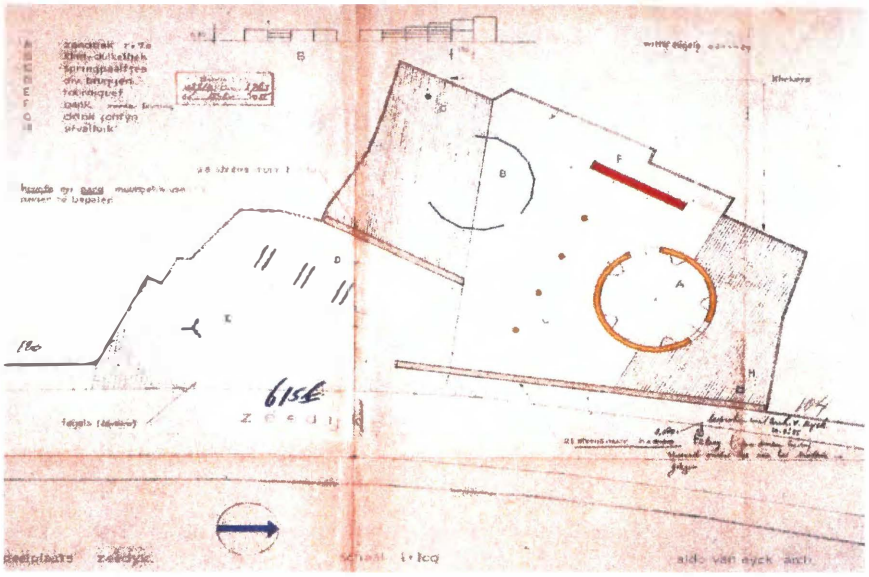


Figure 8. Plan for Playground in Amsterdam
Source: Lefaivre

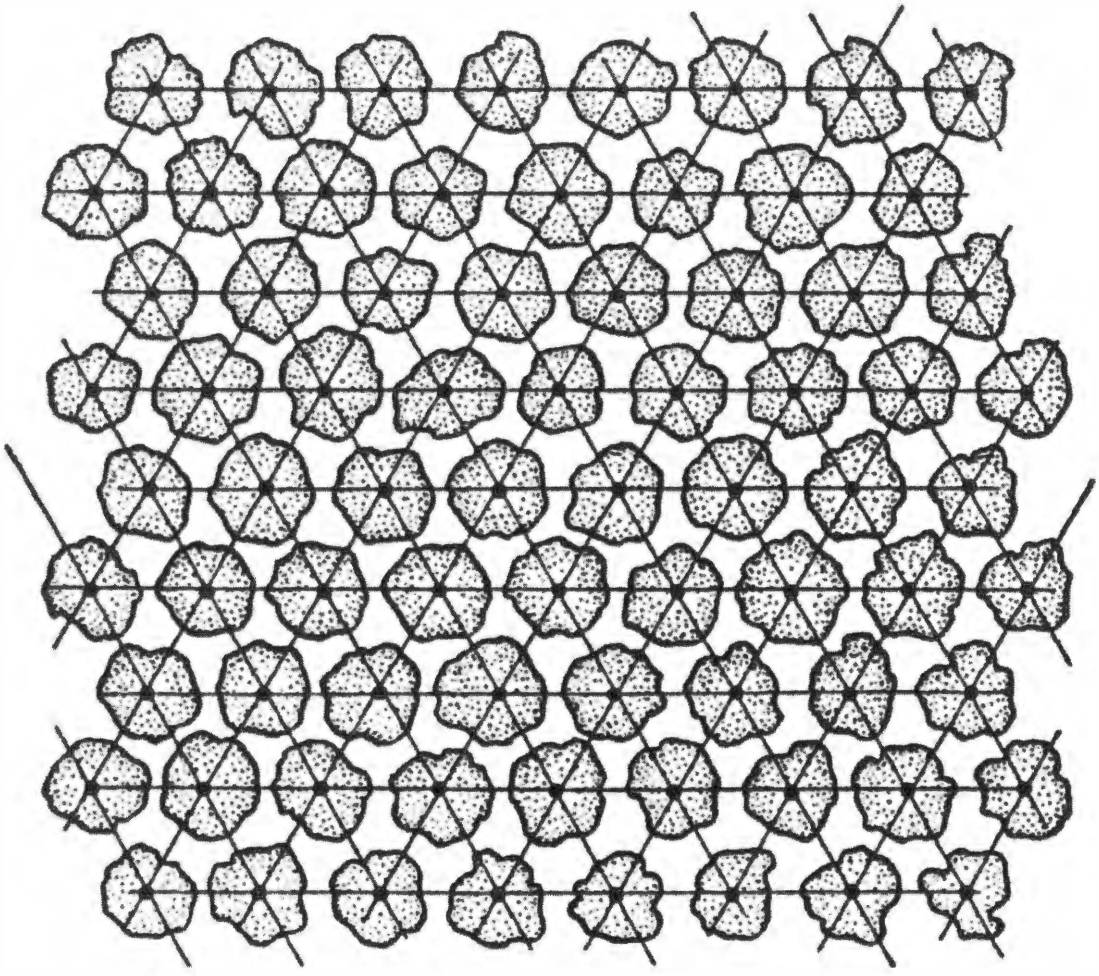


Figure 9. Diagram of a Polycentric Web
Source: Lefaivre

establish the in-between in order to reconcile impulse, observation, and judgment. Architecture can provide a conceptual and physical threshold for learning (Dewey).

Community and learning are two thresholds that must work together to teach what John Dewey calls "the most important life lesson, that of mutual accommodation and adaptation." Community and learning are inseparable concepts. Again Dewey writes, "The principle that development of experience comes about through interaction means that education is essentially a social process. This quality is realized in the degree in which individuals form a community group." The school can become an environment of interaction for students and the community, in fact an environment for learning through interaction with the community (Dewey).

The conceptual union of community and learning physically manifests itself in Thomas Jefferson's "Academical Village" in Charlottesville, Virginia. In order to accommodate and stimulate social interaction between professors and students, Jefferson created the colonnade that connects the students' barracks, and the professors' lodges (see figure 10 through 13). This colonnade was designed to provide "dry communication between all the schools." The colonnade is the threshold between the individual spaces of the barracks and lodges and the collective spaces of the lawn. Jefferson wrote, "The whole of these arranged around an open square of grass and trees would make it, what it should be in fact, an academical village, instead of a large and common den of noise, of filth and of fetid air." Putting the acoustical and ventilation issues of the early 19th Century aside, it is the dry communication that makes Jefferson's campus a community. "Dry communication" is a concept and a physical manifestation. The community of the "Academical Village" is possible only through the social interaction that takes place beneath the colonnade. The architectural threshold provides figural and literal shelter for communication (Wilson).

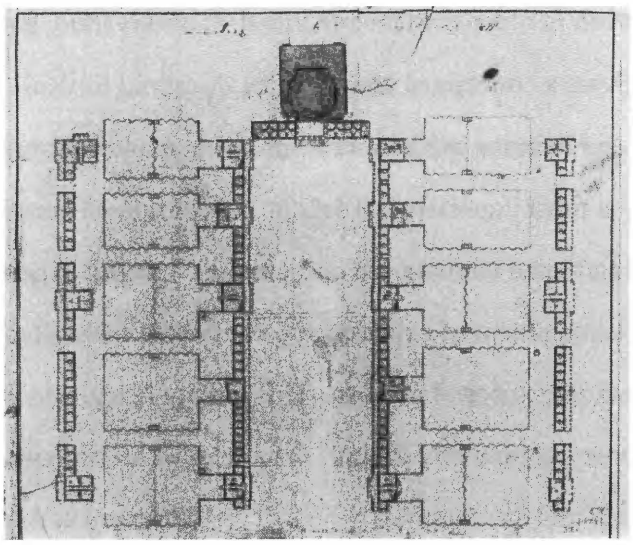


Figure 10. Plan of the "Academical Village"
Source: Wilson

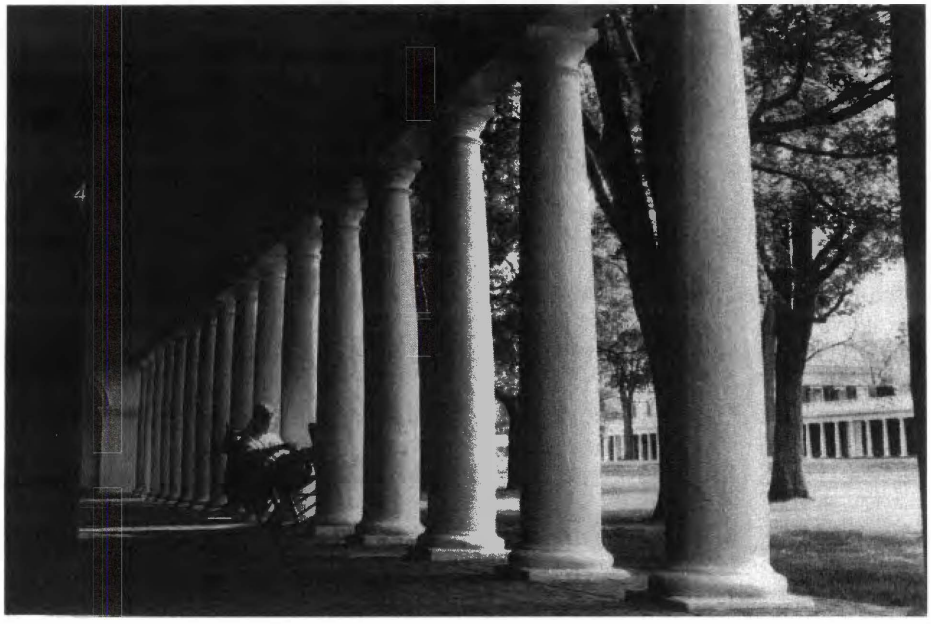


Figure 11. Colonnade at University of Virginia at Charlottesville
Source: Wilson

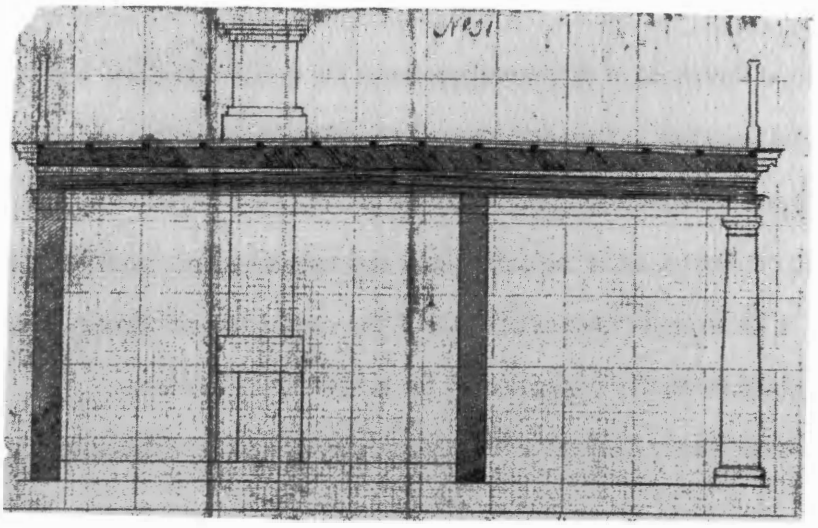


Figure 12. Section Cutting through Barracks and Colonnade
Source: Wilson



Figure 13. Aerial Perspective of the "Academical Village"
Source: Wilson

Art

The final threshold of this investigation is the threshold of art. Art, like community and learning, is a reconciliation of conflicting polarities, in this case between the conscious and the subconscious. Art is the act and the product of this interchange. Stretching the definition, art is the conceptual and sometimes physical place for this interchange. A community is created between the conscious and the subconscious of the individual and the collective embodied by the artist and the audience.

The Laban Dance Center by Herzog and de Meuron is a conceptual and physical threshold, the product of and facilitator of community, learning, and art. The building brings a variety of people including, performers, students, teachers, and viewers, to what was once an abandoned two acre industrial site in the Deptford area of South East London. The vibrant building is a physical representation of Laban's relationship to the community (see figure 14 and 15).

At an urban scale the building is a threshold between the old and the new. The large object-building is at home among the warehouses of its post industrial location. The building recalls the past with a new program. The distorted form of the building is a response to a historic church in the area. The building is a glowing beacon along Deptford Creek announcing the new buildings placed in the community.

At the building scale, the Laban Dance Center is a threshold for community, learning, and art. The façade provides a conceptual and physical threshold using transparency, translucence, and reflectivity as a metaphor for the individual's relationship to community, learning, and art. By day the training, rehearsals, research, and workshops are semi-visible from the outside. By night the façade glows to animate the site. The reflective quality of the façade suggests the individual's role in this learning and arts community. The curved surface of the entry and the abstract mounds of the landscape are



Figure 14. Aerial Photograph of Deptford Area in South East London
Source: Unknown



Figure 15. Laban Dance Center Glowing at Night Across Deptford Creek
Source: Laban Contemporary Dance

used as the backdrop and the set for outdoor performances.

At the scale of a person, the Laban Dance Center provides a conceptual and physical threshold in the form of an internal streetscape (see figure 16 and 17). Articulated with the energy and fluidity of dance movement, the many and diverse interior spaces of the streetscape are places for interchange between the various disciplines of the Center. The program areas, library, theaters, studios, café, etc. define the in-between, in much the same way that the existing buildings and the super structure define the in-between at Bernard Tschumi's Le Fresnoy.

The Laban Dance Center is part of the local community as well as part of a nationwide partnership with dance organizations, agencies and professional dance companies. The architecture of the Laban Dance Center achieves the goals of the organization, to provide access to learning and art to the community. The overall concept of the Laban Dance Center is to engage and stimulate interest and participation, to ultimately initiate new members into a community of learning and art. The context in which the building exists is transformed from an empty space into a place for experiencing community, learning, and art. The content of the project provides an organized system for these threshold activities.



Figure 16. Site Plan of Laban Dance Center and St.. Paul's Church
Source: Unknown

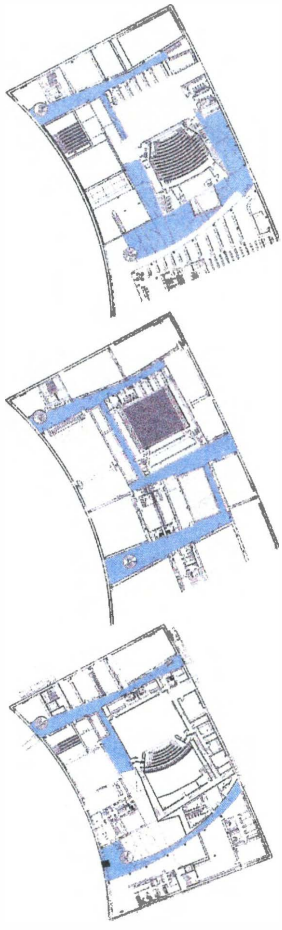


Figure 17. Ground Floor and Mezzanine of Laban with Interior Streetscape in Blue
Source: Unknown

II. SITE

This thesis accepts the potential relocation of the Nashville School of the Arts as opportunity to re-imagine the school as a complex for art and community. The context for the project is very important. In order for the Nashville School of the Arts to become a complex for the community as well as art, the site must have the potential of becoming important to the community. The school's website describes the exciting potential of moving to a downtown location:

> Nashville School of the Arts has a bright future ahead of it. Our location on the Tennessee Preparatory School campus is a temporary one until a facility can be built downtown, where students will be able to not only study and perform their arts on school grounds but also interact with the downtown arts community around them (Nashville School of the Arts).

The site of the new Nashville School of the Arts will not only allow students to 'interact with the downtown arts community around them' but, as a re-established in-between place, the site will allow students and the greater Nashville community to experience the place between conceptually and physically separated areas of Nashville. The site cannot be a centralized campus, independent of the greater network of experiences that already exist in Nashville or will exist in the future. The site must be considered part of a network and as such must become a threshold of within this network (see figure 18 through 20).

The six acre site consists of one block north and one block south of Jefferson Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues (see figure 21). The site has the potential to participate in re-establishing the memory of the historic French Lick Creek or perhaps the re-establishing of the creek itself. The creek once flowed one block south of the site. The Bicentennial Mall Master Plan and the Plan of Nashville suggest that the now underground creek should be resurfaced and flow along its former path from the Bicentennial Mall to the Cumberland, one block south of the Jefferson Street Bridge (see



Figure 18. Diagram Post-Industrial Threshold
Source: Author

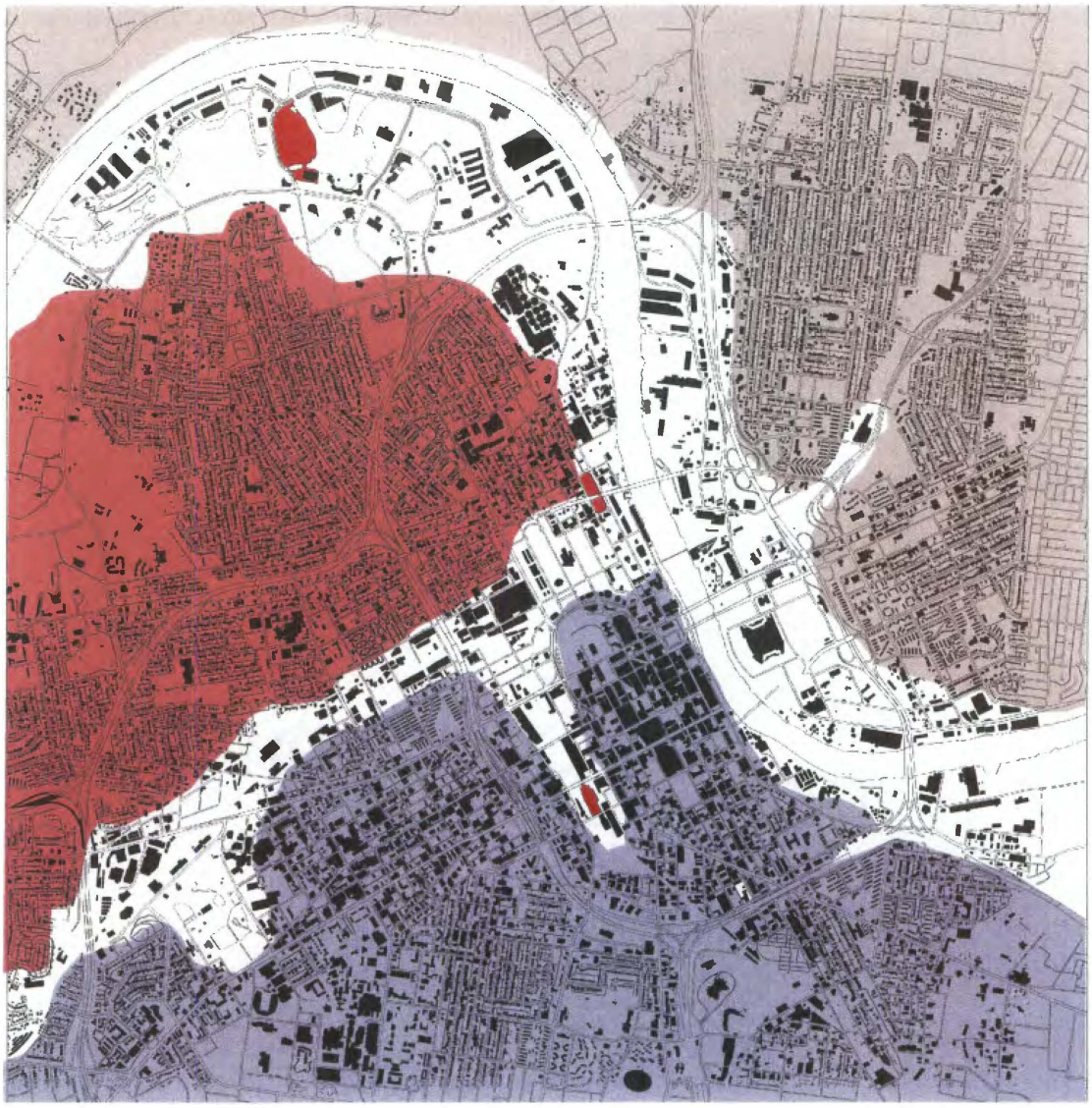


Figure 19. Diagram of Separated Areas of Nashville
Source: Author

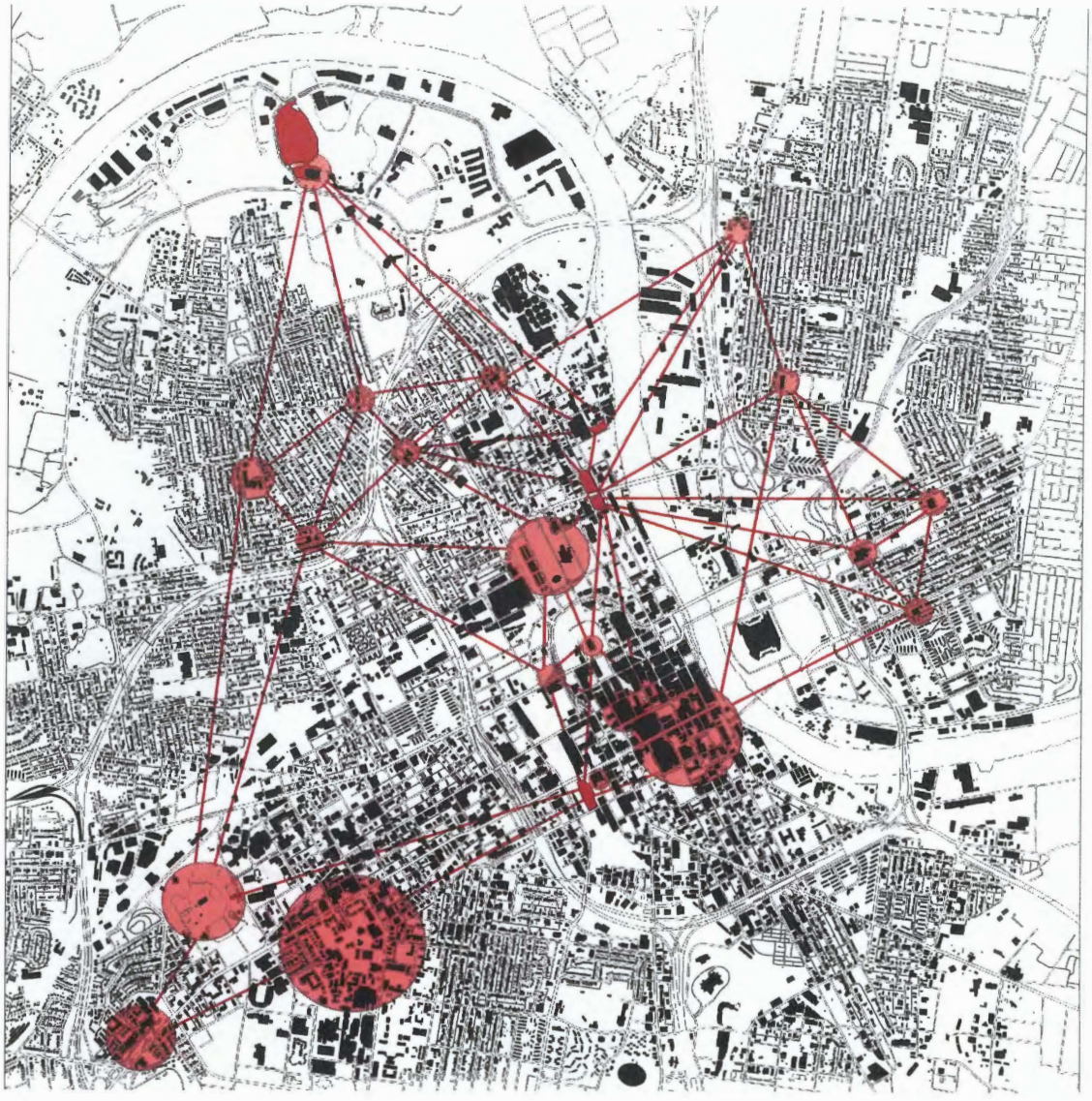


Figure 20. Diagram of Polycentric Web of Arts in Nashville
Source: Author



Figure 21. Aerial Photograph with Site Highlighted
Source: Nashville Civic Design Center

figure 22).

The constructed topography associated with the Jefferson Street Bridge now acts as a barrier along Second Avenue, the east side of the site. This constructed high point sits directly in the view corridor that connects two other important high points in Nashville, the William Strickland designed state capital downtown and Schwab Hill to the north and on the other side of the Cumberland River. This site has the potential to become a visible threshold between built environment of downtown Nashville and the natural environment. As such the site should be a compromise between the built and the natural environments.

At the foot of the Jefferson Street Bridge, the site will be a threshold of entry and departure to and from the east by way of Jefferson Street. Just west of the Metro Ready Mix concrete facility, the site will allow the proposed Cumberland River Greenway to pass along the threshold of the industrial river front. Using the area beneath the Jefferson Street Bridge, the site will have direct access to the Cumberland River with a potential connection to the barge terminal below Neuhoff or Metro Ready Mix. The site will direct access to the proposed trolley line one block to the east by once again using the underside of the Jefferson Street Bridge. The site is extremely accessible from Jefferson Street, 2nd Avenue, 3rd Avenue, Madison Street, and Jackson Street.

The site is a threshold between several varied cultural areas. The institutional government area with 9 to 5 work schedules are to the east and south. The commercial operations to the west have a similar schedule. The similar horizon either side of Jefferson Street, the site will conceptually and physically connect Downtown and North The residential neighborhood to the north and northwest, the line of housing along the river to the east, and the proposed housing at Neuhoff will have more of a night time and weekend culture. The industrial operations to the east and north, especially Metro Ready



Figure 22. Bicentennial Mall Master Plan with Site Highlighted
Source: Nashville Civic Design Center

Mix have a 24 hour schedule and are constantly unloading barges full of sand.

The completion of a propose State Museum, State Archives, and African American Museum on Bicentennial Mall will provide the site with direct access to many enriching cultural amenities. The culture of downtown is very close as well. The site is located on or near many infrastructural connectors including the greenway and proposed greenway extension associated with riverfront redevelopment, the proposed trolley line that would run from the Shelby Street Bridge to Metro Center, the active bus routes, the river with barge traffic and increasing interest in water taxi traffic, accessible sidewalks, and ample automobile streets.

Nashville has earned the title "Athens of the South." The many revival styles such as the State Capital and newly constructed Symphony Hall, show that Nashville not only deserves but accepts this title. Nashville also has a strong tradition of Avant Garde Architecture. The proposed development on the Bicentennial Mall will most likely place itself within the Neo Classical tradition. The proposed development of live/work residents at Neuhoff will most likely place itself in Nashville's Avante Garde tradition. The site sits between these two proposals. As such the art complex and school can become a threshold between the Neoclassical and the Avant Garde.

The site is within a disorderly, underdeveloped, post-industrial landscape that runs along the Cumberland River and former creek beds and rail lines to the east, west, and south. This band with the city is the subject of many redevelopment strategies such as the Bicentennial Mall, the Tennessee Titan's stadium, the Gulch, the Sounds Stadium, riverfront redevelopment, and many more conceptual and real interventions. As such the site is part of a potential in-between place that runs throughout and touching all parts of the city.

The post industrial landscape is home to many building types including: large,

one-story, flat-roofed commercial and government buildings, river oriented linear and courtyard buildings, large and small industrial buildings with small simple span structures made of steel or complicated concrete structures with brick infill, historic homes and new infill, and the machine structures like those to the east at Metro Ready Mix on Second Avenue.

The site within this disorderly landscape requires a strong ordering system that will give structure to the chaos. This system, however, must be derived from the existing surroundings in order to provide a system that is part of a great system. Once this structured site becomes integral to the surroundings, the site will become a threshold within a system of diversity.

III. PROGRAM

A new Nashville School of the Arts is a perfect program for investigating the architectural threshold. Learning and art are both concepts from which to design thresholds of experience. By expanding the schools ability to welcome visitors and send students out into the community, the school also becomes a place to test the threshold's potential to stimulate community through social interaction.

The four year high school model will be replaced with a learning environment for seniors only. The arts complex will be an option for all seniors in high school who know that they would like to pursue the arts or are looking for a unique experience before graduating. The experience will be a transition from high school toward independence. The *seniors only* school will provide the scheduling flexibility needed for intensive art curriculum. The only required class would be English. The Nashville School of the Arts currently takes advantage of this schedule in its senior year curriculum.

The new Nashville School of the Arts will emphasize the a statement found on the existing schools website, "the degree to which individuals form community groups" by providing thresholds as places for social interaction between many groups. The students of the school will, of course, interact with one another and faculty. Beyond this, the students will interact with many groups that visit the school from other schools and from around the city and the state. The students will also interact with the downtown community and other schools, through outreach. In this way the new Nashville School of the Arts will become a threshold for intense and varied social interactions.

The library, museum gallery, traditional proscenium theater, and outdoor amphitheater with projection screen are art amenities that will be enjoyed by not only the surrounding community but visitors from outside of Nashville as well. The experimental black box theater and experimental installation space are primarily for

student investigations, but are meant to also showcase artistic expression fostered at the art complex. Several other spaces are for student, community, and professional use including the production spaces on the east side of the complex, namely the steel shop, wood shop, and ceramics shop. The lower level student gallery and for sale gallery are another way for the students to interact with the community. The café, open market space, and commuter shower and public restroom are public amenities that provide an environment to experience the dual nature of the individual and the collective through public use. Finally the artist live/work housing is meant primarily for instructors and artists in residence, but the flexible spaces at street level encourage some public communication and can be used as retail galleries or other retail spaces as well as work spaces.

The program (see figure 23) is designed to provide the threshold experiences that constitute art, learning, and community. Proximity and spatial arrangements encourage and at times require mingling. The large loosely programmed spaces of the building are an attempt to, as Akkerman says, "bring the myth of the Garden into the corporeality of the Citadel" (Akkerman, 65-72). In the same way the empty spaces of the post industrial landscape can become a place for interaction, the open space of the building can become a place for threshold experiences.

TOTAL PROGRAM NSF	~180,000 sf		
TOTAL PROGRAM GSF	~300,000 sf		
		~QT.	~NSF
production spaces			
	fabric shop	1	900
	recording studios	1	100
	digital lab	2	1200
	wood shop	1	2100
	metal shop	1	2100
	ceramics area	1	2100
	dark room	1	100
instructional spaces			
	2d workshop	1	1800
	3d workshop	1	1800
	4d workshop	1	1800
performance/exhibition			
	open auditorium	2	1800
	museum gallery	1	9000
	proscenium stage	1	9000
	experimental theater	2	2700
	experimental installation space	1	2700
	student run commercial gallery	1	1200
	student gallery	1	2100
	outdoor amphitheater	1	10000
instructional spaces			
	studios		16800
support spaces			
	food court	1	9000
	library	1	12000
	offices	1	1200
housing			
	live	32	28800
	work	32	25600
other			
	art supply store	1	3000
	café	1	3000

Figure 23. Program Summary
Source: Author

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APPENDIX

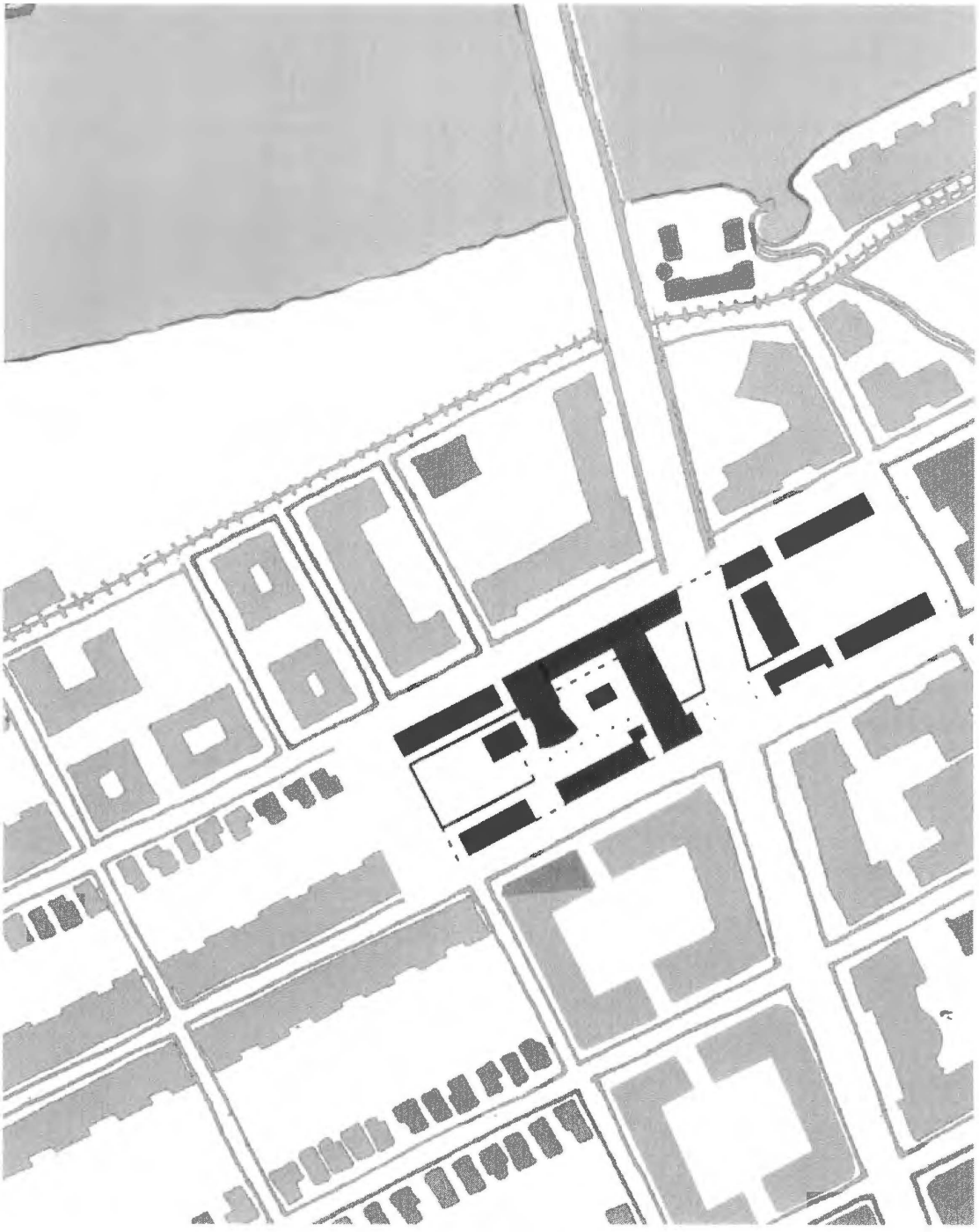


Figure A-1. Site Plan
Source: Author

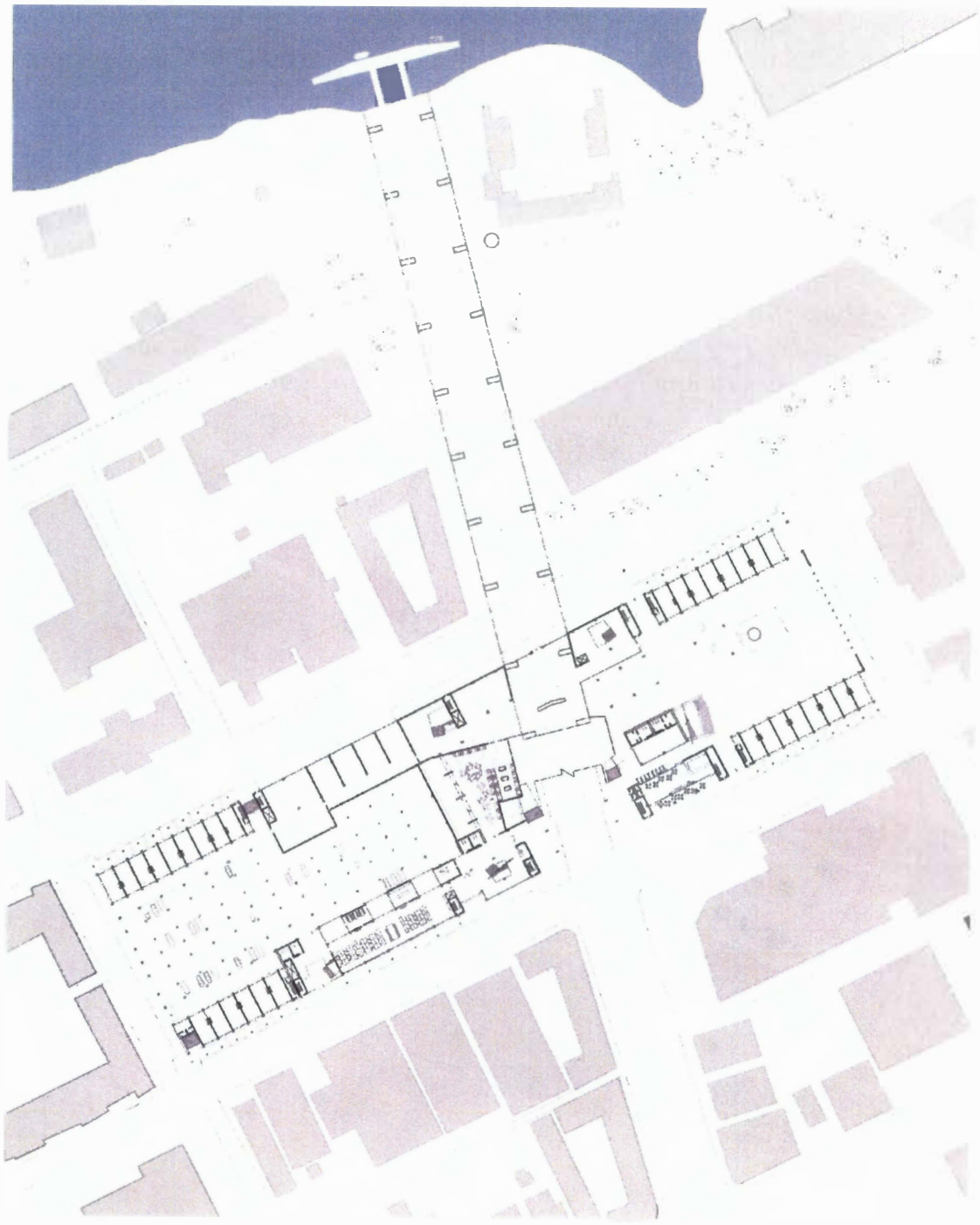


Figure A-2. Ground Floor Plan
Source: Author



Figure A-3. Ground Floor Program Diagram
Source: Author

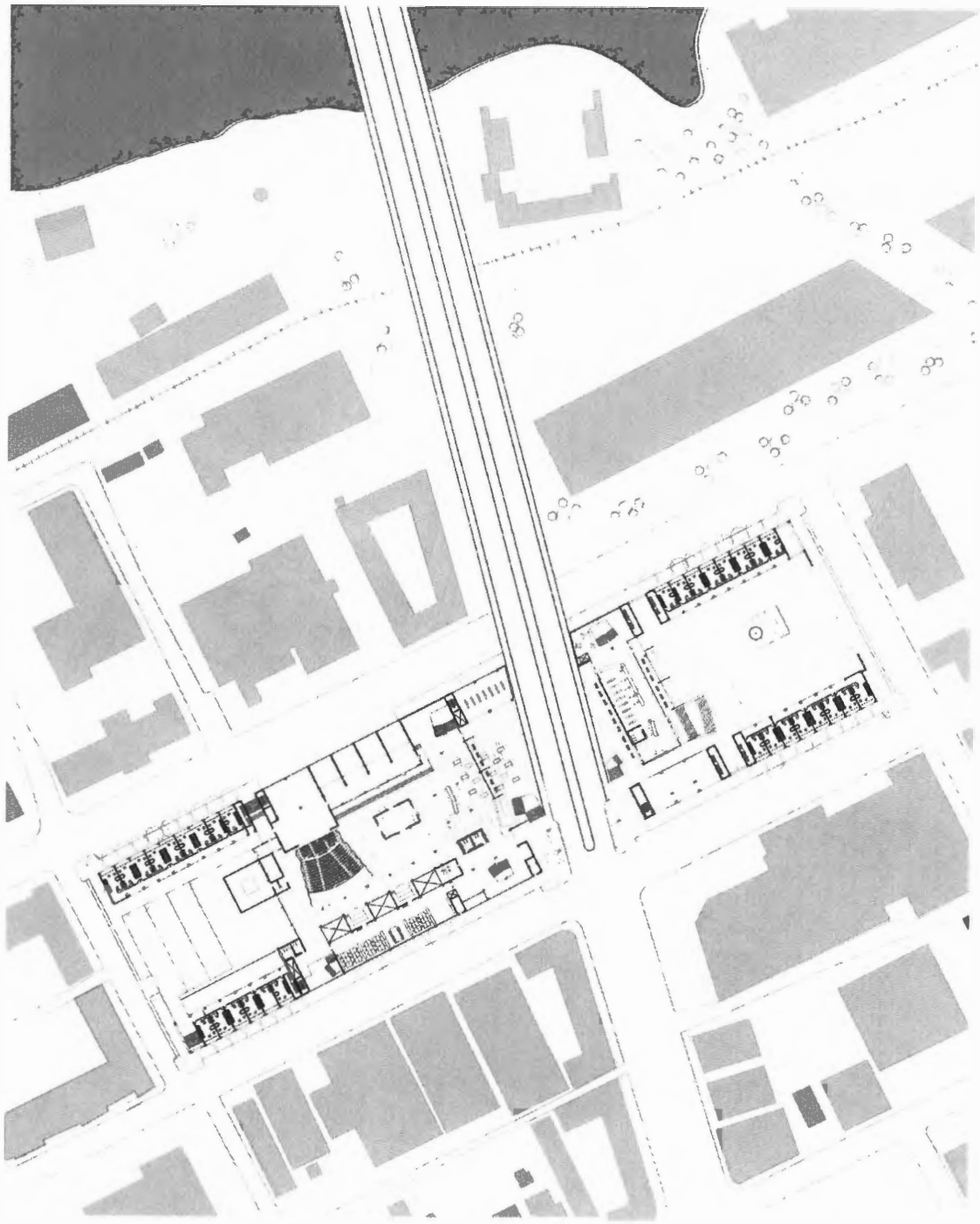


Figure A-4. Second Floor Plan
Source: Author

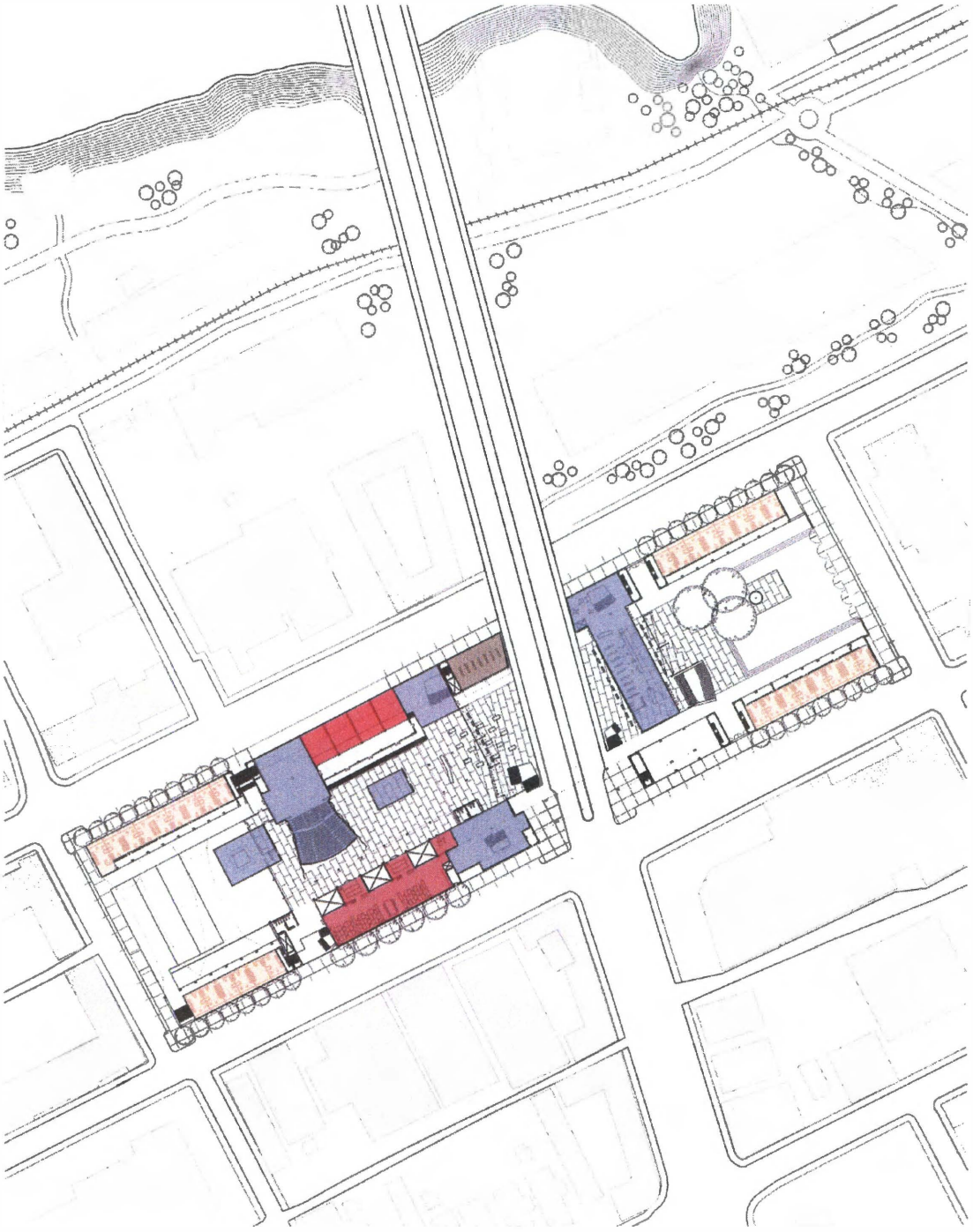


Figure A-5. Second Floor Program Diagram
Source: Author

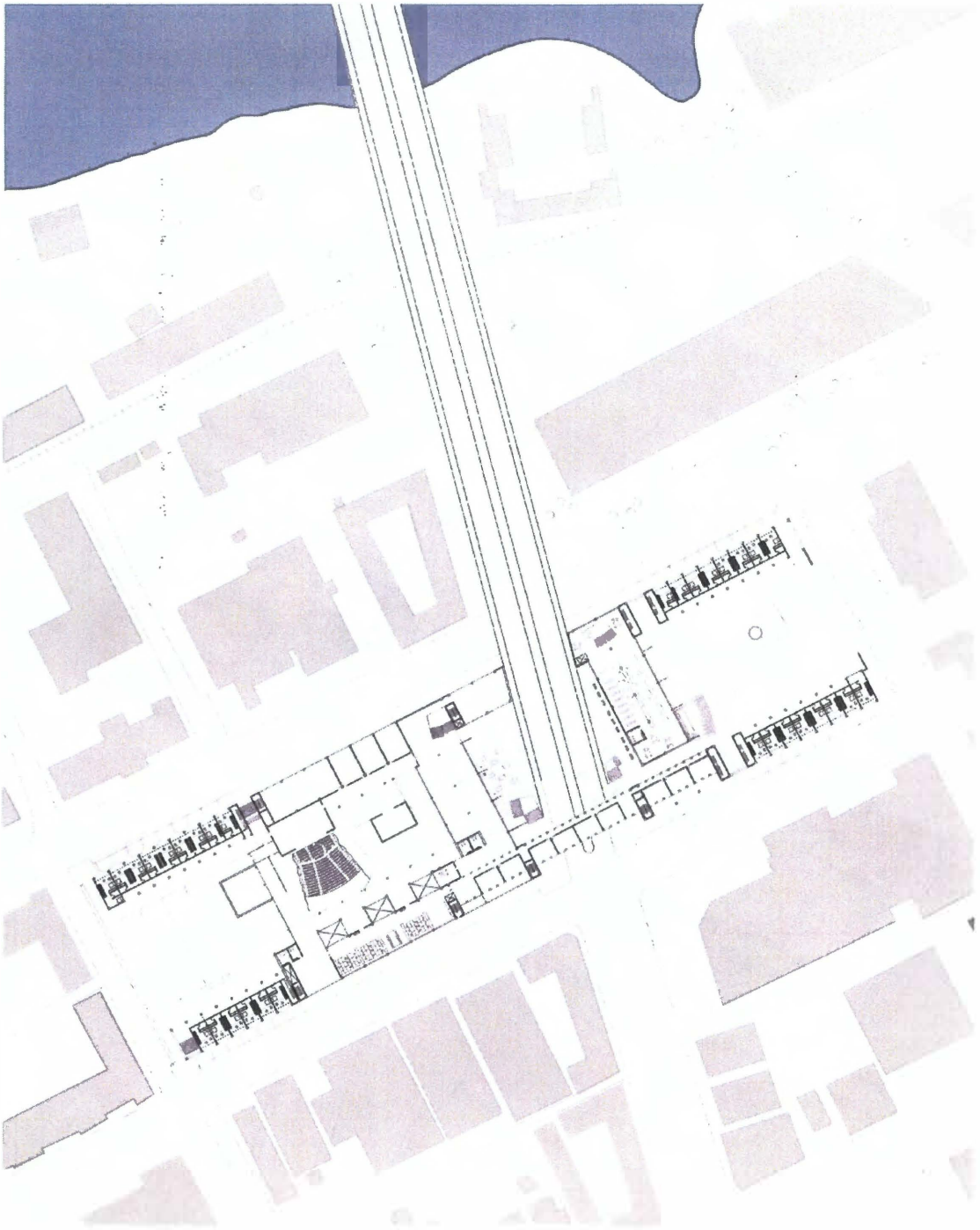


Figure A-6. Third Floor Plan
Source: Author

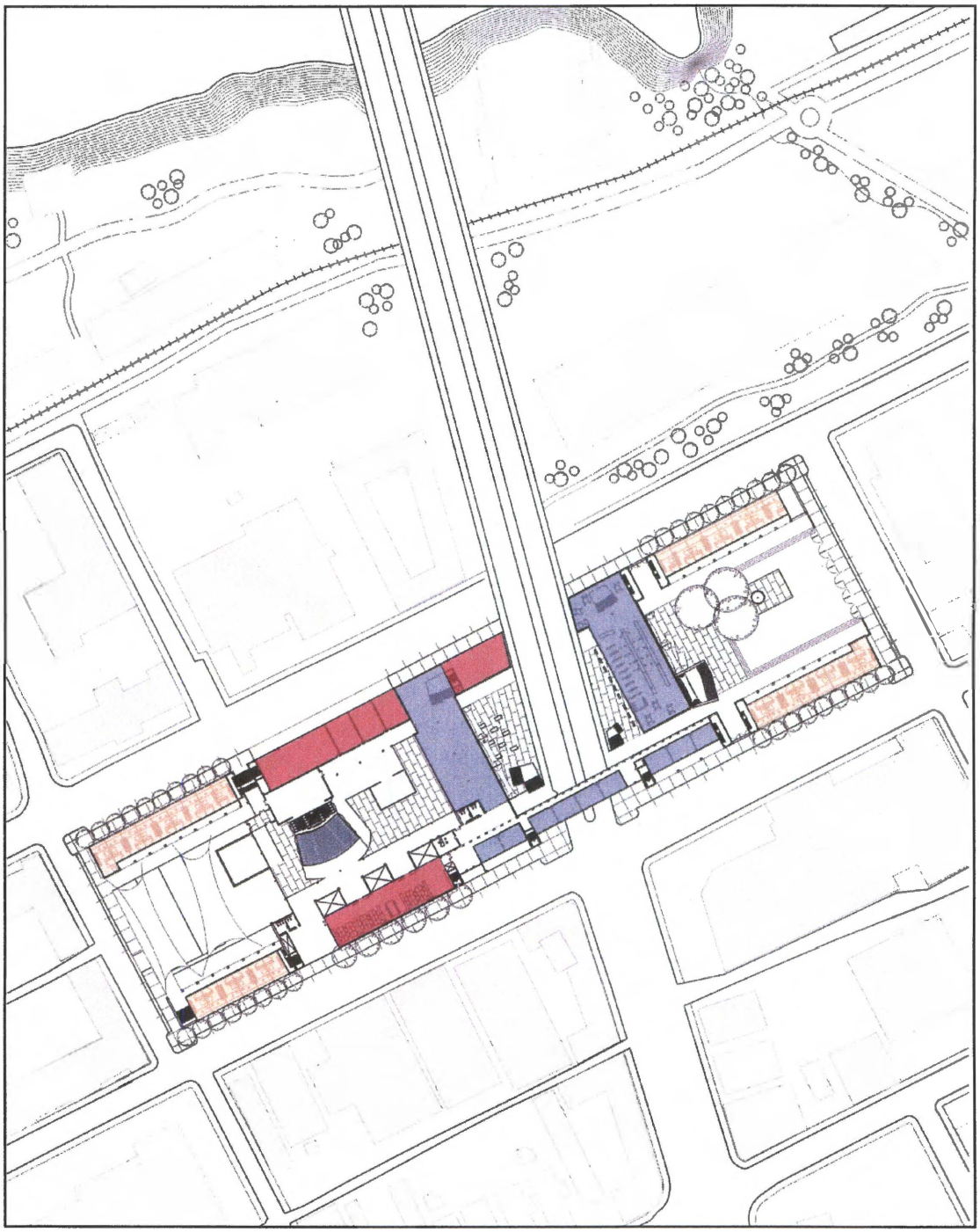


Figure A-7. Third Floor Program Diagram
Source: Author

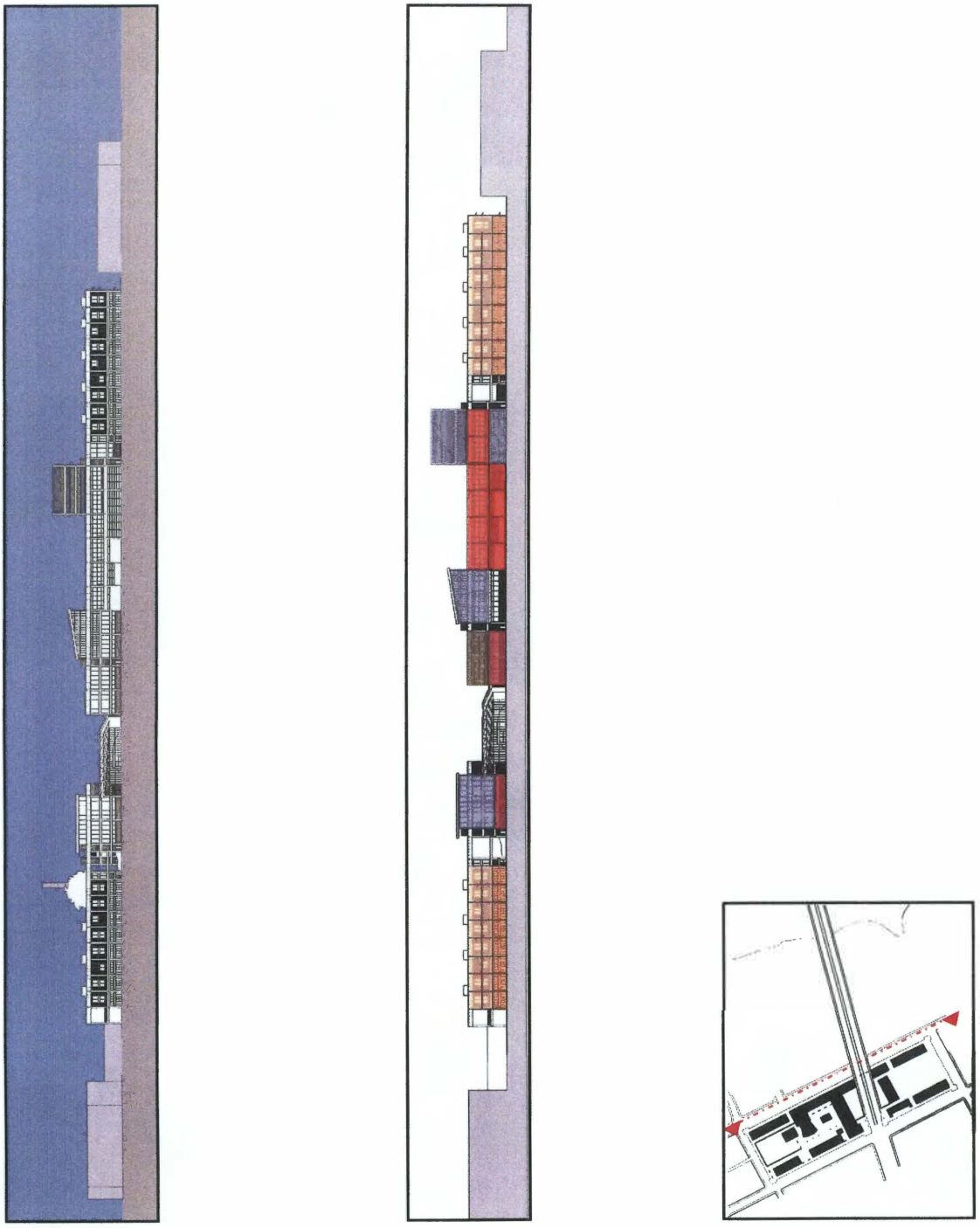


Figure A-8. East Elevation and Program Diagram
Source: Author

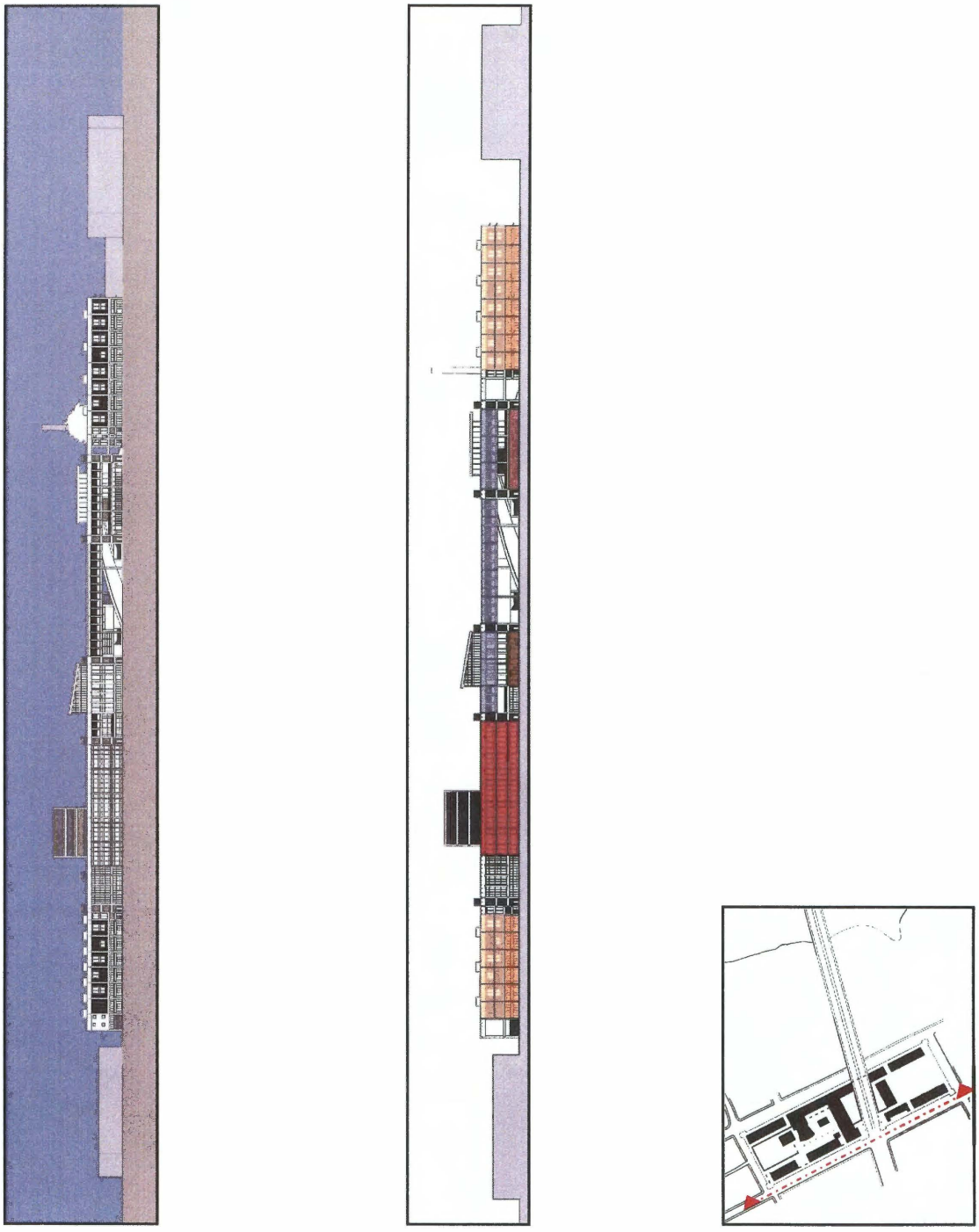
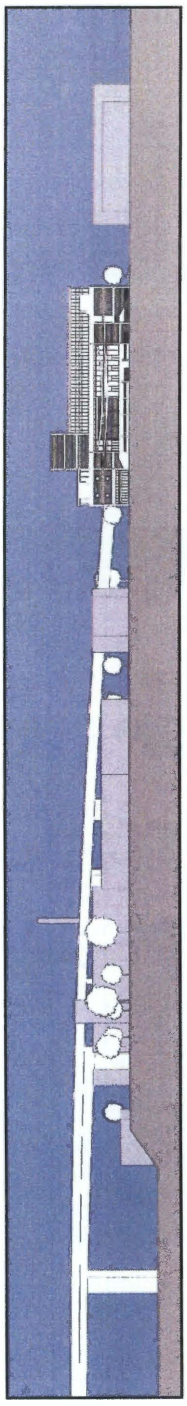


Figure A-9. West Elevation and Program Diagram
Source: Author



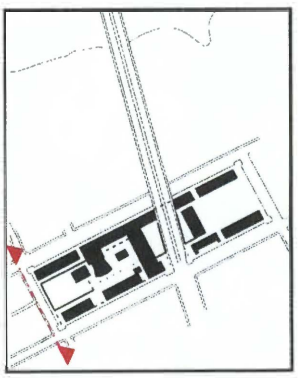


Figure A-10. North Elevation
Source: Author

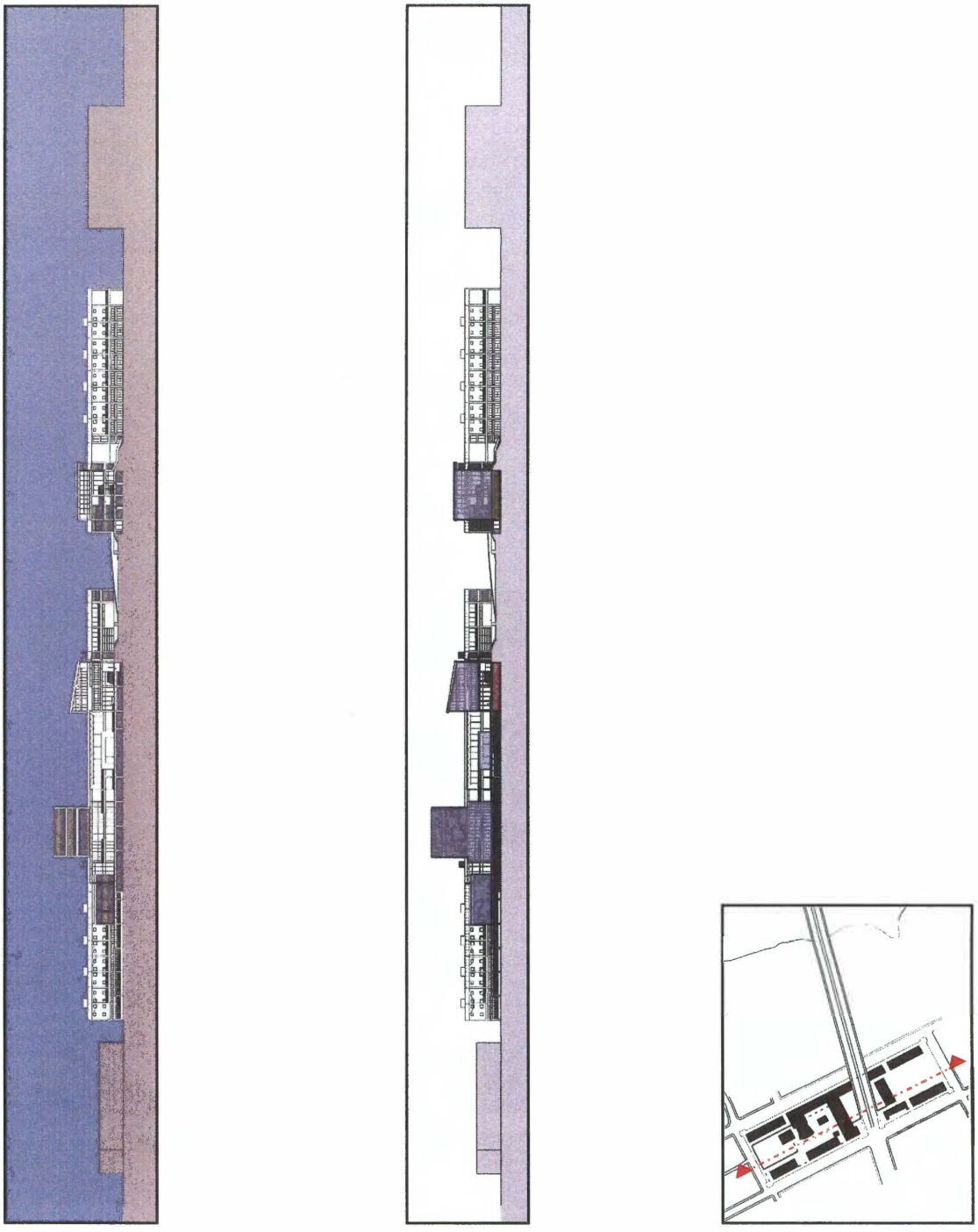


Figure A-11. Longitudinal Section and Program Diagram
Source: Author

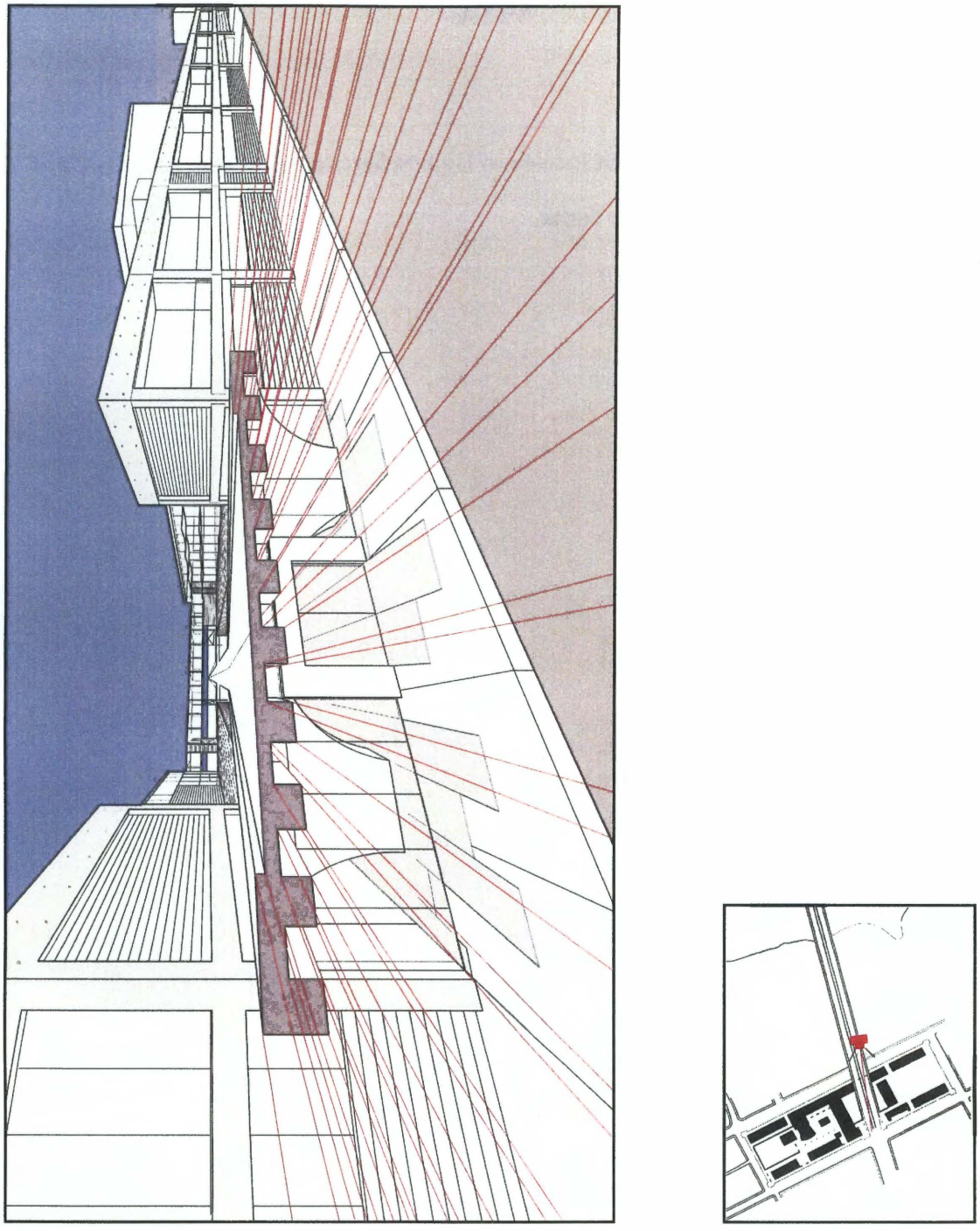


Figure A-12. Perspective from Bridge
Source: Author

VITA

John Mixon is a graduate of Jonesboro High School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas.

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