

Ghost Museum of Black History

Casey Hall
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Prof. David Fox
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Introduction

In 1965, McReynolds High School burned for the first time. It wasn't an accident. Instead of rebuilding, the students, who were black, went to different schools, and the site was left with only the gymnasium. The gymnasium burned for the second and third times in 2017, and then for the fourth time in 2018, also not accidents.

The Cumberland Masonic Lodge No. 90 was built by the black community in 1928. Unusual as it was for there to be black freemasons, the building was their central meeting place, until one day it wasn't. The building was lost to the elements, and its memory lost to time.

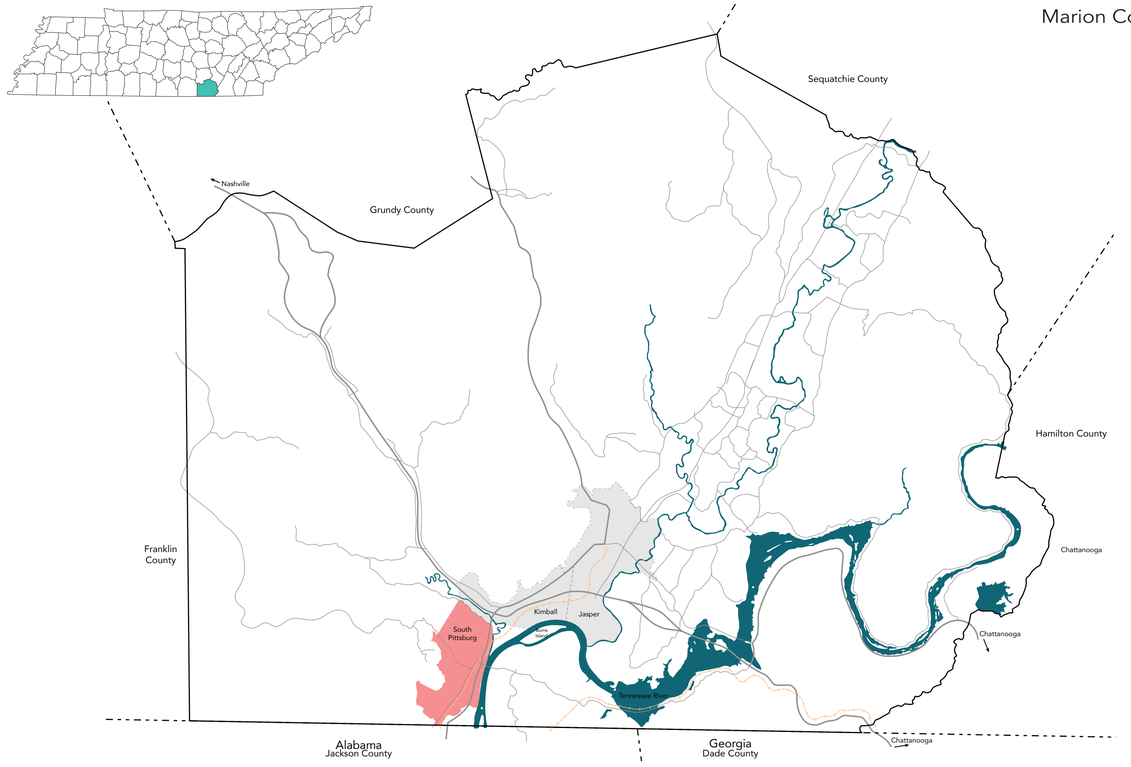
The City Cemetery was where everyone in town was buried. Everyone, whether black or white, rich or poor, foreign or American-born, was buried indiscriminately, unsegregated. Though progressive in its mixed nature, the cemetery slowly was forgotten and overgrown.

The residents of the city of South Pittsburg, Tennessee want to remember these places, even as written records become fewer and farther between. The city has so many stories, but no great way to tell them. Many voices are clamoring to have their individual stories heard, and that makes it difficult to hear any of them. What the city needs is a place to tell their stories in an organized and meaningful way. The city, especially the black community, has lost much of their history through accidental and systematic erasure, and so preserving what history remains is most important.

I aim to preserve the memories of McReynolds High School, the Masonic Lodge No. 90, and the City Cemetery by using juxtaposition, contrast, and translucency and light. These three sites were subject to violence and neglect, and the contrast between what is and what was highlights that condition. The juxtaposition of elements that exist in the current time and elements that exist only in memory is jarring and draws attention to the discordant history of the site. Translucency and light draw attention, and make people question the status quo. They are meant to indicate the ghosts of buildings and the ghosts of the people who used those buildings. Ghosts are made of memory, and I want to preserve that.

Our memories change, and so do these ghost buildings. The buildings change day to night, glowing and reflecting light, and the area changes from the living part of town to the spiritual precinct. The site is changed from old, forgotten bricks and different, unconnected buildings to glowing glass and connected ideas. These ghosts are not static and unmoving. The ghosts are standing, and breathing with light, and watching over the town. The high school stands watch on a hill facing the rest of the city, dignified as it stares down Cedar Avenue. The remains of the gym stand beside it, and a truss melted beyond recognition, and they bear their scars and ask, "how could you?" Ghost lights in the cemetery stand over their sleeping charges, begging the city not to forget them.

I want to be truthful to what these places were and also to how they've changed. These places—McReynolds High School, the Masonic Lodge, the City Cemetery—are the identity of South Pittsburg north of Second Street. The black students who were smoked out, the black residents who no longer meet in the lodge, and the various residents who intermingle in death deserve to be remembered.



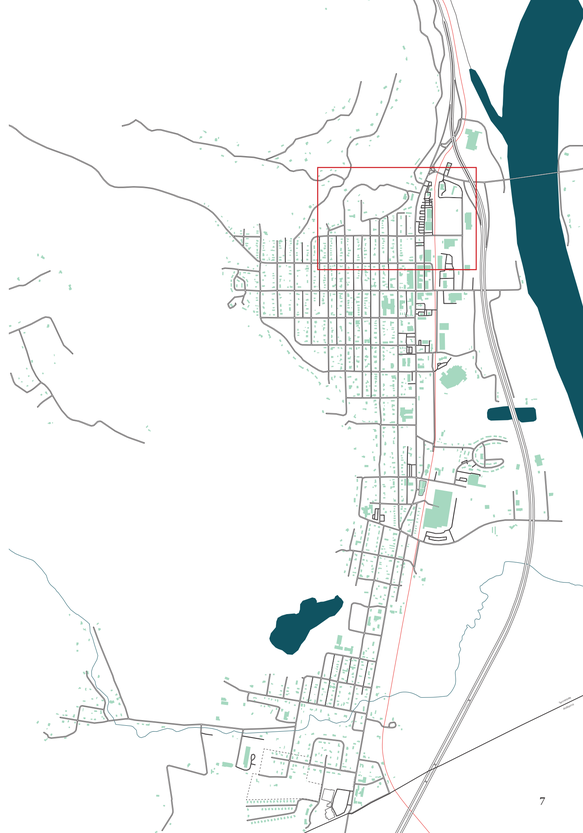


Site Proposal/Scope

The scope of this project includes the site where McReynolds High School was, the school's gymnasium, the school's athletic field, the City Cemetery, the Cumberland Masonic Lodge No. 90, and the surrounding residential neighborhood. The site of the High School and its gym and the Masonic Lodge are the only sites with newly designed buildings. The rest of the locations and areas listed are incorporated through two series of markers.

McReynolds High School, the Masonic Lodge, and the City Cemetery are historically significant sites in South Pittsburg, Tennessee. All three sites are relevant to understanding the history of racial relations in the city, and all are in various states of deterioration. These sites are as important to the city as many of the buildings in South Pittsburg already listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Indeed, in the South Pittsburg Historic District, most buildings are single-family residential homes, only notable for the year they were built with no particular story attached to them. Surely the high school and the cemetery deserve the same protected status as these buildings, considering their importance to the city?

McReynolds High School, known as "The School on the Hill," was built in 1921 and named after Brown McReynolds, one of the members of the committee, which was formed in 1919, trying to start the school. The committee raised funds to match a grant from the Rosenwald Foundation, which existed to help black communities build schools in the South. The school was built for black students, since at the time of segregation they were unwelcome in the other schools





in Marion County, and in 1949 the gymnasium was built. Previously there was only one school in the county for black students and it was an elementary school. The school taught children from Marion County and from adjacent counties. In the summer of 1965, the school was burned down due to segregation conflicts, after which the gymnasium, which was all that remained, was used as a temporary school with interior partitions for classrooms until 1966, when Marion County Schools was integrated. In recent years the building was vacant and used as a storage facility. In 2017 the gymnasium burned twice more, and in 2018 it burned again. All recent three times were presumed to be arson.

> *"After while nobody is going to think about it being a school here. But I'm going to always think about it and let my grand-kids know it's a school here. This is history. You can't get rid of history."*
> *– William Ikard, former student at McReynolds High School*

The Cumberland Masonic Lodge No. 90 was built in 1928. It was funded, built, and used by the black community of South Pittsburg, becoming the central meeting place for their community. This is significant even outside of South Pittsburg because the freemasons have been primarily white. In more recent years, the building has been left in disrepair, and now the plaster on the walls and ceilings is falling off and the roof is caving in. In addition to this physical neglect, the building that most residents of South Pittsburg, both black and white, consider historically significant to the black community is seriously lacking in documentation. The only written documentation about this building is the plaque on the front door.

The City Cemetery, previously known as the old Haley Cemetery, dates back to 1840 and is one of the oldest graveyards in the city, with approximately 1600 burials and with many of the founders of the city laid to rest there. Such founders include James Bowron, who represented the English investors who founded South Pittsburg as an industrialist city, Dennis Martin, one of the people who established McReynolds High School, and Ella McElroy, a teacher at McReynolds High School who wrote a weekly column in the local newspaper called "Colored News." The cemetery is unique because the graves are not separated by race, social class, religion, or nationality. The cemetery also has graves of both Union and Confederate soldiers. The graveyard is currently overgrown with trees, weeds, and briars. Gravestones are toppled over by fallen trees and sinking graves, and wrought-iron fences have been twisted by fallen trees. There have been many efforts in recent years to clear up that overgrowth so family members can visit graves safely, but these efforts are difficult for the city to maintain. The last known burial in the cemetery was in 1975, so the number of relatives of the deceased is decreasing, leading efforts to clean up the cemetery to dwindle, until 2004 when the South Pittsburg Historic Preservation Society took a dedicated interest in reclaiming the cemetery.

Program – Museum

Some of the residents of South Pittsburg have expressed an interest in a Main Street, urban renewal, adaptive reuse, and architecture that is not "cookie-cutter." Their goals are to make the part of the city north of 2nd Street, which was historically the black half of town, "more livable," and the Cumberland Masonic Lodge #90 and McReynolds High School were noted as possible sites. Parks, riverfront development, and housing were all mentioned as priorities. The residents would like for there to be a focus on the scenery of the area and on their history, with issues of race and economics at the forefront. A culinary school, a micro-brewery, a music venue, a bakery, a bed and breakfast, were all brought up as possibilities. The main problem the city is having with enacting any of these visions is that their individual preferences and priorities are not hierarchical and sometimes conflicting, leading to confusion about which direction to go in.

Of all of the suggestions and observations made by the community, perhaps their primary priority should be preserving their history, specifically black history. It is no coincidence that the black side of town has no buildings nationally registered as historic, and it is no coincidence that one of the buildings the black community in South Pittsburg considers vital to their history, the Cumberland Masonic Lodge #90, has no accessible written history. McReynolds High School burned four times, and the Masonic Lodge is literally falling apart. These are only symptoms of an issue prevalent in the United States as a whole—white Americans systematically erase the history of people of color in America, whether those people are black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, or otherwise. Despite the community's claims that there has been no lynching in Marion County and that racial conflicts in South Pittsburg were always minimal at most, the evidence shows that the city can do better. The preservation of history is integral to the formation of an identity and it is the only way to ensure the integrity of the stories told is upheld.

> *"Museums are spaces in which identities are understood, formed and shared."*
> *– Museums Association*

It is for all of these reasons that I propose to turn what remains of McReynolds High School and the Masonic Lodge into a museum celebrating the black history of the community. The goal of a museum is to collect, preserve, and share collections, and museums have an increasing role in supporting communities, making it ideal for this purpose.

What makes a good museum?

> *"Museums can be a place to help shape community identity and bring different community groups together, a catalyst for regeneration through the creation of new venues and civic spaces, and a resource for developing the skills and confidence of members of those communities."*
> *– Museums Association*

In order to further analyze the qualities that make a museum effective at communicating ideas, I visited museums near the area that focused on relevant



Cemetery Light Markers

topics such as civil rights and industry. I then analyzed those museums for their strengths and weaknesses.

Vulcan Park and Museum, Birmingham, Alabama

This little museum overlooks the city of Birmingham, providing visitors with several ideal viewing locations. The exhibits focus on the iron industry of the city.

Strengths:

- The museum itself is arranged in a straightforward loop, starting and ending in the same lobby, making it easy to navigate.
- The content of the exhibits is also straightforward and very focused on the industry of Birmingham.
- The most identifiable landmark of the museum, the large Vulcan statue in the center of the park, is directly linked to the content of the museum, as is the wall sculpture in the lobby.
- A side room has a rotating exhibit, which was good because it helps the museum feature new content and is also separate from the permanent exhibits.

Weaknesses:

- The museum is less engaging than it could be, with the information presented as large panels of text.
- Empty spaces behind exhibit pieces show walls and the backs of exhibits, breaking up the flow of the museum.

Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, Birmingham Alabama

The Sloss Foundry is part of Birmingham's history in the iron industry. Now it is a monument to the old industry, with large silos rising up into the sky and smaller, darker room full of old machinery to explore. The silent foundry has the air of an ancient ruin, and the visit is both informative and beautiful.

Strengths:

- The landmark gave visitors the opportunity to explore freely, but also offered a prescribed path to follow.
- The lobby/museum and the foundry itself are both visually interesting.
- The variety of sites to see and spaces to explore made the visit very engaging.

Weaknesses:

- The actual exhibit felt like it was part of the lobby; it didn't have a clear beginning or end.
- There could have been more signs so people could navigate without using the pamphlet.
- Many parts of the foundry are not disability-friendly.

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Birmingham, Alabama

The visit to this museum begins with a video, and afterwards the wall behind the video rises, dramatically revealing the rest of the museum. The exhibits are focused on the civil rights struggle in Birmingham, though there is plenty of information on civil rights in America as a whole.

Strengths:

- The transition from video to exhibits is visually interesting and engaging.
- Many exhibits are designed to be immersive environments.
- Most of the museum is a straightforward path, with clear demarcations between different exhibits.

Weaknesses:

- The transition from video to exhibits makes viewing the earlier exhibits more crowded and stressful, though it does help space out groups of visitors.
- The beginning of the museum had an ambiguous path, which led to backtracking. The last exhibit was a chaotic room with no clear path.

National Memorial for Peace and Justice, Montgomery, Alabama

This memorial is commonly known as the Lynching Memorial. The main memorial has metal rectangles with county names and victim names inscribed on them. The rectangles vary in their height off the ground, with the path descending below the coffin-like rectangles. Next to the main memorial are equivalent rectangles laid out almost like graves, with the intent that these ones would be picked up by officials from their respective counties and respectfully displayed.

Strengths:

- The memorial is effective at visualizing an injustice and creating an emotional impact.
- Once in the memorial, it is very easy to navigate since most of it is visible at once.
- The changing conditions of the memorial (light to dark, shallow to deep, open air to water-covered wall) make the experience dynamic and engaging.

Weaknesses:

- The path from parking to ticket-buying to entering the memorial is slightly confusing.
- Some paths outside of the main memorial (like the courtyard in the middle and the area outside of the main memorial with the rectangles meant to go to their respective counties) were not straightforward and required backtracking.

Legacy Museum, Montgomery, Alabama

This museum is the sister to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. A few blocks away from the memorial, the exhibits cover the history of slavery and racism in America.

Strengths:

- The exhibits were all varied, visually interesting, and engaging.
- There was a good mix of interactive exhibits and static exhibits.

Weaknesses:

- The exhibits had no clear path to follow
- The exhibits competed for attention, making it difficult to focus on any one exhibit.

So, what makes a good museum?

- Establishing a clear identity
- Directing the flow of visitors to reduce confusion
- Having different views and ideas—a museum is not objective
- Being involved with its local community
- Addressing social issues
- Innovating
- Having reach and resonance

The most important aspect to designing a museum, as with any design, is having a focus and directing everything around that focus. The focus, the identity, the main idea, is what ties all the information in a museum together and what makes it possible for a museum to express its view and resonate with people. In addition to clarity of ideas, it is necessary for a museum to have a clarity of movement. Having a clear path to follow means the visitor can focus all their attention on the exhibits and there is no confusion or ambiguity. Museums should also connect to the community, as a way of grounding its content, gathering support, and bolstering the community.

> *"Cultural institutions provide the glue that binds communities together. Culture attracts people to a place, just as much as good schools, housing or transport and creates an environment in which other industries, goods and services can grow."*
> *– National Museum Directors' Council*

The Precinct

The idea of a precinct or a district came from the fact that I had many different elements that I wanted to tie together. The school and the gym were already basically one item, but the City Cemetery and the Masonic Lodge seemed completely separate entities. Conceptually, the three places were already linked through the black heritage of the city, but physically they were disparate. To remedy this, I employed a permeable boundary. This would include the area that used to be the athletic field for McReynolds High School. The area is in no way marked physically, there are no pictures of it, and there is no written record of it, but the residents of South Pittsburg do remember it, so into the precinct it goes. The precinct also includes part of the residential neighborhood, because if the white residential neighborhood across Second Street is afforded the honor of being called a historic district, then so should the black residential neighborhood north of Second Street. The only reason there is such a divide at Second Street is the historic concrete streets that make up the city south of the street. The city is one of few that was planned and built by one group of people, and at the time they did not pave the streets that far north. With unpaved streets, this area became the place where poorer black citizens could afford to live. This led to the more ostensibly historic buildings being south of Second Street, and therefore Second Street became the cut-off for the historic district. This condition of the divide is in itself historic, however, and acknowledging this by creating a new district is the only way to mediate the systemic racism at play.

The boundary needs some way of being marked, otherwise it does not serve its purpose of bringing the conceptual into the physical. The boundary needs to be permeable, so that it cannot be confused with a wall, which has historically and metaphorically been used to divide, and that is the opposite of my goal. A solution for how to mark the border came to me when reading about the ancient necropolis. The necropolis, the city of the dead, was the boundary of the city of the living, and it was marked by ancient tombstones. The precinct that I propose is not exactly a necropolis, but it does share many similarities. Indeed, with the City Cemetery as part of it, the precinct, exactly like a necropolis, is a place where dead people are buried, and with my idea of having the ghosts of buildings visualized, there are even more dead people roaming around in spirit form. With all of these dead spirits in the area, having a boundary of tomb-like markers to contain them seems even more practical, and so that is the route I took. The tomb-like markers I created are somewhat obelisk-shaped, and each one could have a plaque or an inscription with a story on it. The city has so many stories that they tell orally, but they tragically have not written down all of them. Perhaps this is because they do not have a place to write them down, and so I decided to provide them a place. At night, the markers might glow, lighting the edge.

The City Cemetery would also have markers, but instead of acting like tombstones, they would act to reveal tombstones. The cemetery is so overgrown and ill-maintained that many of the tombstones are nearly invisible, and there is no clear delineation between grave and not-grave. Marking each tombstone would draw attention to each person laid to rest in the cemetery, it would represent each spirit visually, and it might prompt the city to continue and reinvigorate efforts to clean up the cemetery. The markers themselves would take the form of floating, spherical lights, which would give the cemetery an eerie and spectral glow, making visitors contemplate each life lived in the city. The markers, essentially, act like ghost lights in a theater.





Precinct Boundary Markers

The Ghost Museum of Black History

The idea of the museum is to highlight injustices white people have done to minorities. The museum is personified as a vengeful ghost. The site where the McReynolds High School used to be is now a Color-Craft Studios, housed in a fairly unremarkable building. The fact that this is what replaced the historically and culturally significant high school speaks volumes, especially considering it was no accident that the school burned down. It is this discontinuity in the importance of the site that I wish to emphasize. To do this, the new museum is as identical to the old high school as possible, with research limited and with the program of a museum being different to that of a school. The building has the same footprint and same massing, but the specter of the unfortunate Color-Craft Studios remains as well. The two buildings will appear to overlap and intersect. The actual Color-Craft building is not important, rather it is the idea of its overtaking this space that I wish to retain, so the general shape of the building remains and has been realized as a dark, solid block to contrast the light, translucent specter of the school. The museum is a visible ghost, a pointed reminder of the building's violent destruction.

The museum is not a civil rights museum, rather it focuses on the black history of the Sequatchie area and of South Pittsburg. The South has plenty of civil rights museums, and indeed many of those museums are on the Civil Rights Trail, which guides people through the Civil Rights movement in the South. Many visitors of the museum would be black people, eager to learn about their heritage. For black visitors, making the museum about black history makes it more celebratory than a civil rights museum, which would mostly focus on the historic oppression of black people. For white visitors, the museum would be more about educating and creating understanding. Civil rights is an issue that many white people have tried not to think about too much. It's difficult for us to admit our wrongdoings and to try to do better. Most of the visitors at the Civil Rights museums I've been to have been black people. Making this ghost museum a black history museum makes the content more

Source: South Pittsburg Historic Preservation Society



Source: Google Maps



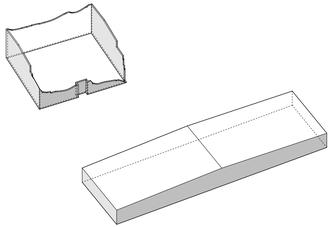




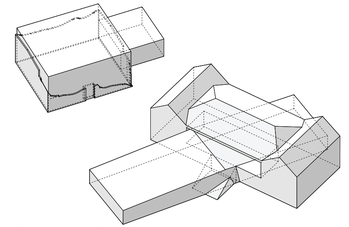


Existing Gym

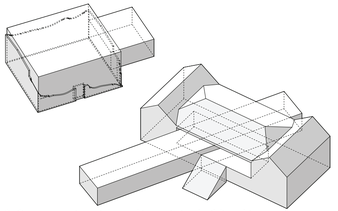
Massing Diagrams



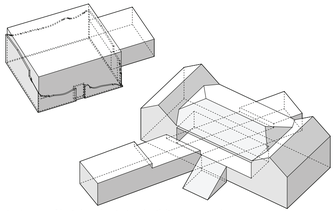
1. Existing conditions



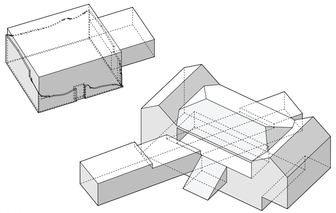
2. Add massing of historic school and gym



3. Open up main stair by making existing building thinner



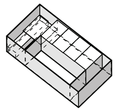
4. Vary roof height of existing building to match program

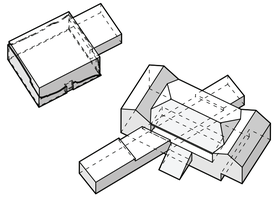


5. Add basement

palatable to white visitors (though it certainly is not necessary to pander to white comfort), and perhaps this will prompt them to think about how these buildings got to the state they are in now. The intersection between the old and new buildings helps visitors see and acknowledge the wrongs done to this school and to the Masonic Lodge. Not hiding the burn scars on the school's gym and the neglect of the Masonic Lodge helps emphasize this point.

Another reason to make this a black history museum as opposed to a civil rights museum is that South Pittsburg has historically had fewer racial struggles than elsewhere in the country. Martelia Cameron Kelly, the author of the only book on the history of South Pittsburg, said that there was not a civil rights struggle in South Pittsburg, and the spoken stories of the community confirm this belief. The community also proudly claims that there were no lynching deaths in Marion County, and indeed my visit to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice confirms this. Nevertheless, racism is still in existence in South Pittsburg. The fact that the areas on the National Registry of Historic Places stop south of Second Street, which is where the racial divide is in the town, the fact that McReynolds High School was burned down four times, and the fact that the Masonic Lodge, an important locus in the black community and a unique building in that it is unusual for black people to join the freemasons, all point to a condition that is less utopic than the town suggests. Certainly, the white residents have tried to do better, but they still have room for improvement, and acknowledging this is the key to that progress.

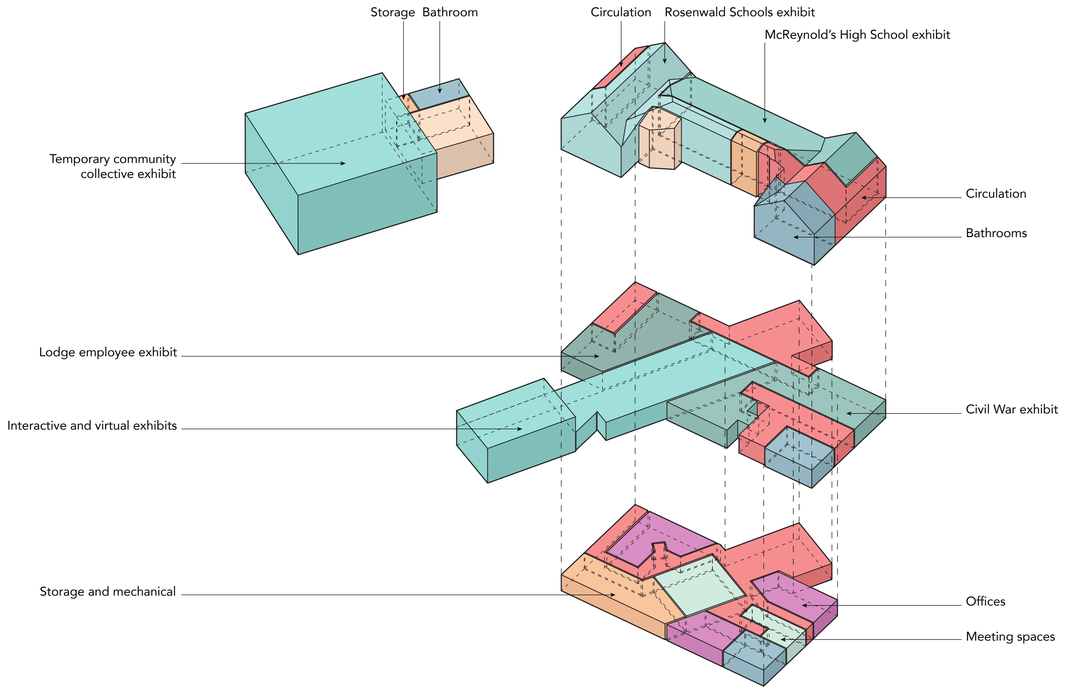




Goals:

- Preservation
  - o Protect what remains of McReynolds High School from further arson and deterioration.
  - o Recover the City Cemetery from its overgrown state
  - o Maintain what remains of the black history
- Education
  - o Visitors and students learn about the city
  - o Community members engage with their history
- Addressing the issue of systemic erasure of identity in America
  - o The lack of national acknowledgement of the historical value of the buildings on the black side of town
  - o The lack of written history about the Masonic Lodge #90
  - o The lack of respect shown for the historical McReynolds High School
- Community interaction
  - o Community members will take an active role in the creation of the museum
  - o Community members will reflect on their shared story and shared identity (and will consequently reflect on their differences)

Program Diagram



Program and Circulation of the Ghost Museum

Program

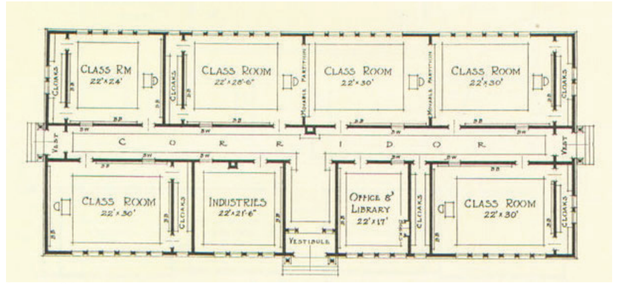
The Ghost Museum, which is on the site of McReynolds High School and its gym, is focused on the black history of South Pittsburg. Since the school is the site of the museum, that is the first sub-topic under black history addressed by the museum. The first exhibit is on Rosenwald Schools, of which McReynolds High School was one, and then the following exhibit covers McReynolds High School more specifically.

Other exhibits in the Ghost Museum include information on the Civil War and Lodge Manufacturing. During the Civil War, South Pittsburg was not an established city and was called Battle Creek, after the creek that fed the Tennessee River at that location. Both Confederate and Union troops used the area around Battle Creek as a way station when traveling in the East Tennessee and North Carolina area. The site where the city is today hosted some of the first free black regiments in the Union army, including, but not limited to, the First Regiment of the United States Colored Heavy Artillery, which is currently being studied by the East Tennessee Civil War Alliance. Regarding Lodge Manufacturing, the factory was one of the first businesses in the South to hire black employees.

The gym houses a community collective, similar to an artist's collective, in which community members would contribute anything they want as long as it accomplishes the shared aim of preserving and celebrating the black history of South Pittsburg. These contributions could take the form of artifacts, stories, or works of art. This model of collecting contributions from community members encourages community interaction and engages the community in a conversation of personal values. If one of the city's issues is sorting out their individual priorities, then this helps everyone have a voice to showcase what's important to them.

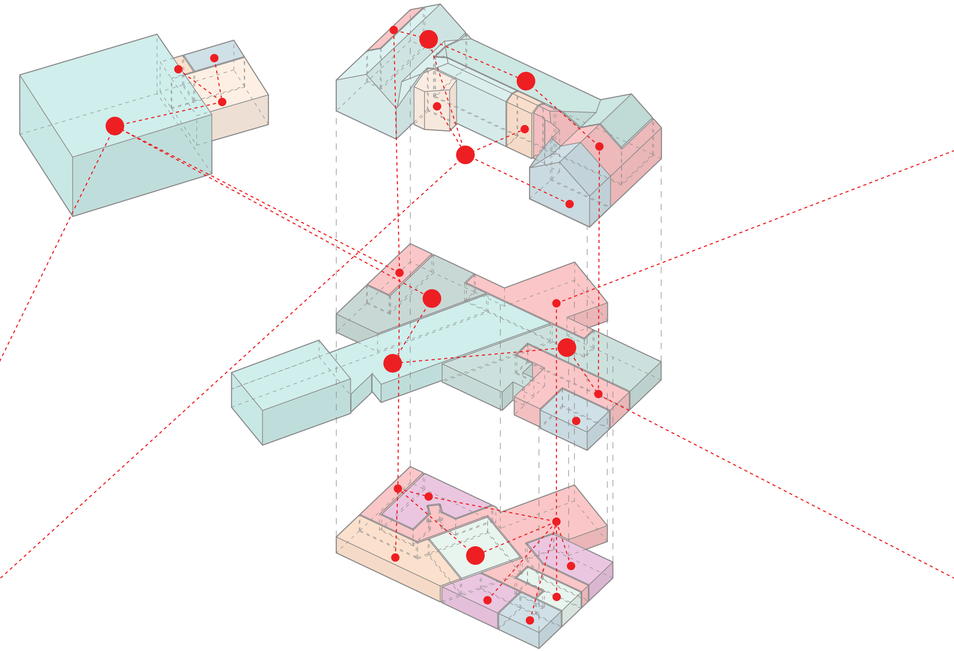
Circulation

One of the most identifying features of McReynolds High School is the main staircase that faces Cedar Avenue and the rest of the city of South Pittsburg, and so this is the main entrance to the Ghost Museum. From the porch that the stairs lead to (which is also accessible by a ramp coming from the gym), visitors buy tickets and then enter the first exhibit about Rosenwald Schools. The Rosenwald exhibit, the McReynolds High School exhibit, the Civil War exhibit, and the Lodge employee exhibit all follow one continuous path, with narrower transition spaces, which would

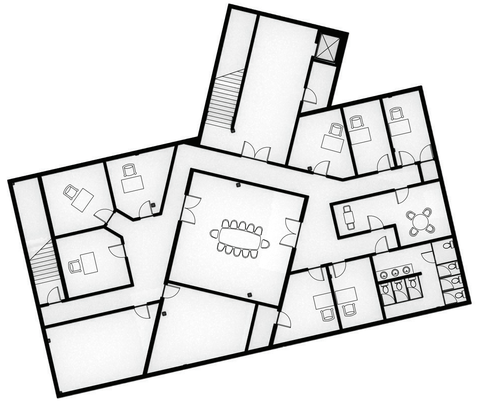


Source: ArcGIS

Circulation Diagram

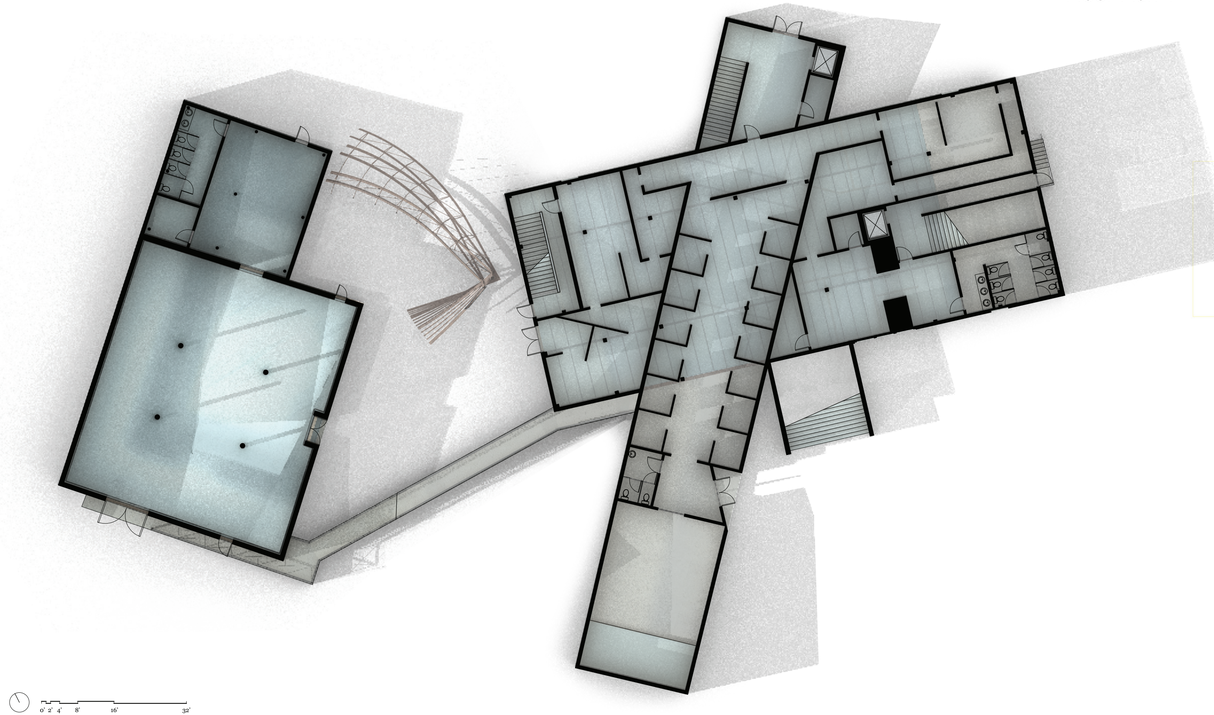


Floor Plan 0 - Basement

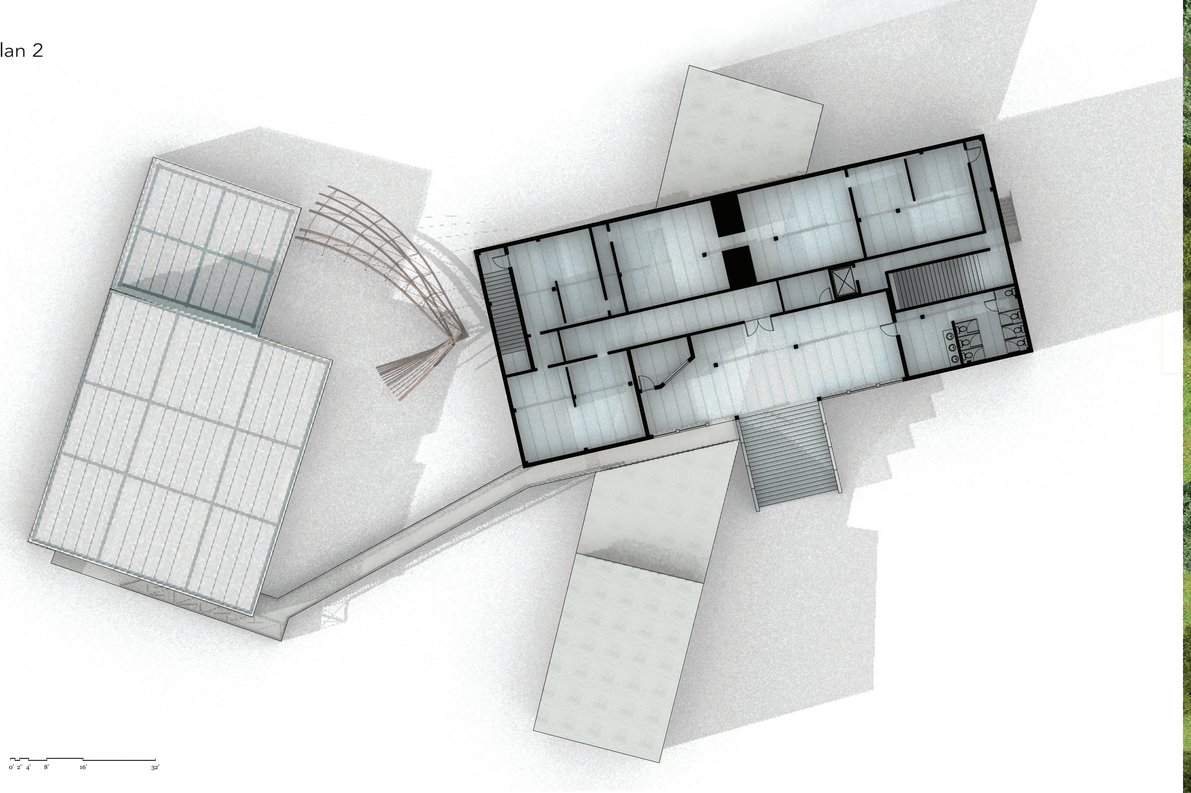




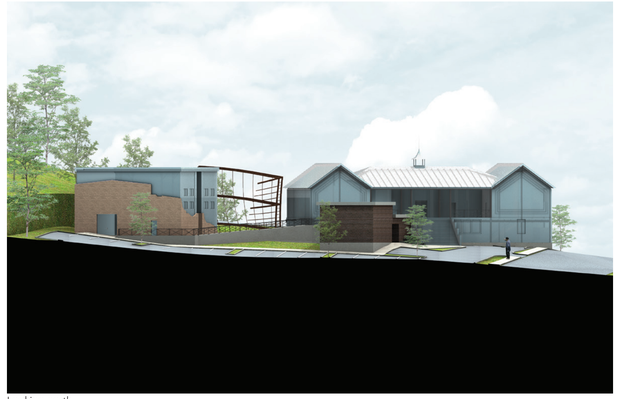
Floor Plan 1



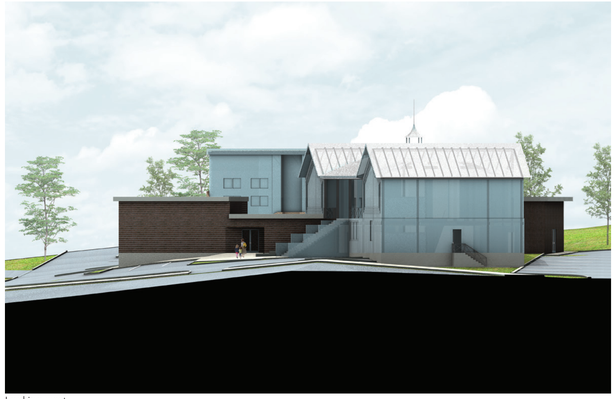
Floor Plan 2



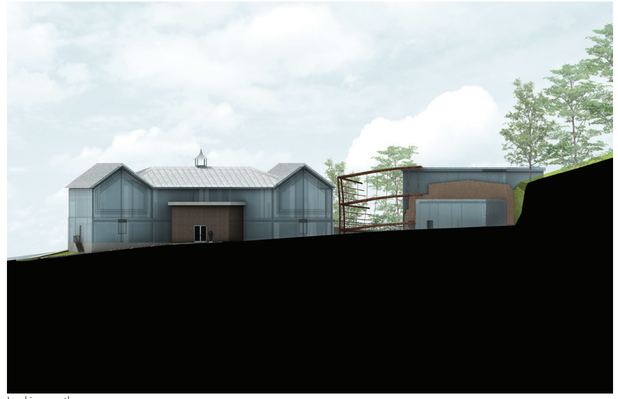
Roof Plan



Looking north



Looking west

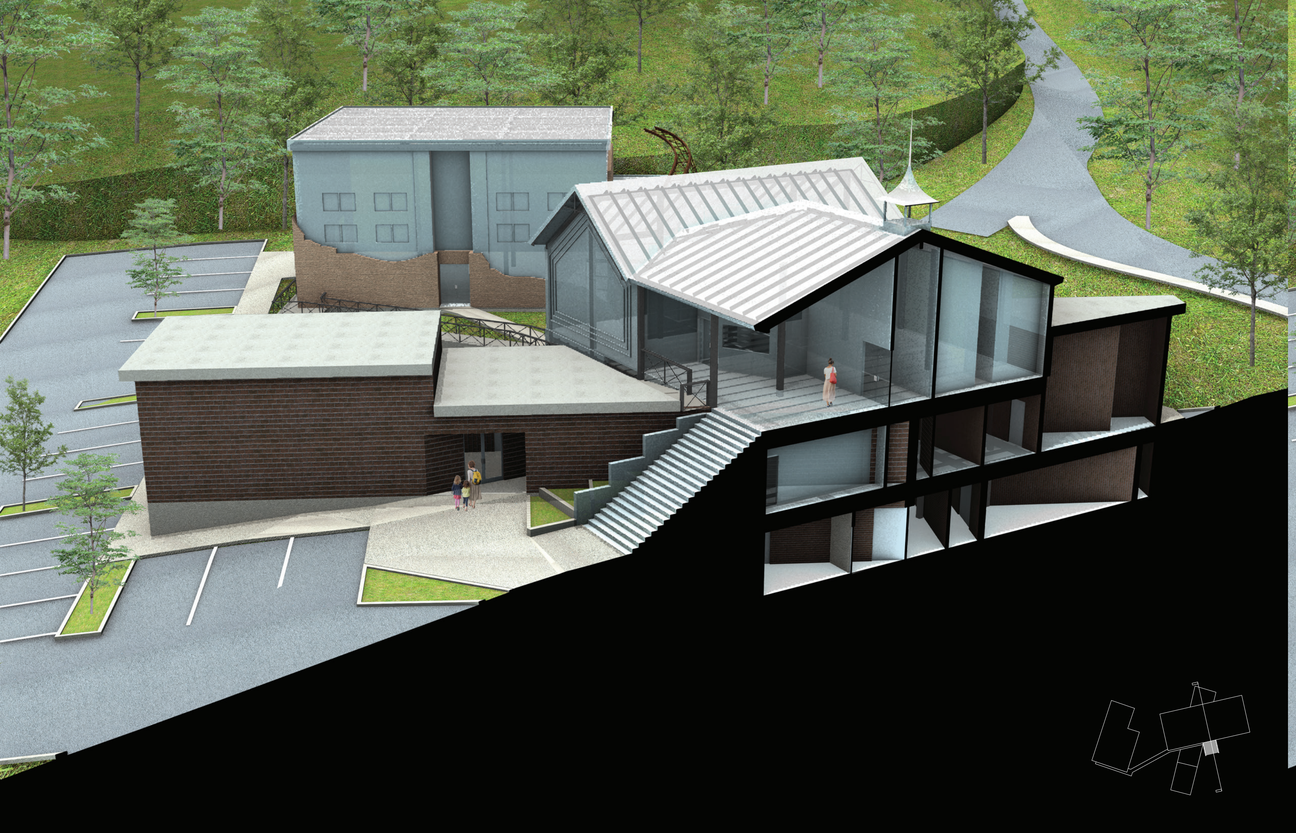


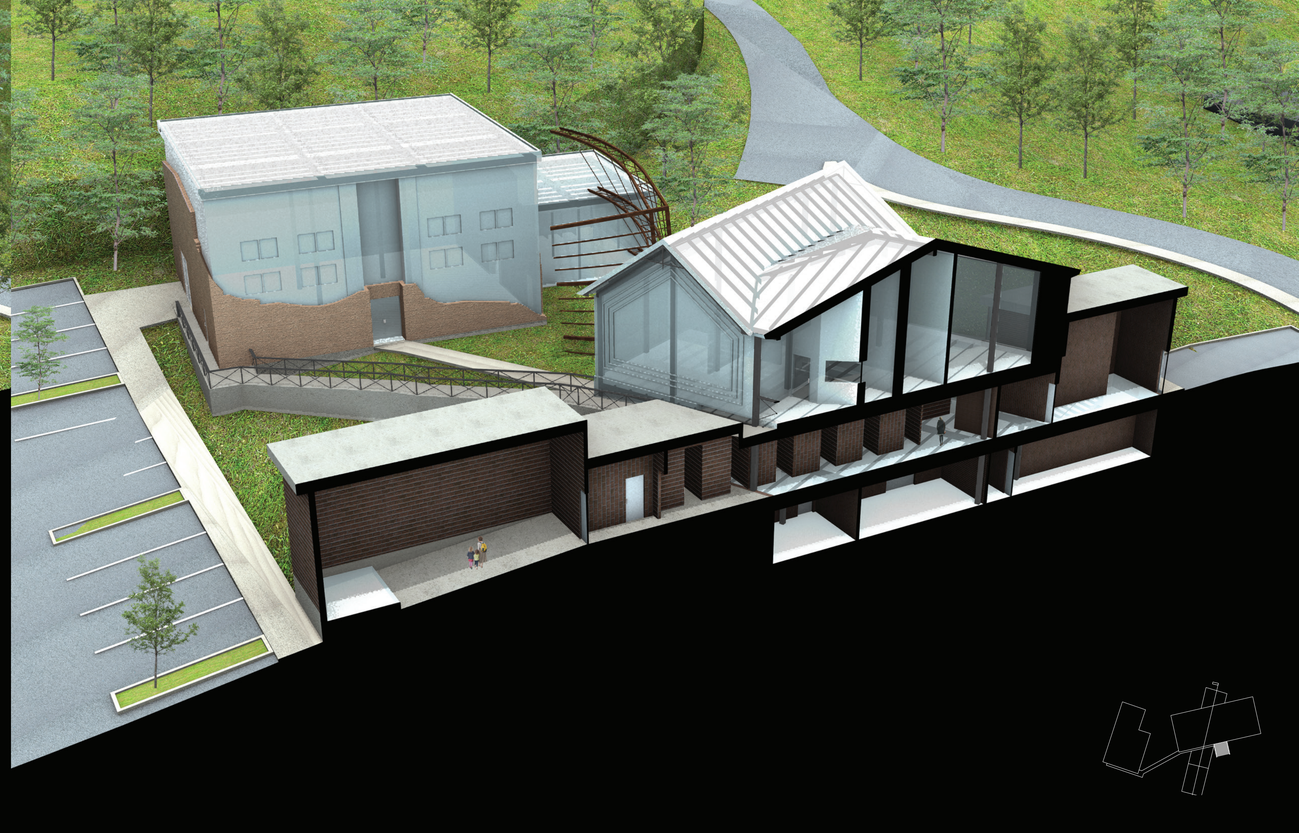
Looking south

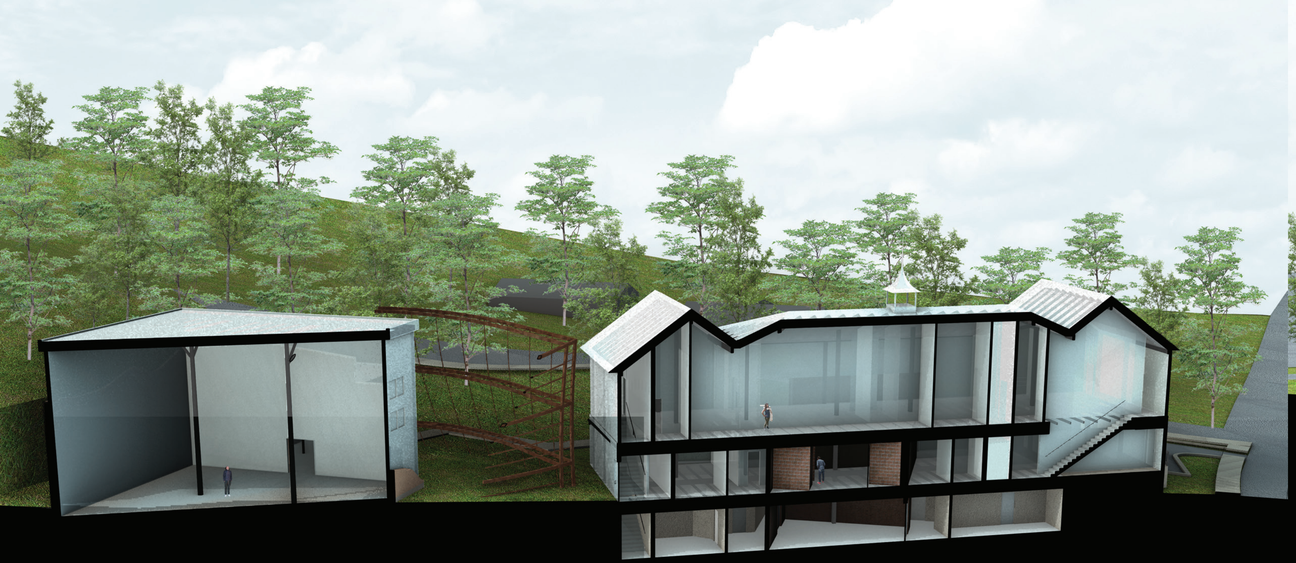


Looking east

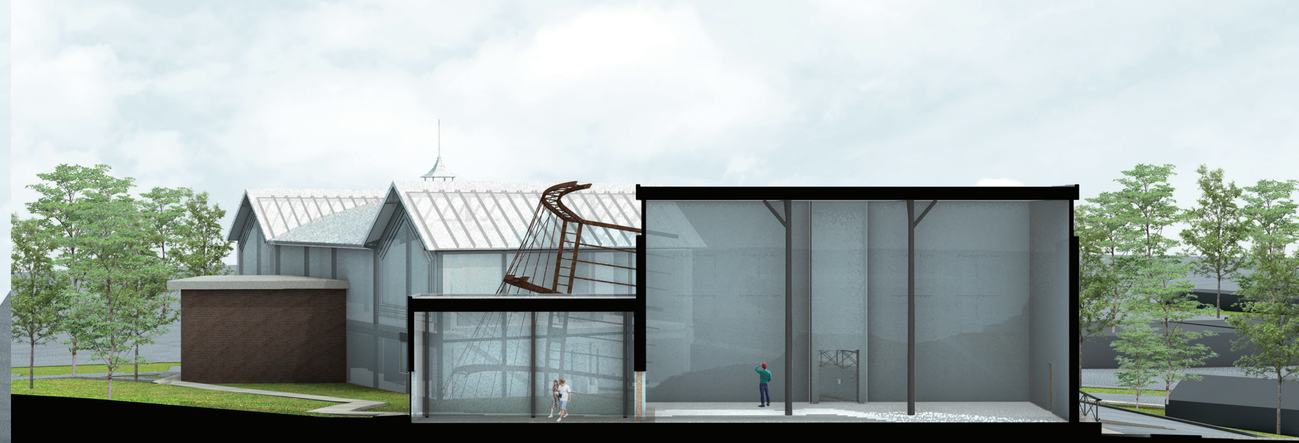
Elevations













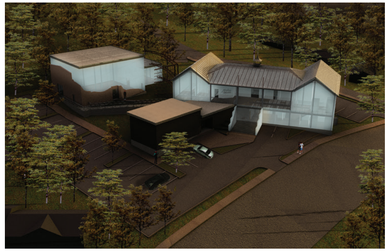
have been the cloak rooms of the original school, based on a floor plan of a typical six-teacher Rosenwald School.

In between the Civil War Exhibit and the Lodge employee exhibit is an optional set of interactive exhibits. These exhibits are interviews with residents of South Pittsburg, especially the ones who went to McReynolds High School before it burned down. These interviews would be similar to the work of Heather Maio, who creates holograms of Holocaust survivors to preserve their stories in a way that people could directly ask these people questions. This row of exhibits is the only part of the museum that requires backtracking, but the dual rows of interview booths mean visitors could visit one row on the way in and one row on the way out. At the very end of this hallway is a small theater. This theater could play the video of South Pittsburg from 1953 called “Your Town on Parade,” or it could play a narrated informative video. When the museum is not open, this theater is accessible from without the museum, meaning the town could use the space as a meeting area, or a place to put on plays, or a place for movie nights.

After the visitor finishes in the Lodge employee exhibit, they exit the school building and walk over to the gym’s community collective exhibit.

The basement, which has offices and storage for the museum, is accessed from the back of the school.

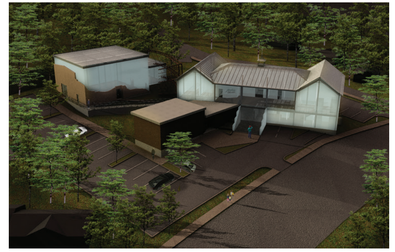
The school and the gym have three connections: a ramp connecting to the front of the school, a path connecting the end of the school’s exhibits to the beginning of the gym’s exhibit (which was at one point the front entrance of the gym), and a path in the back of both buildings that connects the basement of the school to the service side of the gym. Within these paths is displayed a truss that at one point was a part of the gym but is now twisted and distorted by the many fires that ruined the building. The truss has been turned on its side and now acts as a sculptural piece, serving much the same purpose as the dark brick building slicing through the ghostly version of McReynolds High School. The truss acts as a stark reminder of the four fires that destroyed the only place in Marion County where black people could learn, at least until schools were integrated.

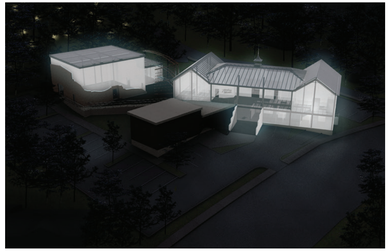


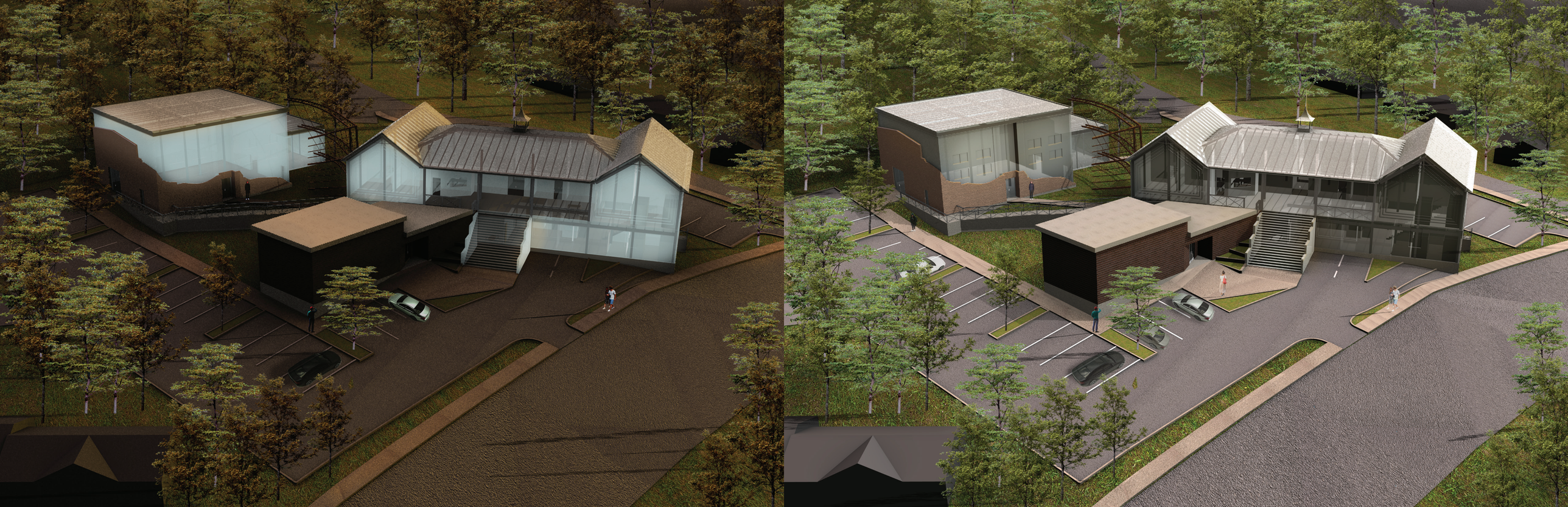






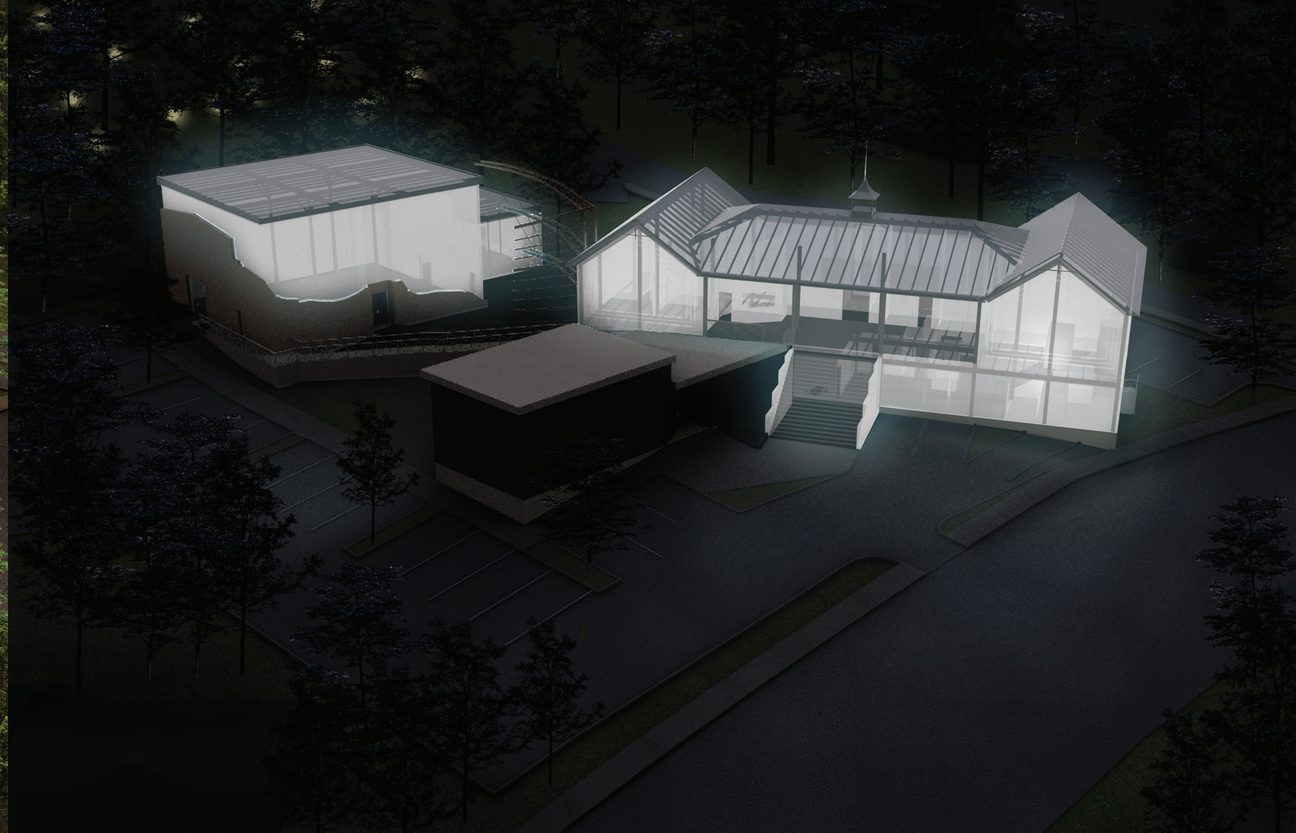












Material Analysis – Translucent Glass and Light

The most prominent material used in the precinct is a translucent glass. The massing of the school and gym are entirely made of translucent glass, and the outer façade of the Masonic Lodge is also. This material is used to unify disparate elements and to make the buildings look ghost-like.

In the cases of its use in the school and the gym, the wall system is based on Steven Holl's work and is composed of various layers of glass: sandblasted glass, channel glass, and smart glass that also acts as a safety barrier. The channel glass, in combination with pressurized air cavities and capillary insulation, provides the thermal insulation for the building. The smart glass provides shading and UV protection as needed. Within the system, lights are embedded, so that at night the building can have an eerie, spiritual glow. In the case of the gym, the glass wall system would be slightly offset from the existing brick walls, which, as they are damaged by many fires, would only be able to act in an aesthetic capacity.

I chose a dark-colored brick to represent the Color-Craft Studios building so that would contrast the translucent glass and harken back to the material used in the original high school and its gym. The translucent glass then becomes symbolic of what is spiritual, and the dark brick becomes symbolic of what is existing and tangible.

I relied on existing materials for the historical quality they provide. The existing brick of the gym and the existing brick of the Masonic Lodge are physical manifestations of the history that those two places embody. The existing metal of the trusses of the gym is also a manifestation of the building that doesn't exist anymore, but it is also a manifestation of the violence and neglect that those buildings suffered. Displaying a truss that is melted into something that is no longer a truss emphasizes the point of the Ghost Museum—that this site was mistreated, and this is the result.

I am fascinated by translucent concrete as both a solid material and a translucent material. It is the combination of translucent glass and dark brick, the mediator between spiritual and tangible. As such, I wanted to use this in the markers around the edge of the precinct. With a light in the center of each marker, translucent concrete would make the markers solid in the day but filled with light at night.

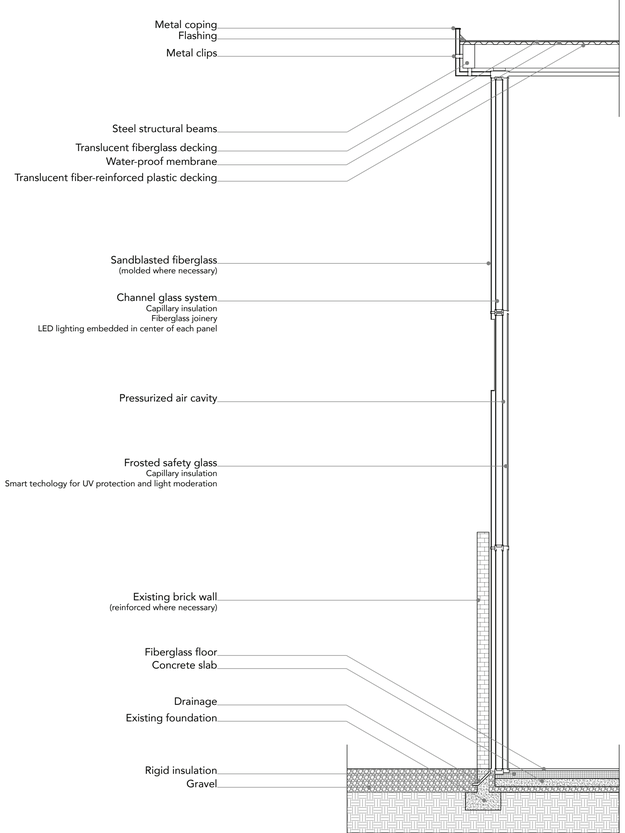
In addition to translucent glass, light is another key material used to indicate spirituality and evoke a mood that could be either eerie or thoughtful. My material choices have all tended to fall into categories of light and dark and solid and translucent. The massing added to the gym, the massing of the school added over the massing of the existing building, the outer façade of the Masonic Lodge, the precinct boundary markers, and the grave markers in the City Cemetery—all use light to symbolize the spirits in the area, to create a mood, and to draw attention to the different aspects of the precinct and the Ghost Museum.

Some structural elements, most visibly in the gym, are made of cast iron. This decision comes from the fact that cast iron is the main industry of South Pittsburg,



Source: Steven Holl, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

the reason the city is called South Pittsburg, and the reason South Pittsburg has any claim to fame. With the significance of this material in this city, it would almost be ridiculous to use any other material. Nevertheless, cast iron is only strong in compression. It is weak under tensile forces, as the material is relatively brittle. As such, cast iron is only used for columns, and any beams are made of steel.



The Masonic Lodge

Program

The program of the Masonic Lodge largely follows the program of what used to be there. The second floor is still used as a community meeting space, but the first floor would now host an exhibit on the Masonic Lodge. Since there is no written information, it would be up to the community to provide the stories and artifacts for this exhibit. Behind the Masonic Lodge are two small service buildings, and next to the main building is a garden, about the same size as the building, with a small raised platform that could be used to host small events.

Circulation

The visitor has a choice of entering the Masonic Lodge through the exhibit on the first floor or through the garden. From either location, the visitor would take the stairs or the elevator up to the second floor, where meetings are held.

Design

The building of the Masonic Lodge remains the exact same on the exterior. My main priority with that was preserving the elevations as they are, so the service buildings in the back are distanced from the main building. The interior, however, would be gutted to fix the floor, walls, and ceilings and to add an elevator.

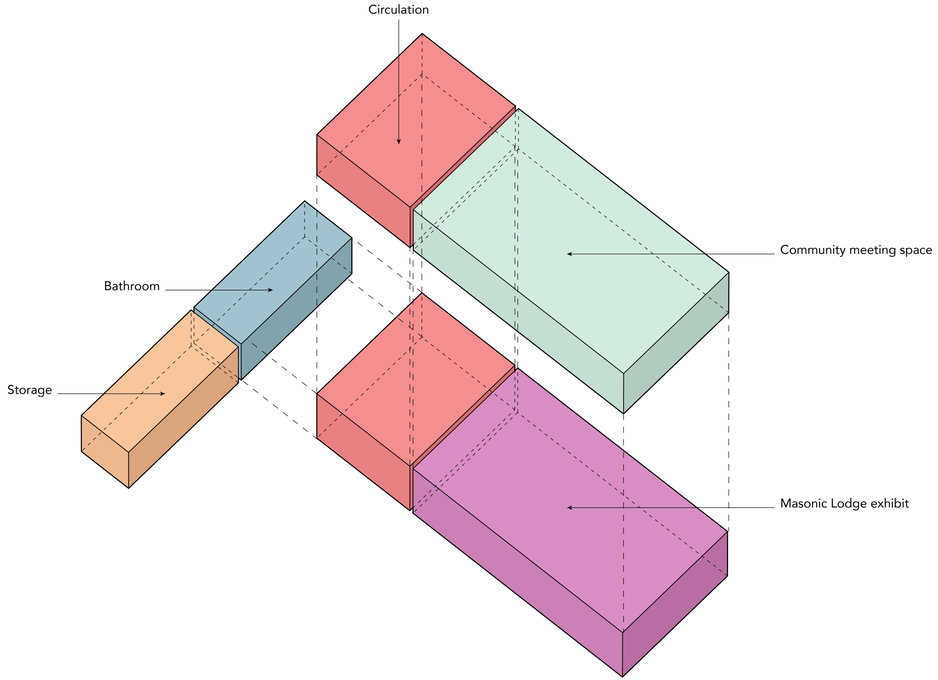
Around the entirety of the Masonic Lodge, with the original building, two back buildings, and garden included, is a translucent barrier. This barrier serves to blur the edges of the original building, making it more ghost-like and matching it to its counterpart—the Ghost Museum/McReynolds High School.





Source: Ken Jordan, South Pittsburg resident

Program Diagram

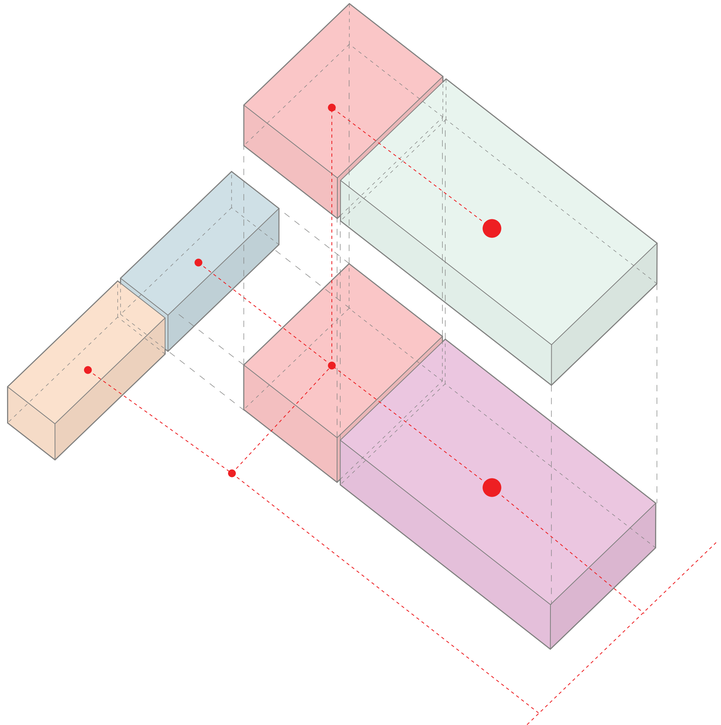


Motifs

Motifs prevalent in the precinct and the Ghost Museum:

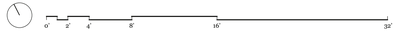
- Light and dark
- Solid and transparent
- Light and death
- Black history and racial segregation
- Erasure vs. preservation of memory
- Memory vs. reality
- Stories — written vs. told
- Change

Circulation Diagram

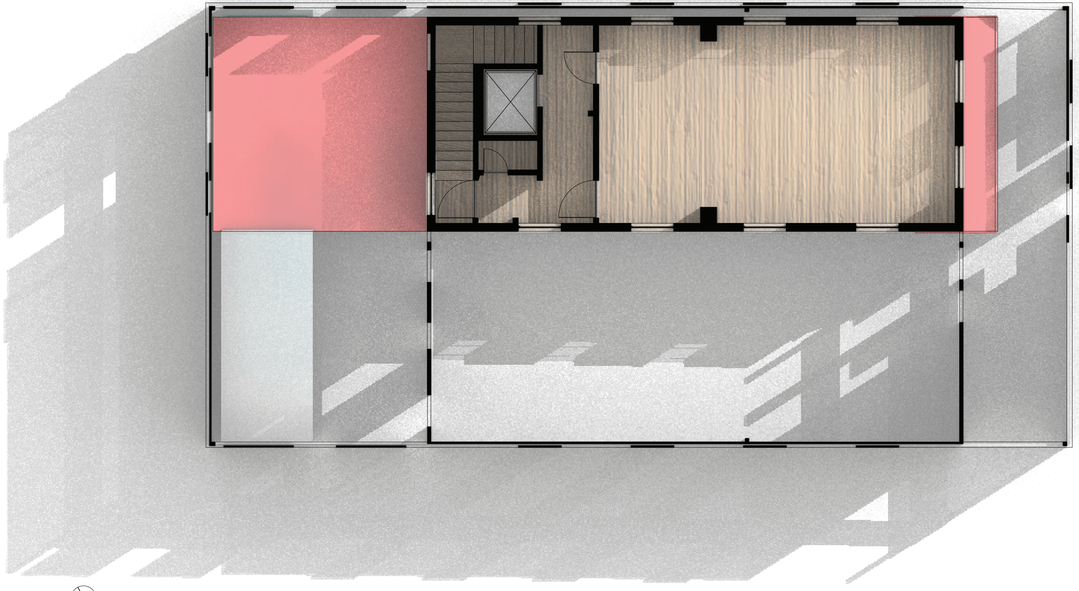


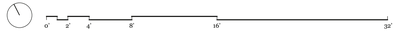
Floor Plan 1





Floor Plan 2





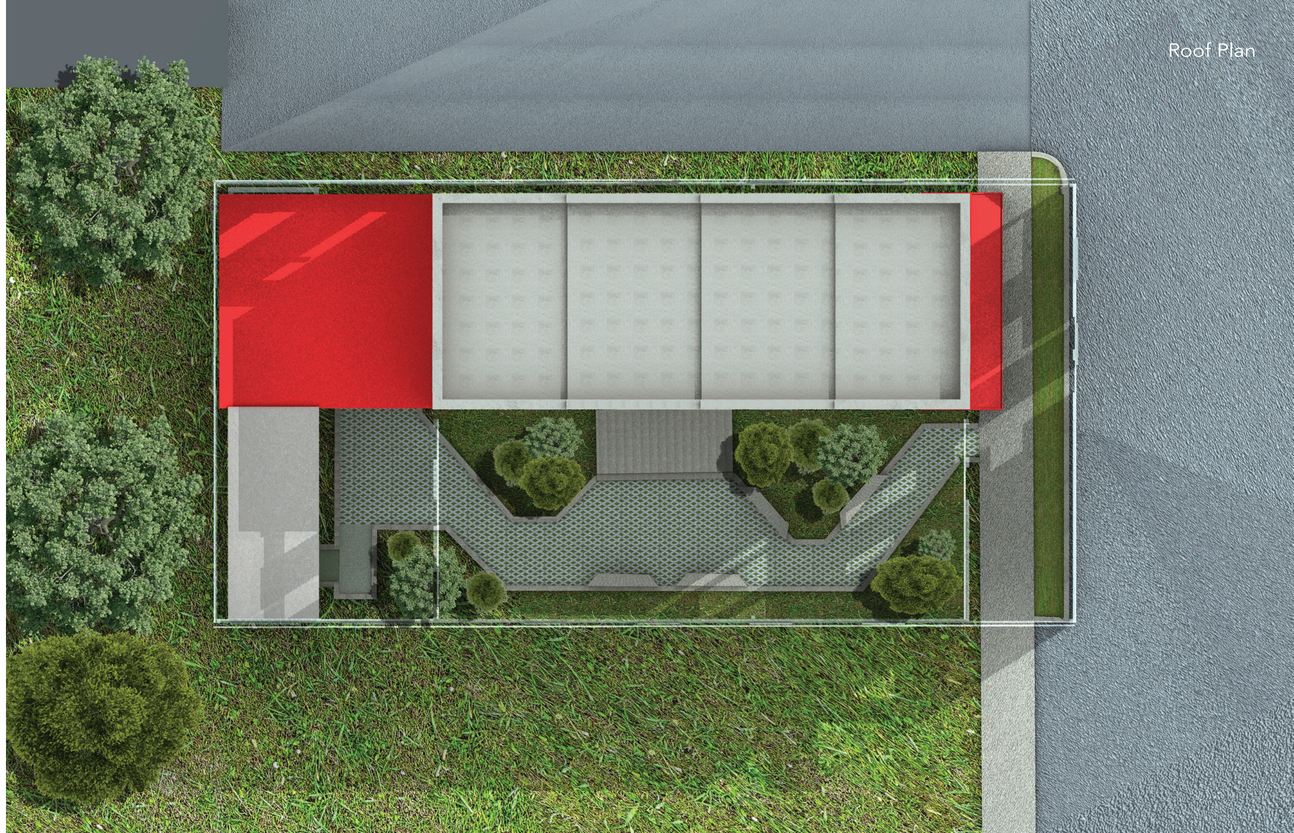
Reflection

In the faculty and alumnus review of my project, I received good feedback, some of which I agree with and some of which I don't. One critique that I absolutely agree with is that my precinct boundary markers could use some refinement. As an idea, the markers are acceptable, and they accomplish what they set out to accomplish, but as they are drawn at the current time, the markers look chunky and heavy-handed. They do not achieve the monumental and ethereal quality I had hoped for. Indeed, at least one of them looks like a tent. This lack of refinement is mostly due to a lack of time dedicated to this particular aspect of my project. With more thought given to the precinct boundary markers, they might have evolved into a more effective border that communicates the message of passing from the living area to the spiritual area. I do stand by the idea of marking the border with monuments that might have stories inscribed on them.

According to one reviewer, the three most powerful aspects of my project are the twisted truss, the cemetery light markers, and the view of the school from the Masonic Lodge. With that in mind, I could have emphasized those three elements more. The twisted truss is not as prominent as a slap in the face could be. Perhaps a bit of timidity came over me when I minimized its presence on the site. The cemetery light markers are one of my favorite parts of this project, but I did not spend much time with them. They should have been cherished as much as a dead loved one, since that is what they represent. The view of the school from the city is apparently what makes the project. It is important to emphasize role of school looking over town. Seeing the school as a sentinel that watches over the city and probably judges the residents is a level of personification that helps explain many of my decisions.

Several people have questioned the role of the Color-Craft Studios building in the museum, which is fair. I stand by my decision to include the Color-Craft building. It seems to be doing its job, since everyone wants it gone. The immediate revulsion everyone has to seeing this building disrupting everything else going on in the site is actually the whole point and the target reaction, because the replacing of the historic McReynolds High School with a nonsense building is a disgusting turn of events.

Two people told me to "invert the building." One way of inverting the building is to have the recognizable main stairs and porch on the inside instead of the outside. In this sense, the ghost is the void. In essence, this comment urged me to use empty space to represent the ghost of McReynolds High School instead of using translucent glass. I do agree that the translucent glass is on the nose and an obvious choice of material to represent the ghost. I could have pushed the conceptual nature of my project more, but one benefit to using translucent glass is the possibility of using light too. If my material is empty space, then light becomes more difficult to use. Empty space needs a solid boundary to define the space, and how can light penetrate that solid boundary in a satisfactory manner? Light has long been representative of the spiritual, ghosts have often been represented as glowing beings, and theaters use a ghost light to appease the ghosts of the theater. Light also draws attention to my project, which is what I need to get people talking and thinking. No use hiding in the shadows, let's light the place up.

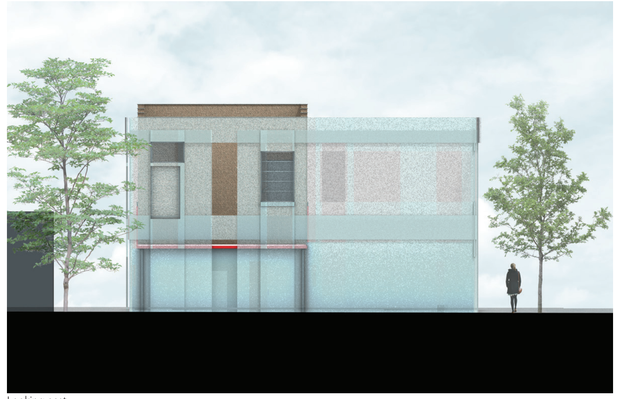




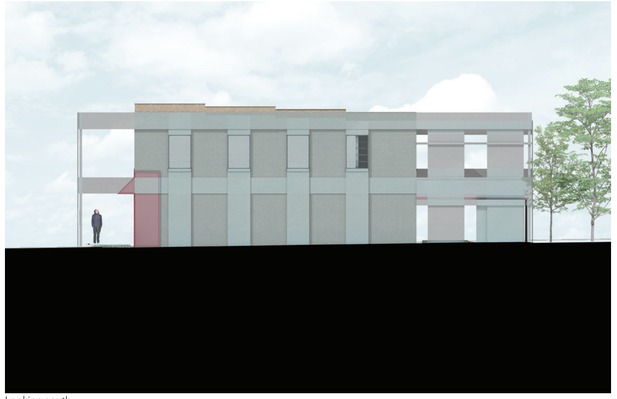
Looking west



Looking north



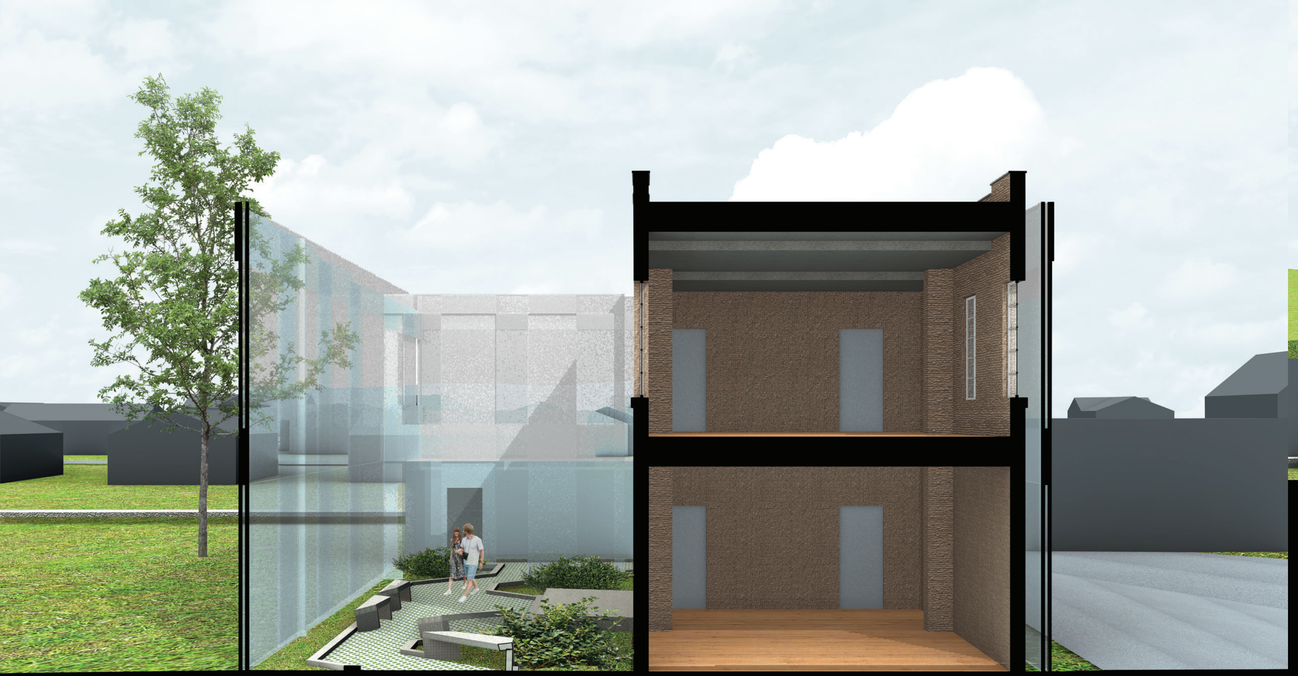
Looking east

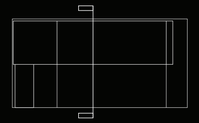


Looking south

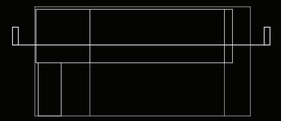
Another suggestion for how to invert the building was that Color-Craft Studios should become the ghost and McReynolds High School should be the solid and tangible. The Color-Craft building could be a steel frame, empty and with no program in the space. It would be dead space, not useful, not significant, just like the Color-Craft Studios is now. I like this idea, and it is a route I could have gone with, but I would have had to go down that route at the very beginning of this project.

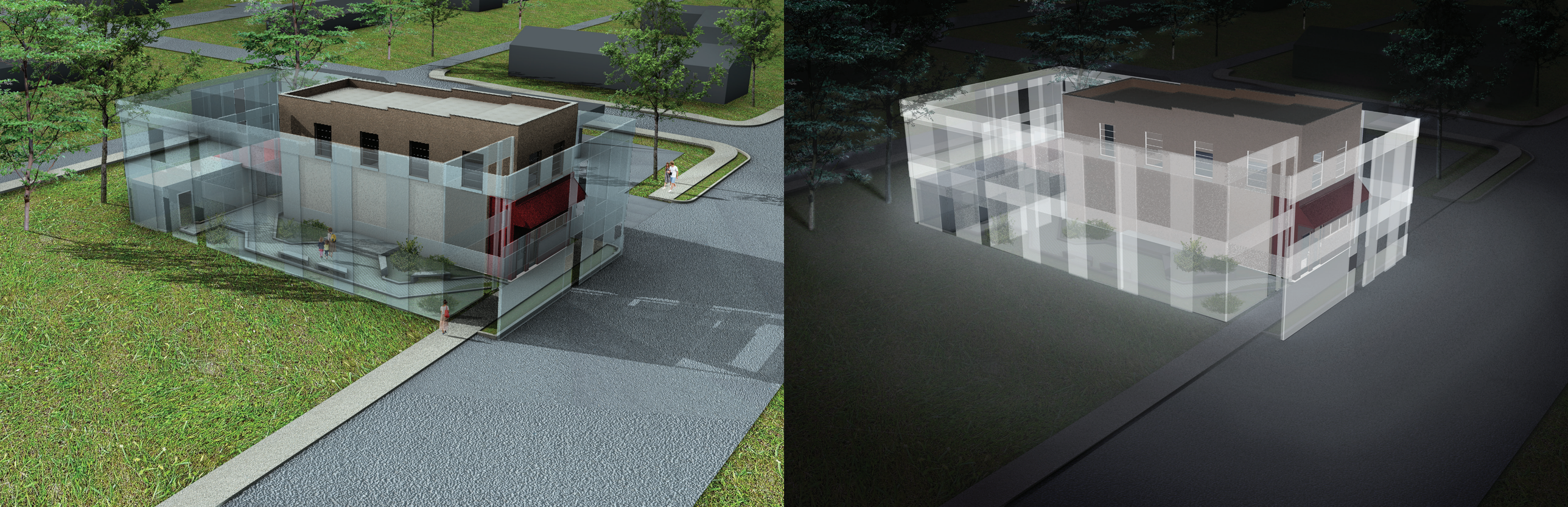
The other main critique of the Ghost Museum is that the reviewers said the details on the façade were “mimicking,” “problematic,” and “too representational.” I understand their point of view, because there is a fine line between mimicking and recreating. The only options for how to represent the old high school are to make it a detail-less massing, akin to a Monopoly house, or to include as much detail as possible in order to be as truthful to what the building was. I picked the latter, since my goal was not to abstract the building, but to bring it back to life relatively faithfully. I can see that I could have treated those details differently, probably by exaggerating them. Details change in our memories, and so strictly following the information I could find in one single picture did not do those details justice. Ghosts are memories. When we remember, some details disappear and are forgotten, and some details become larger-than-life. Treating the school more like a memory and less like an exact replica would have helped my project.











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