

2023 MERIT AWARD

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LYCEUM

A traveling fellowship in Architecture

RIGHT TO OLD TOWN MALL

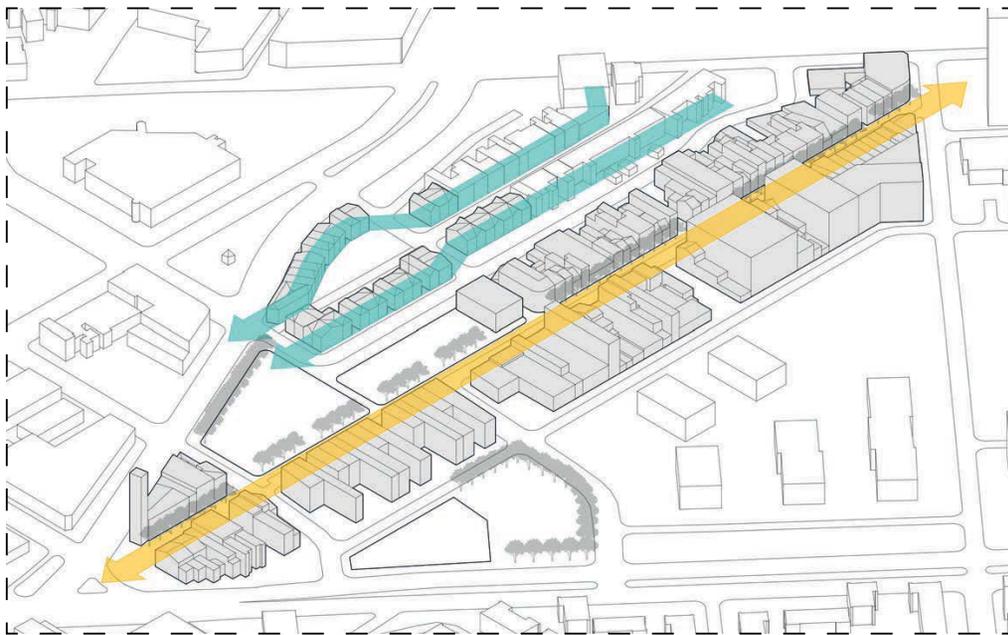
*Proposal for the Revitalization of Old Town Mall, Baltimore, Maryland
Entry to the 2023 LYCEUM Travelling Fellowship
LF-11434*



PROGRAM AND CONCEPT

The project as a whole was approached as a way to challenge the often sterile uniformity of development in cities today. The culprit of this problem is often identified to be the top-to-bottom approach often seen in architectural practice, but perhaps other contributing obstacles also include the overwhelming complexity of planning regulations, the lack of funding in sites such as the Old Town Mall, or the lack of accessible education for people to learn how to intervene in the spaces they inhabit. In any case, this results in an overall absence of power over the space of the city.

These efforts are based on theoretical works advocating for the democratization of public space such as *The Right to the City* by Henri Lefebvre, and on precedents such as the NDSM hall in Amsterdam and the citizen-lead revitalization of Detroit in the 2010s, revolutionary in the framework it laid down for collaborative consumption and “do it yourself” space making. With this in mind, this proposition aims to provide residents of the Old Town Mall the framework to build less uniformly, more inclusively and more freely.



Formal parti.

The yellow arrow indicates the strengthening of the commercial axis on site through a continuous facade.
The blue arrows indicates extending the existing residential urban fabric at the back of the site.

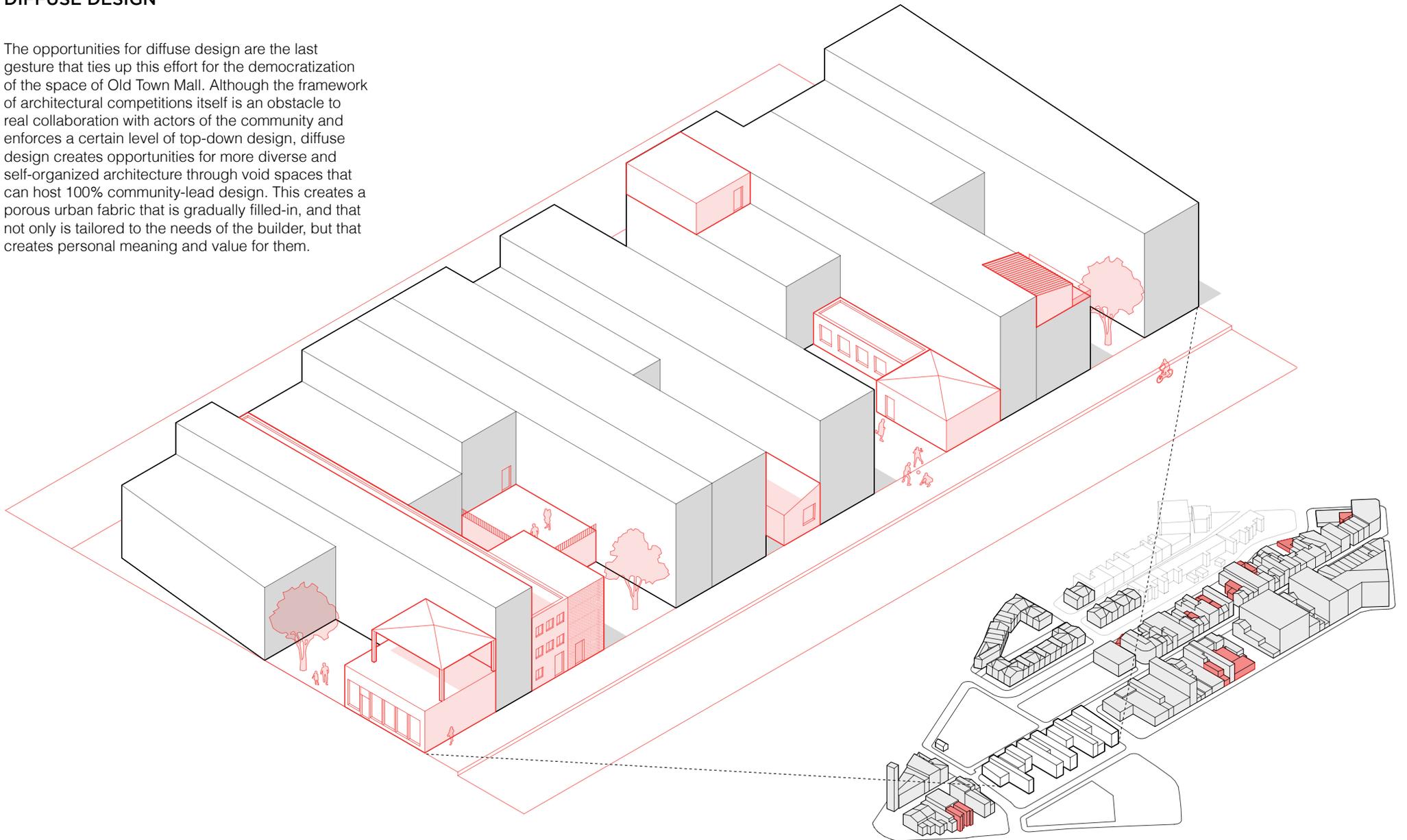


Program diagram.

LEGEND	
■	Fablab
■	Skatepark
■	Mixed commercial and residential
■	Communal garden
■	Residential
■	Public square
■	Basketball court

DIFFUSE DESIGN

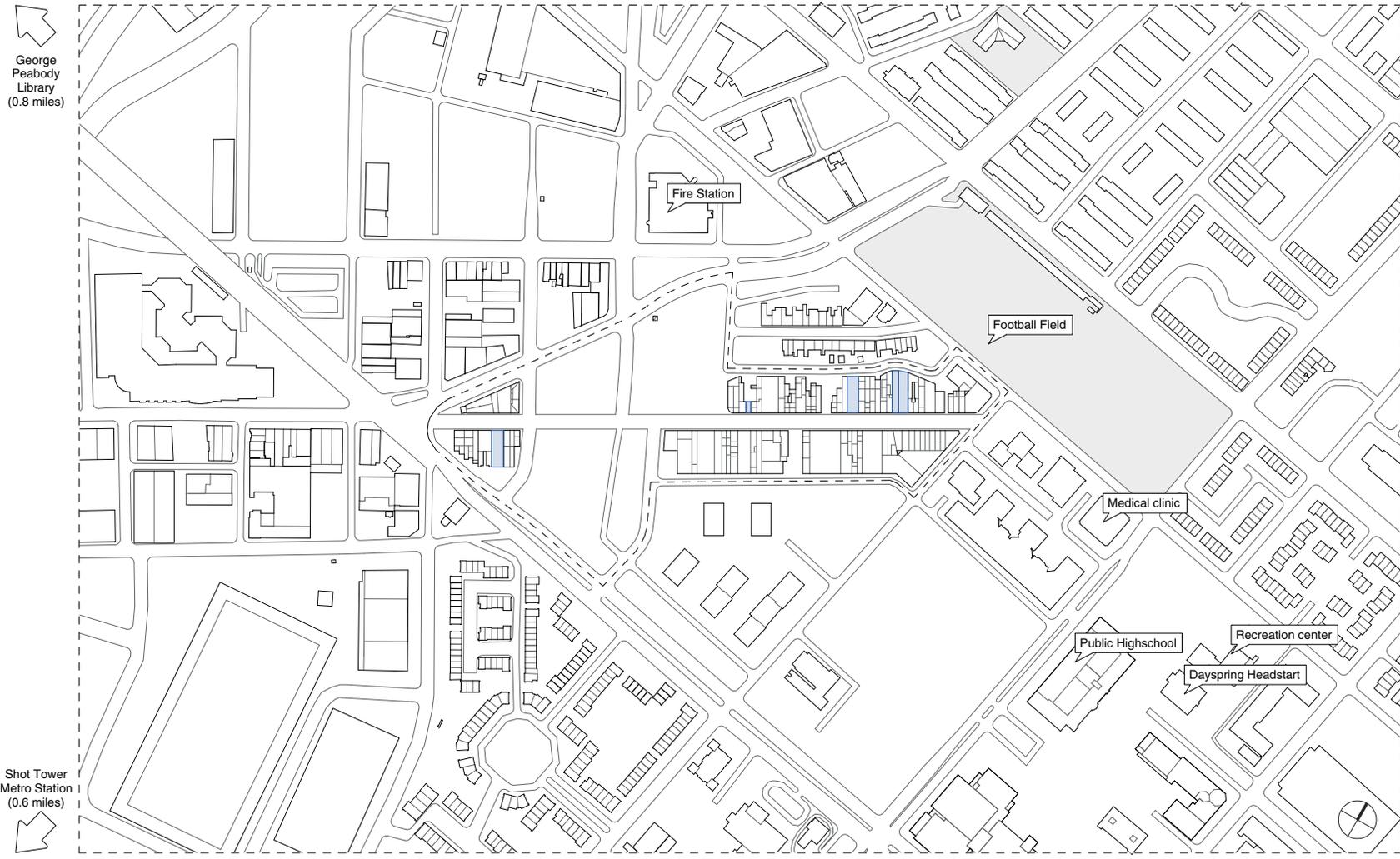
The opportunities for diffuse design are the last gesture that ties up this effort for the democratization of the space of Old Town Mall. Although the framework of architectural competitions itself is an obstacle to real collaboration with actors of the community and enforces a certain level of top-down design, diffuse design creates opportunities for more diverse and self-organized architecture through void spaces that can host 100% community-lead design. This creates a porous urban fabric that is gradually filled-in, and that not only is tailored to the needs of the builder, but that creates personal meaning and value for them.



New proposed buildings that allow for diffuse design.

Diagrams of what seems to have been built after the original buildings on the site: informal building is observed in the existing built fabric.

CONTEXT + DEMOLITION



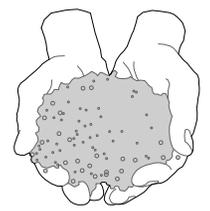
- LEGEND**
- - - Site Delimitation
 - ▭ Parks
 - ▭ Buildings to demolish

Considering the architectural heritage of the typical Baltimore rowhouses that can be found on site, as little buildings as possible should be demolished. However, some buildings (indicated in blue) seem damaged beyond repair and can be replaced by newer buildings.

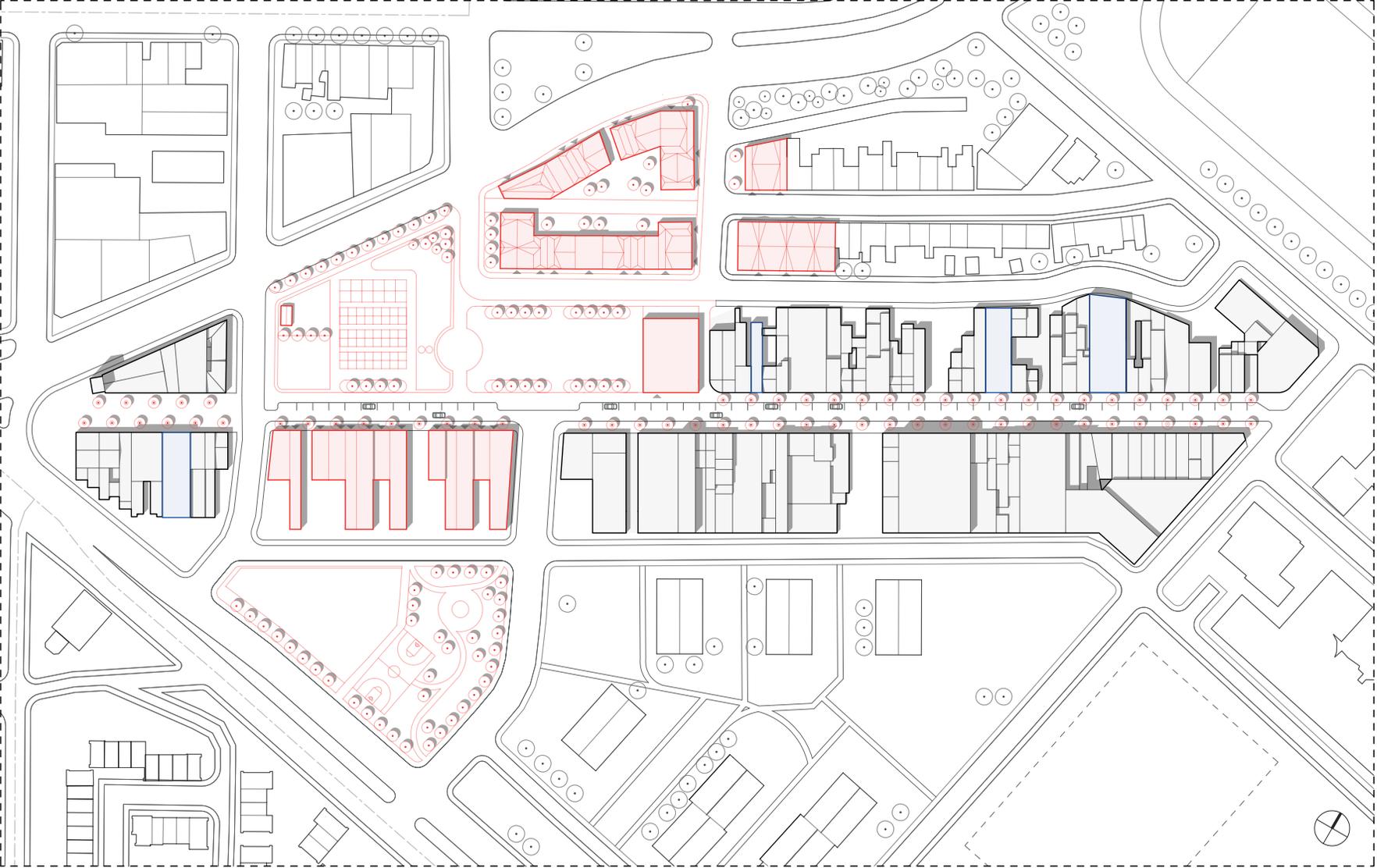
Materials recovered from the demolition are reused through the site: bricks can be reused in non-structural elements, such as continuing the low wall circling the communal garden.



The rotting wood structure can also be composted in the communal garden.



SITE PLAN



LEGEND

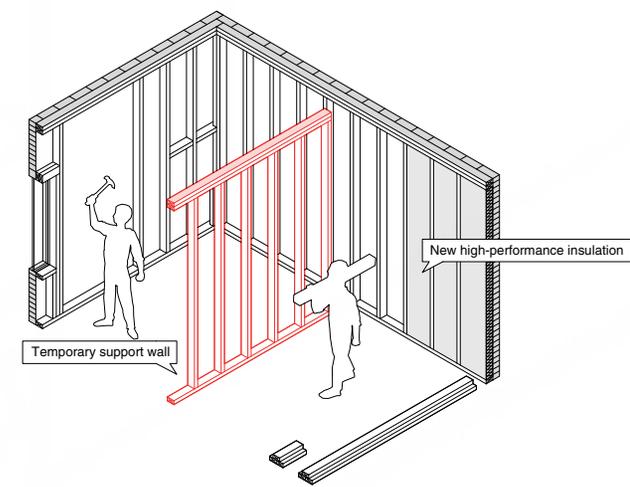
- Demolished buildings
- Renovated buildings
- New interventions
- ▲ Entry to a building

Site plan





Detailed axonometric of 517, 519 and 521 Old Town Mall; new proposed roofing after renovations.



PRESERVATION

Old Town Mall's state of abandonment is a reflection of the generalized problems of vacancy Baltimore has been facing since many years, and which stems directly from redlining policies. I believe that the site has the potential to lead the way in training and solidifying existing revitalisation initiatives. The site would function as a gigantic open-air workshop where community members would learn skills through training led by experts and retake control over the site. Existing initiatives that already tackle vacancy issues through Baltimore, such as the Vacants to Value program or Black Women Build-Baltimore can be involved in this process.

Furthermore, renovation rather than demolition and rebuilding can help reduce carbon emissions while preserving the cultural heritage of the site, and installing new high-performance isolation can help reach emission goals and reduce occupants' bills.

THE COMMONS

The commons are at the heart of the project and comprise four zones:

- The Demonstration Garden;
- The Field of Dreams Communal Garden;
- The Public Square;
- The FabLab.

The Demonstration Garden and the FabLab frame the communal space as educational hubs.

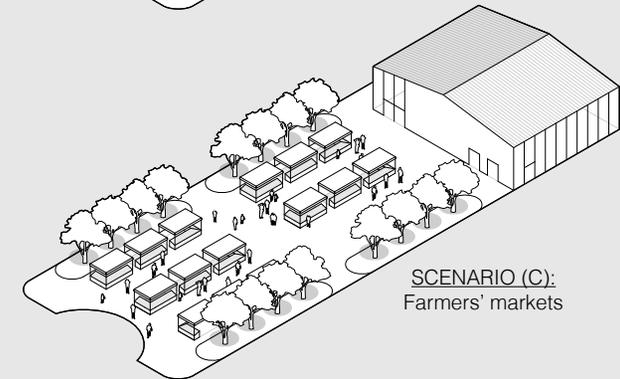
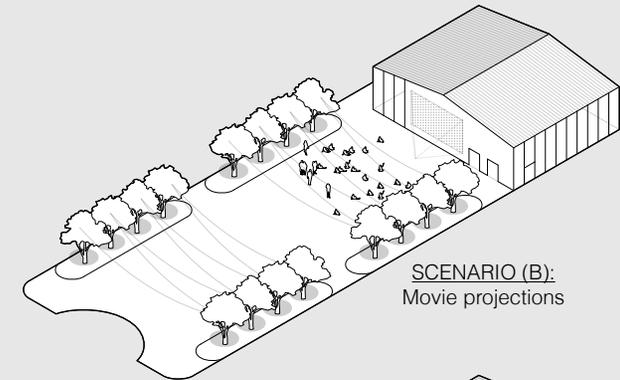
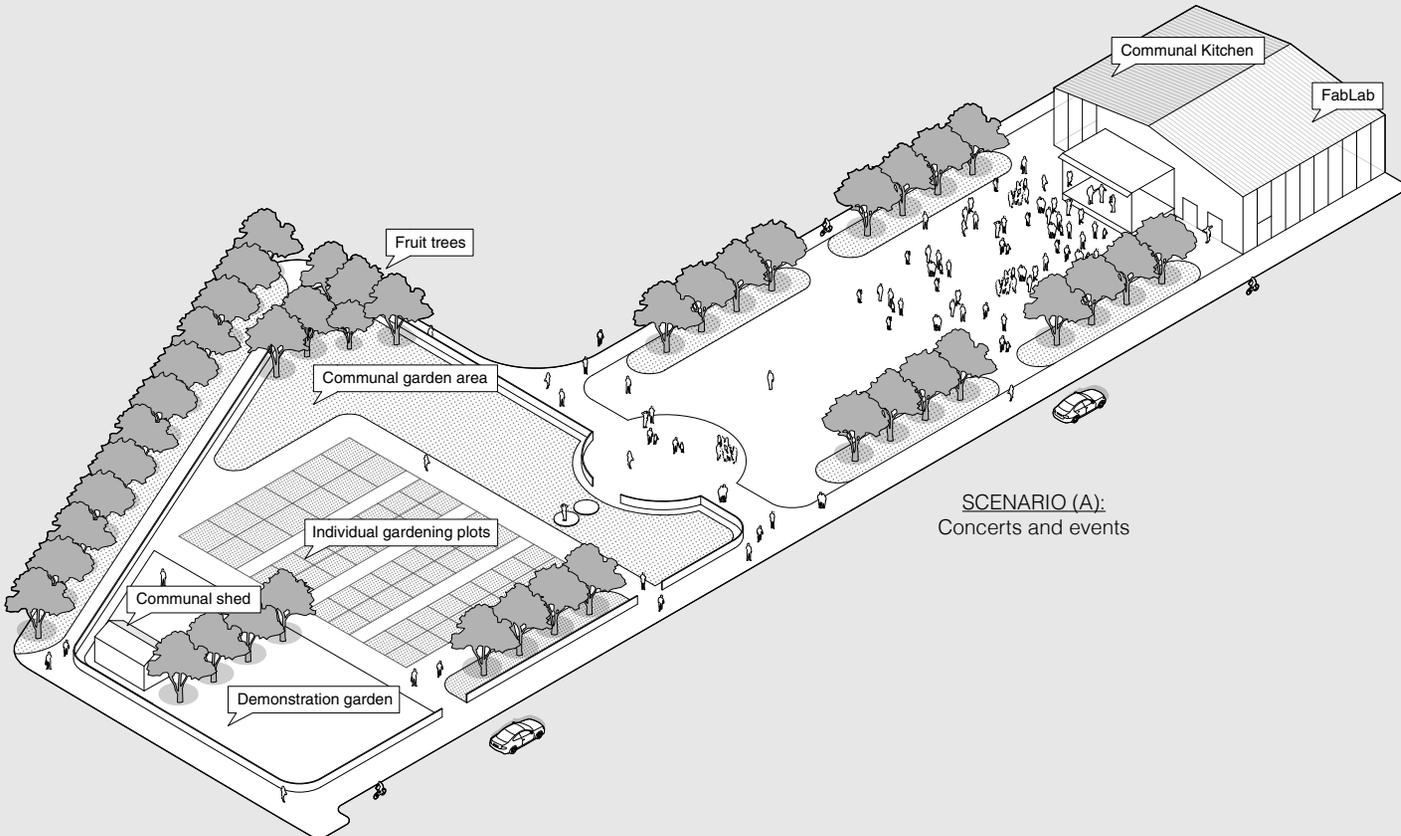
(1) DEMONSTRATION GARDEN + (2) FIELD OF DREAMS COMMUNAL GARDEN

Communal gardens are often the only space where urbanites have power over the space of their city; many gardens are filled with self-built structures. Inspired by the City Farmer garden in Vancouver, the demonstration garden on the north-west side is meant to educate users on gardening, composting, recycling and others. This knowledge would be used in the communal garden, but can also inspire shoppers and wanderers that are not from the neighborhood to cultivate their own land.

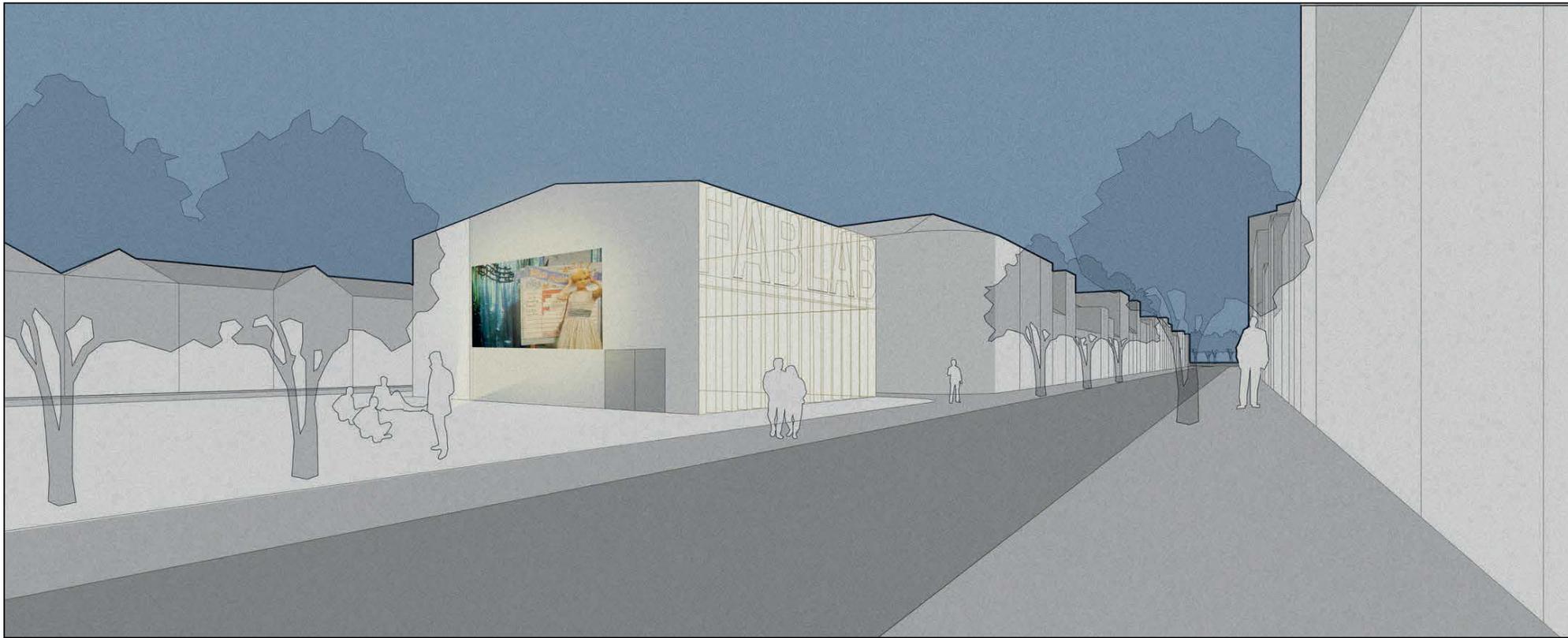
(3) PUBLIC SQUARE

The Public Square serves as a transition space, connecting the garden and the Fablab, but also hosts temporary or seasonal programs, such as:

- (A) concerts and events;
- (B) movie projections;
- (C) farmer's markets.



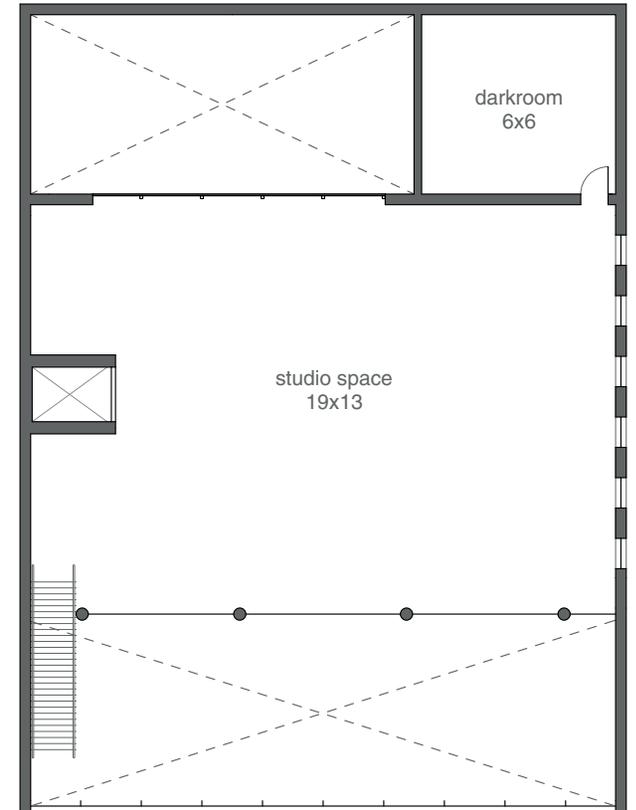
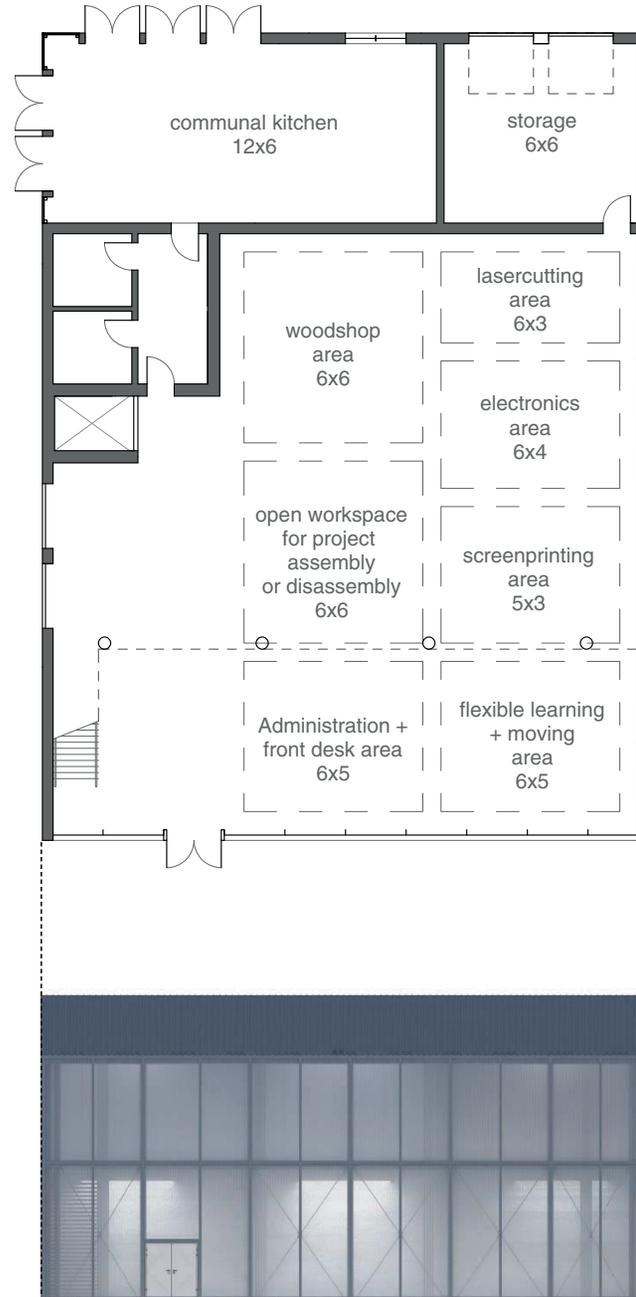
PERSPECTIVE



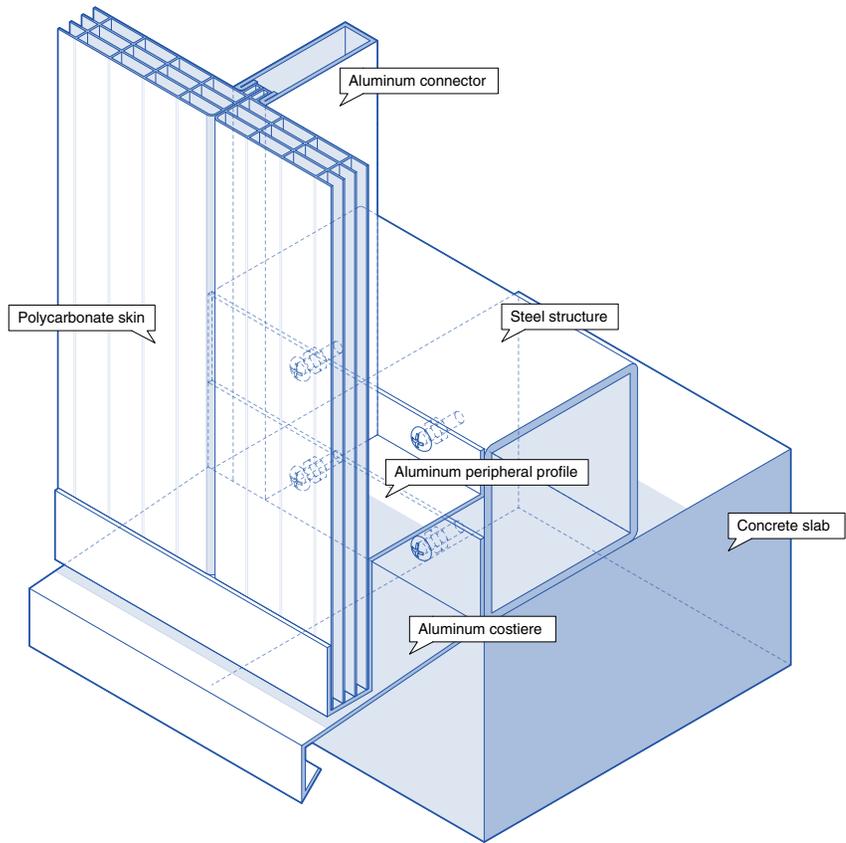
FABLAB

The introduction of a Fablab aims to democratize access to technology and to processes of making for the community. It also includes in its program a communal kitchen that opens up to the square, to be used by members of the garden and friends, and an art-focused studio on the second storey. One can imagine art installations, student projects leading to life-long passions or prototypes for nearby businesses taking roots in these spaces.

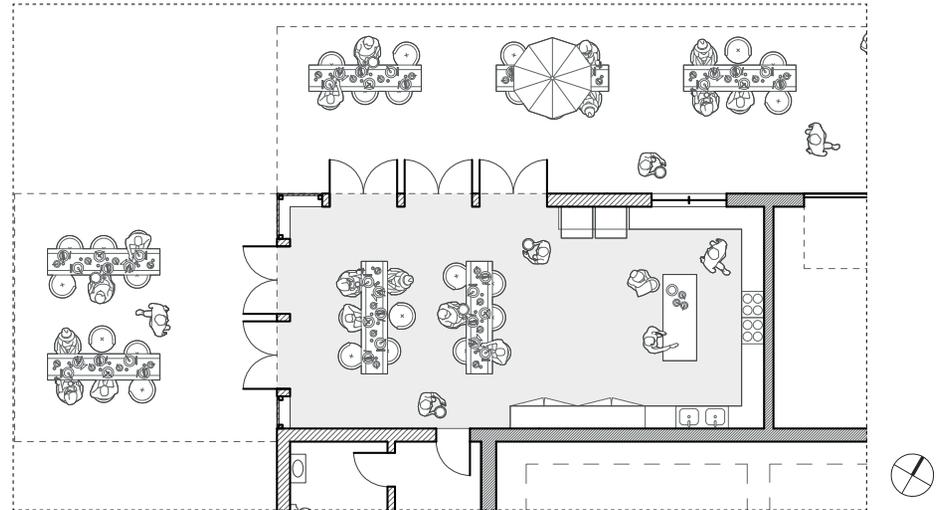
Rather than trying to emulate the neighboring urban fabric, the Fablab stands out by its materiality, and encourages expressive and individual interventions to other buildings of the street, creating a patchwork-like diversity rather than sterile uniformity.



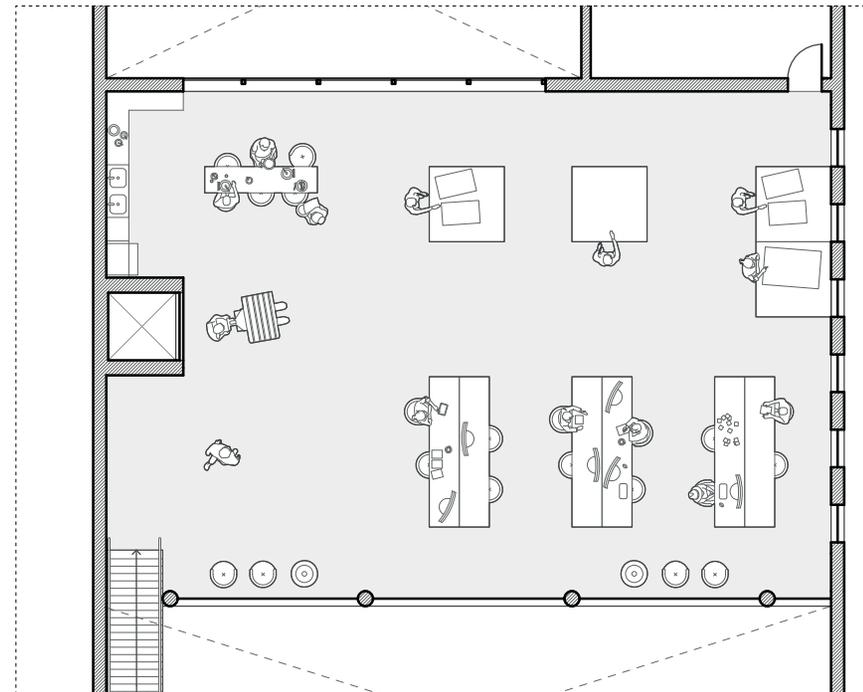
FABLAB DETAILS



Construction detail of the polycarbonate skin.



Detail of the Communal Kitchen, first storey.



Detail of the Artist Studio, second storey.

