

SITE, INTEGRITY, FORM AND INTERACTION:

THIRDSPACE AND A NEW MODEL FOR MIXED USE, URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AND DENSITY

THIS FINAL PROJECT IS PRESENTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

BY

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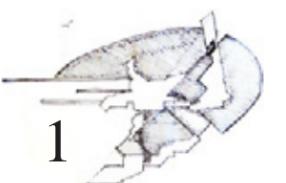
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TO MY STUDIO FAMILY.

MY FRIENDS AND MY ACTUAL FAMILY.

WITHOUT WHOM I WOULD EXIST ENTIRELY WITHOUT SANITY



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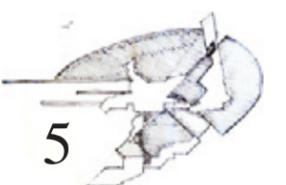
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARCHITECTURAL STRATEGIES	6
BACKGROUND	8
ABSTRACT	10
SITE	11
THIRDSPACE	21
SITE AND PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES	24
DESIDERATA	27
PROPOSED INTERVENTION	29
DESIGN PROCESS	32
THE FINAL DESIGN	47
REFLECTIONS	67



ARCHITECTURAL STRATEGIES

The solidity of belief in the matter of architecture is inappropriate even at the level of generalization considering the ever changing physicality of the natural world. These are not laws, or rules to be followed. They are suggestions to be decided upon on an individual basis and on a number of factors. Architecture is a contextual construction of an inherently problematic function. It is a solution to a problem, given rigidity and form. It represents a real and tactile physical abstraction of the creative expression of the mind. It is a solution, a means to an end, for accomplishing goals. As designers, though not always as the drivers, we must look to the future and generate new ideas but we must also look to the past to understand the ideas we have, where they came from and how they should adapt to modern usages. Do not reinvent the wheel, but redesign it if necessary.

It is important to recognize, ultimately as problem solvers, that there is often more than one solution to most problems, and thus we should keep an open mind especially concerning design changes. We should seek to inform designs to accomplish the answers to those issues we are trying to decipher. It is immediately important to define those problems and questions. Know what the design is trying to do and how it accomplishes that, and know that the issues it solves outweigh those that it causes. Always leave the place better off than you found it. By giving a solution such solidity and longevity, more problems are inevitably created. No system is perfect and each system will inevitably create new issues, becoming the new source of the problems that architecture may one day seek to correct. In this way, architecture is self perpetuating.

There is no need to ignore history. A scientist should not cast aside research relating to his, purely on the basis of a difference in era. Similarly, if the research is there, find it and know how to use it. However, we must always consider history in the context of history and seek to understand the motivations of past works.

The value of the art form of architecture is its versatility. The goals and their solutions are dependent on those who set them, and the variety of answers to the same question is always great, as anyone who's been to an architectural studio can attest. Some fail to realize this variety can exist, and some



see the opposite. Limits should not be placed on design solutions in architecture by defining specific styles that we see throughout history. Generalized solutions and suggestions are more appropriate due to the ever increasing and varying degree of technology and materials available to many today. That is not to say that a project should not assume a common architectural vocabulary or tectonic, but that each element used should be considered and implemented with reason.



BACKGROUND

Today's society is characterized by many increasing divisions in demography. Modern urban development is primarily profit driven, often seeking out areas of decline and attempting to reverse the flow of funds to that area. What is often left out of these considerations is the characteristic and historical right to the domain by those who already inhabit it. Communities which already exist within areas of "revitalization" and renewal are often forced out of their customary place in the city. Yet we must be considerate of both sides. There are many reasons for demographic groups to be on the move, and those groups that participate in the influx of new inhabitants are not always those motivated by profitability. When people in an area are confronted with the new existence or invasion of another group, the new group does not often provide for the old one to stay and hence creates a new invading force to lay siege to another area. However, this can be prevented by adjusting a few urban practices.

What is often overlooked is that the true character of a location is inherently defined by the cultural groups that inhabit it. When one group moves into or settles in the physical realm of another they create swells or islands of difference. In some extreme cases this can result in a gentrified area surrounded by a rundown one, or vice versa. Areas of friction, these urban seams, exist in large part due to popular urban practices that seek homogeneity of space and culture which is psychologically associated with a desirable and predictable profitability by developers. Locations such as these can be found in much of the urban landscape of the US. Areas occupied by a dynamically varying demography contain an inherent friction that often becomes increasingly pronounced and problematic usually resulting in one group being forced from the area and ultimately the area being smoothed back to homogeneity. Atlanta is in this way very different from many other US cities. Due to the increasing number and variety of people in the city many of these areas have occurred. In the case of areas in and around the city, many developers are seeking to capitalize on an influx of a generally affluent, younger population and are redeveloping various areas of the city. The



influx is due, at least in part, to the current economic downturn as many companies and businesses based in the north have begun transferring workers southern cities such as Atlanta due to the lower cost of living. Inhabitants who have historical claim to certain areas are being forced out of their traditional locations and into the surrounding suburbs. This occurrence is not unique to Atlanta; cities like New York and Los Angeles exemplify similar movements.

ABSTRACT

Many areas of urban redevelopment are inherently subjected to slash/burn development tactics both physically and socially. Areas of urban decline are characterized generally as having a population of “undesirables” or marginalized people, located near infrastructural city elements or areas that were previously industrial, and areas of large minority populations. Those in the undesirable population, while not inherently detrimental to the place, are frowned upon by developers and planners and thus are forced to shift locations in light of redevelopment. Many of these “undesirables” are marginalized because they seek to be marginalized, to exist between the gaps of planned and organized space and society. The chosen site contains preexisting populations of underground artists, skaters and a small collection of homeless individuals who have settled in disused areas. This marginal population represents a portion of the true character of the site and should be allowed and encouraged to remain in place. The marginal quality of these groups is a large part of their integrity, as well as the site’s, and should be preserved if at all possible. The design creates a location that allows the graffiti artists and skaters to exist, without directly planning for them. The chosen art studio and gallery spaces as well as the school are placed in an attempt to provide a bridge between different groups. Due to the lack of specificity of space and the fact that the site does not immediately call attention to itself the different groups are allowed to continue their marginal existence by providing for them the privacy that they require, in a seemingly public place without removing the marginal characteristics of their events by redirecting them to the mainstream eye. By planning and allowing for a population to remain in an area of decline through its rejuvenation the new development can become a unique social center, providing a unique sense of location and allowing for unique interaction to occur between social demographics.



A.



B.

A. Sanborn maps showing early site characteristics.
 B. The same sanborn map overlaid on a satellite image of the current area.

SITE

An area of the city of Atlanta near the Carter Center (a presidential library) west of downtown but inside the perimeter has, in the past fifteen years, seen an influx of individuals who do not align with those inhabitants who traditionally occupy the area. When the area was originally developed around the mid nineteenth century it was, like much of Atlanta, an industrial site centered on a railway that ran from north to south through its center. It has most recently been re-centered on the Carter Center, a complex that is surrounded by roadway and fast moving traffic. Freedom Parkway, originally constructed in 1994, was built specifically to allow traffic access from the I75/I85 Connector directly to the Carter Center. It was opposed locally, but ultimately supported by the state government and its namesake. Inherently the road itself was a large point of contention among those it would displace from its slicing through the existing residential neighborhood. It is not difficult to imagine opposition by the areas inhabitants to a new highway in the place of where their homes once stood. Residents of the Old 4th Ward, the area between the Carter Center and the Connector, lacked the capacity to adequately fight the road's development, and ultimately failed in their efforts. Freedom Parkway, which turns northward just before reaching the Carter Center, was protested by residents farther north and forced to stop. It ends abruptly as it intersects Ponce de Leon Avenue, an area where the affluence is greater than the residents of the Old 4th Ward. The Carter Center inherently meant an influx of developers, new inhabitants and ultimately the gentrification of the area, which is still ongoing. In the years since its construction the roadway near the Carter Center has developed from a concentrated area of demographic difference to an area classifiable as an urban seam. The boundaries between the different social and economic classes has become pronounced as tensions have mounted and one group will soon dominate the area, forcing the others out.

When Freedom Parkway was built it was elevated above certain parts of the landscape, built and natural, to maintain its level grade. The Carter Center sits on high ground, while the train tracks

to the west sit on the low ground. The bridge over the rail lines is a result of the built up roadway. The train tracks and the parkway bisect and form a pinnacle between the up-scaled Inman Park (south) and the low end Old 4th Ward. Presently the surrounding area is largely residential with pockets of small scale retail spread around the community to the south. A large disused parking lot sits adjacent to the northern edge of the parkway, west of the rail lines.



Satelite image of Freedom Parkway and the Carter Center (Middle, Right)

In the center of the site (running from east to west) is the bridge that holds the elevated roadway. This bridge, while not uncommon in the area, features a piece of unusual structure. The bridge itself is standard design structurally, but the structure above the roadway that is somewhat unusual. Sitting above the roadway is a superstructure of concrete t-beams, the purpose of which is not immediately discernible. This site also features a cell tower for a small television broadcasting station, which has anchor lines running over the roadway here. The large tunnel-like covering above the roadway is a protective device, intended to shield automotive and pedestrian traffic from ice that may possibly shed off the anchor lines in winter.

The most important and interesting part of the site is perhaps the most unknown portion of it. Underneath the bridge is perhaps one of the most unique spots the city of Atlanta can offer. One photographer describes it in the following excerpt,

“(It was) a spot I started painting at 12 years ago, underneath the Freedom Parkway Bridge, next to the Carter Center. Amazingly, this spot that was freshly poured concrete back in the day has become a subterranean gallery and proving grounds for a generation of Atlanta street artists. The layered work and haphazard gestalt formed the most inviting dadaesque (avant-garde) canvas one could imagine. 21st Century collage at its best, Hanna Hoch would be proud.”

This artists incites speak volumes towards a potential site programming but also gleams the true importance of the site. The bridge’s underbelly is well known in at least one realm of the artistic world, and is a true treasure of an art that has ironically been outlawed elsewhere in the city and a vast majority of other cities as well. Graffiti is perhaps one of the purest forms of folk art this country can offer and yet in many public places it is immediately destroyed as quickly as it appears which



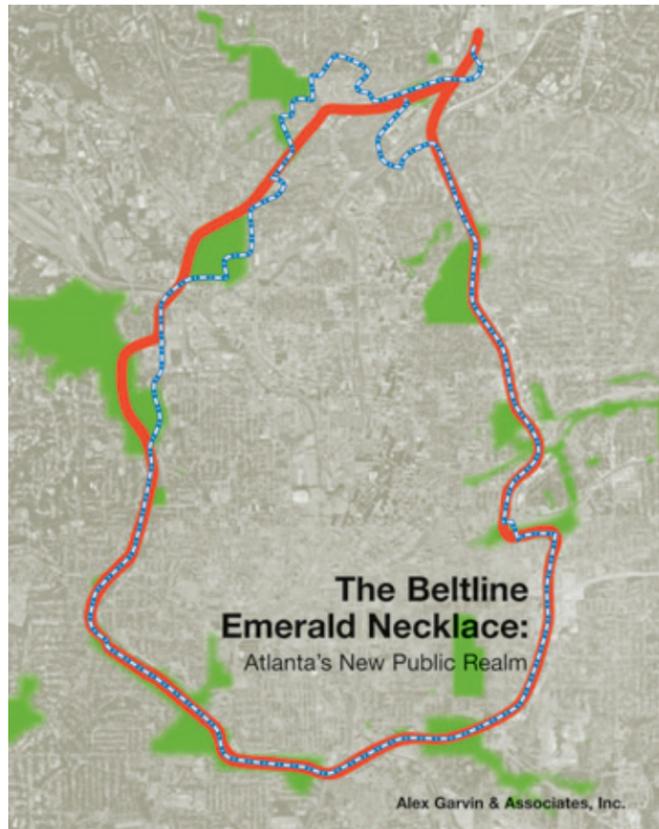
The underside of the Freedom Parkway bridge.

is usually almost overnight. The location of graffiti is perhaps the largest contributing factor to its longevity, or lack thereof. Recently Freedom Park (east of the bridge, south of the Carter Center) was designated by the city as Atlanta's Public Art Park, which may contribute to the continuing existence of the artwork on site. Regardless of future plans made by local governing bodies, the artwork here is unique, perhaps in the entire city, and it should be preserved and encouraged. However its popularity exists as an "underground" gallery for street artists' and it is important to consider the degree of exposure given to these artists and their works. They exist as a marginalized group, and intentionally so in this location. While there was some graffiti on the topside of the bridge, it was not the type to be considered art. The location under the bridge is segregated from all pedestrian traffic associated with the normal inhabitants of the area, which consists mainly of joggers and bikers riding on the trails of Freedom Park.

The remnant rail lines of the area's past industrialized state have since come to occupy this underbelly to the site as well. In the time prior to freedom parkway the rail lines, while they were perhaps at the bottom of a small valley, have since been subjugated to the bottom of the parkway bridge. The walkway that runs next to the roadway on the bridge is a small trail, part of the Freedom Park trail system, and emanates from the Carter Center, running along the roadway in this location, but ultimately looping back to the Center. It is well used by exercising pedestrians such as joggers and bikers who both live nearby and travel to use it. To the south, new development has begun in recent years; an apartment complex was completed recently, and is retaining renters quite well. A majority of them are from northern companies, as previously discussed. The area is a dense collection of stratified demographics. New development is creating an influx of those who are "othered" to the area, and those who occupy space under the site are likewise othered to those who have a financial claim to the location. The Carter Center, a symbol of gentrification in and of itself, rests upon the hill to the east above much of the common place activity, the everyday happens on the road way below, and the homeless and restless youth bellow the roadway, with new development encroaching from the south. In the years to come as the site surroundings are being developed this urban seam will become even more pronounced and will result ultimately in the forced expulsion of those who currently occupy the site out of necessity and they will be forced to change locations

yet again based on local urban redevelopment practices.

The rail lines are another important site element. Atlanta's Beltline Project is a system of parks and light rails already in development. It is envisioned as an emerald necklace of parks circumventing the entire city camouflaging a new mass transit line to aide in decreasing automotive traffic within the city. The project is set to incorporate many of the outdated/disused rail lines around the city, including those that run along the site. The Beltline planning committee is currently planning a rail station to be located in close proximity to the site to provide a mass transit connection to the new park they are planning, also to be partially located on site.



A.



B.



C.

A. Plan of the Beltline Project. B. Detail plan of the Beltline project. C. Master plan for the Beltline Park to be added on site.



The Carter Center (above) and some residential homes of the Old 4th Ward.



Above Left: A memorial/sculpture titled 54 Columns by Sol Lewitt located less than half a mile from the project site. The columns are meant to reference the Atlanta skyline. Above Right: A small scale business near the site.



Images from under the Freedom Parkway bridge.



Images from under the Freedom Parkway bridge.



Images from the disused parking lot north of the Freedom Parkway bridge.

THIRDSPACE

The local inhabitants most likely to face expulsion are those in the mid-twentieth century homes west of the site in the Old 4th Ward, and those who occupy the area underneath the bridge. The new development in the area represents a threat to not only the local artist community but the homeless and skater populations as well. The skaters have physically built themselves into the space with their construction of ramps and similar artifacts, and the artists have engraved their works into the structure of the bridge itself. The skaters are a group that intentionally marginalize themselves. They are a unique demographic not only in this way but in their ability to adapt to different spaces regardless of what they are planned to be. Much of the pedestrian level urban form has become a place where skateboarding happens.

Early on skaters primarily absorbed urban refuse as their playgrounds. They existed initially in disused playgrounds, swimming pools and flood ways, but eventually began using urban necessities such as stairs, handrails and benches as part of their performance space. Skateboarding has become much more widespread in the past decade, and perhaps less of a phenomenon and more common place. However, it is still somewhat of a forbidden art form in many locations other than those set aside specifically to function as skate parks. It is for this reason that the local redevelopment around Freedom Parkway may result in the restraint and or removal of the skateboarding population.

The homeless, or urban outdoors-men, are another demographic existing locally who occupy relatively the space (perhaps more consistently) as the skaters and do so out of the necessity of the place itself; which provides shade, a lack of noise, and privacy. These are not people who have recently lost their homes or who are there because they have fallen on hard times. These are the people who have chosen to be homeless and to live on their own, far away from standard and accepted society. Aside from the rail lines that an observant pedestrian might notice, the space that these three demographic exist in is by and large hidden from all view and knowledge of the general



public that inhabit the roadway and/or walkway on the top side of the bridge itself.

The three distinct populations that occupy this portion of the site suggest a very unique set of needs for the location. They require a degree of secrecy because they are considered “others” in society, they are marginalized. The skaters require steel and concrete to continue their sport, though not necessarily a space planned specifically for them since skaters are experts at finding additional uses for much of the urban environment. The artists require concrete canvas to expand their works upon, though not necessarily a space set aside specifically for graffiti. The marginalization of these acts and people is something that requires a certain amount of thought. The act of planning a space specifically for these functions, graffiti and skating, implies that they will lose their marginal quality.

Amongst the three groups the homeless are perhaps the most unique. Both skaters and graffiti artists are defined by an action; the act of skating and the act of painting, both reinforced by the chosen location for the events. It is the homeless who are othered perpetually because of the way they live their lives. Where a graffiti artist or a skater can, for the most part, pick up their board or put away their can and immediately fit in with the rest of society, the homeless have no option to blend in with the rest of society. These characteristics speak volumes to the space, or place, that these groups require in order to exist. It is suggestive of the rigidity of space each group may appropriately come to inhabit.

The most implicit function of the marginalized is its difference; the uniqueness from its surroundings. If everyone were intended to be the same there would only be one of us and not of billions. Many urban practices seek to establish a sense of location for a specific group and fail to plan for, or perhaps plan against, much of the urban marginal population. It is only a failure to plan this way in that it refuses to accept the almost inevitable existence of these populations in many areas. The challenges in urban planning are many; relating to site history, surroundings and infrastructure; but should also include creating a place that can allow for a peaceful coexistence between a number of different groups, rather than a singular primary group. It is the commingling of this variety of

groups that can create a true sense of community and a unique identity of a location. This unique variety of demographics, and the planning that each would require can be set forth as a new standard for urban density as well as a new definition for the term “mixed use development.”

SITE AND PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES

In order to halt the creation of roaming demographic groups in urban and suburban environments, there are certain changes that should be made to our urban practices. Many areas are seeing an invasion by new profit motivated development, the primary source of these displaced peoples. However, it is unreasonable to stop new development altogether as in some cases it may be necessary. Given that new development can be difficult to stop, it is more feasible to readjust the procedure for dealing with demographic friction within the realm it will come to exist in. People are going to be uncomfortable around others.

Let us examine the issue through the metaphor of environmentally friendly planning. For some new developments we see today, when developers choose to build on a site that has a steep slope and various forms of flora and fauna they precede in a slash and burn mentality which results in the leveling of the site and the removal of all growth, resulting in a generic location with no sense of place. Again this is representative of a profit driven development because the main motivation for slash and burn development is its price. However, what many developers fail to realize is that a unique site will result in a unique building, and a sense of location given by the building, which ultimately makes it a more desirable destination. Some of the most interesting and popular (from the development aspect) pieces of architecture occur when the site is considered an important parameter in design. In many cases developers find sites and, much like their concern for the environment, they tend to ignore the preexisting sociality of the location. Given that many of the best designs are spawned from a treatment of the site as a design parameter, developers should account for the social distinction of sites, especially in urban environments, where, due to the proximity of different demographics and social conditions are the most complex. Rather than clear cutting the “undesirable” social aspects of the site, incorporate them into the design and produce something that is truly unique; not only unique in the sense of design, but in a social sense as well; incorporate the existing populations into the site and be allow them to remain. Furthermore, it



may benefit those who occupy the area prior to the new intervention. If a demographic is forced from a location they will only become “undesirables” elsewhere. If those inherent socialities are considered a detraction then allow them, if they desire it, an opportunity to improve their own condition and thus become less a blemish. Provide opportunity for a homeless individual on site to straighten their lives out, be it through a rehab clinic or a job training center or an employment office located on site or a school of some kind. Those who seek to live on site, and become part of it, should be encouraged to do so and should be given a place as well. There is no reason people from different demographics or classes cannot co-inhabit space, or spaces in close proximity, aside from psychological barriers in the minds of many individuals.

Specific to this site, it is also appropriate to provide an opportunity for the skaters and artists to better themselves as well. This doesn't necessarily mean a skate park, or graffiti gallery. It may however mean that the opportunity exists for these marginalized groups to coexist peacefully. Again this attitude relates to the marginal qualities of the groups and the events associated with each of them (skating and painting). Their true value comes from their marginality and to preserve this is to preserve the true integrity of the demographics. In fact this might also be approached under the impression that the appeal to many skaters might be using a piece of structure for something it is not specifically meant for, such as a railing, stair or bench implemented as part of a trick. From this perspective one might design a series of indoor/outdoor spaces with multiple, subtly subversive, double-functioning elements that can perform their intended function and also be used by the skaters.

The degree of visibility given to the graffiti and the skaters should also be considered. It is very important to provide a level of comfort to these groups. They are the embodiment of the site's unique character both physically and socially and encouraging them to stay and be a part of a new development is just as important as encouraging new site inhabitants to come in and be comfortable with the artists, skaters and homeless on the site. One possible way of solving this is to provide accessible space that is not immediately apparent to those who do not inhabit it. In other words, it is always there if one wishes to find it, however one might easily overlook it, much like current

location under the bridge. It should not call attention to itself, but should be well designed.

Given the plans for the Beltline include a rail station in close proximity to the site; it is an opportunity to plan for the existence of yet another group of people; those arriving on site from the rail lines, perhaps to use the new park. This planning can perhaps best be attended to by incorporating the rail station into the project itself, given that the project site is to occupy the edge of the Beltline Park that is to contact the rail lines.

DESIDERATA

Incorporating any distinct physical site characteristics can be difficult, but incorporating the sociality of a site is even more difficult. Urban social conditions can be extremely complex, and thus require complex solutions within a design. The inherent heterogeneity involved in creating a socially complex project is perhaps the most problematic aspect. People are often uncomfortable around individuals from other demographics, and for a number of reasons. There are constructions within the mind that rigidly adapt information we perceive into specific categories. If the goal here is to allow and encourage individuals from different demographics to interact and engage each other we should, for the purposes of this experiment, examine why they currently do not. Often the mind labels certain characteristics as detractors, the more of which we perceive the more uncomfortable we may become, with comfort also being contingent on proximity. Therefore, personal comfort is a combination of a number of factors, the main of which we will describe as number of detractors, proximity (between us and another individual) and the comfort implied by the surroundings. Different surroundings ascribe varying levels of comfort depending on a number of factors, including the degree of openness vs. privacy of a space, the familiarity one might have with that surrounding, or the amount of light vs. darkness within a space.

Given this, I would suggest certain strategies that can be implemented for creating a space that will ascribe a greater amount of comfort for a varying degree of individuals, even when they are in close proximity to those with which they may normally feel uncomfortable around. Discomfort might also be alleviated by helping people better differentiate between true detractors and those that are mere misconceptions. In effect, understanding the differences between themselves and others through allowing them an opportunity to get to know each other in a different type of setting can help people lessen the number of detractors that make them uncomfortable to begin with. The formality of that setting is also very much implied by the spatiality of the location itself and its function. For instance, in the case of the bridge here on Freedom Parkway, the underside of the

bridge is a comfortable place for skaters to spend time because of they are the primary group there and they are scarcely noticed, thus there a few detractors for them to worry about. The space is out of the way and presents a degree of privacy, so they are comforted by the space itself, which leads to the next point of contention.

In order to redefine the physical construction of the mind we must first dismantle the existing. The first step towards reestablishing a comfort zone on an individual basis is removing the original comfort zone and establishing a new one. A form of shock or immersion therapy is necessary to break the bounds of the premiere construction. This means plunging individuals into environments where they are normally uncomfortable and allowing them to gain a measure of acceptance in that environment. It should be noted that the goal of this type of adjustment is not conformity, as that implies an emphasis on homogeneity. The idea here is that you introduce an acceptance of the natural heterogeneity that occurs on site resultant from the varying demographics, which is currently not commonly accepted in any sort of variety of spaces. In the case of a specific design, an alternative to this, or rather another way of viewing the concept is to allow social groups to remain in their location, and then layering additional groups into the same space, much like what is proposed here. A layering of demographics would be a unique situation and only occurs in specific locations, usually determined by the function of the place. A wide variety of demographics may be experienced at a religious site or at a Wal-Mart or shopping mall (and there is some irony here) versus the relatively small grouping of demographics that we see somewhat naturally in many of today's housing developments. A primary goal of this proposal is to pull that social variety into the everyday space of a community.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION

The site is a location of conflict between a number of different demographic groups. Initially the program was to include new housing to allow for the new development that will be taking place on site due to the Beltline Rail and Park system, as well as a space to provide for the preexisting groups who have a more historical claim to the site. The space would also need to encourage interaction between the varying groups. When we look at architecture that encourages interaction it leads down three distinct paths. There is that in which people interact through a common search for commodities, i.e., stores like big box retailers who target a variety of demographics as customers. The second path is recreational space; play grounds, gyms, skate parks, etc. Recreation and play is something that can happen almost anywhere if an individual is in the proper minds set, as is evident when looking at skateboarders or just children playing in the street. The third is something that is a bit different. It is architecture but it is spiritual as well. There are various strata of spatial typologies that can be seen as spiritual; the three main of which I will classify as places of religious worship, cemeteries, a memorials. Memorials I consider to be the least specific of the three, and they are somewhat of a middle group between cemeteries and places of worship which are both directed towards specific groups of people, though all three blend very easily.

Thus an element was incorporated into the project to serve as a memorial and increase the nonphysical implications of the space. The events the memorial is directed towards became the Atlanta Child Murders, which occurred specifically from 1978-1983. During that time in the city of Atlanta twenty-nine individuals ranging in age from six to twenty-eight , though mostly under the age of fifteen, were murdered. All of them were Black Americans. The city of Atlanta was largely dismissive of the events, passing them off as normal occurrences in the Black community and refusing to acknowledge the serial nature of the killings. The idea of oversight by a governing body is applicable to the site surroundings even to current day given the crime rate in the Old 4th Ward, and the degree to which it has persisted in recent years.

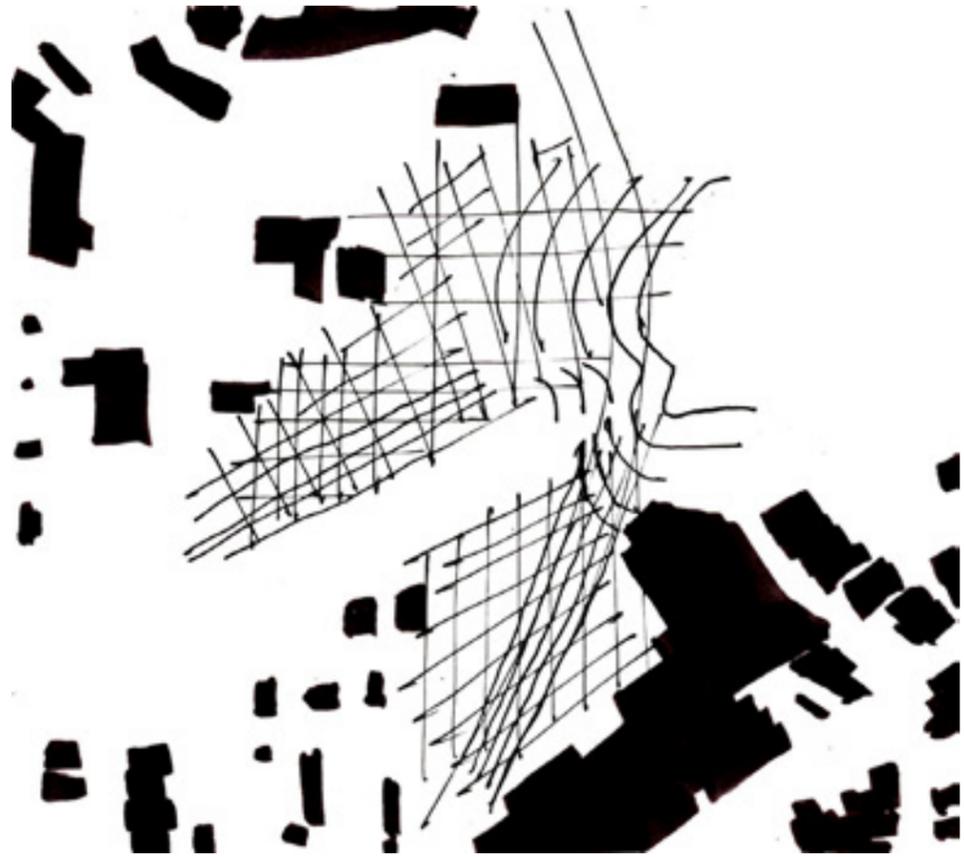
On interaction, people can only be encouraged to behave in a specific way not forced; there are general, less programmatic, ideas for developing interactive spaces. These interactive strategies can be applied to more specific program defining tactics. (There are of course generic qualities of good space that must be considered as well; things like light and darkness, nature and wind, and spatial comfort which will be discussed later.) These interactive strategies are composed mainly of spatial characteristics. Multi-tiered spaces and a variety of spatial scales can provide different groups spaces to inhabit as well as create interesting destinations within larger space.

The physical pathways between spaces, if spaces are considered destinations, become very important. While it is important to choose the destinations pathways connect carefully, various characteristics of pathways should also be explored, including enclosure vs. openness and conditioned vs. unconditioned. Providing views from pathways to destinations, and the degree to which this occurs is also important when attempting to encourage or discourage an individual from traveling to and experiencing a destination.

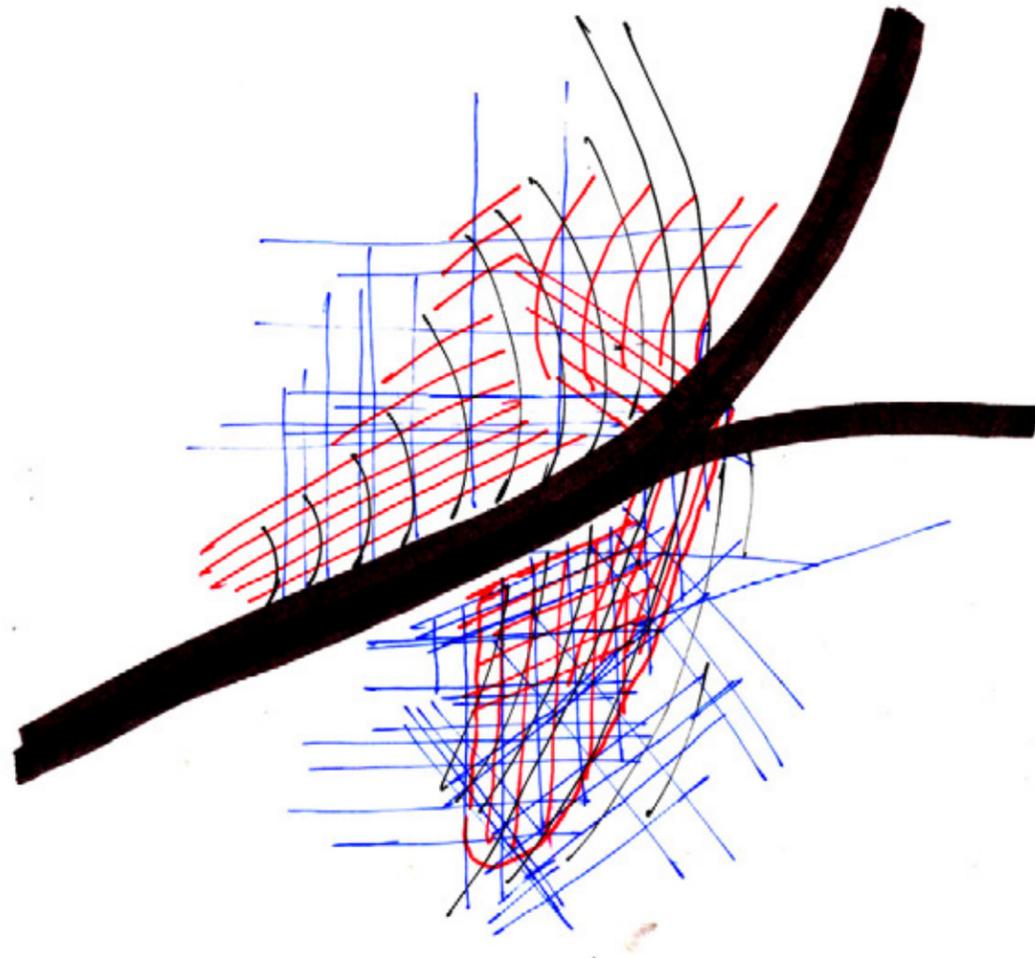
In searching for an element that would assist in achieving this bridging between demographic groups the site was examined to find an element that might help achieve this. Artwork, while somewhat of a commodity, is something that can be enjoyed (although often produced by a lower class) by a wide variety of peoples. Since the artwork is a key component of the true integrity of the site it should be kept and encouraged to be furthered. It should however, as discussed, maintain its impromptu characteristics that it currently enjoys on site. The idea of creating a structure that does not call attention to itself, while focusing on artwork (though not specifically graffiti) will further allow for the persistent presence of the art that preexists, allow a canvas for the development of new art and allow the act of graffiti painting to remain marginalized and away from the mainstream.

Much as the memorial aspect of the program was added to provide a sense of greater meaning to the space, a school was also added to force the presence of children on the site. While there are already elements of live/work, a school will reinforce the safety and security of the place. In addition, the

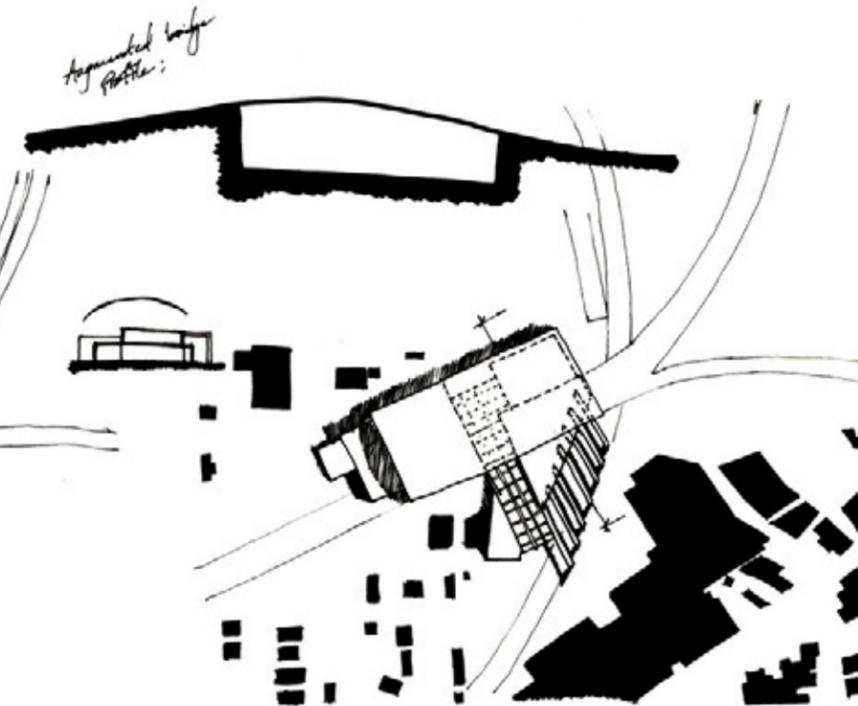
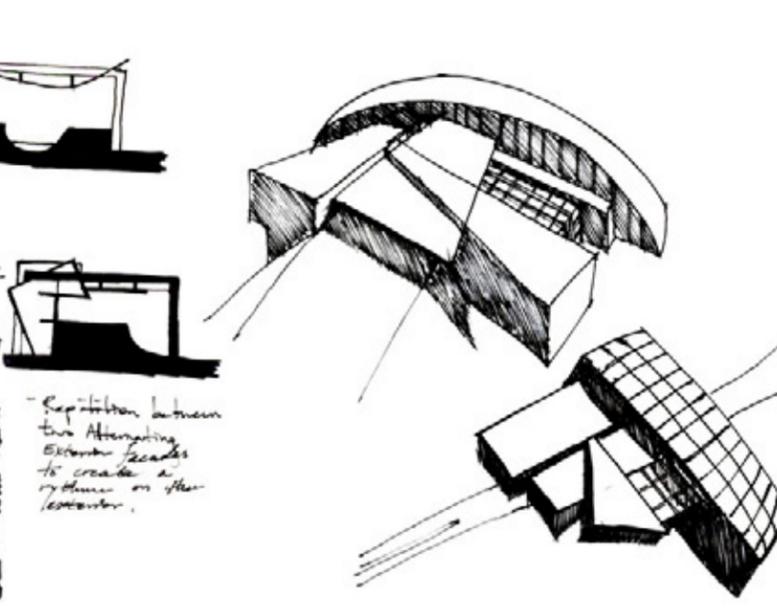
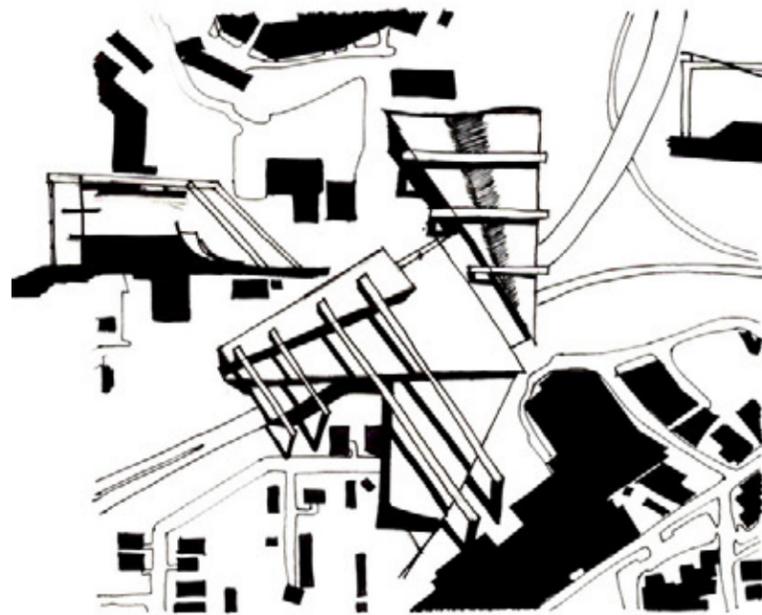
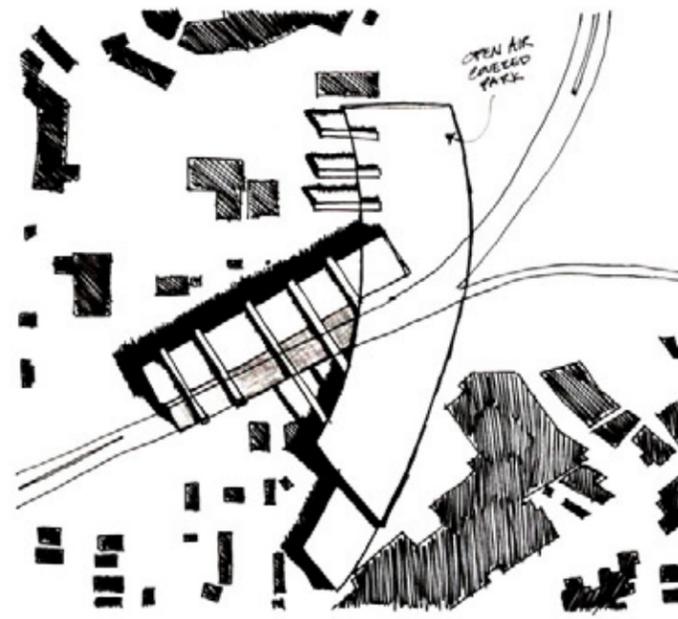
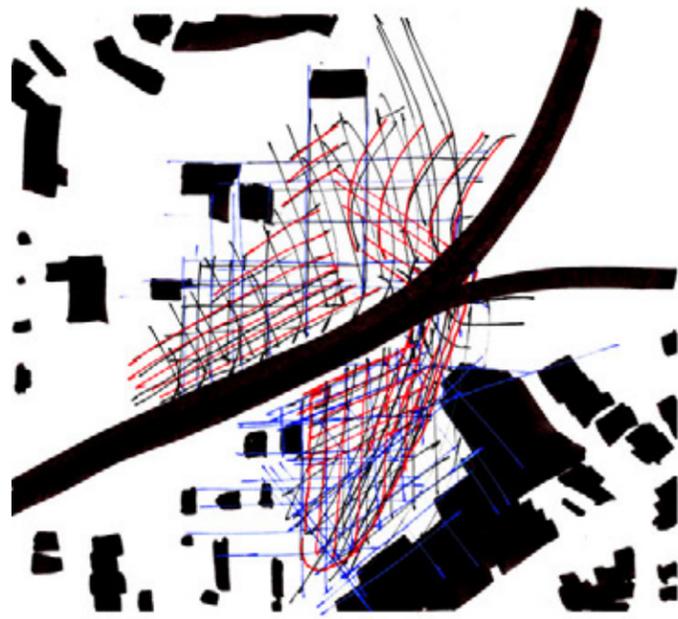
school is also the key element that ties the location itself together and also seeks to tie the location to its surroundings. The nature of the school is based on a model developed in Pennsylvania called “The Neighborhood Academy” and is a school run primarily by volunteers, though it does feature some fulltime employees. The school functions on a sweat equity system where parents are asked to help with things like serving lunch. Given its volunteer nature the education is provided at a lower cost than traditional public/private schools and thus allows for not only a great presence of lower class students, but also a diversified mix of students (reinforced by location) from upper to lower classes.



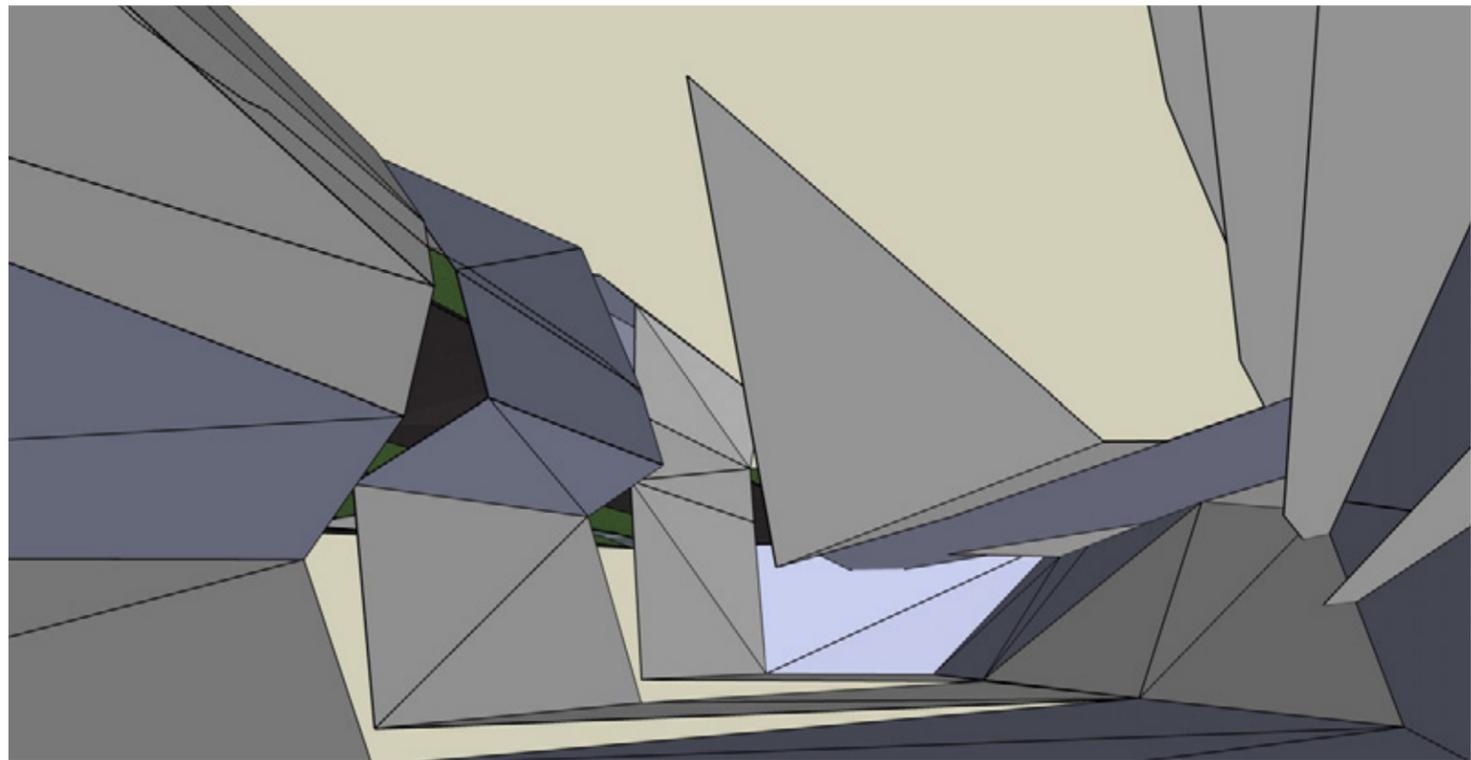
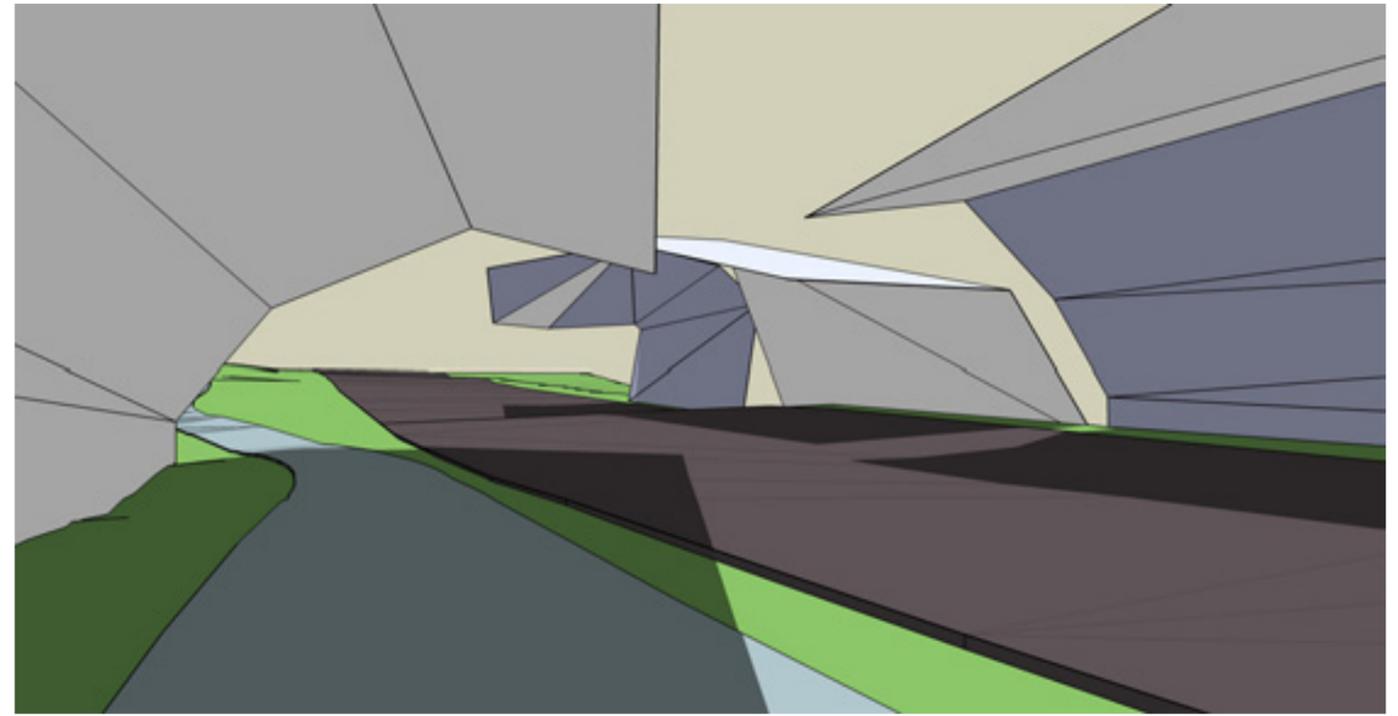
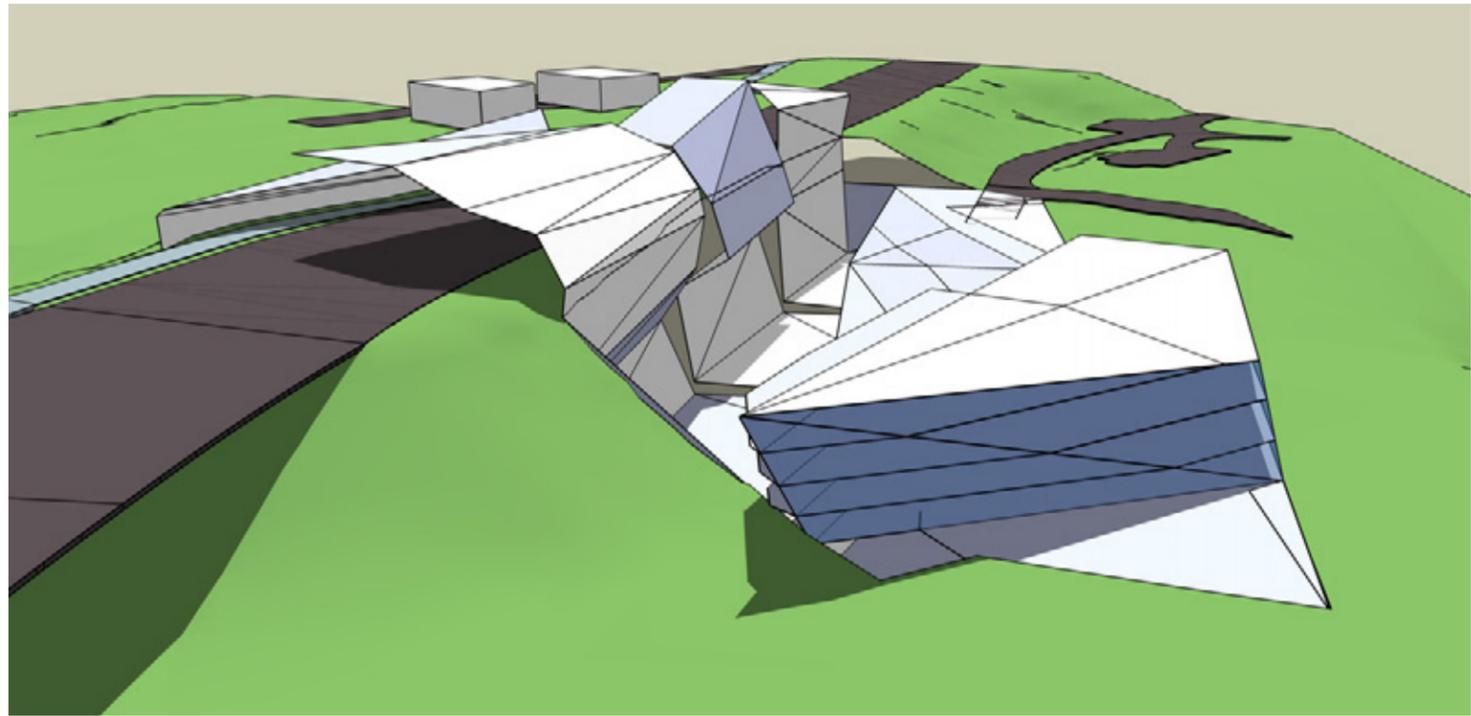
DESIGN PROCESS



Early in the design process I was unsure of how to go about starting such a large project. A few different design approaches were considered, most of them incorporated the same idea of site and surroundings being somewhat of a form driver, in that lines moving across the site were pulled from adjacent and local streets and buildings. Many different grid overlays were drawn in an attempt to generate lines on site (shown at left) all with lines pulling from larger grids in the surrounding areas.

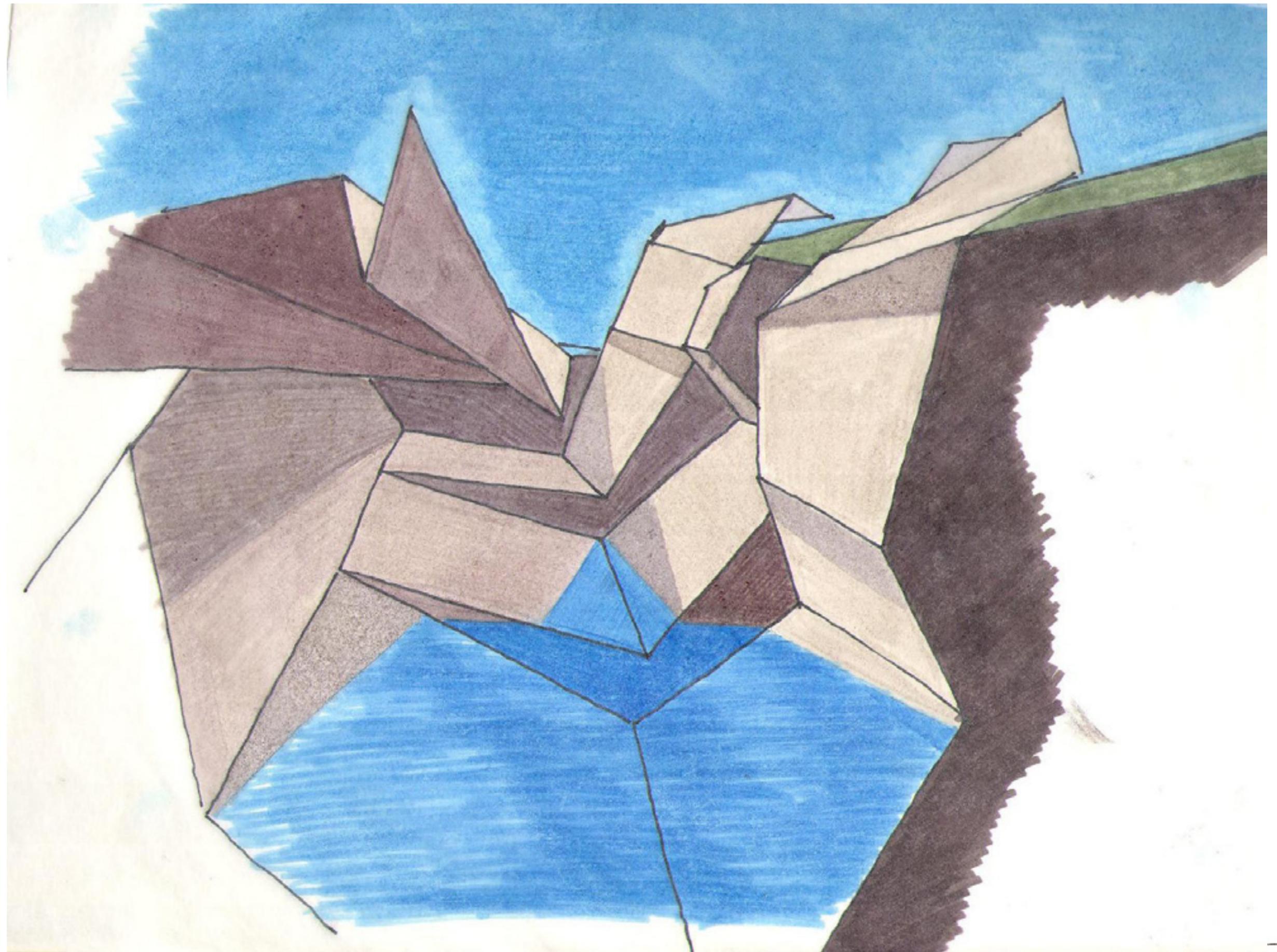


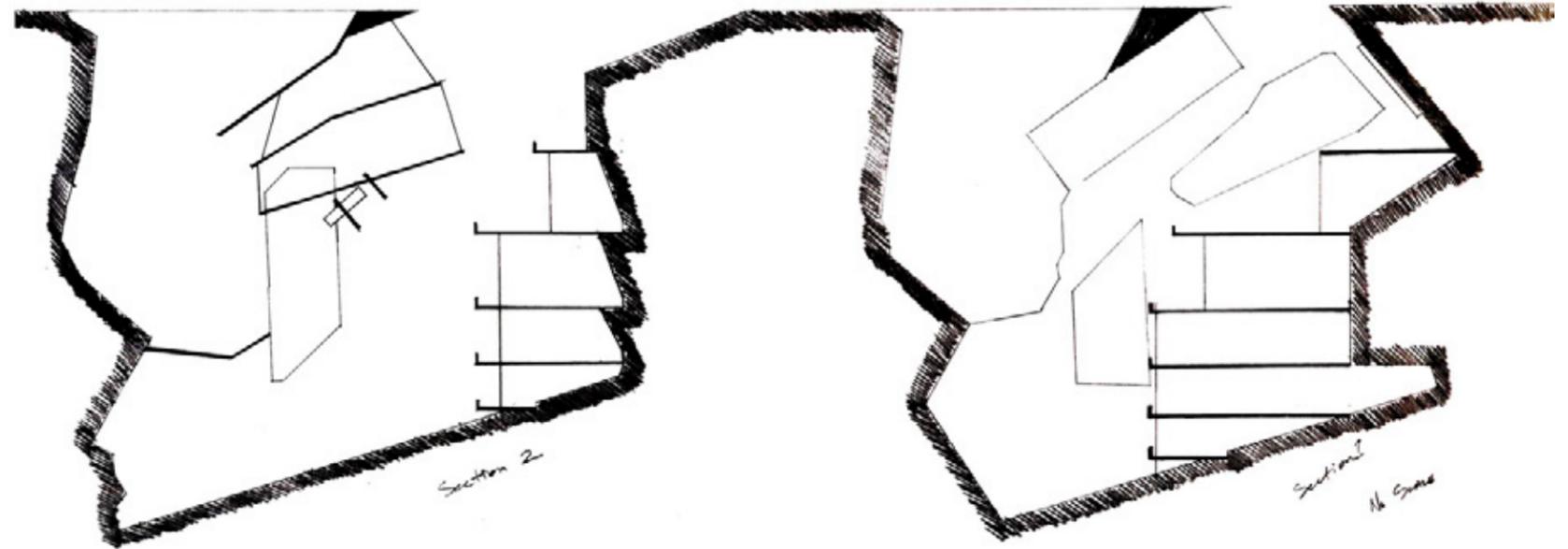
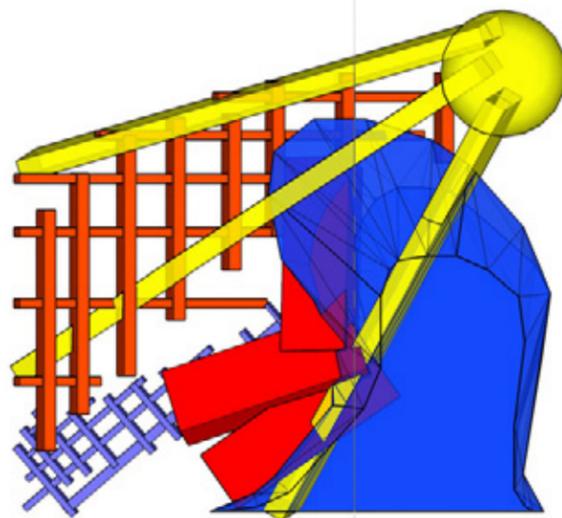
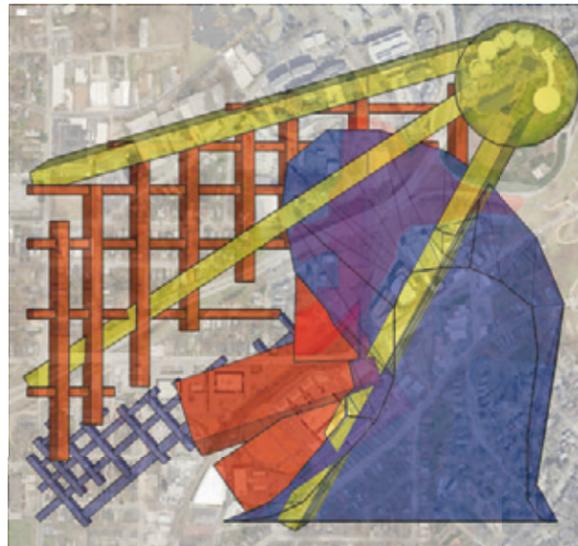
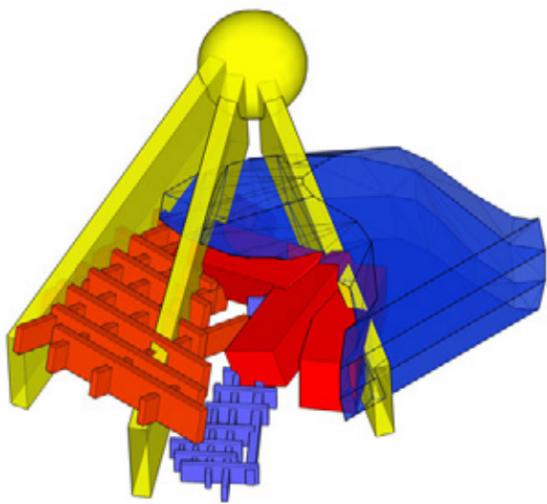
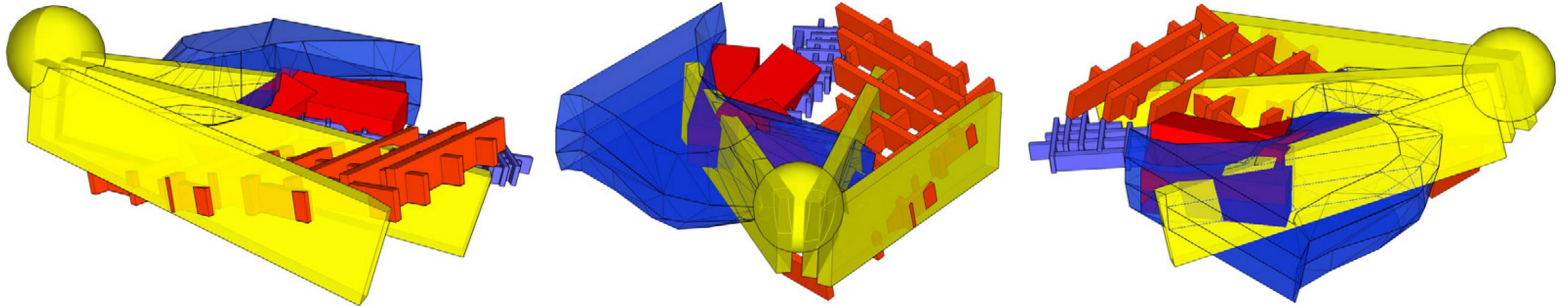
Initial attempts like these shown above explored volumetric massing and on site location for different programmatic elements. The project was initially centered on the bridge and its underside. However, as the design process progressed the ideas concerning the bridge shifted. As the true value of the marginalized space, and the pure beauty of the space under the bridge became apparent, the project center was relocated to the abandoned parking lot/paved area north and slightly west of the road.



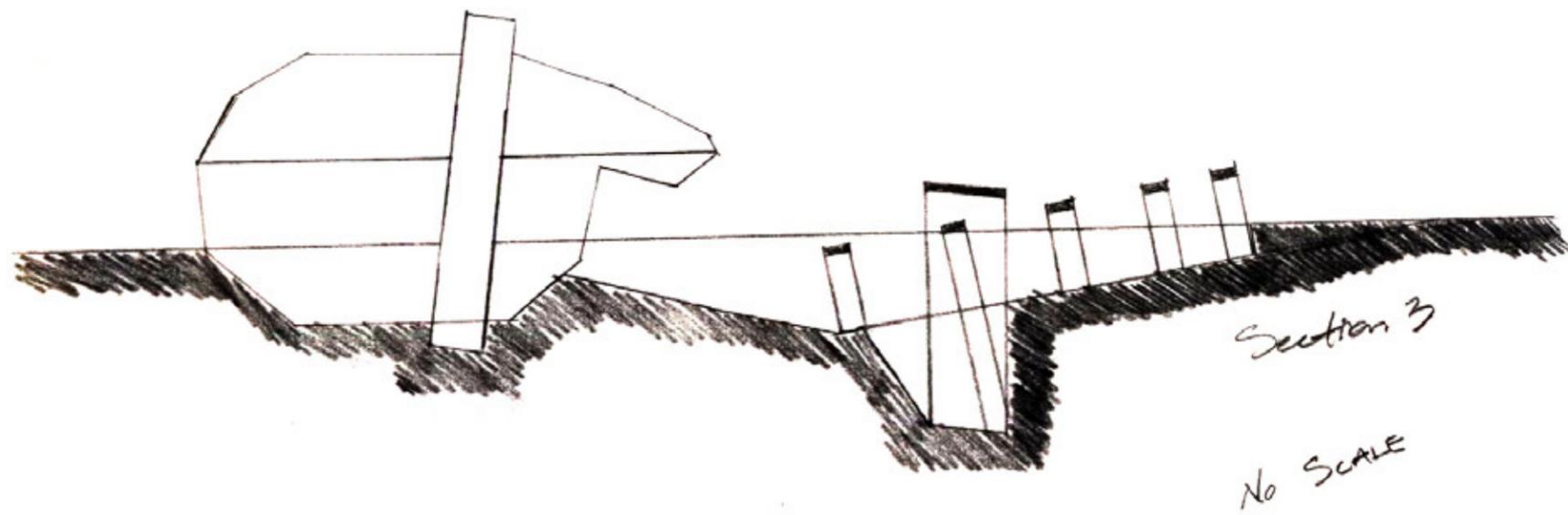
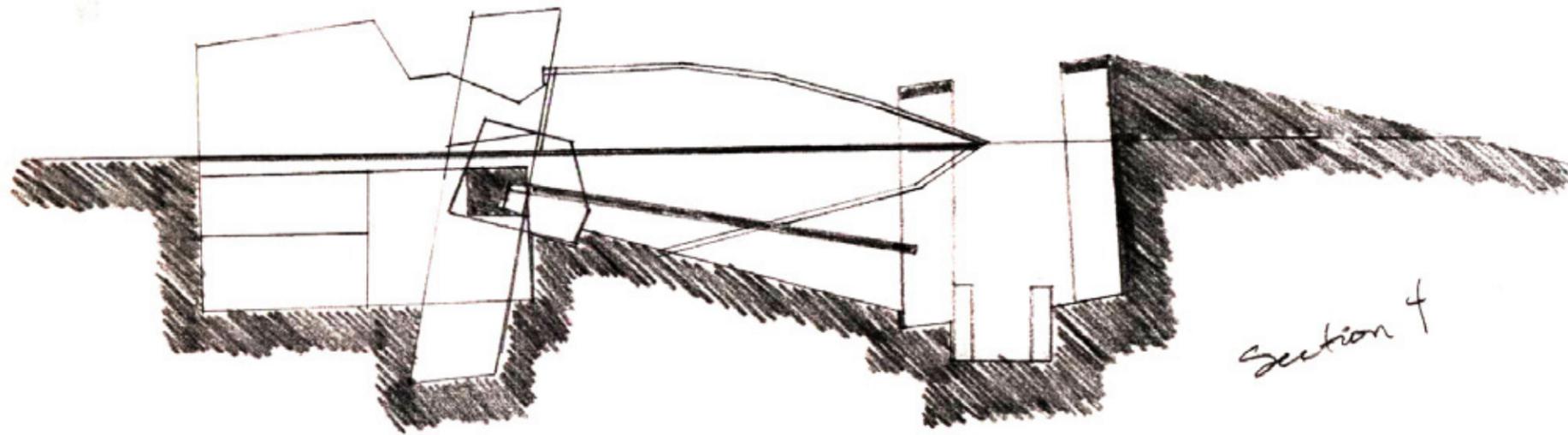
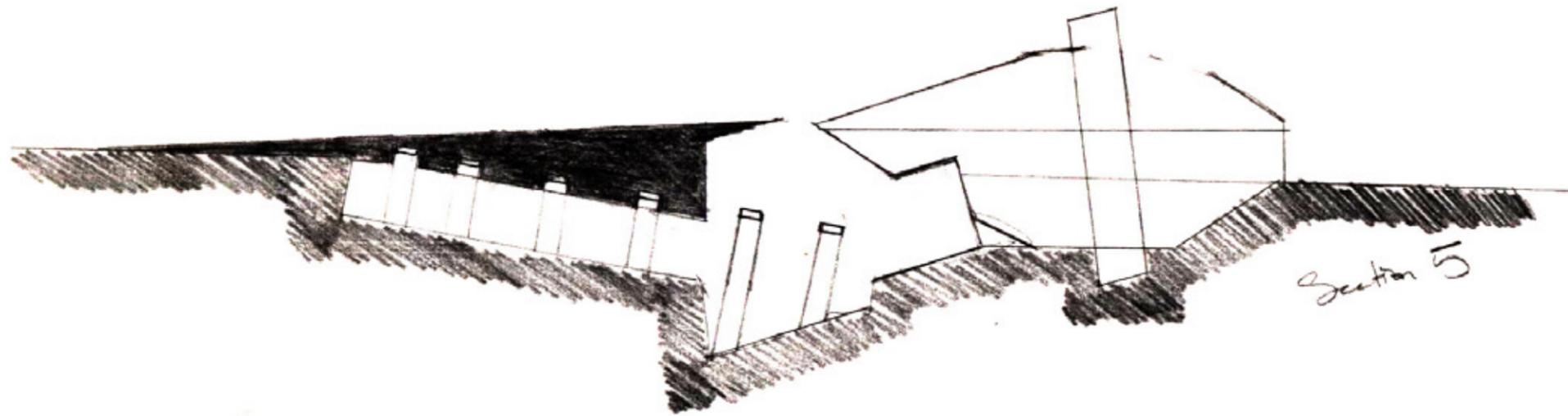
Other early design attempts were much more auspicious, but showed a developing theme throughout. The idea of giving physical form to the local conflict between lower and higher classes is something that has been of continuing interest to me throughout the project. Though admittedly early design attempts were very straight forward. An early scheme (shown at left and above) features a large chasm, at about sixty feet bellow the road bed, bordered by jagged dynamic volumes. The fingers are meant to replace the covering over Freedom Parkway and are representative of the inhabitants of the Old 4th Ward attempting to stave off expulsion and grabbing for more space.

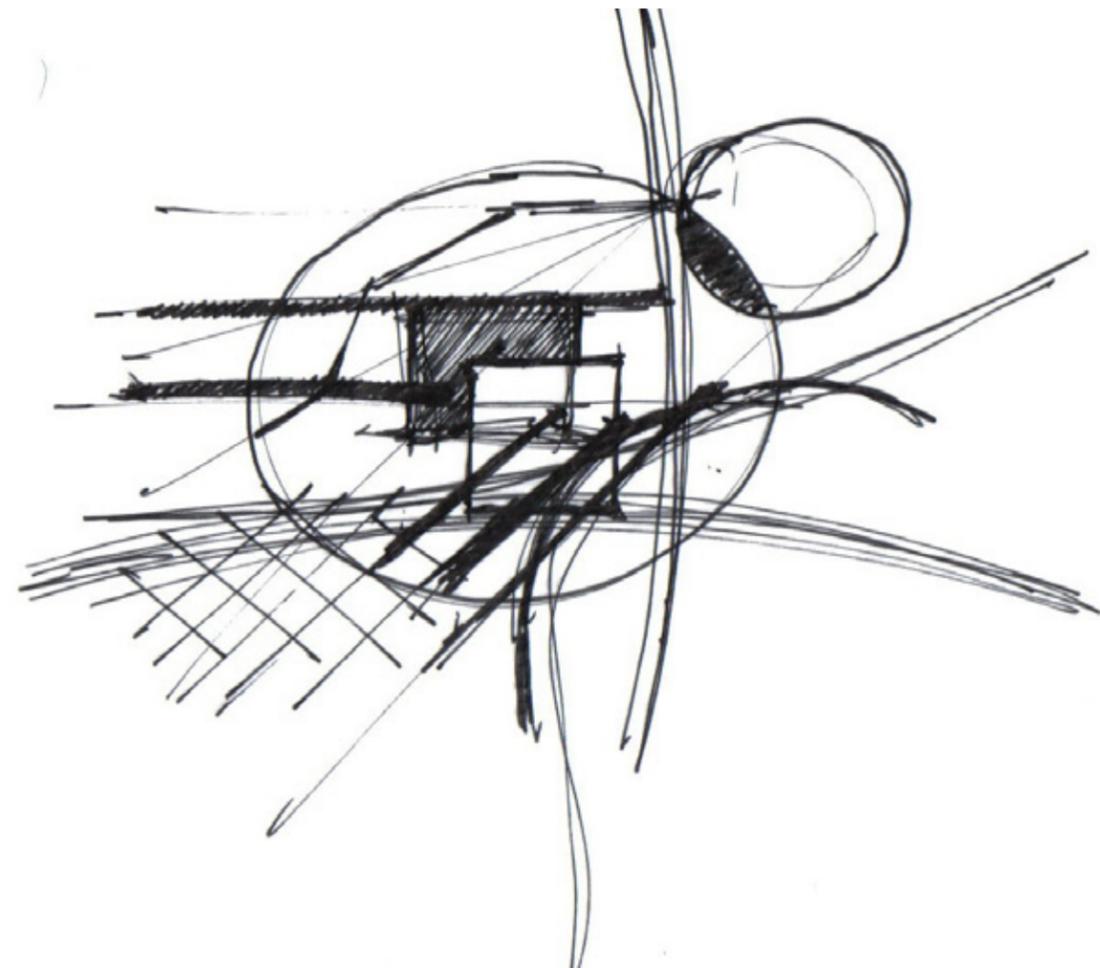
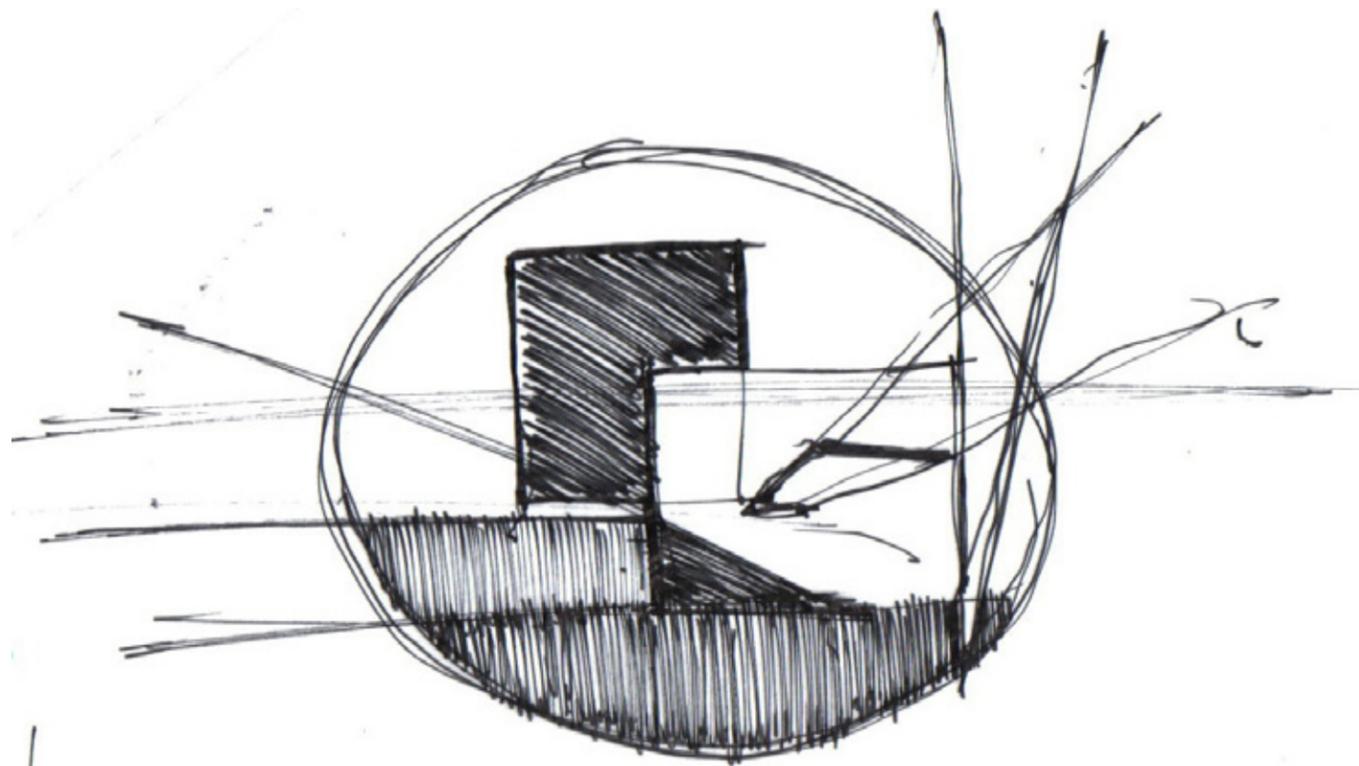






The next site study was based on the varying social groups surrounding the site and their various strengths and influences. The yellow is representative of the Carter Center and its projecting influence over the entire site. The orange is based on the small scale street grid of the Old 4th Ward's residential area. The blue represents a large wave of single family residential houses of Inman Park, which aren't really set on a standard grid. The red is based on the large scale residential complexes directly to the south of the site, while the blue grid is pulled from the small businesses southwest of the site. Each of them are fighting amongst each other, aside from the yellow, which oversees them all. Sections were then developed based on the social pressures model. (shown here and on the following page.)

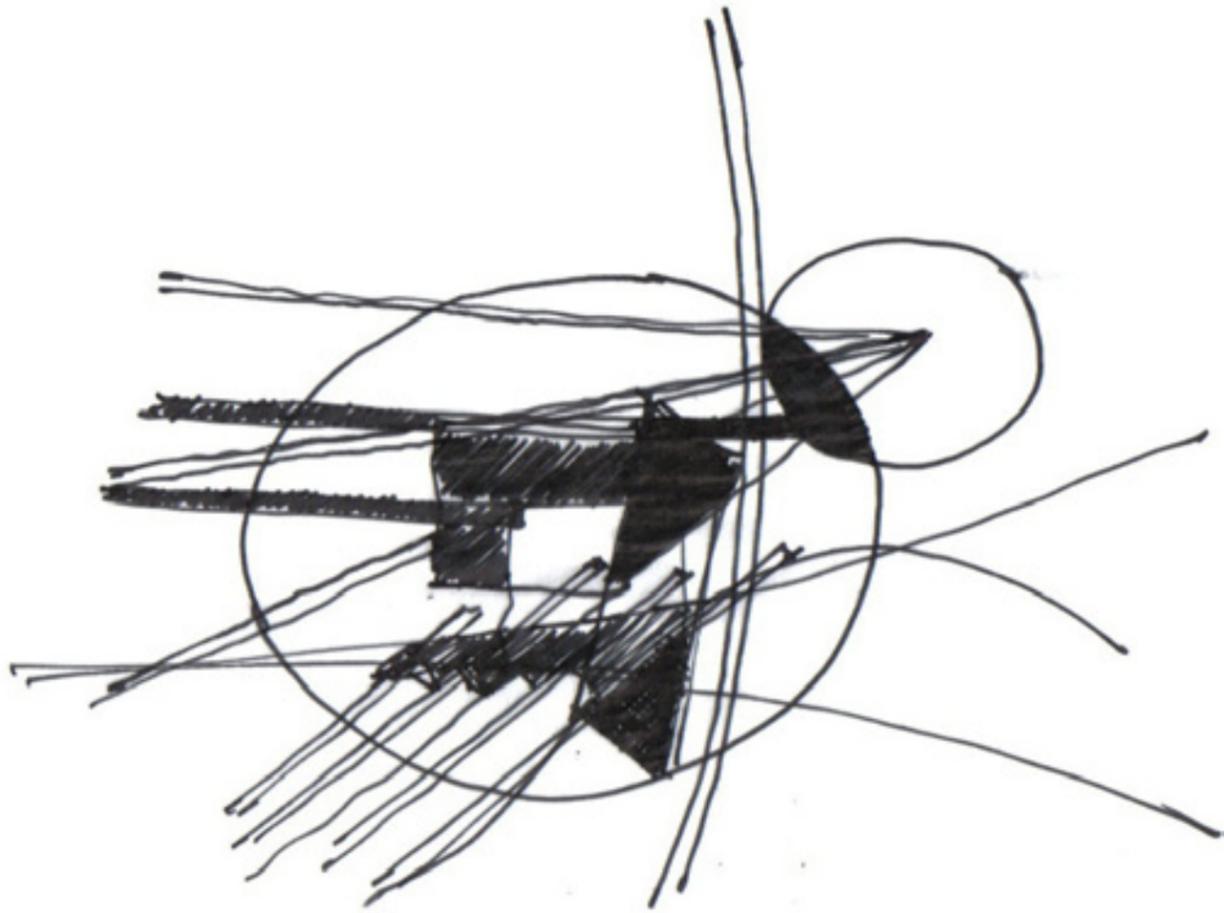




The next design iteration, which would be the preliminary design that would evolve into the final scheme is centered on a metaphor, similar to the idea from earlier schemes of the structure embodying the struggle happening around the site. This new scheme would draw on the perfect geometry of the Carter Center. Composed of concentric circles centered on a small lake hidden from view by the rising land and the complex of roads and buildings around it. Jimmy Carter was a president known for his humanitarian efforts and his support of the lower class. Ironically his presidential library works against his efforts quite well on the local level. When Freedom Parkway was built it cleaved neighborhoods in half and caused, at least partially, the divide between the north and south sides of the site. The new site plan was meant to incorporate the idea of this library meant to support the lower class that works against itself by starting with the perfect geometry of a square within a circle, a symbolism not uncommon in architectural history. The single square would become two squares as the idea of absence was woven into the plan. The circular geometry melts away and becomes an ellipse, a shape only distinguishable from a circle when viewing the curvature from a distance. The idea of absence is shown in the plan by stripping away the sides of the squares and leaving remnants of the former squares to imply their once undivided geometry. The plans become divided into three parts; one to the west, one east, and one south embedded into the roadside.

The diagramming for the site plan development will presented on the following pages along with the three dimensional models associated with various plans along the way.

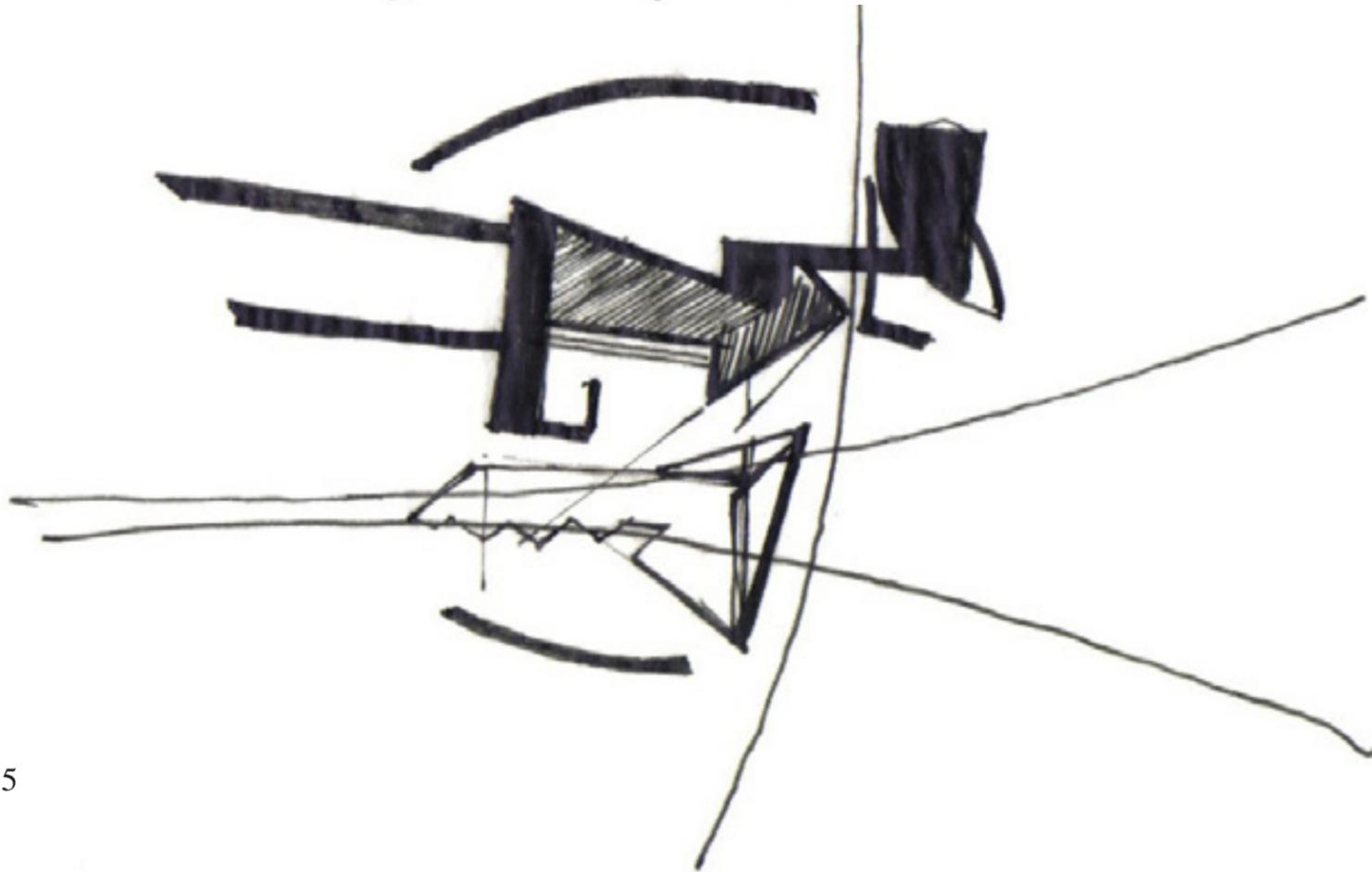
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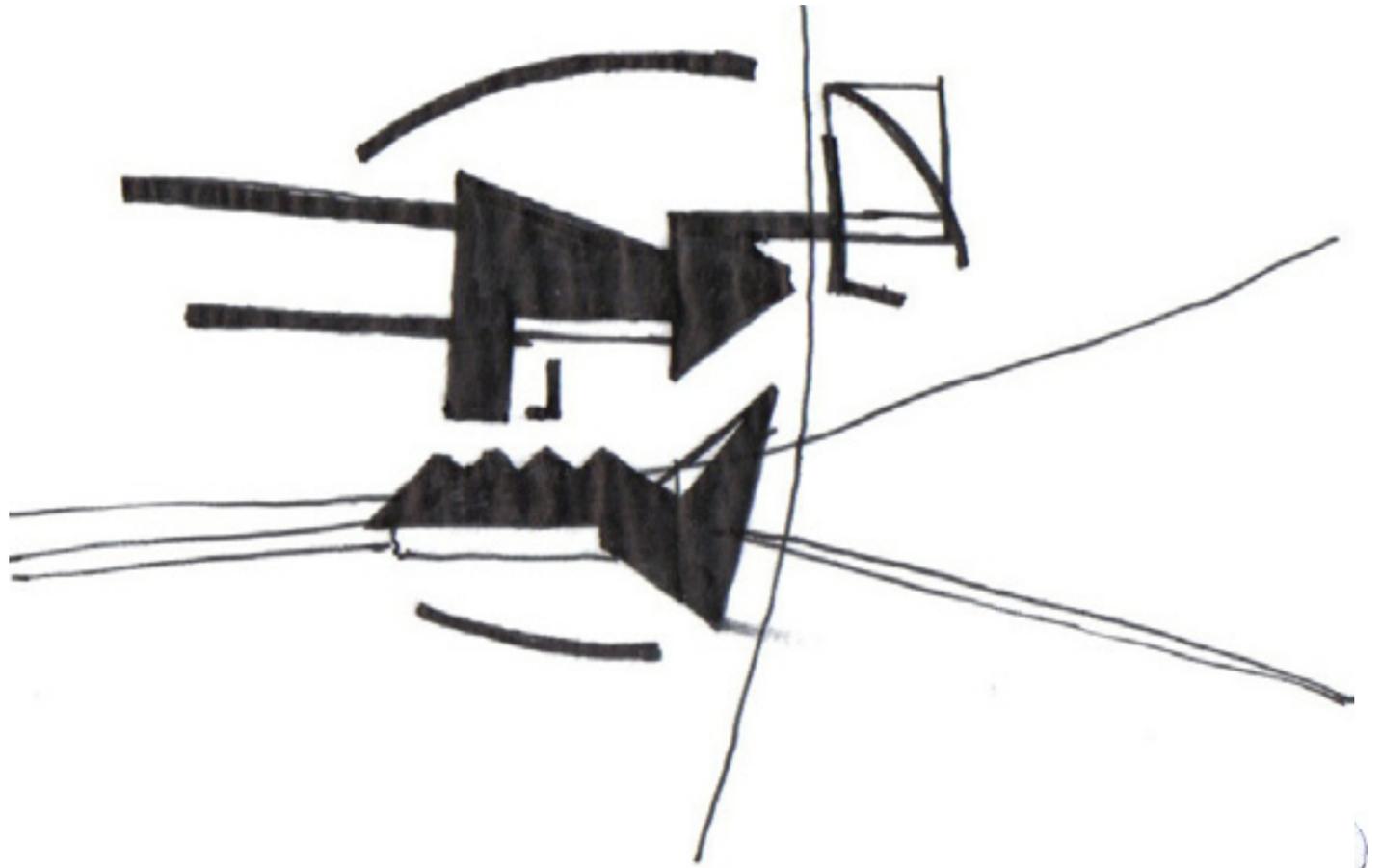
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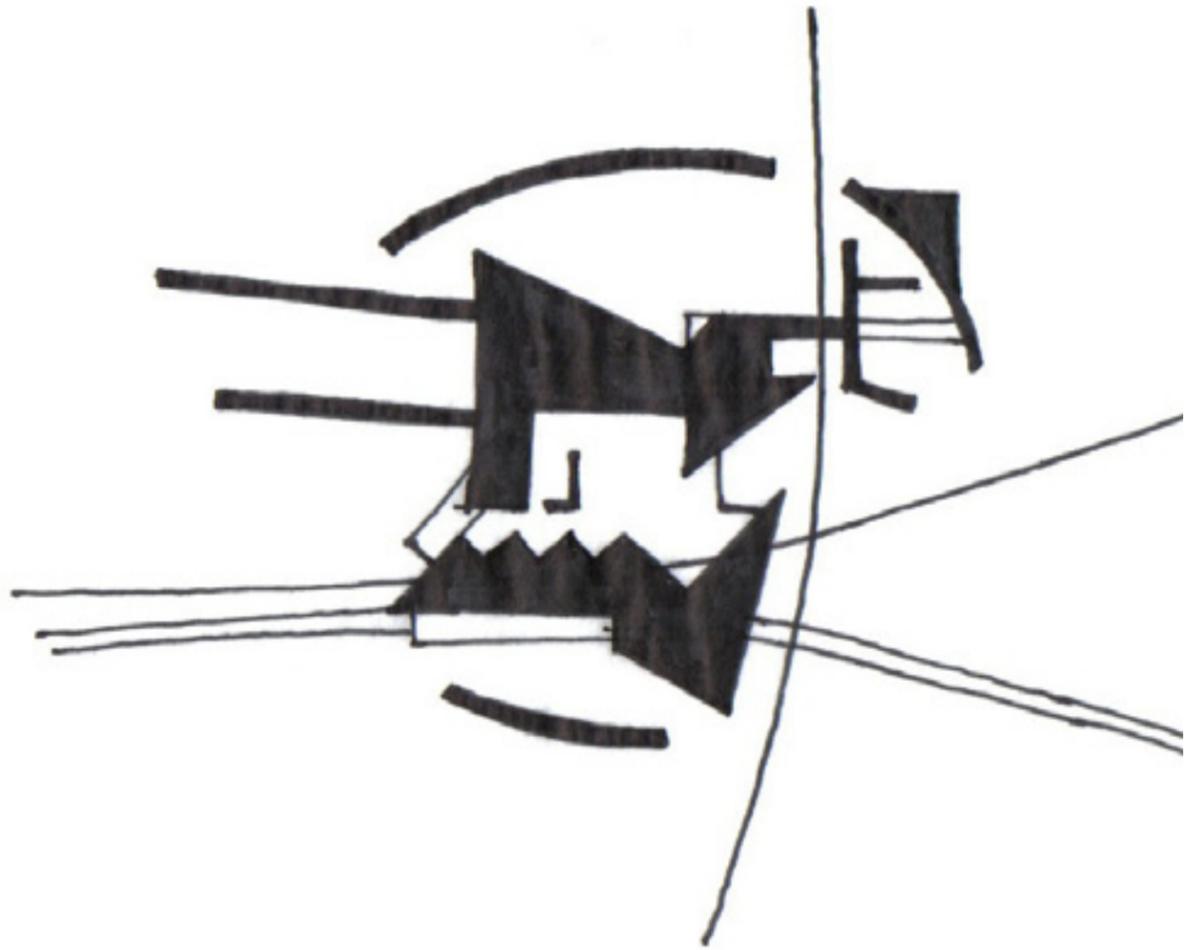


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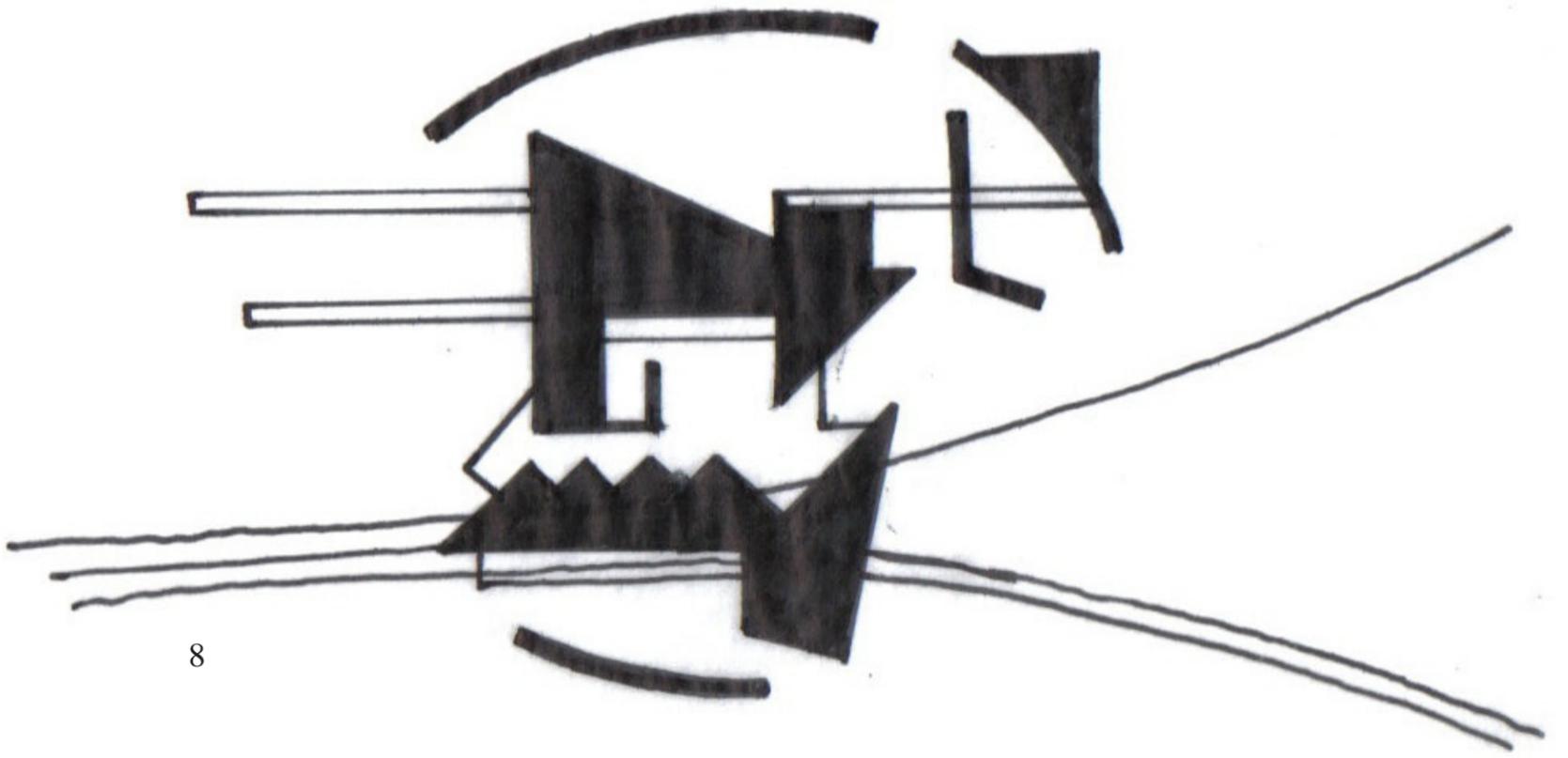


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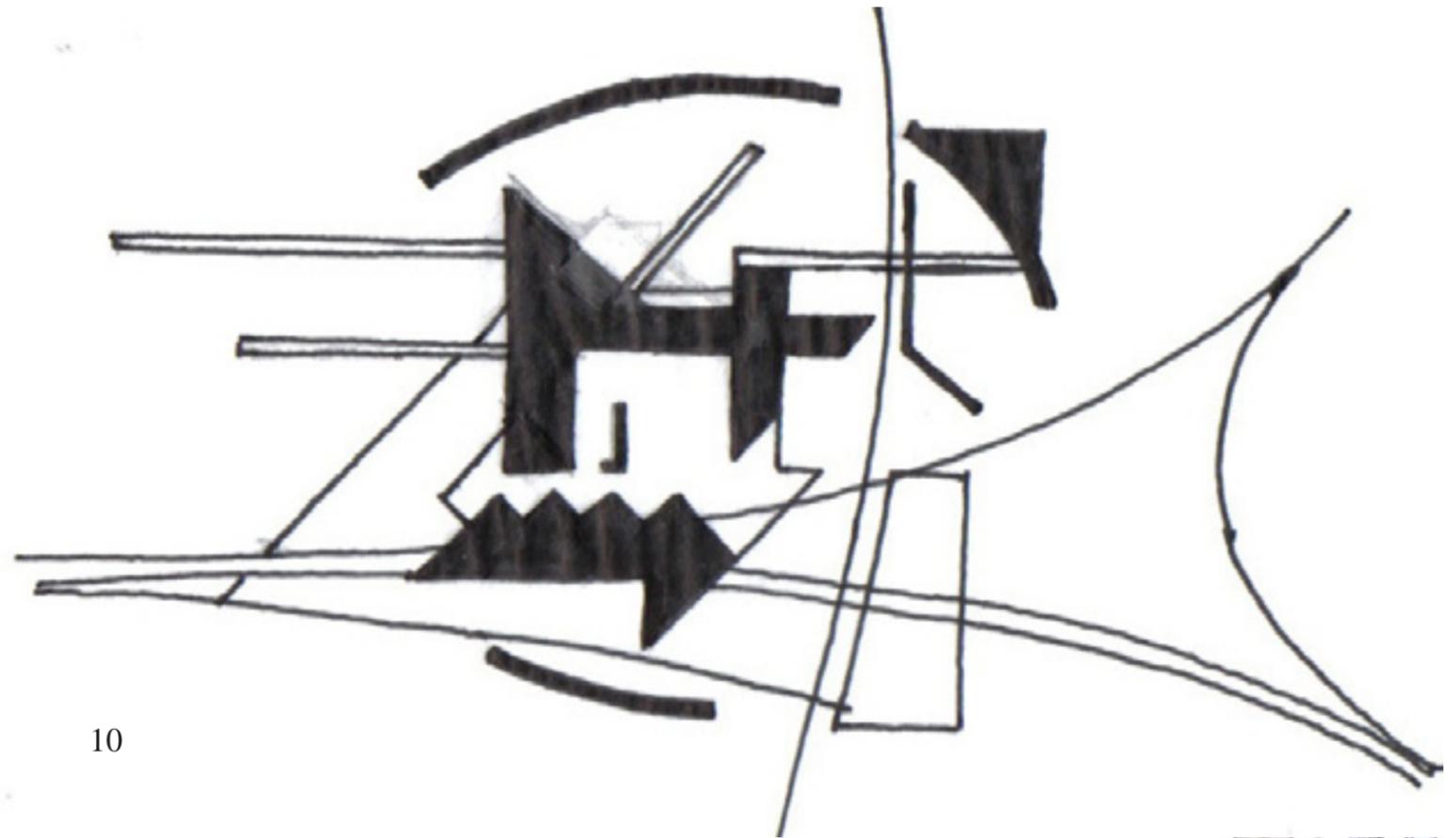
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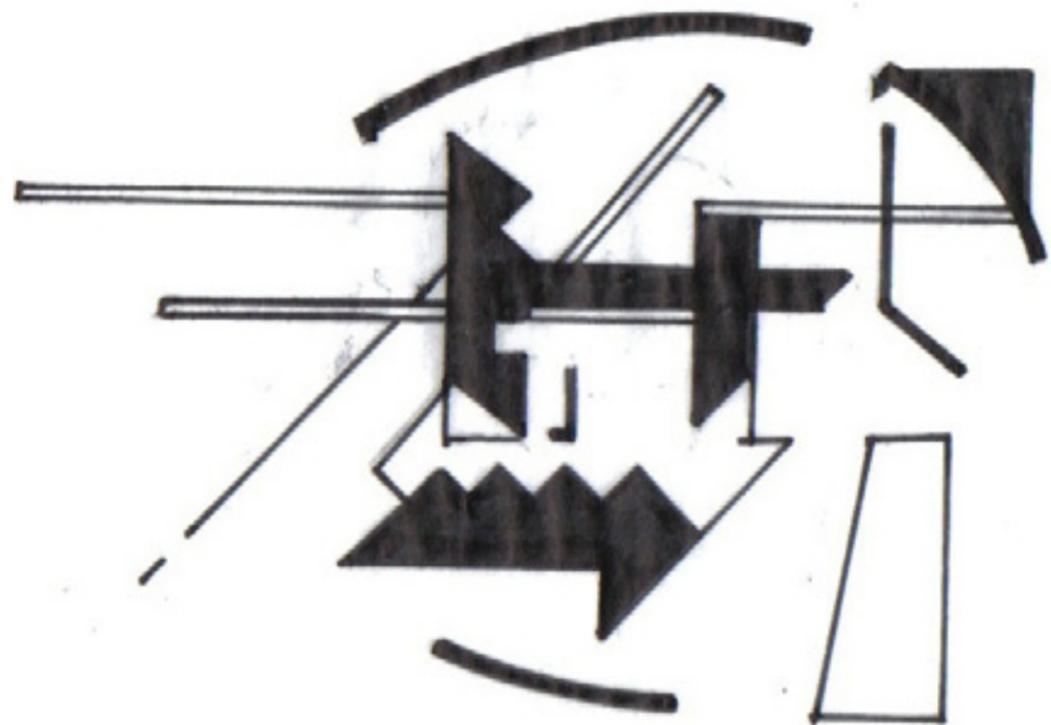
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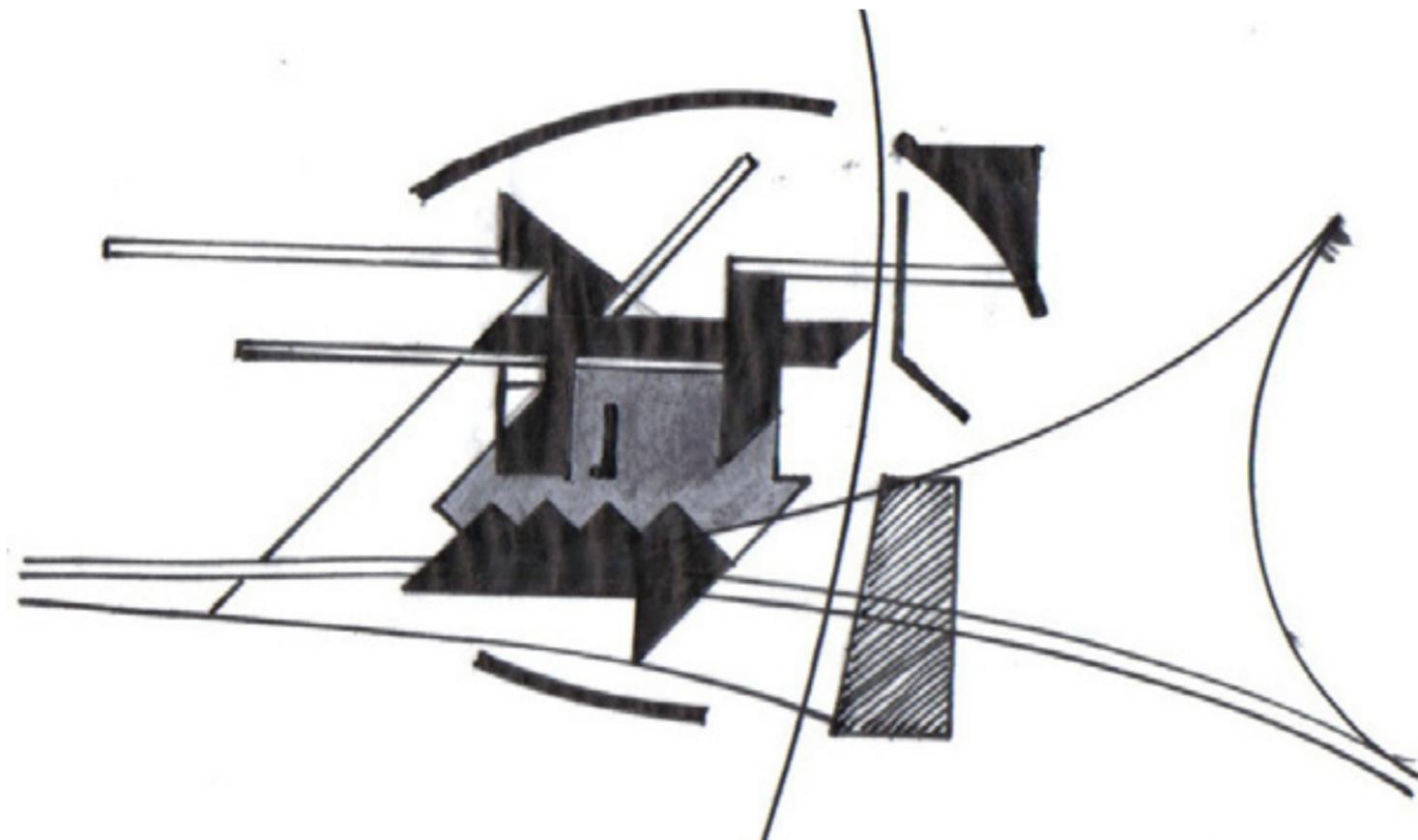
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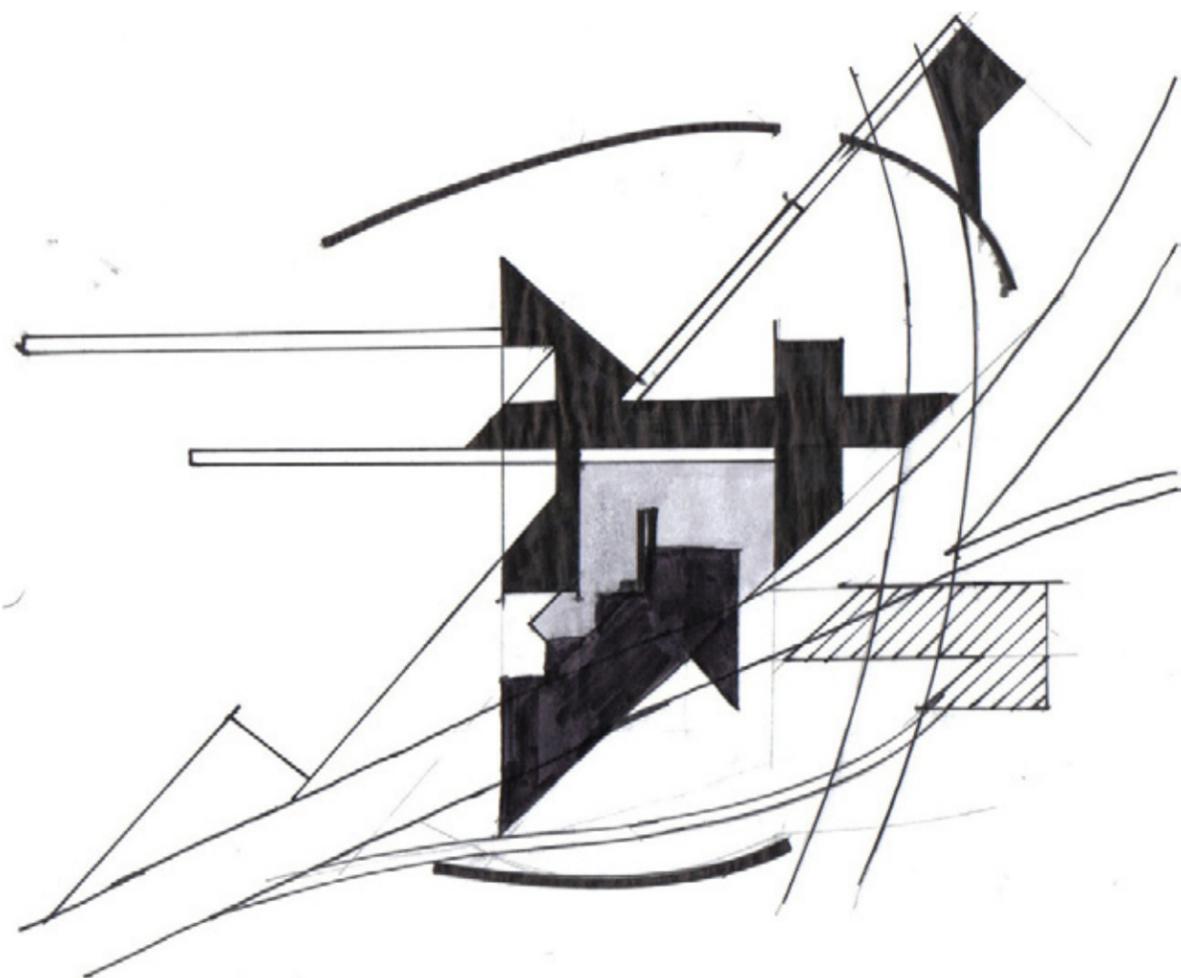
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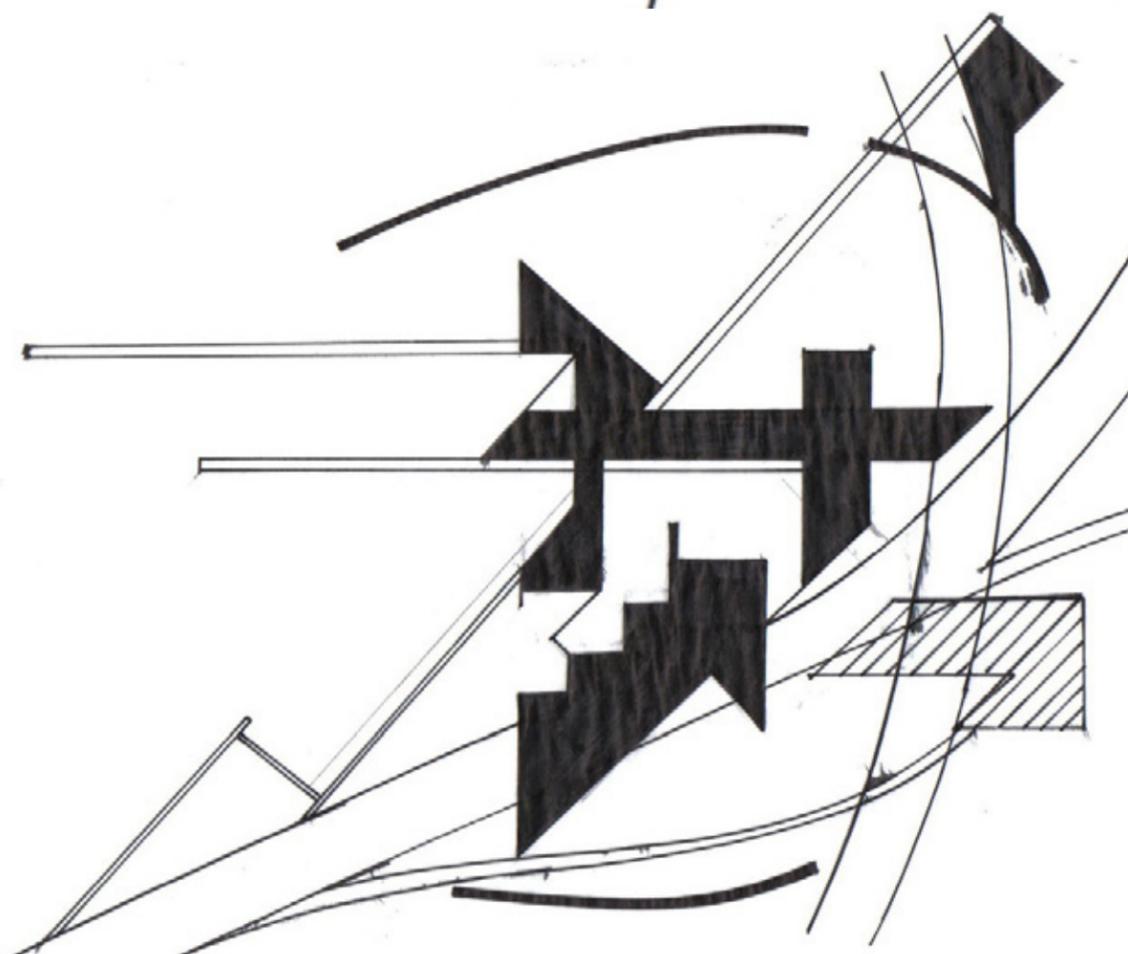
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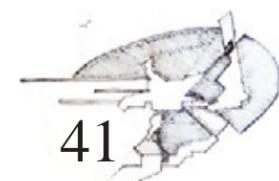
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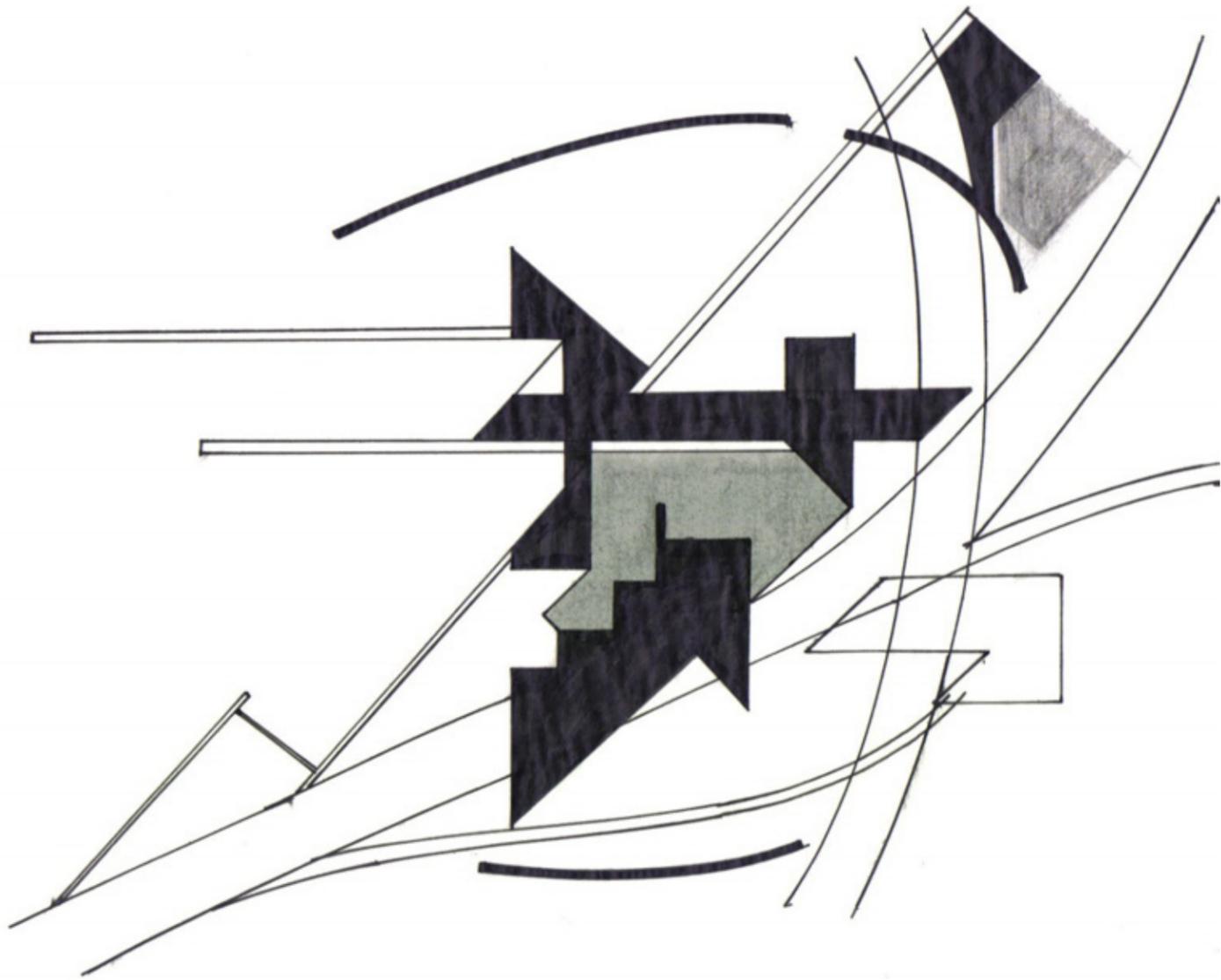
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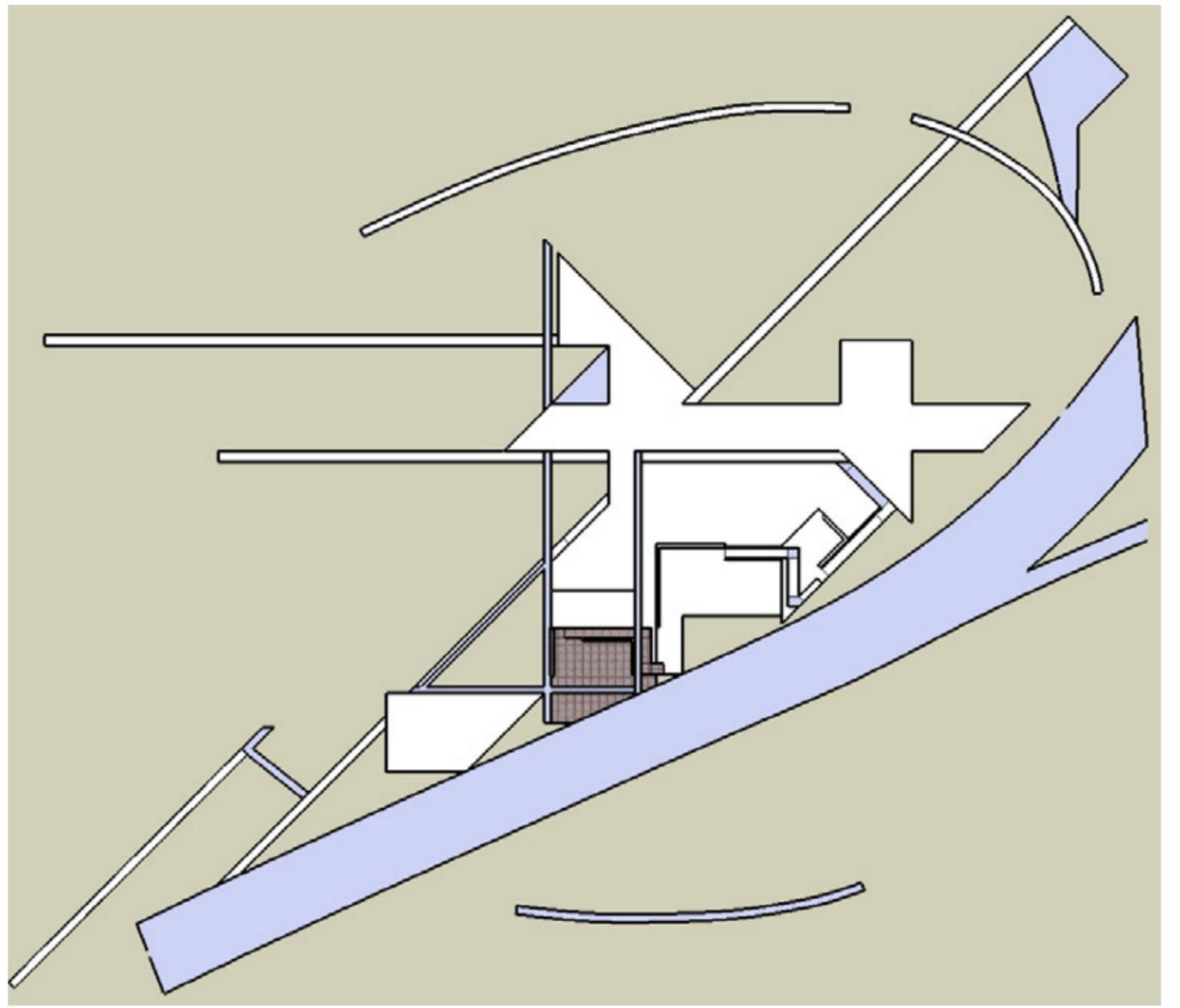


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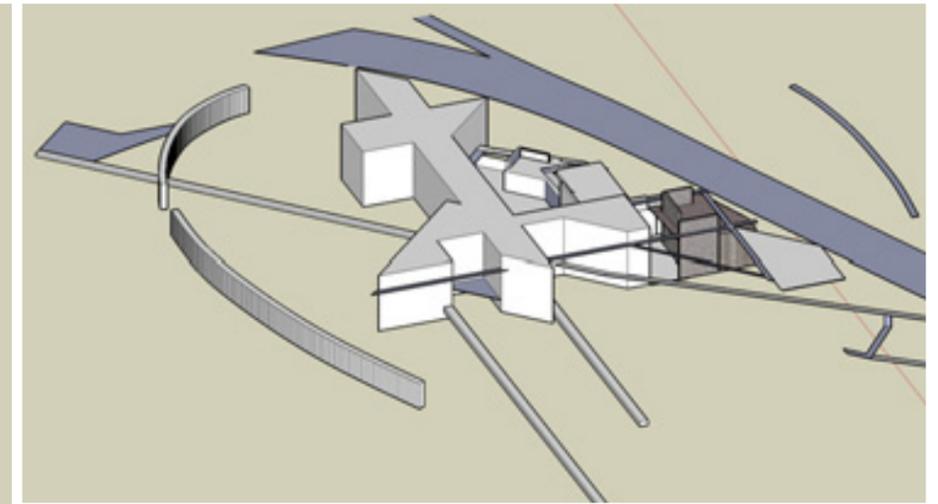
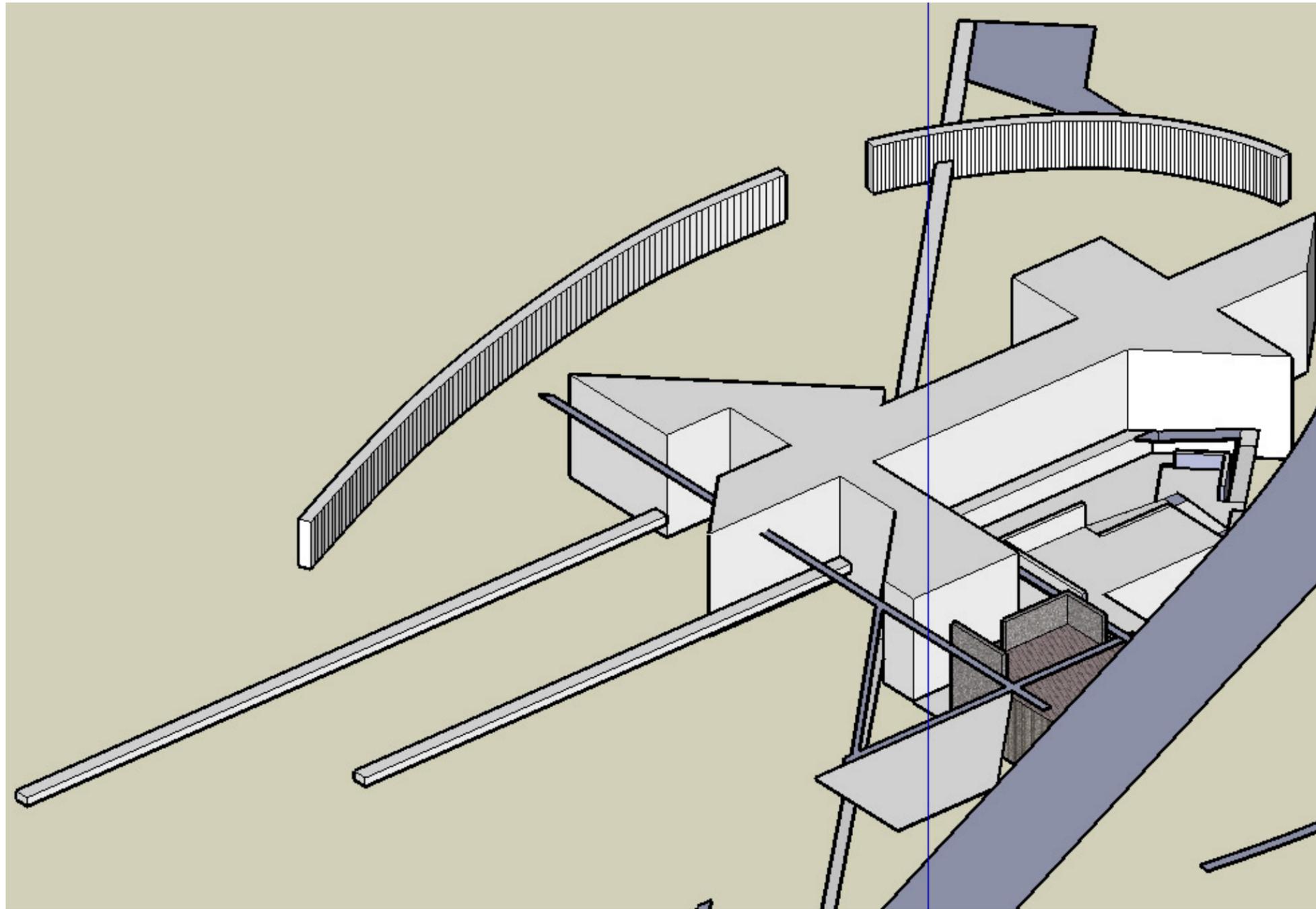


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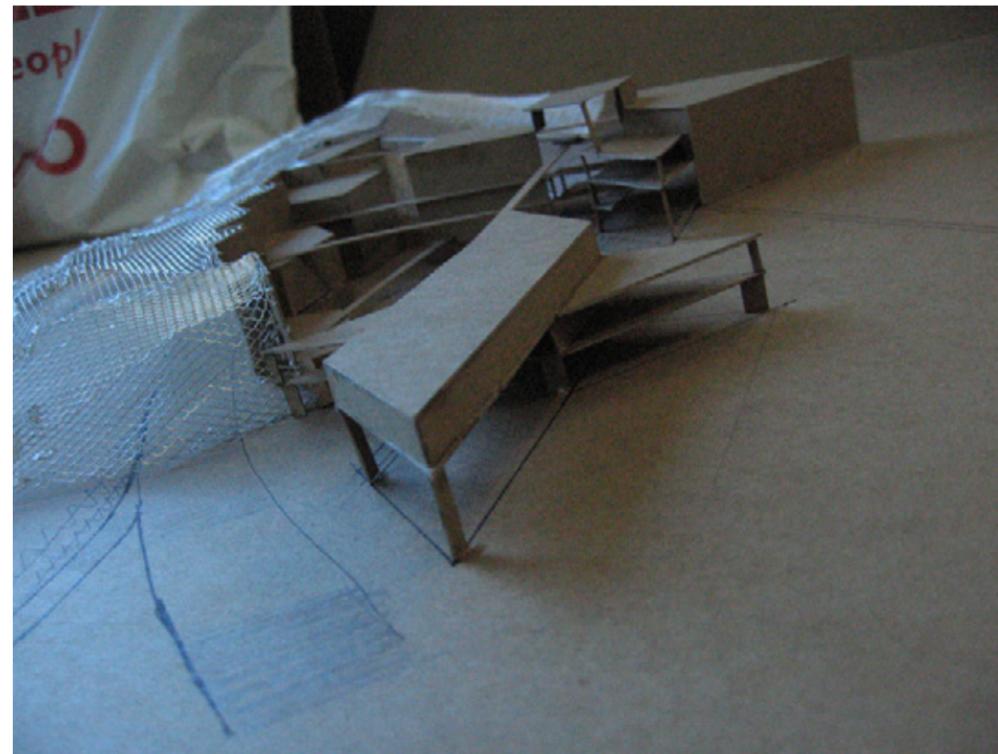
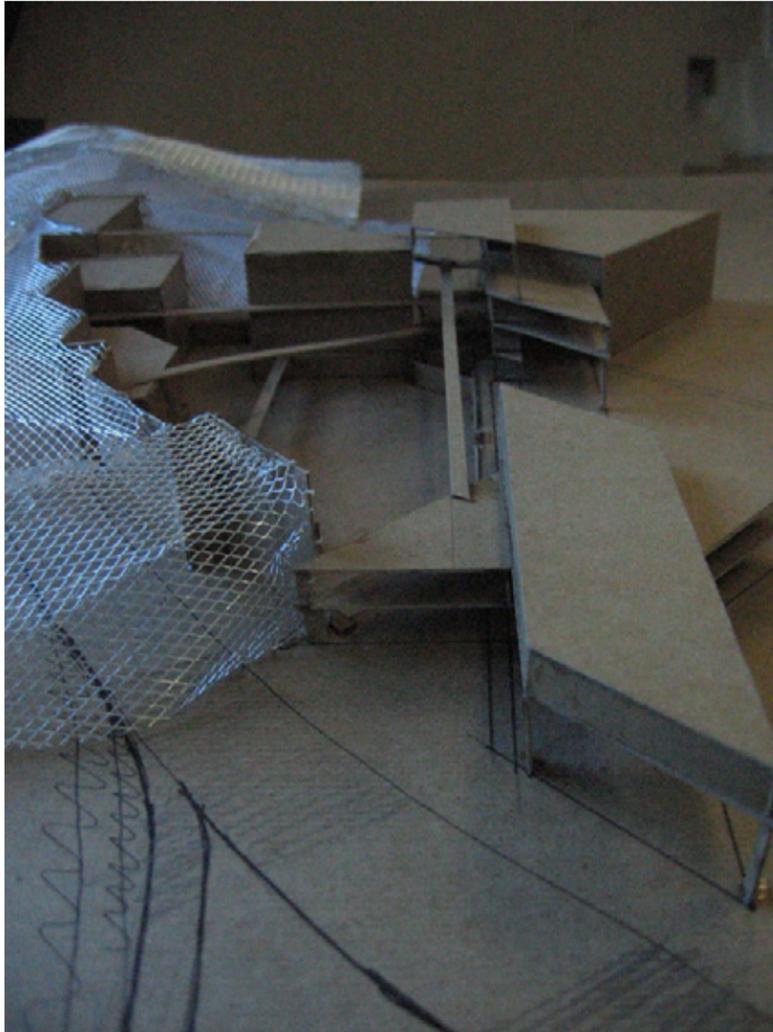
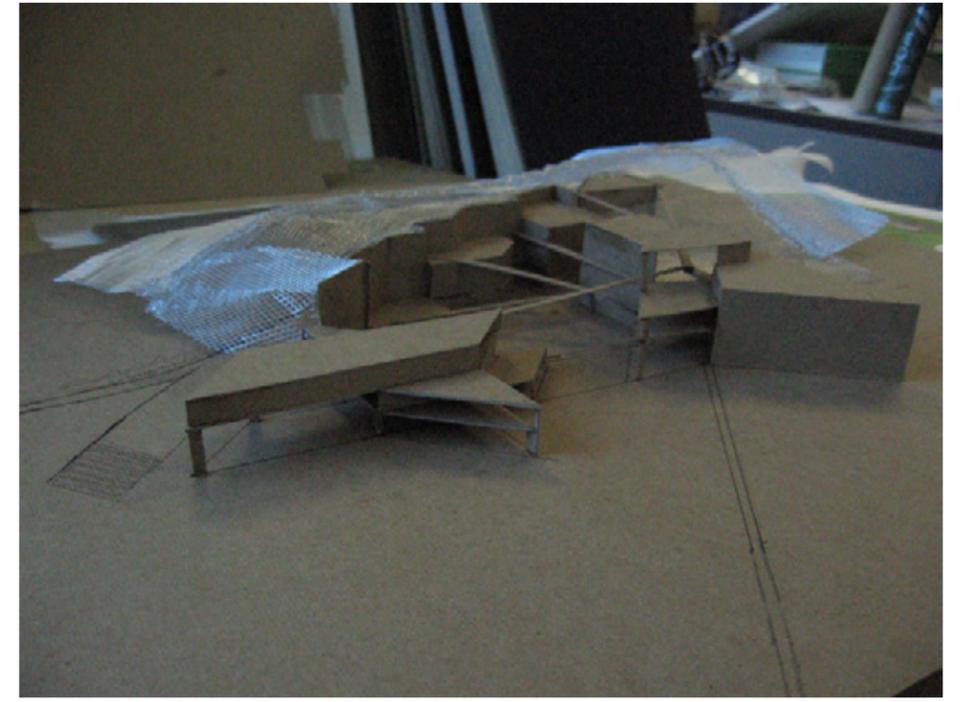
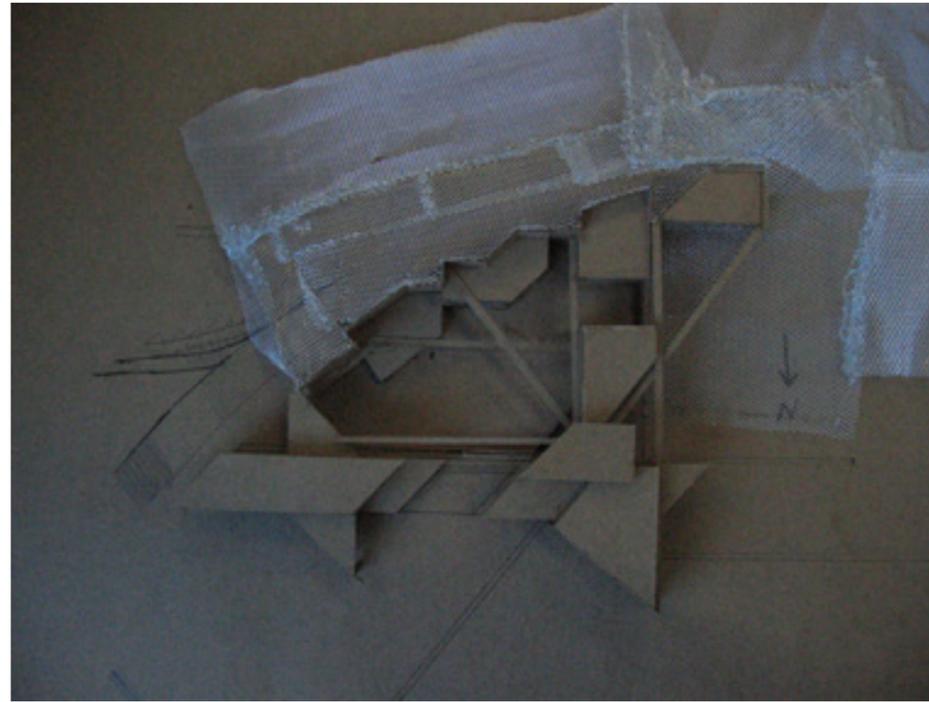
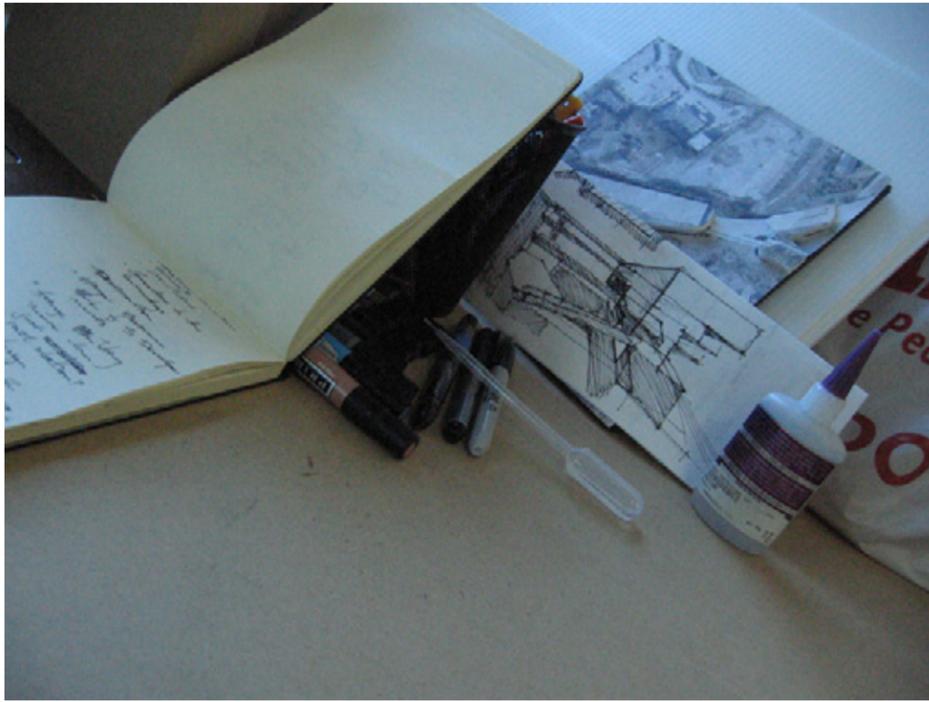
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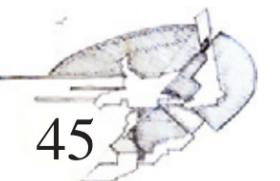
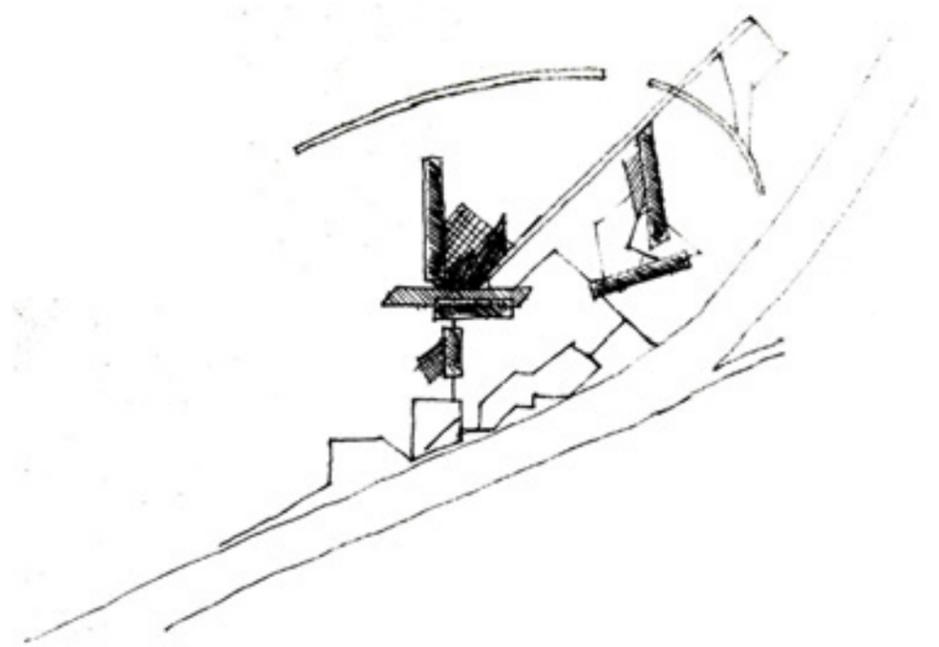
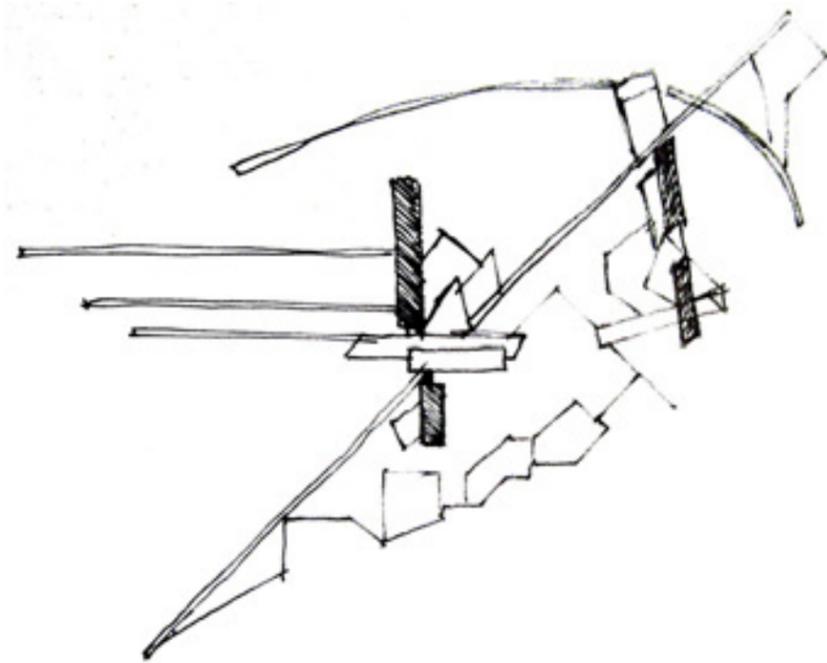
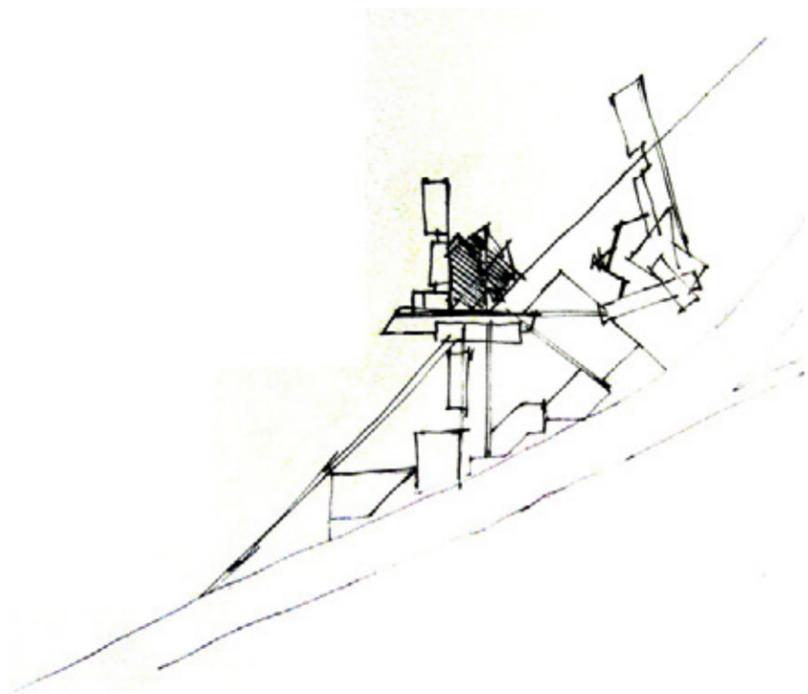
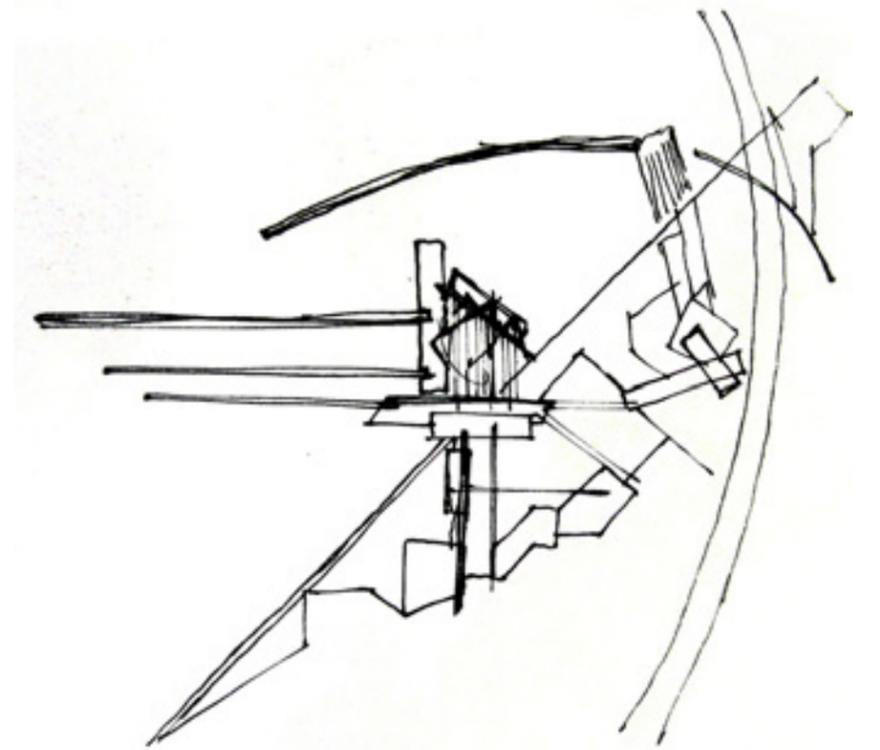
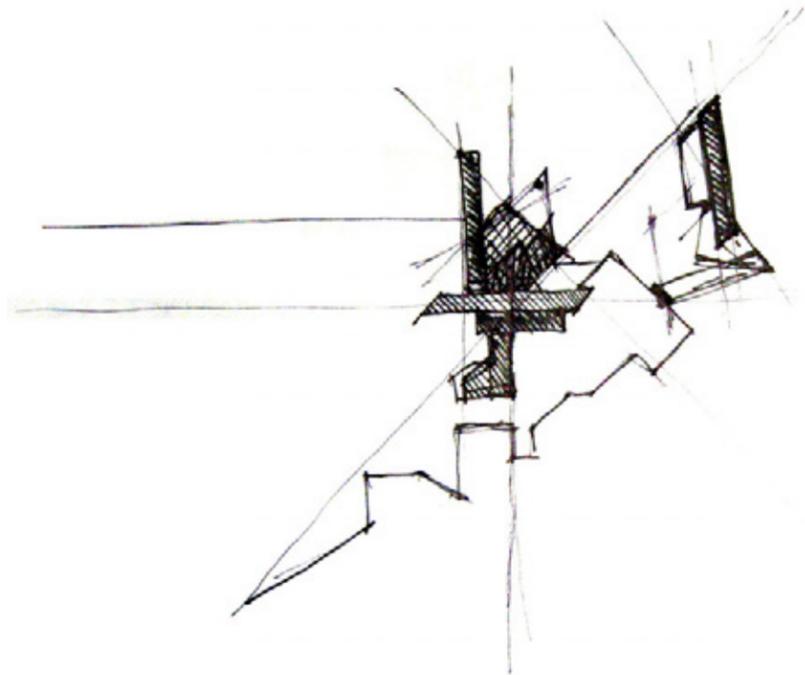
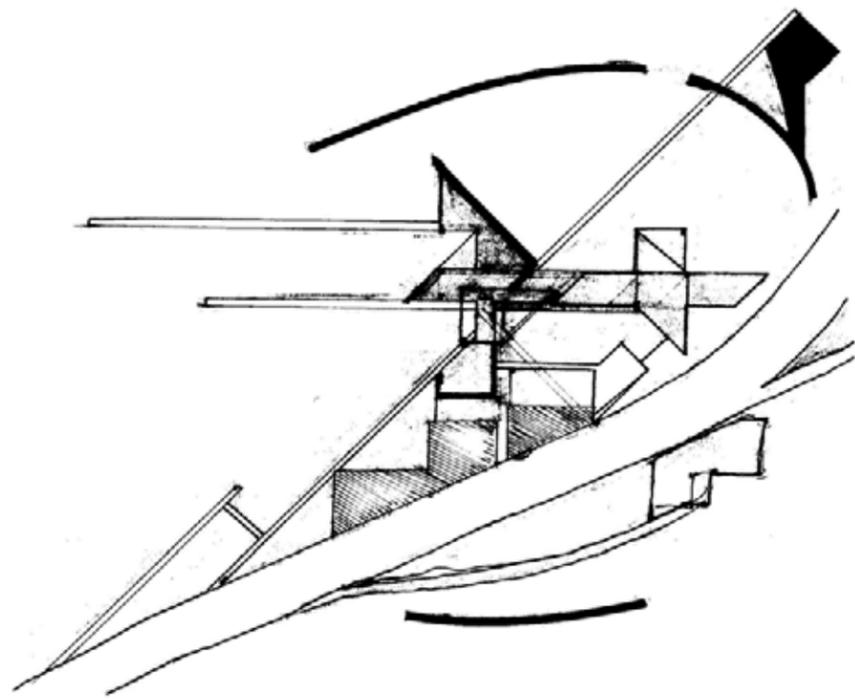
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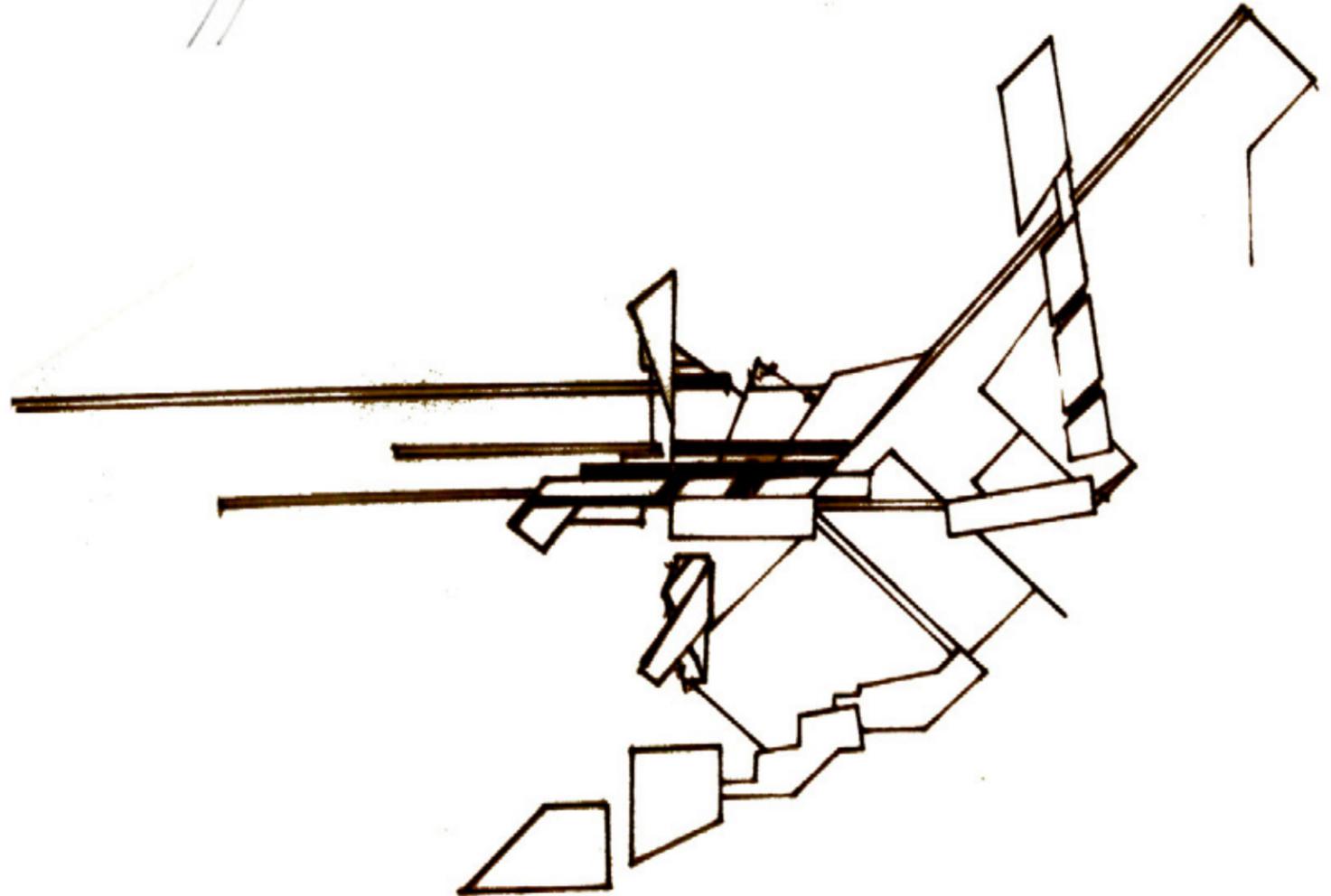
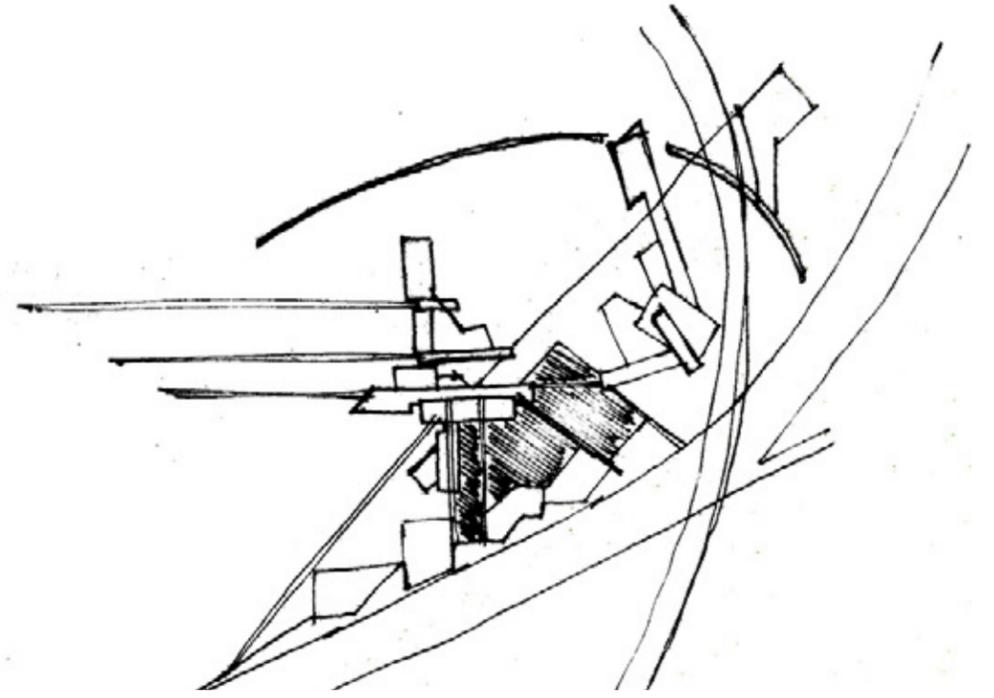
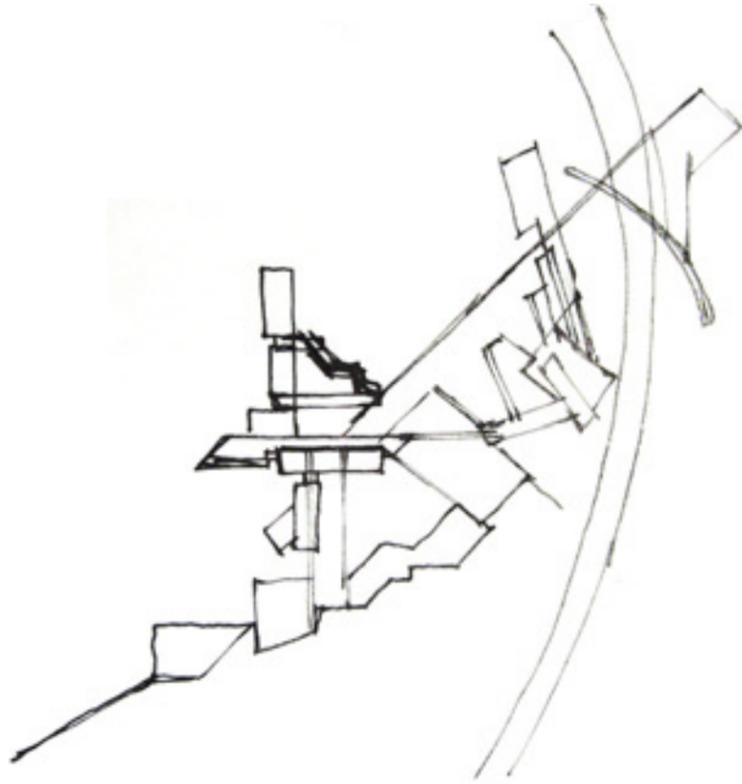
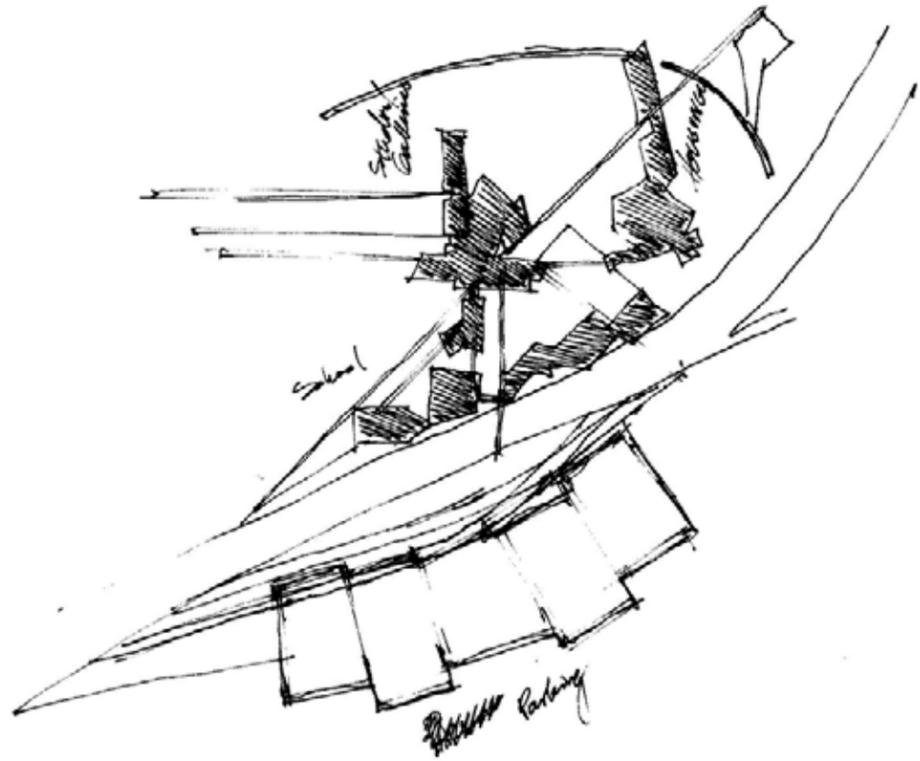


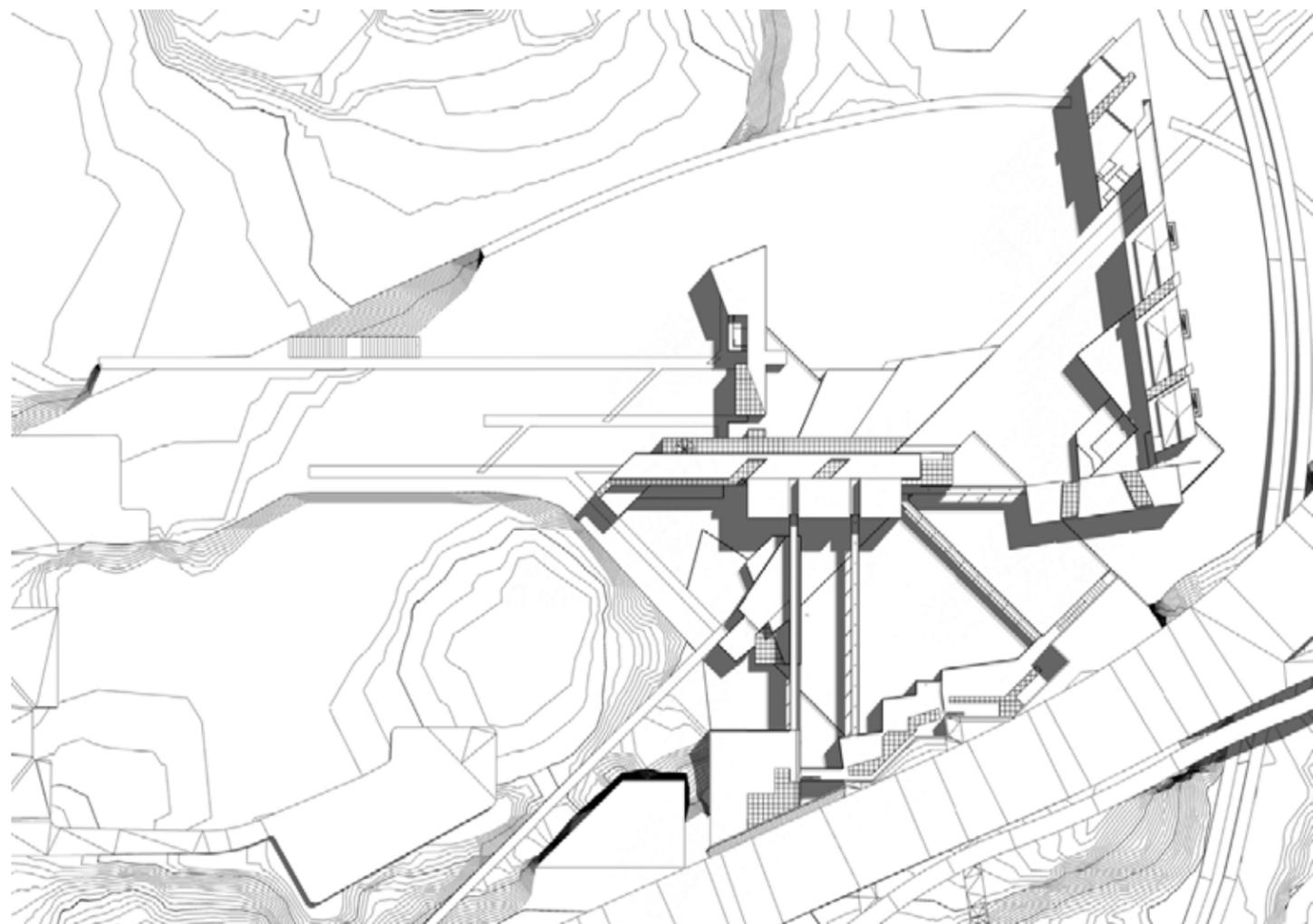
The site plan evolved to include a prominent east west volume which was composed of clean edges to contrast the rough edge of the structure embedded in the hill side. The walls forming the ellipse on the exterior edge of the site formed a solid site boundary and were envisioned not only as boundaries but as water features as well, as each of them would maintain water falling on the inside edge to a small narrow strip of water that followed each base. The fingers extending west are also shorter strips of water to help guide people into the site who enter from the west, where the Beltline Park will be located. The mass that becomes pushed the exterior of the ellipse, separate from the rest of the masses is the rail station. The arrival and departure will be directed around the ellipse to the park, east to west. However, the opening in the ellipse allows for entrance from the rail station. From here the site plan progressed quickly. The remaining site plan progression diagrams will be shown on the following pages.



A study model based on the then current scheme.





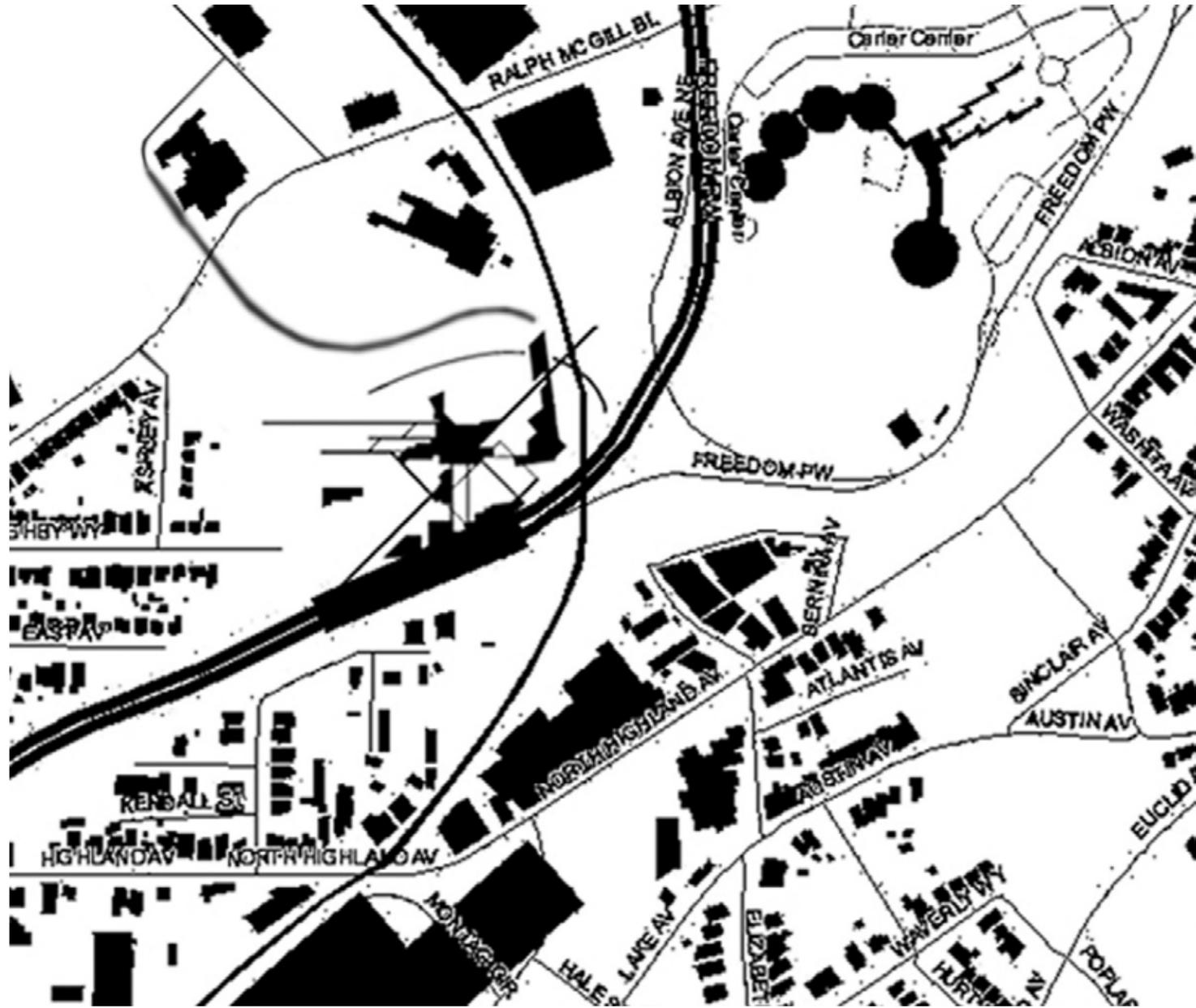


THE FINAL DESIGN

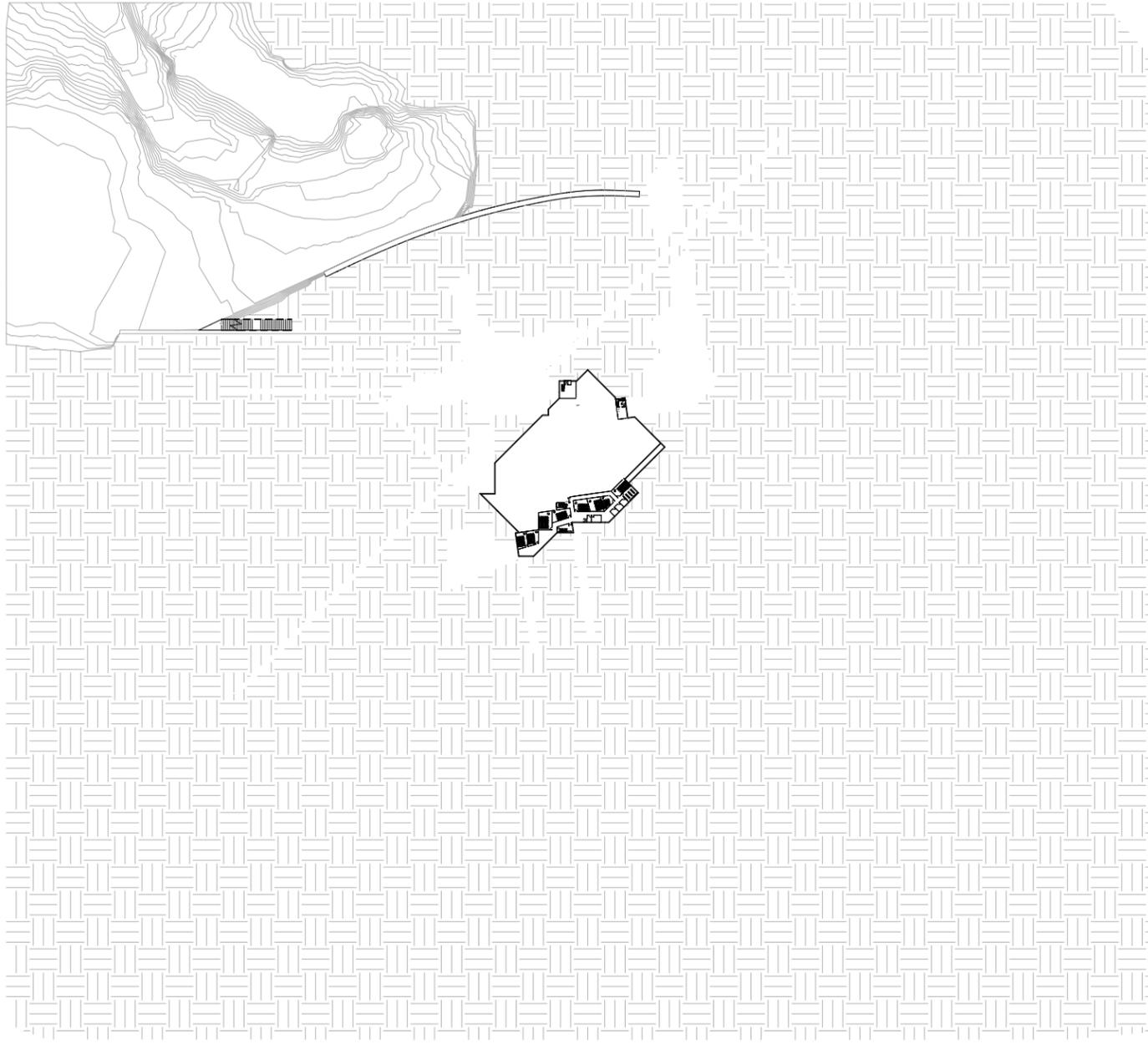
The end of site diagramming marks the start of the final design. In establishing the three distinct volumes the program was able to be divided amongst them. The school, perhaps the most important part of the scheme, was placed into the most embedded part of the site; the hillside of the roadway. The location is the most fortified of the site against the surroundings. The lowered area of the plan, developed throughout the diagramming, is the playground area for the children of the school. It is both protective and restrictive of movements too and from the area. The roofs of the school are lower than the roadbed, and are hence green roofs. There is a connected circulation from the road to the area underneath the bridge along the rooftops of the school. Skylights are also added to the roofs to allow light into the deeper circulatory spaces in the school.

The apartments are composed within the East building. Originally conceived as low income, transient housing they became half and half normal apartments and supportive housing. The northern most wing of the building, as well as the western wing of the building are low income, studio apartments. The central portion of the building is occupied by three bedroom apartments, all at least partially double height. They are separated from the train tracks by a thin field the runs parallel to the building, north to south, and culminates at the underside of the bridge. The space in the corner of the North and West wings of the apartment building is occupied primarily by ancillary spaces for the building.

The smaller building, located between the school to the south and the studio building to the west is a stand alone gallery space. It is two stories and represents an entrance to the site to pedestrians who enter the site from the parking lot (southwest in the image at left) or from the pedestrian ramp that extends southwest to Freedom Parkway. The entrance in this smaller building would push them around the gallery spaces and into the larger West building.



The west building is reserved for artists studios and smaller display spaces for works, as well as two large, open multipurpose spaces (central to the site plan). The glazed portion of the building the runs East to West is a large atrium space. It is the primary entry point for pedestrians arriving from the park to the west. The atrium portion of the building also contains many open balcony spaces to provide visual connections across the building and between levels. It is also meant to be a contemplative space, with ample light from the glazing and ample amounts of shade as well. The ground level here pulls the exterior water features extending to the west into the interior which is bordered on one side by columns and on the other by a walkway and large trees. The trees are meant to add to the serenity of the space as well as to filter light as it infiltrates the building. The northern wing of the building is comprised of offices and studio space, with display areas on the ground floor of the northern tip.



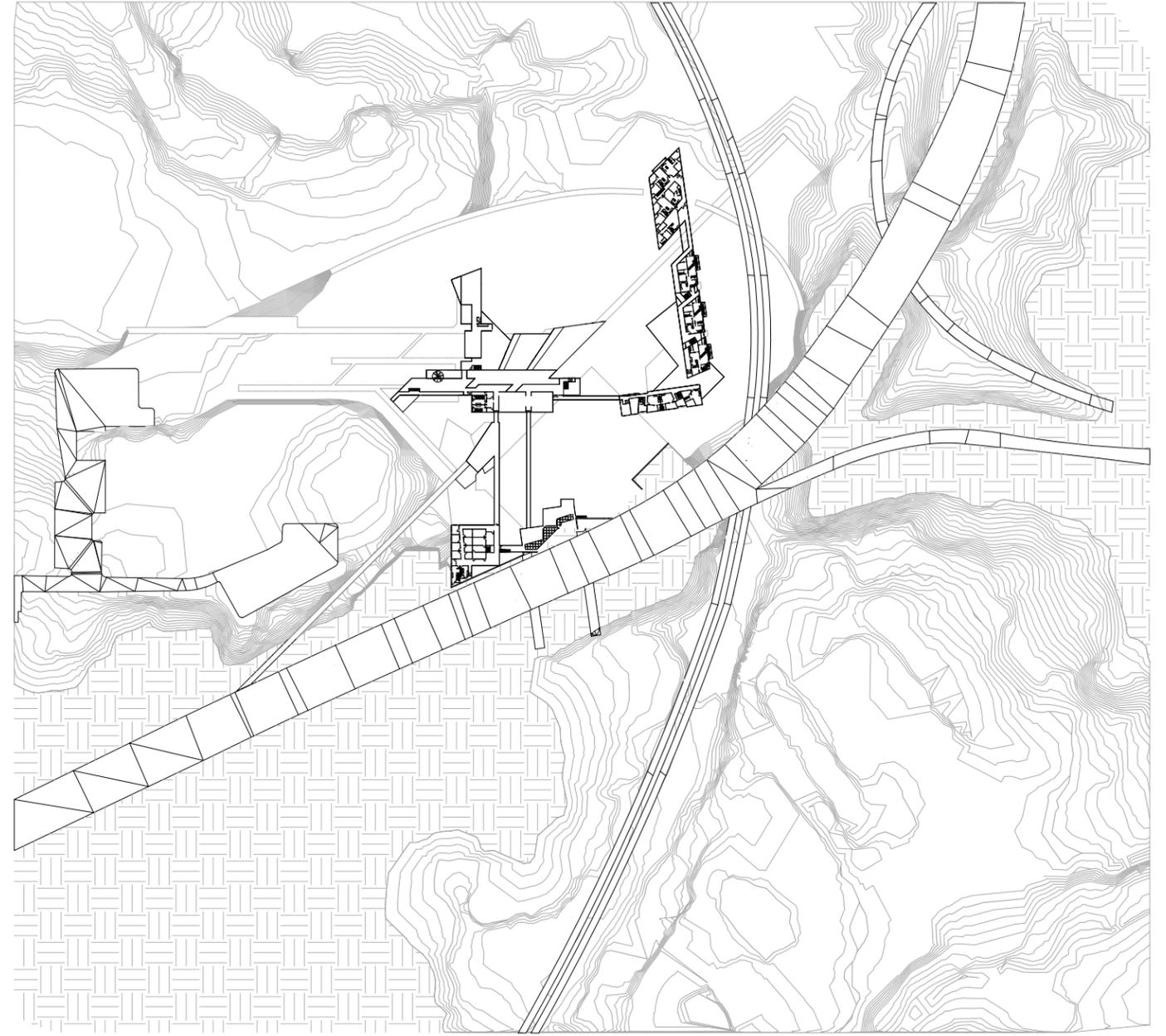
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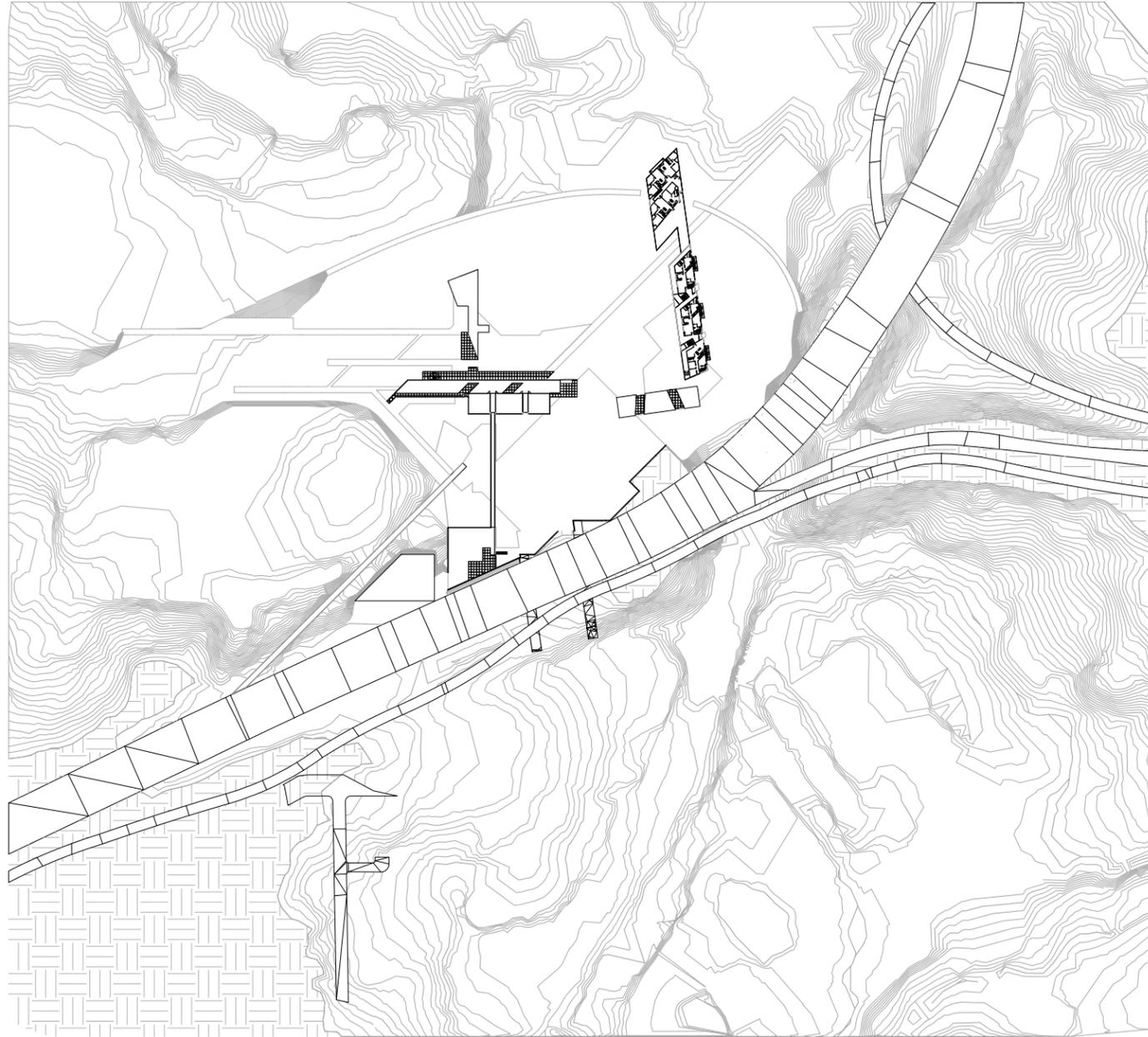
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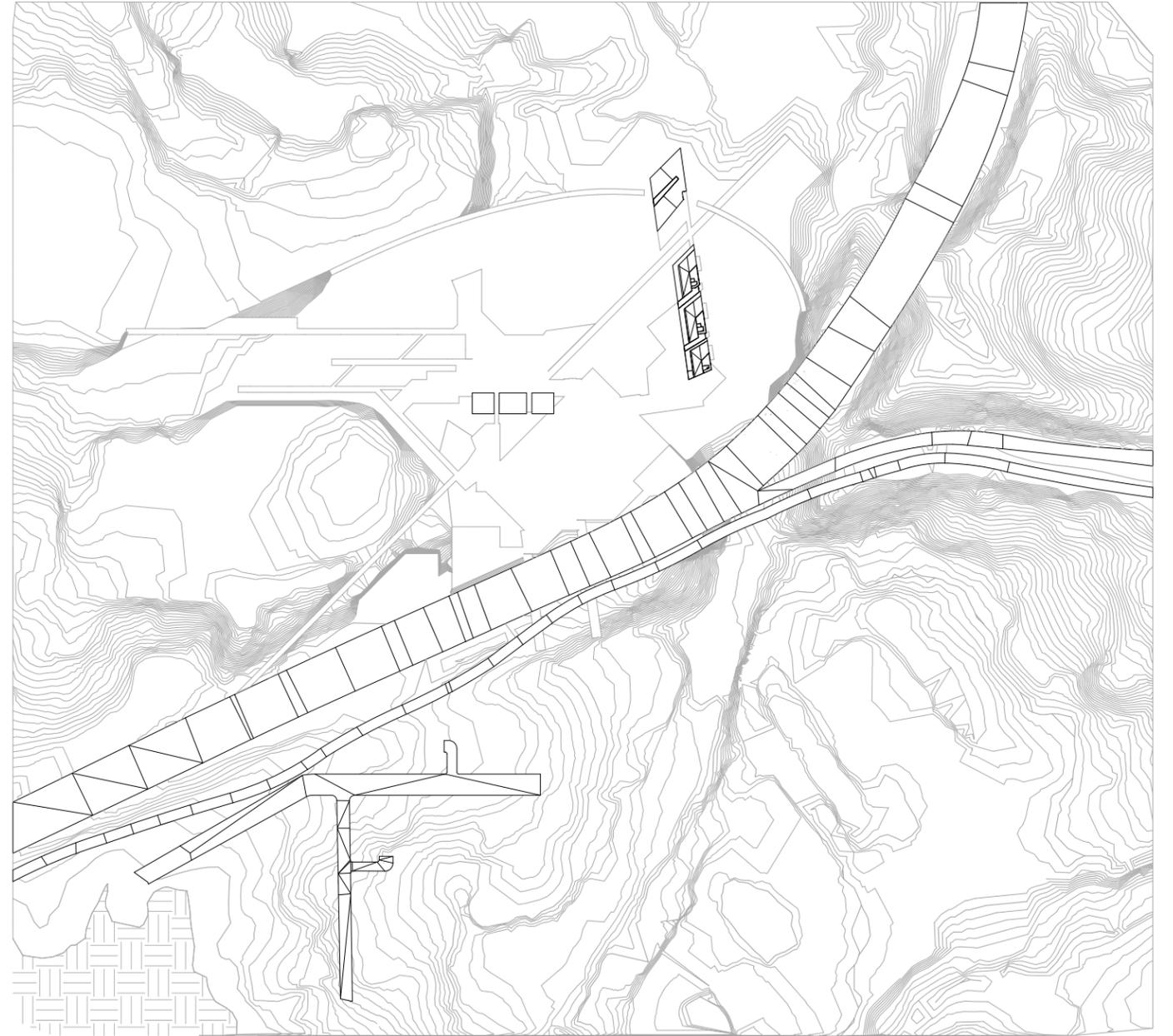
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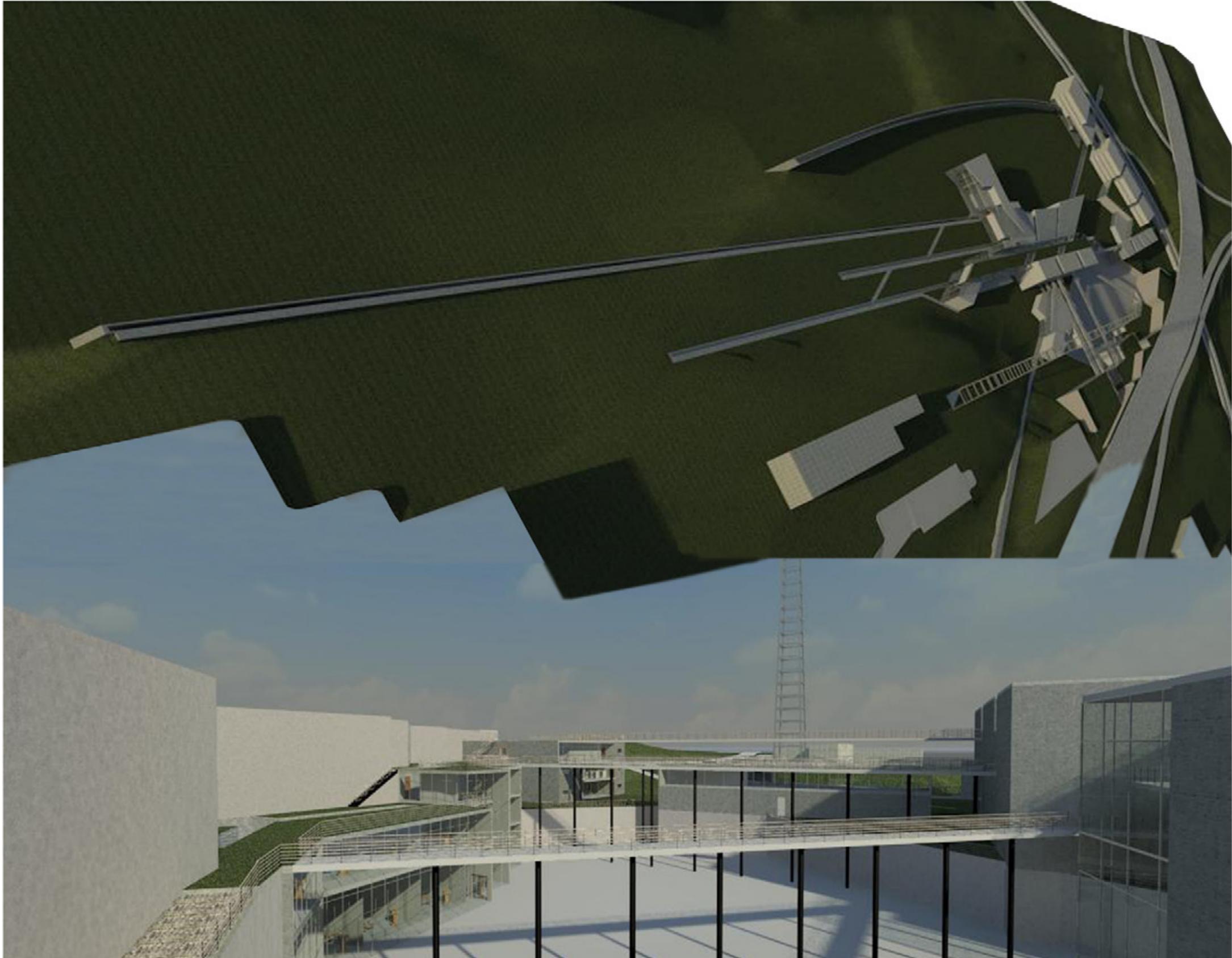
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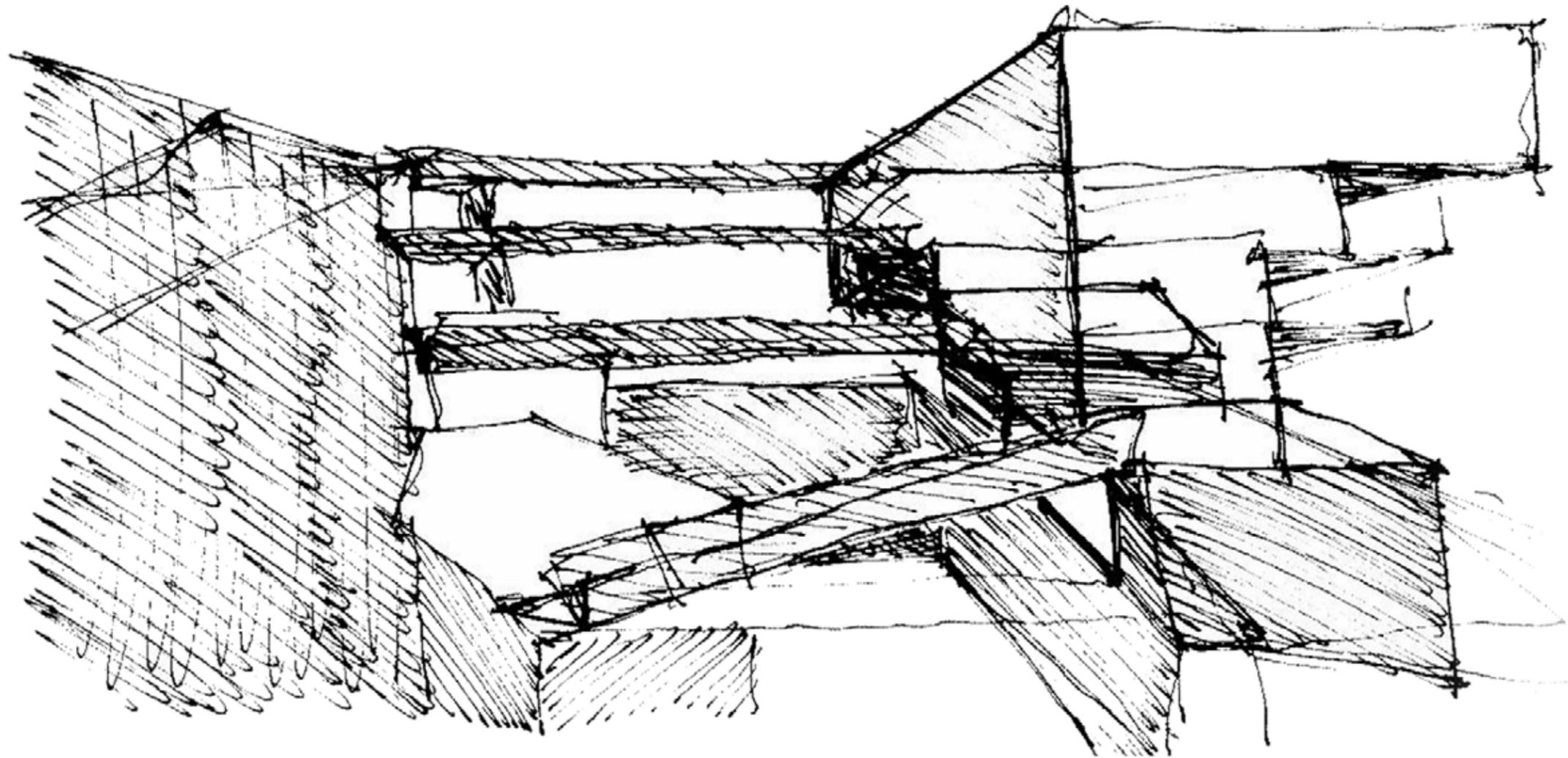


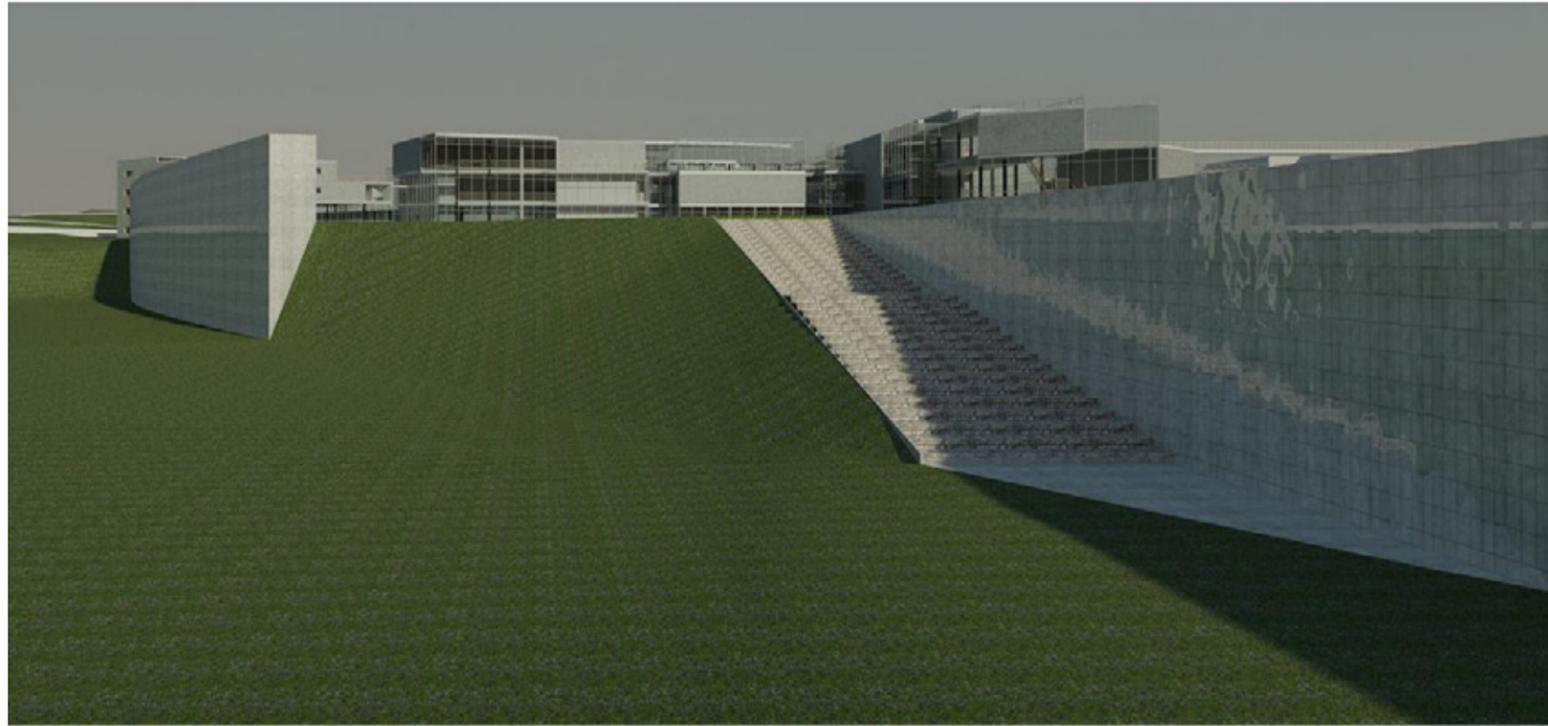
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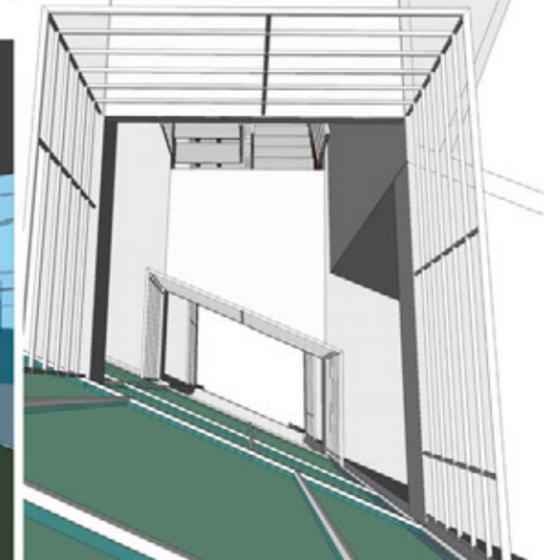
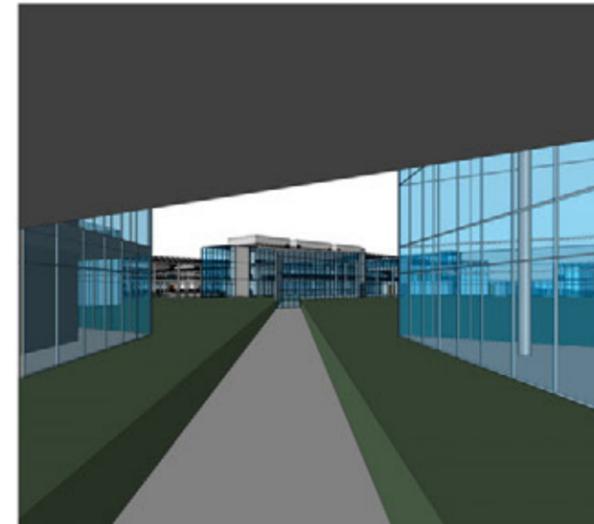
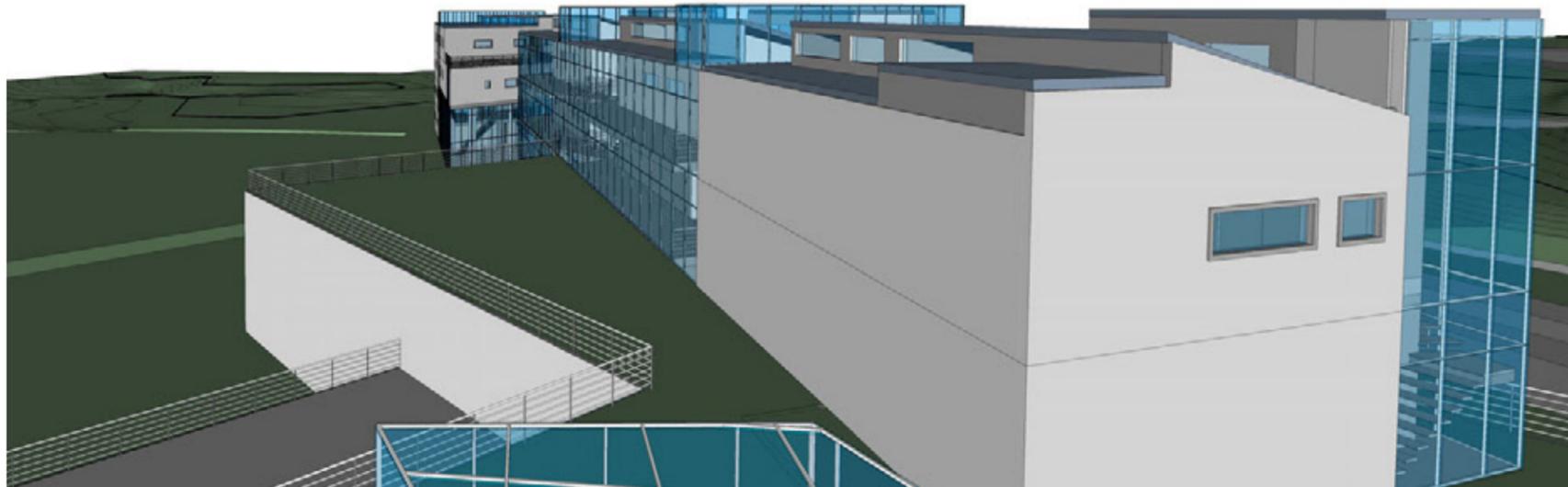
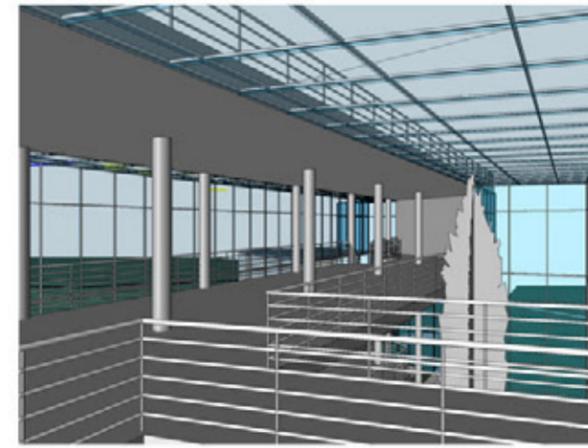
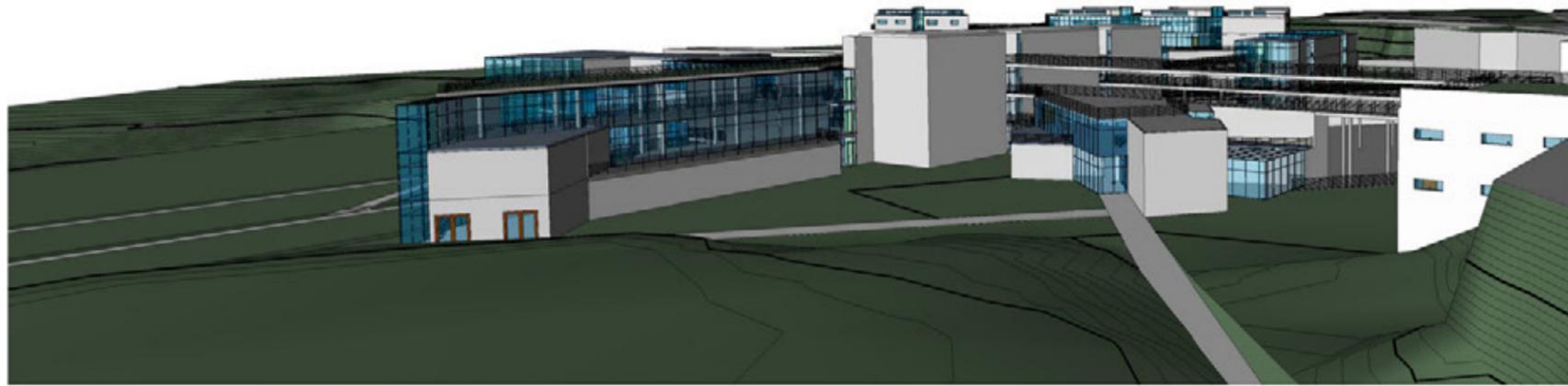
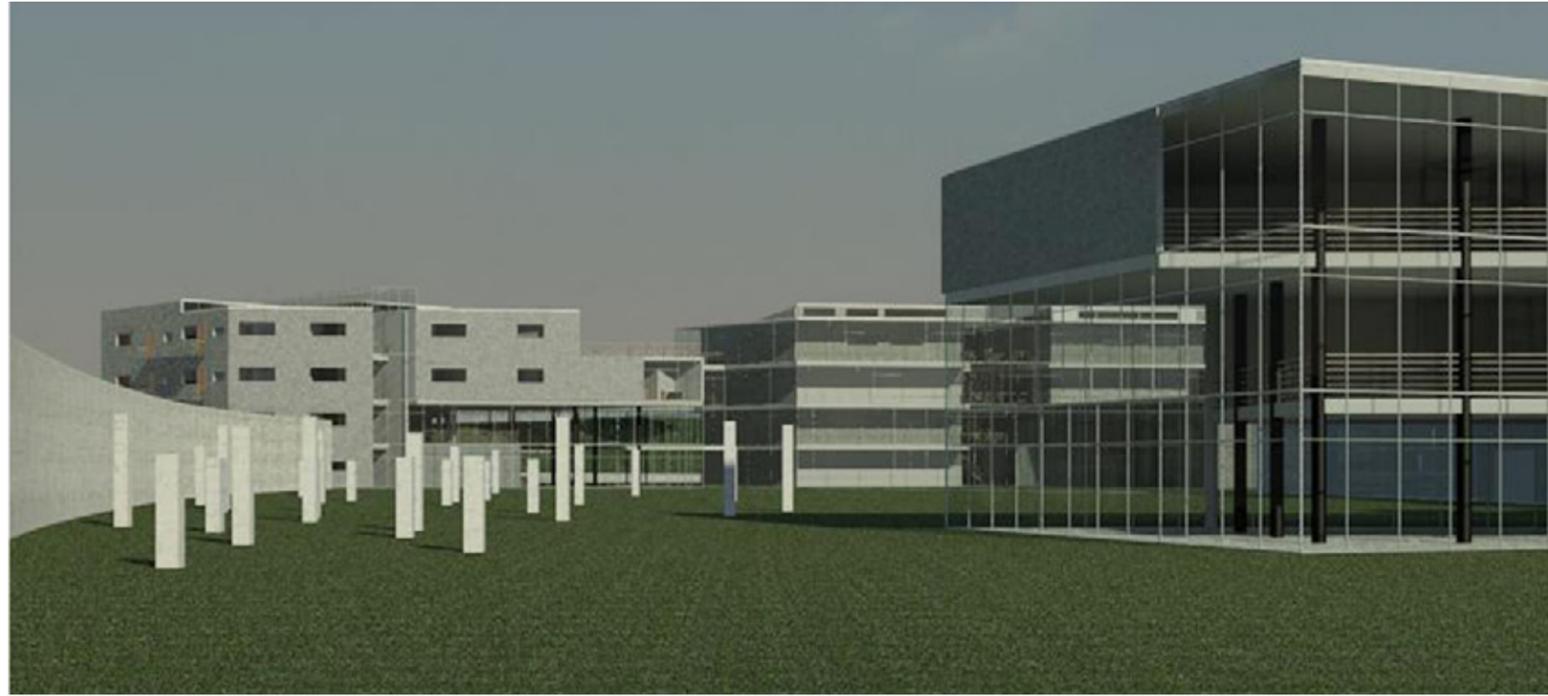


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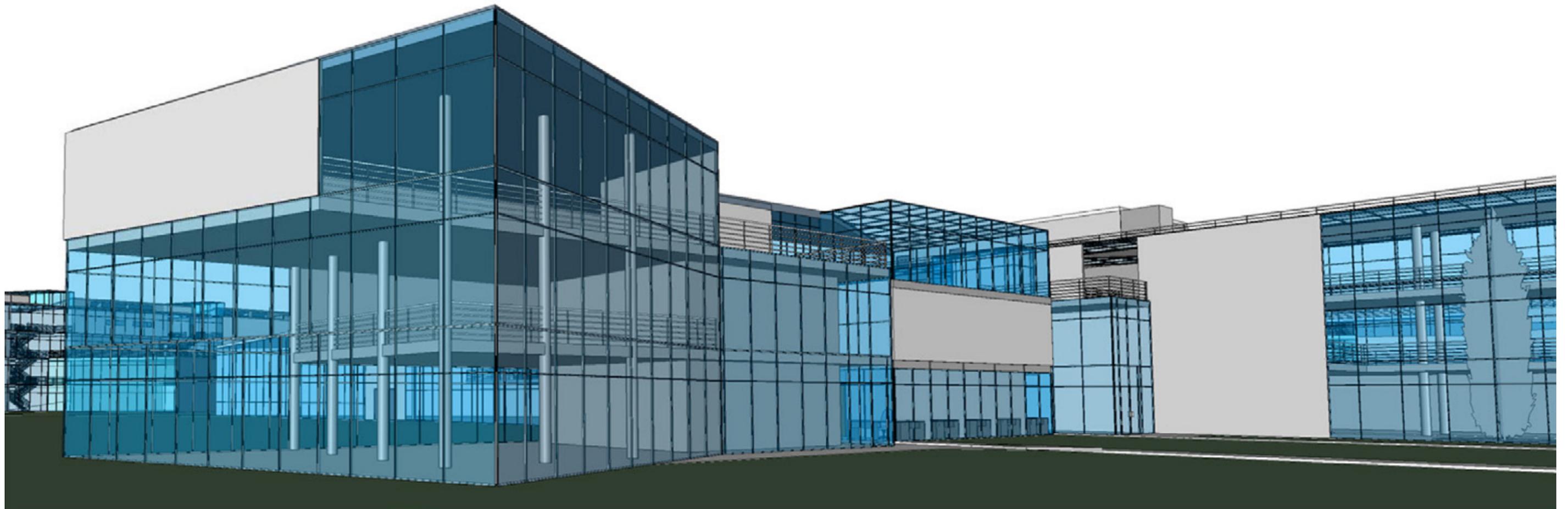
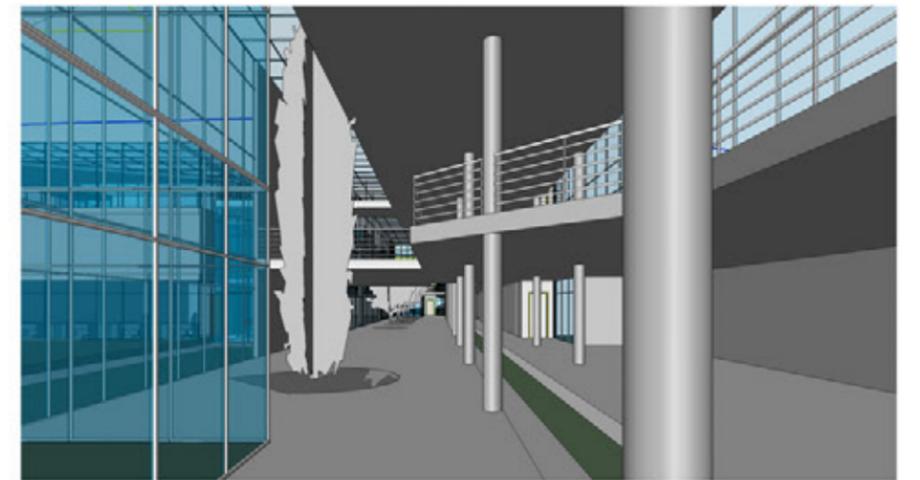
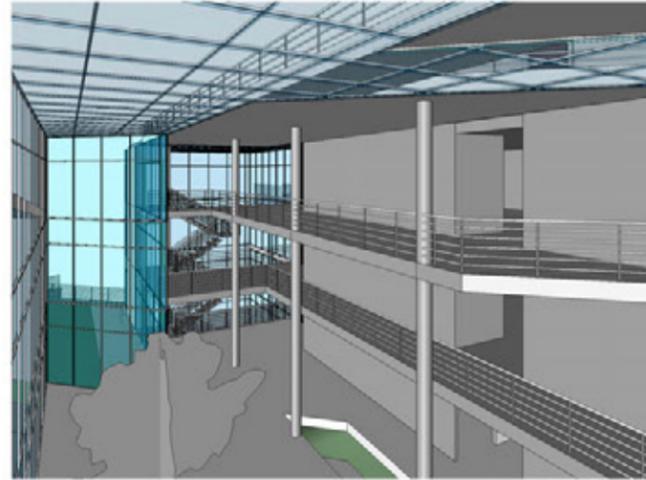
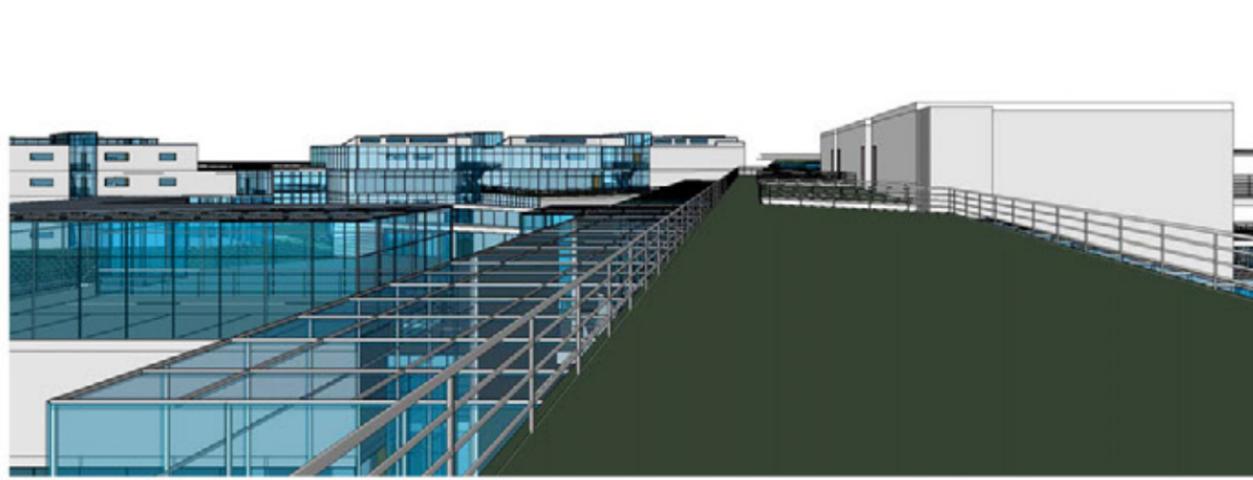




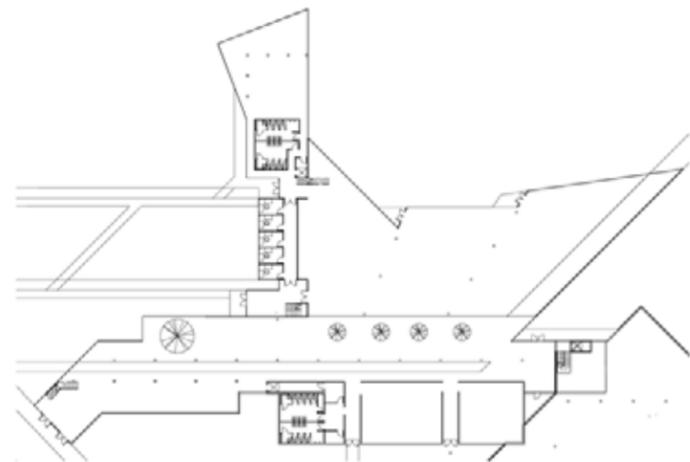


Top: View of the memorial from the west. Above Left: Site entry from Freedom Parkway pedestrian ramp. Above Mid: View of the second floor atrium space in the west building. Above Right: Circulation spaces of the east bldg. Bottom Left: Exterior of East building - West Facade. Bottom Mid: View from east building breezeway to the west building.

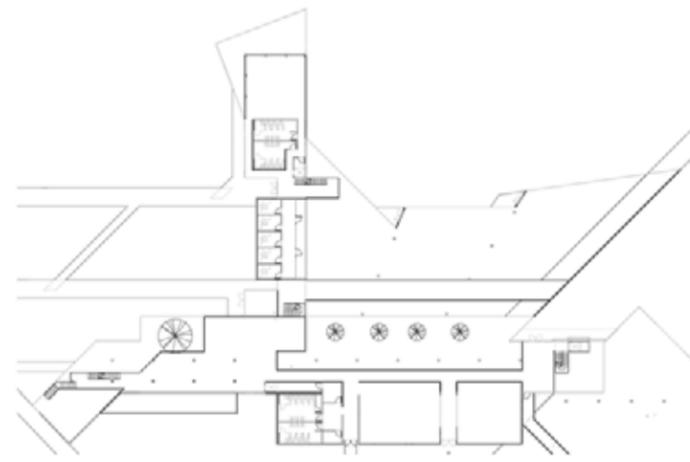




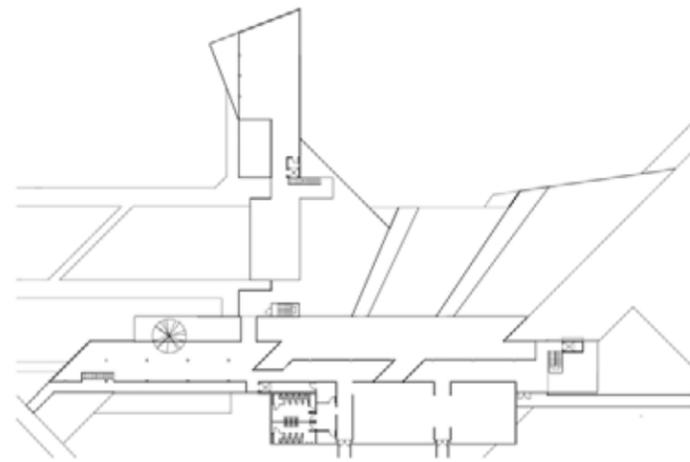
Above Left: Green roof above atrium in the west building. Above Mid: View of atrium in west building, facing west. Above Right: west entry to atrium space of the west bldg.
Bottom: Northern tip of west building.



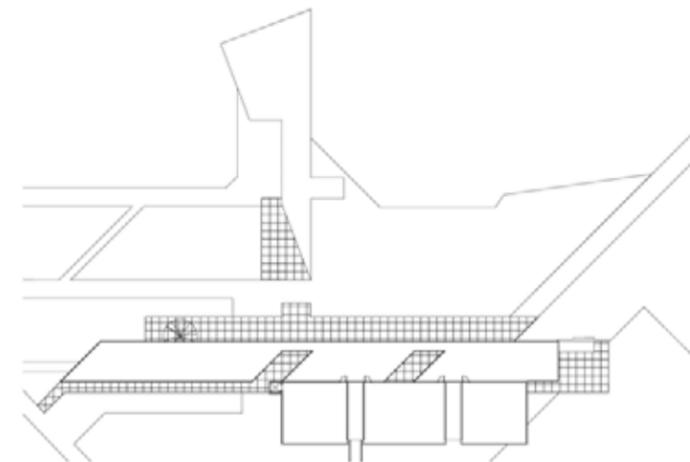
① Ground - West Building
1" = 40'-0"



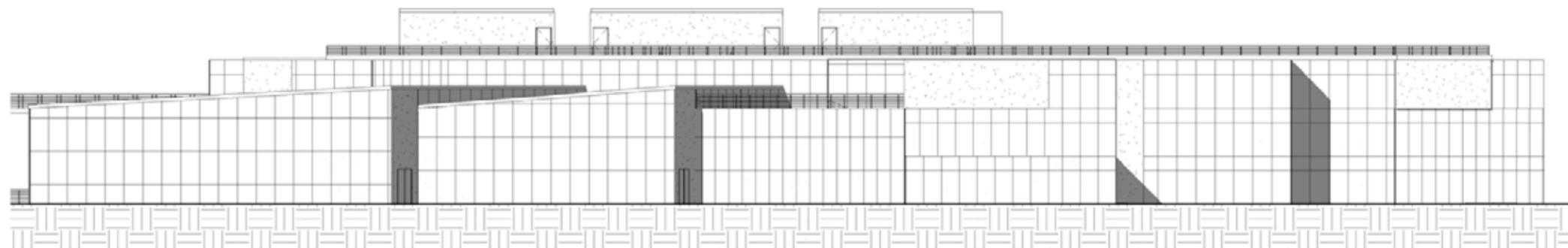
② Level 2 - West Building
1" = 40'-0"



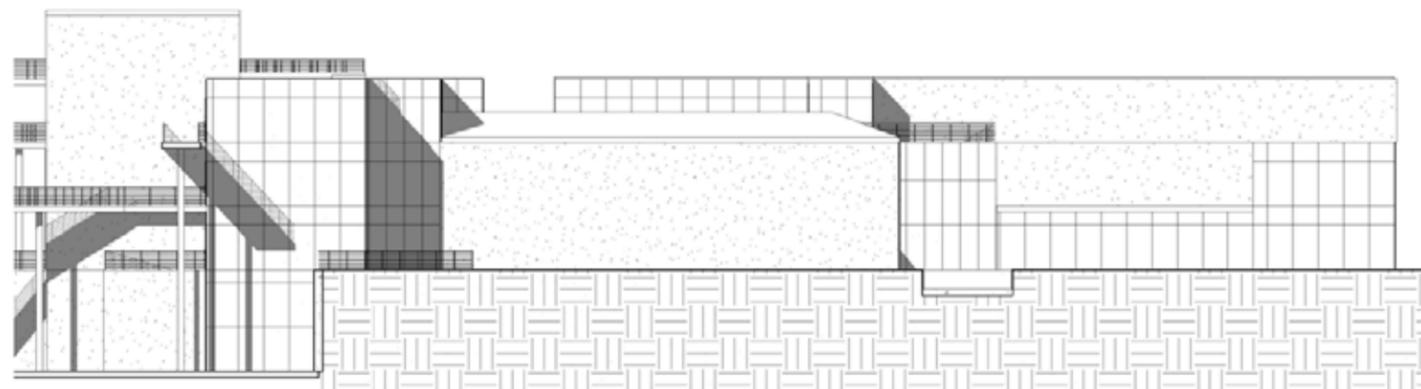
③ Level 3 - West Building
1" = 40'-0"



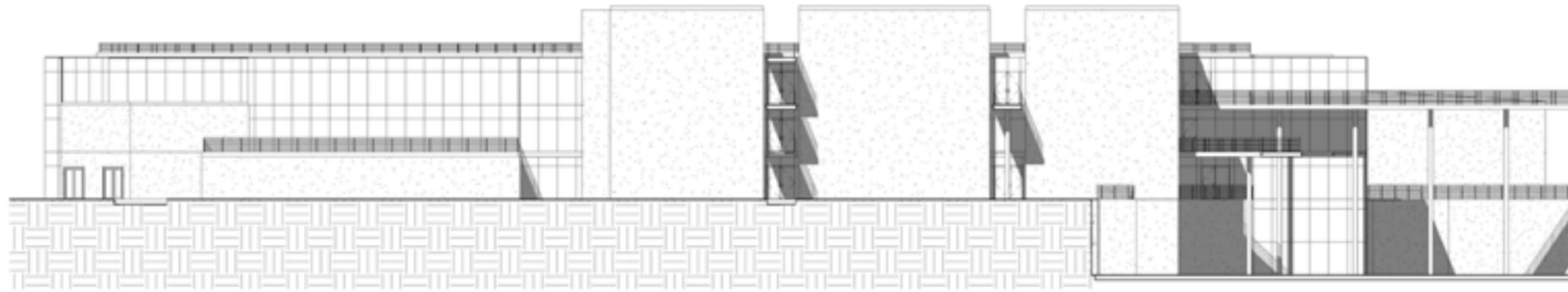
④ Level 4 - West Building
1" = 40'-0"



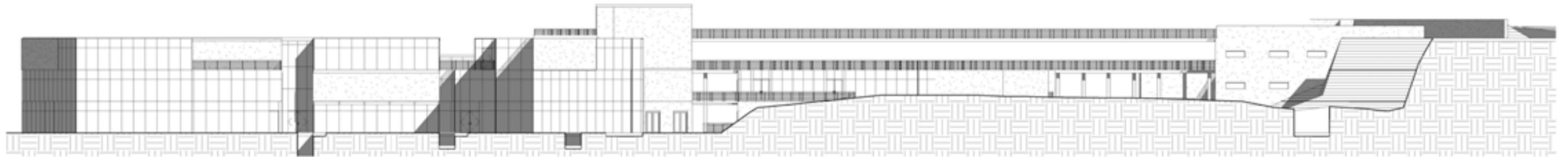
⑥ West Building - North
1" = 20'-0"



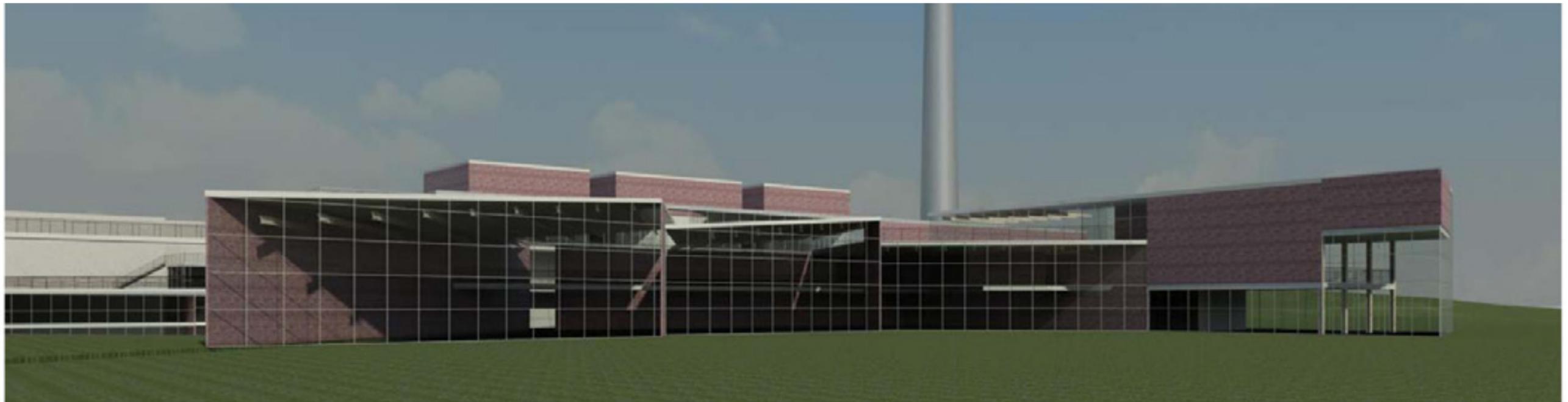
⑤ West Building - East
1" = 20'-0"

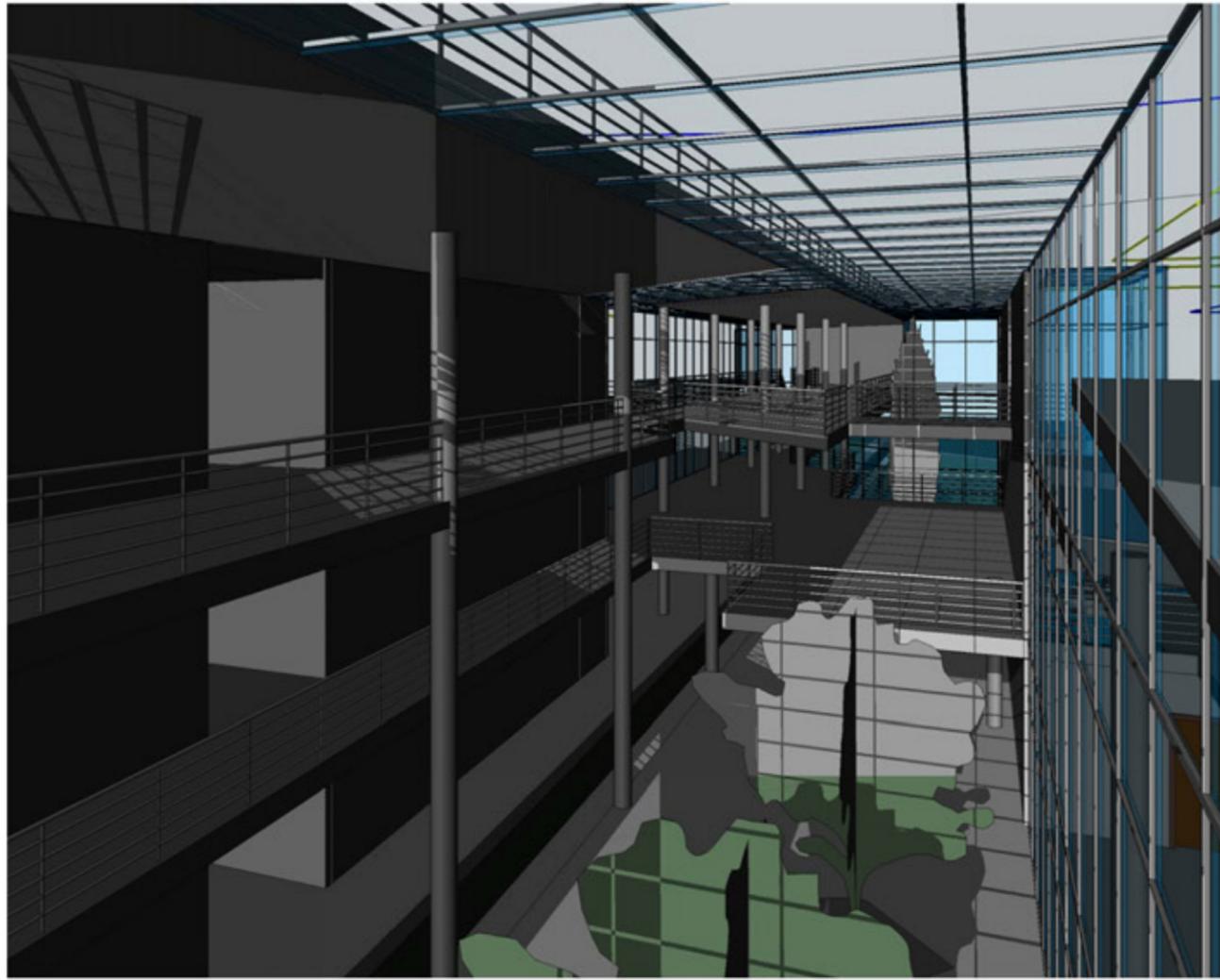


7 West Building - South
1" = 20'-0"

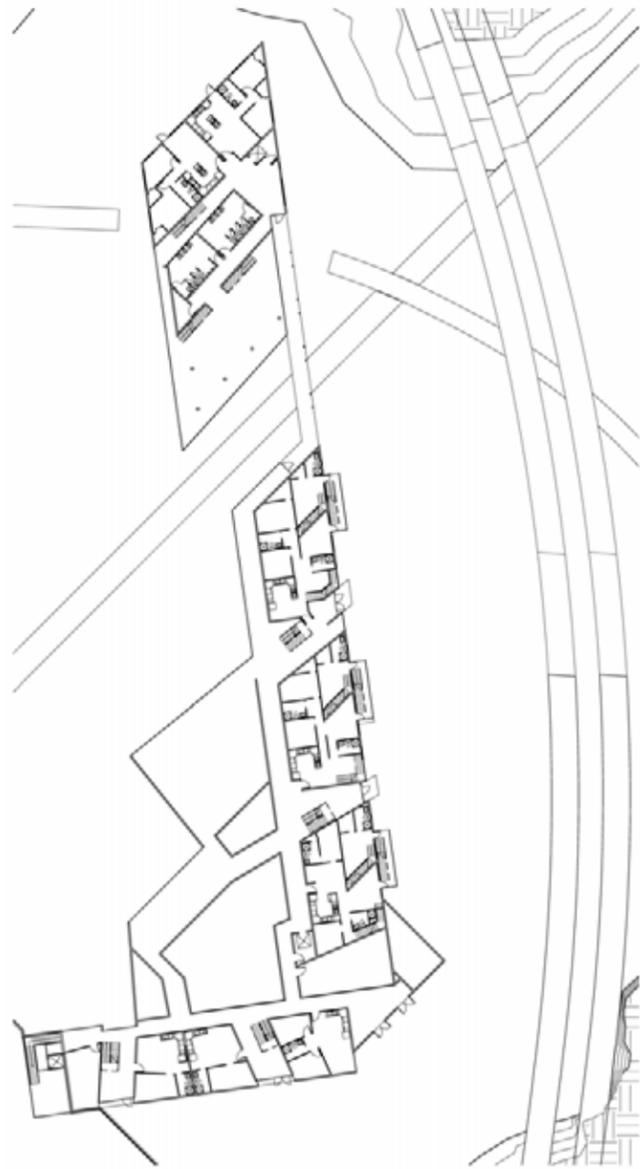


8 West Building - West
1" = 20'-0"

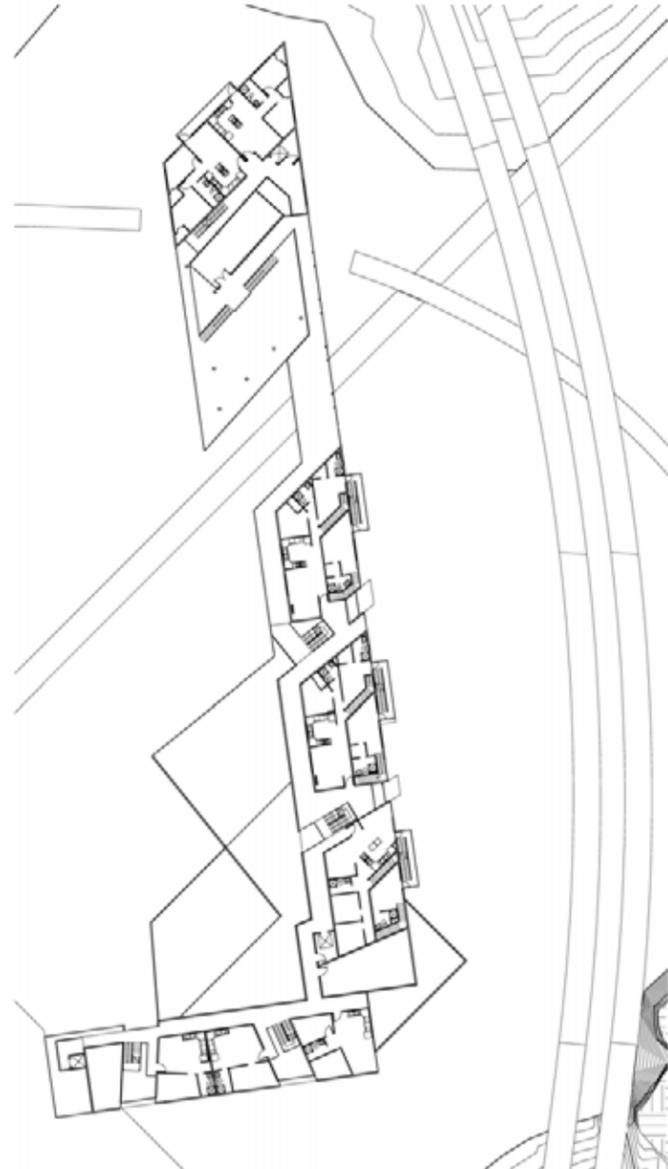




Above and Right: Atrium of the west building.



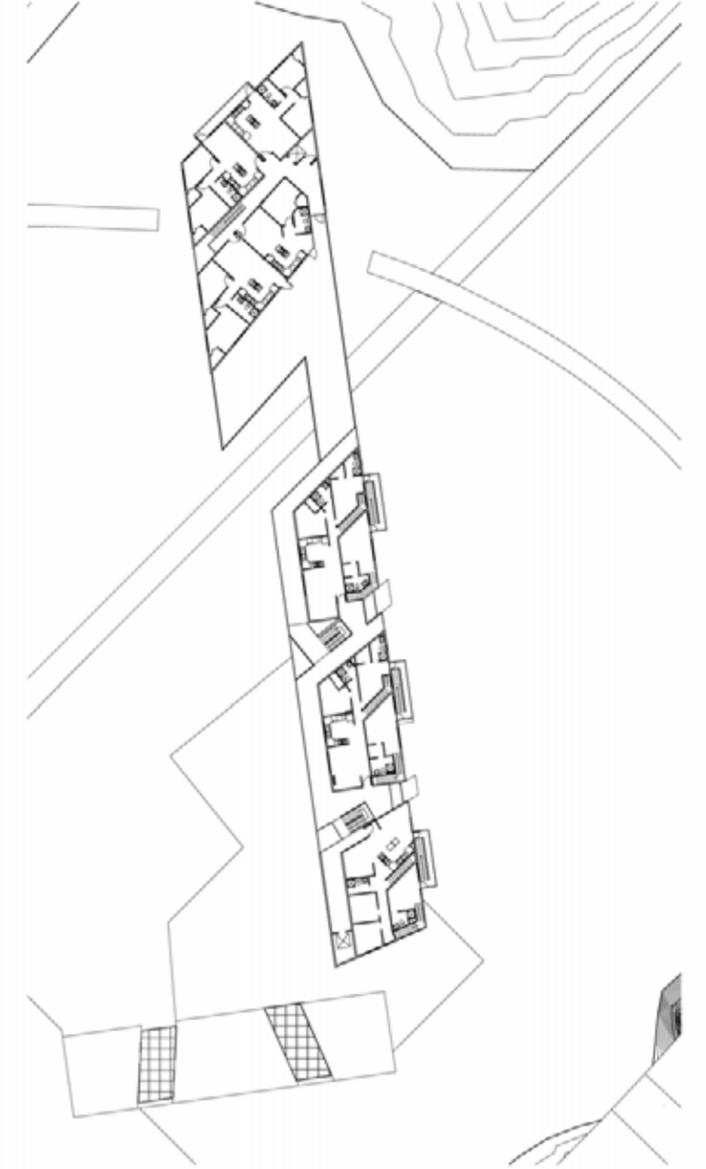
Ground - East Building
1" = 40'-0"



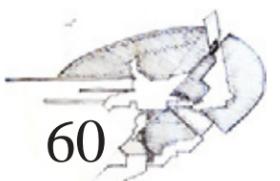
Level 2 - East Building
1" = 40'-0"

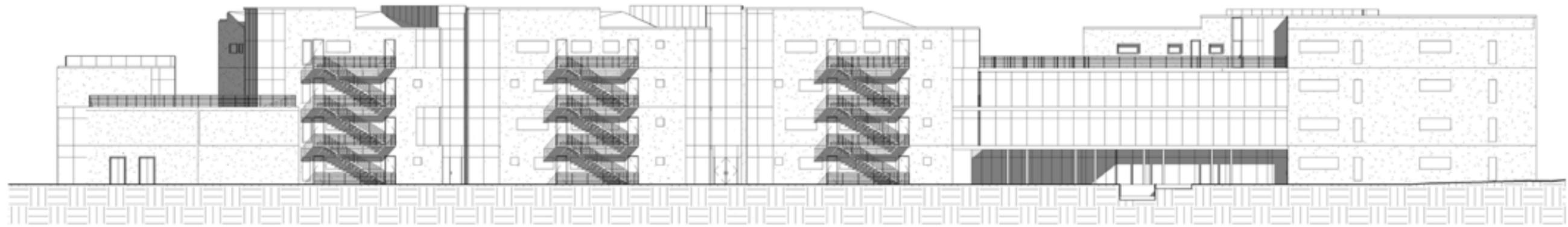


Level 3 - East Building
1" = 40'-0"

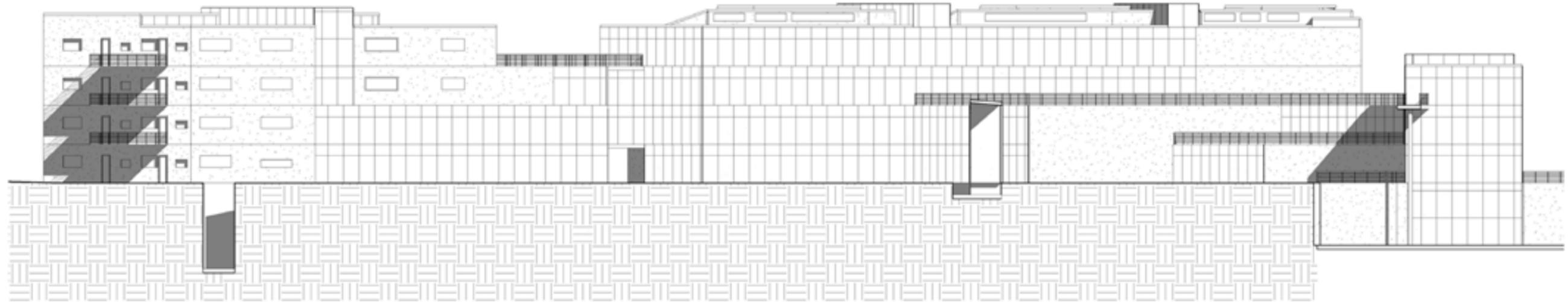


Level 4 - East Building
1" = 40'-0"

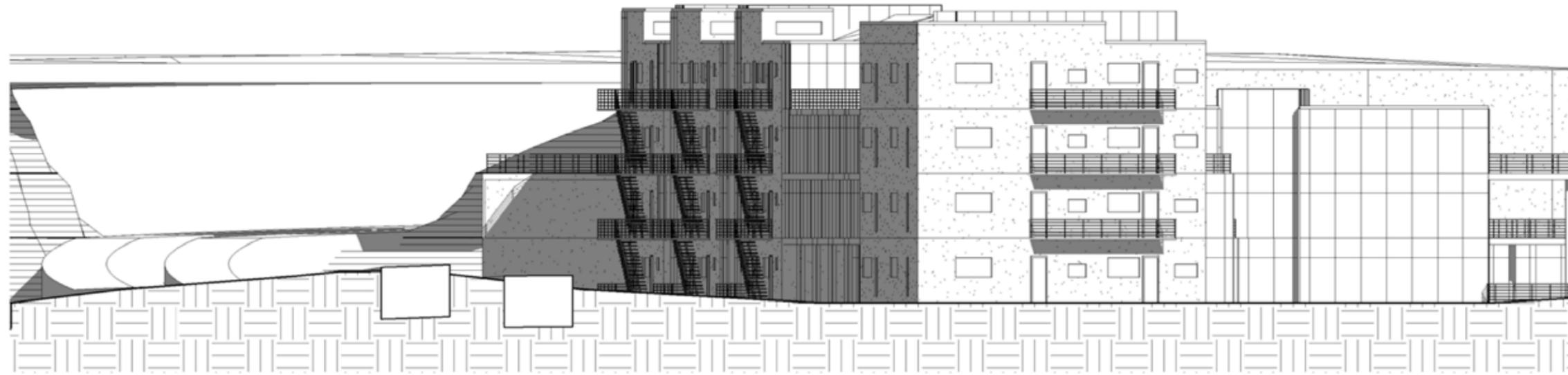




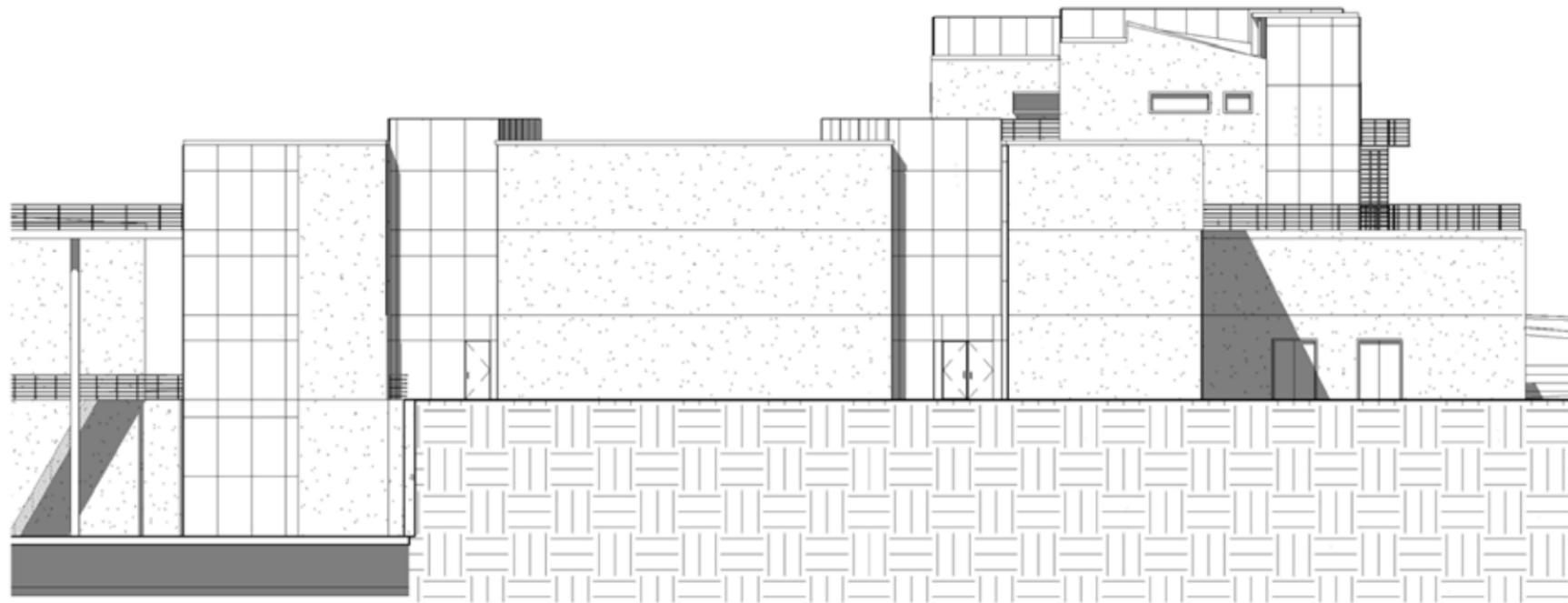
East Building - East
1" = 20'-0"



East Building - West
1" = 20'-0"



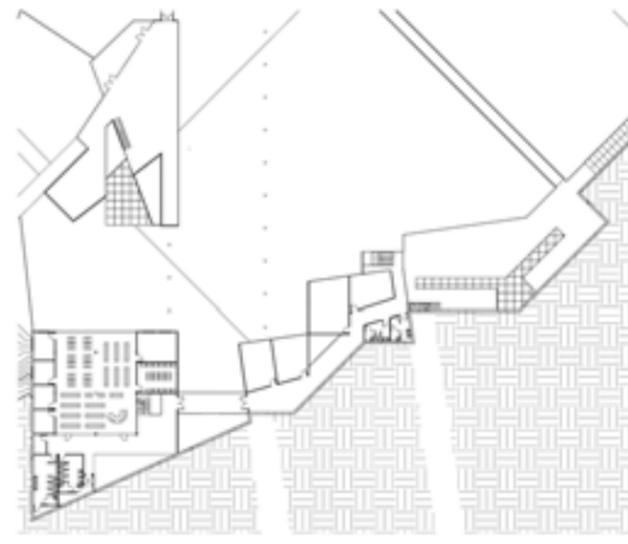
East Building - North
1" = 20'-0"



East Building - South
1" = 20'-0"



Ground - South Building
1" = 40'-0"



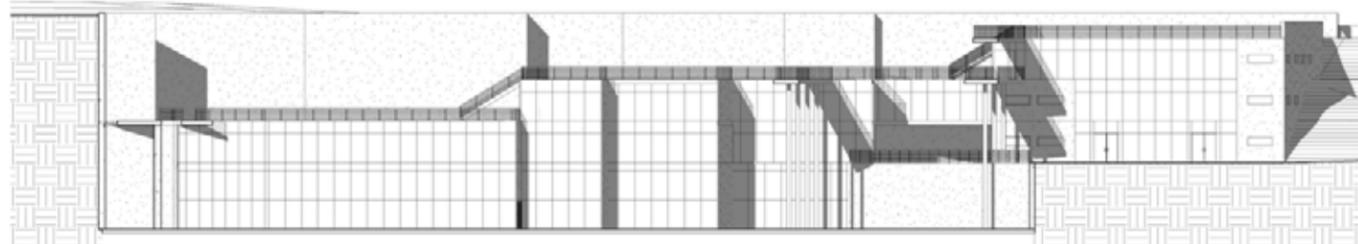
Level 2 - South Building
1" = 40'-0"



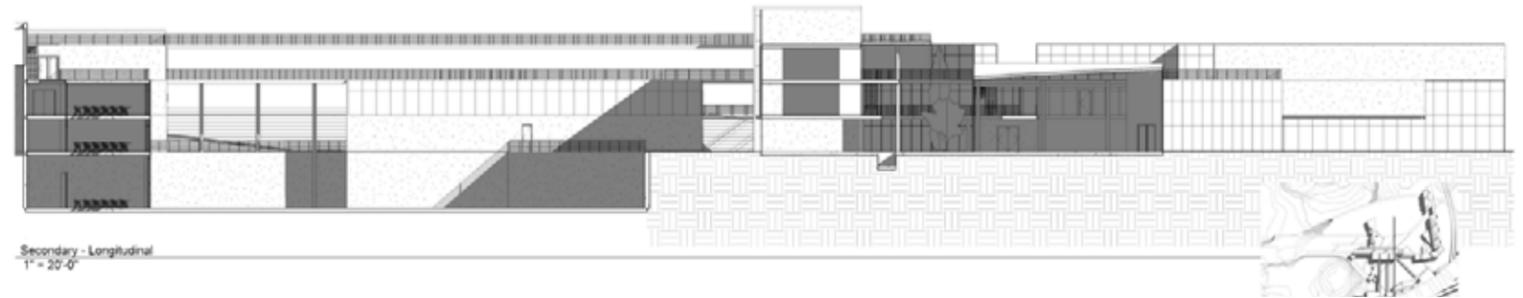
Level 3 - South Building
1" = 40'-0"



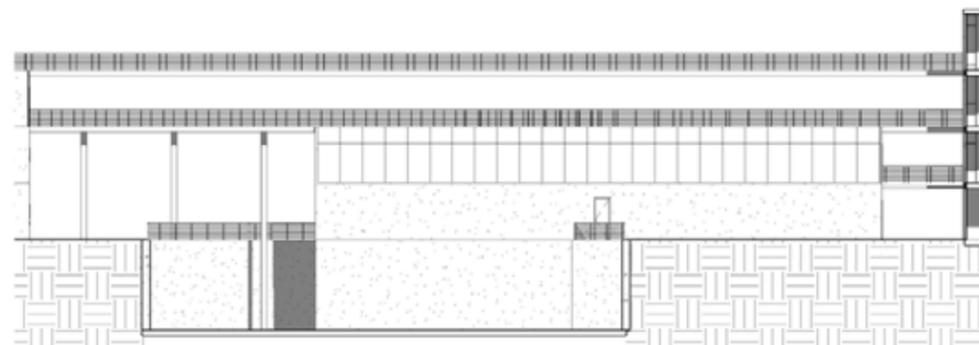
Level 4 - South Building
1" = 40'-0"



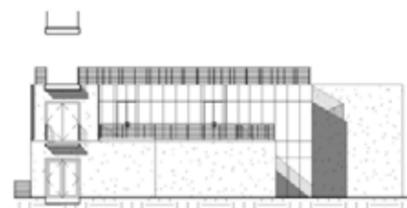
South Building - North
1" = 20'-0"



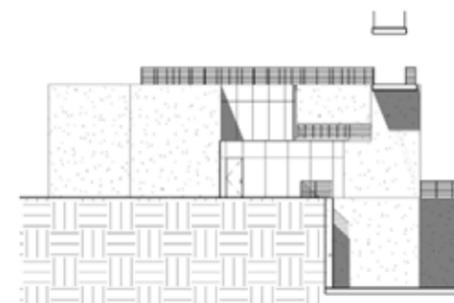
Secondary - Longitudinal
1" = 20'-0"



Gallery - East
1" = 20'-0"



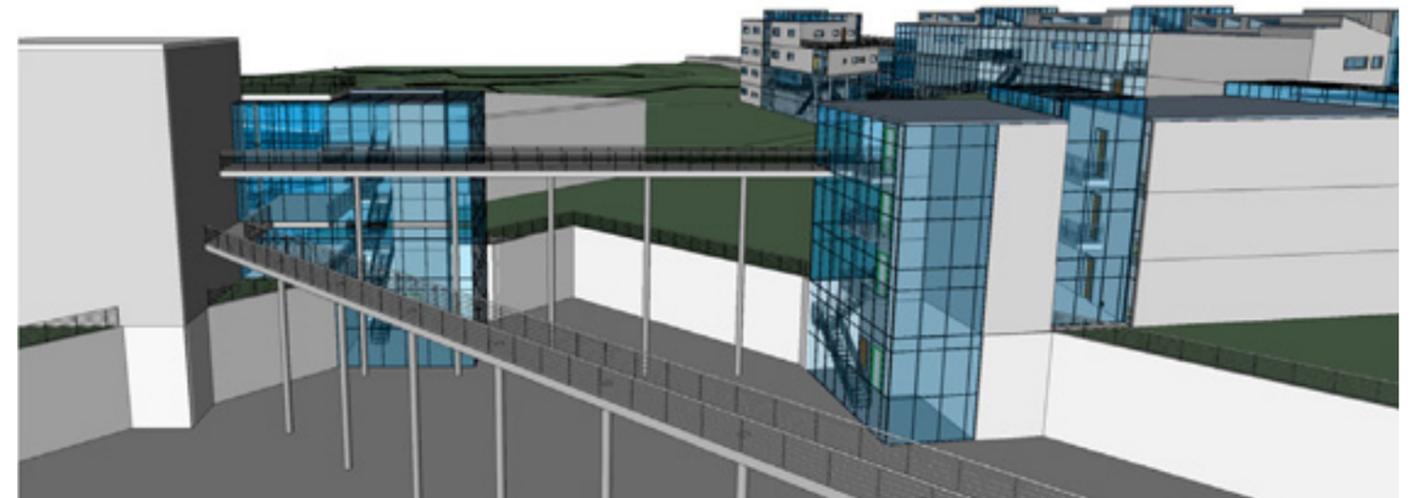
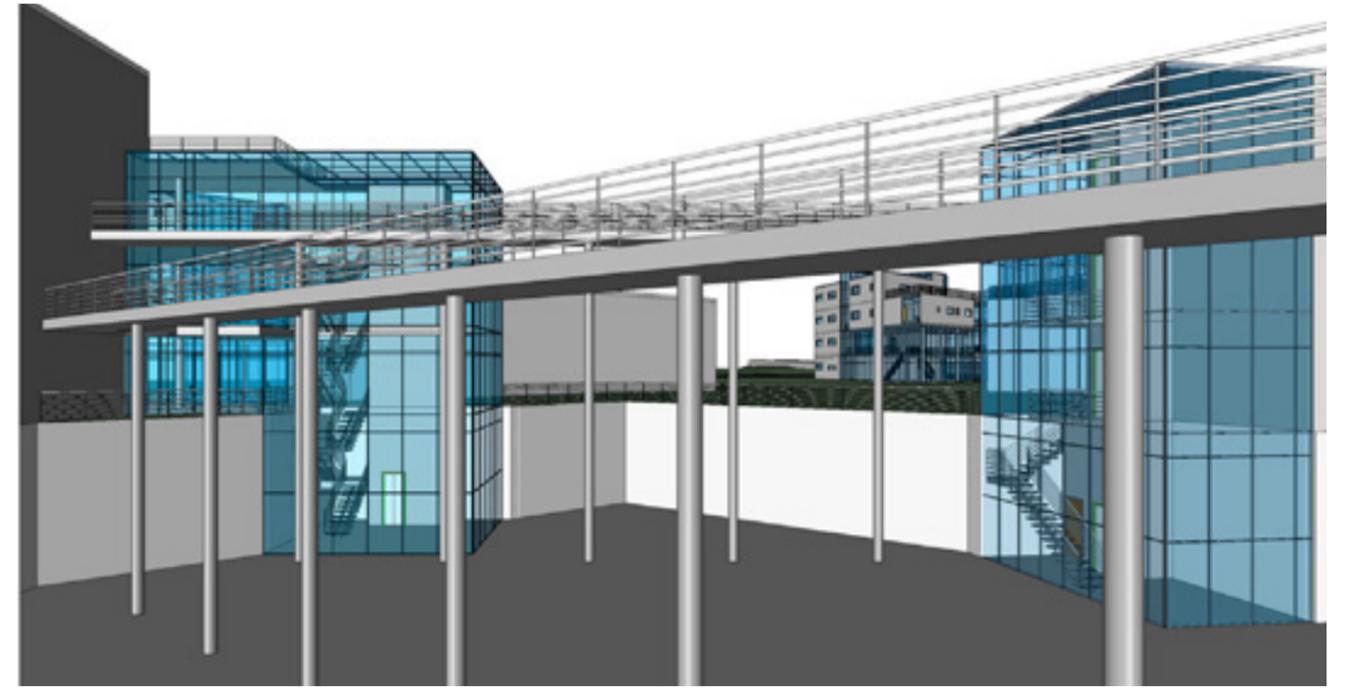
Gallery - North
1" = 20'-0"



Gallery - South
1" = 20'-0"

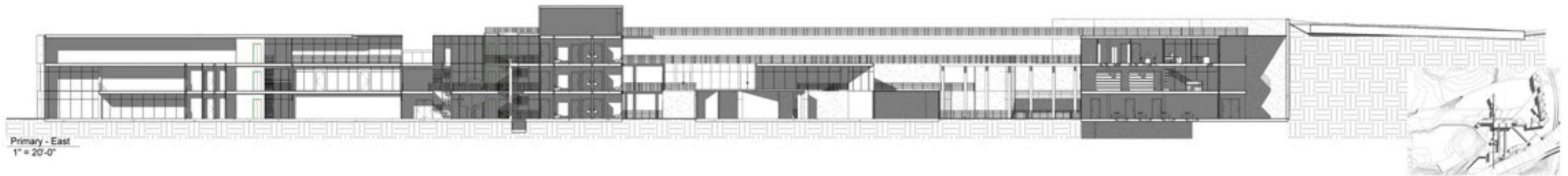


Gallery - West
1" = 20'-0"



Above Left: A view from Freedom Parkway looking west across the site. Above Right: A view north from the roof of the school.

Bottom Right: A view north over the school from Freedom Parkway



Primary - East
1" = 20'-0"

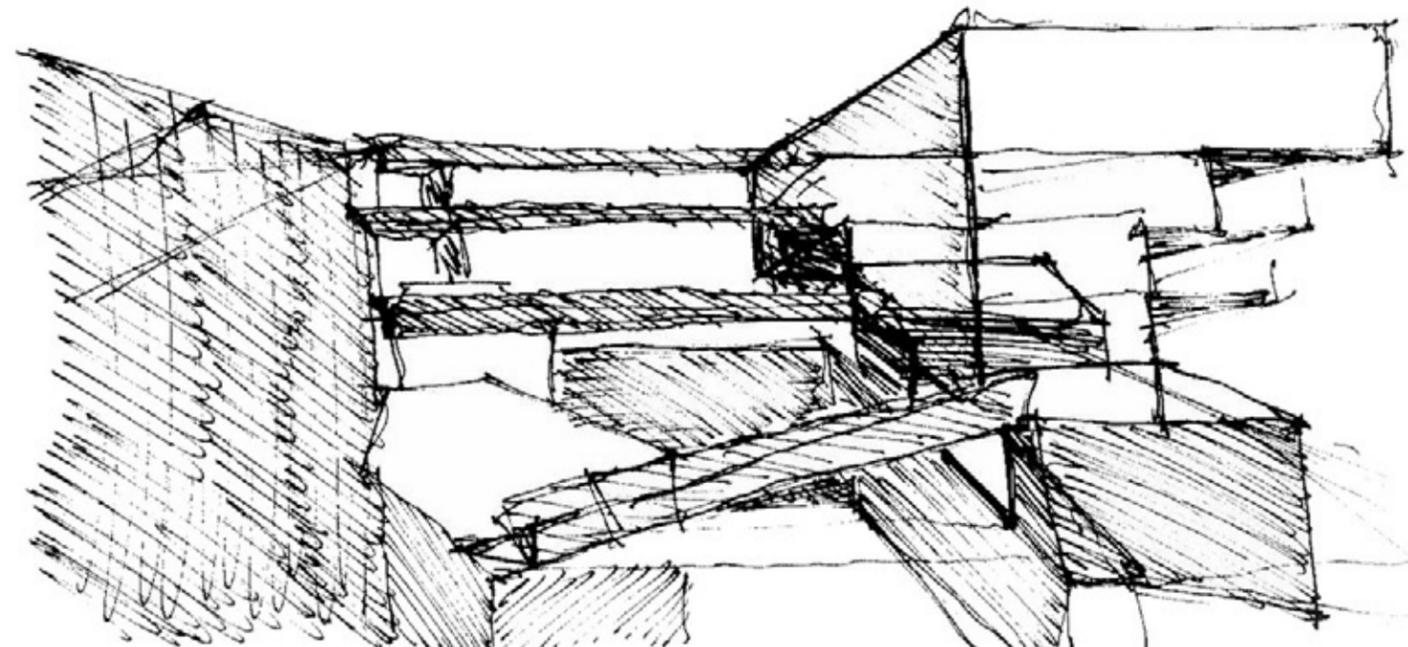
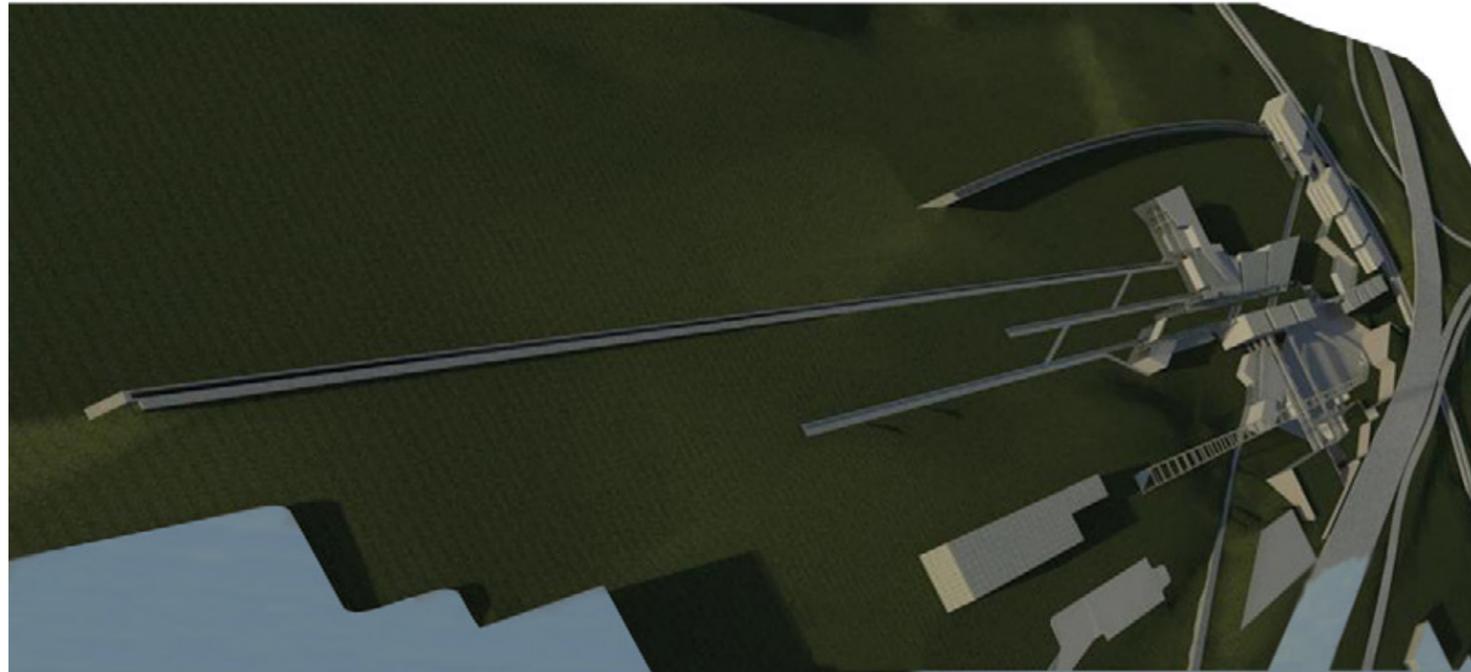


Primary - North
1" = 20'-0"



Primary - South
1" = 20'-0"





REFLECTIONS

The design process for this project ended up being similar to others in that there was work done at the beginning of the process that in the end, did not relate directly to the physical scheme of the final model. However, the initial schemes examined were all points along the same path leading to the final design, each furthering a particular aspect of the design. The design process was carried out in many different media, and different forms within that media. The images set forth in this document are a result of a layering back and forth between pencil, ink, four different computer programs and three different rendering engines.

The design idea, as it was initially posed, was relatively general because the intent is that the idea is a process of design that can be applied to multiple sites. The follow through of the initial idea on this particular site determined the program and partially the form of the building. The project site was a particularly lucky find, as it incorporates so many different social groups.

The execution of the final design and presentation perhaps fell a little short of communicating some of the points elaborated on in this document, which resulted in the final presentation being less coherent than it could have been. Because the final design did not center on a specific programmatic element, there has been some debate as to whether or not the design itself is successful in executing the initial ideas. However, the initial goals were to create a unique sense of place, foster the development of a community through furthering the interactions of demographic groups that do not normally interact by providing a space that would encourage interaction and a space that ties into the surrounding existing community, and to preserve the integrity of the site through an effort to preserve the urban memory of the location and allow preexisting demographics to exist within the new space. The final design, while perhaps slightly discentered, goes a long way in accomplishing each of these goals. The discentered nature of the site actually places the newly created place itself into a category of the marginal; it becomes both very many things at once, and remains to be



no single entity. The program set forth is meant to become an example for a new form of mixed use development, that goes beyond the traditional retail/residential definition. In addition to the unique program the building masses are also intimately built into and informed by the site and the surrounding area. The numerous layers of meaning that happen on site, corporeal and incorporeal, not only seeks to preserve the urban memory of the site but of the surroundings as well.

