

The image features several overlapping, semi-transparent red lines of varying thicknesses and orientations against a white background. The lines create a sense of depth and movement, resembling architectural sketches or structural elements. One prominent line runs diagonally from the top left towards the bottom right. Another line is more vertical, and a third is horizontal, intersecting the others. The overall effect is that of a layered, three-dimensional drawing.

**REACTIVATING CAVITIES WITHIN THE CITY**

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A hand holding a rolled-up document with a red ribbon. The document is partially unrolled, showing a white surface. The hand is positioned at the top right, with fingers gripping the edge of the scroll. The red ribbon is tied around the middle of the scroll. The background is a light, neutral color.

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The background features several overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in shades of red and orange, creating a layered, abstract effect. A pen nib is visible in the upper right quadrant, pointing towards the center. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

# **ABSTRACT**

Cities are in a constant transformation mode, meaning they never stop. A city's inner way of life, immediately responds and transforms to what is happening in the world at every second, may that be economically, socially or naturally. As such constant metamorphose occurs and one takes a micro shot of the city, one perceives "cavities" that are created within the city. These cavities are shadowed by the mass of the city and in such darkness they are unperceived. People pass by it throughout the day, but these "shadowed cavities" are ignored as if they were non-existent and not part of the landscape. As the city moves toward a certain direction, these cavities are left behind, stopped on time. These "shadowed cavities" are ignored by the masses and are disconnected from the city, as if they were not part of it anymore. Marginal activities start to take place into them and an invisible fence is put up. In a micro level, "shadowed cavities" are real and present in every city, independent of its size. The thesis that will be developed throughout the school year aspires to explore and understand this segment of the cities. In a macro view of the city [a map, and aerial view], one does not perceive them and they are considered part of the city. When taking a closer look, it can be seen that such cavities are present and have been forgotten, marginalized and have lost their original character. The thesis will also explore how these cavities that were shadowed and separated, can be brought to the light and surface, and again, be connected to the city, making the micro and the macro shot alike.



A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a pen, writing on a document. The hand is positioned at the top right, and the pen is angled downwards towards the bottom left. The document is a light-colored, possibly cream or off-white, paper. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white. The text 'THESIS POSITION' is overlaid on the image, following the diagonal path of the pen and hand.

**THESIS POSITION**





Cities, does not matter its size or geographical location, go through changes as time goes by. With such changes some spaces are left behind and are marginalized. These spaces are what will be referred to as a cavity. But what is a cavity? In the dictionary, one is able to find two different kinds of definition for the word cavity. One, the simplified version, says that a cavity is simply “any hollow space”<sup>1</sup>. The other, looking at a cavity in a more scientific manner, is the orthodontic aspect of a cavity. The definition of this cavity is not much different, but it goes more in depth to the cause of a cavity. In this case, it is seen as a “decay that can lead to the death of the tooth”<sup>1</sup>.

When comparing the cavity formed within a city with the cavity of a tooth, the examination of a cavity in the city starts to be clearer and easier to understand. As mentioned above, a cavity in the tooth is a decay which leads to the death of the tooth in the case such cavity is not taken care of. In the same sense, a cavity formed within a city is decay; a decay that if not intervened and taken care of can cause the “death” of such space. Therefore, can a cavity in the city be intervened and taken care of such as a cavity that is found in the human’s tooth? Before exploring the manners in which a cavity in the city can be intervened, it is important to understand what exactly composes the city density. For some, in order for a city to be considered a Metropolis, the city has to be extremely dense with no space in between buildings. People have to be bumping into each other and no gaps are allowed. In the article “Mutant Geographies: Speculations on the Urban Transformation of Detroit” Dan Pitera challenges

what such appropriate urban density means and goes on to say that an “appropriate urban density can have gaps and open spaces”<sup>2</sup>. Society seems to be scared by the open space and the solution that is often seen for a cavity is the construction of a building. A cavity in the city does not need the same remedy as the dentists use in a cavity on the human tooth. When one goes to the dentist with a cavity, the cavity is completely filled to prevent further decay. The cavity in the city is different. It does not need to be completely filled with a building to mask the decay. Spaces like a cavity in a city have to be carefully examined and the intervention of it needs to be thought out. Sometimes a building mass in the space is the solution required for the area; but such does not have to be the main solution and ultimate goal of an intervention for a cavity. A cavity can still be an open space but with a purpose, and not merely a space that has been turned into a parking lot for example, because of lack of other option.

### *Site*

To examine such phenomenon that happens in cities all over the world, Detroit, Michigan, was selected to serve as an exploration of cavities. Detroit is a city that has gone through innumerable changes. Once seen as one of the major capitals of the world, Detroit is now a different place. History has left its marks in the city and it is not hard to notice as one drives down the streets of the motor city. With such rapid changes, Detroit’s fabric is composed of many cavities that are in the process of decay and due to its abundance it is the perfect place for exploring the intervention of such cavities.

The cavities chosen are located in an area that is now

trying to make its way back. With new building being built and others being renovated, a community is trying to be created in this neighborhood. Office buildings, restaurants, pharmacies and new condos are some of the new developments happening in the area. Even though there are traces of a community trying to be built, without support spaces in the area it would be difficult for a community to establish itself. With that in mind, cavities that are in between the new developments in the area were selected to act as support spaces for this community that is about to grow.

### *Public versus Private*

Since medieval times, the public square has been an important component of a community. That is where the people gather and the public life of the city happens. A city without a public life does not create community and it is unable to grow not only socially, but also economically. The movement of people throughout the city helps the city to develop and keep moving forward.

The modern society has isolated itself from the world by putting themselves into private vehicles where their car windows are not even rolled down to allow some minimal interaction with the exterior world. People pass by spaces without noticing them, and the pedestrian path has become an ignored layer within the city's fabric. Such technology has helped with the isolation of the individual from the public side of the city. Life has been privatized along with consumerism in the capitalist society in which we live on today, and the public life of the city has been left forgotten along with its benefits that are brought to the creation of a community.

In the article "The Public Domain" by Richard Sen-

net, Sennet argues on the disappearance of a public life in the city. Sennet interprets the public life as more than a relaxation exercise for the human, but a life experience to be kept. Sennet goes on to say that “out in public people are able to experience sensations and human relations which one could not experience in any other social setting or context.”<sup>3</sup> The experience of enjoying yourself in public has been erased from the modern life. With that in mind, individuals stopped to interact with each other and became afraid to do so. Barriers were created, and people walk around as if they had an invisible shield and the right to be left alone. The public behavior became a matter of observation and passive participation. <sup>4</sup>

The lack of community is a reflection of what the modern life has done to people’s life and the only way to bring this back is to create spaces where human interaction can happen. Therefore, public spaces are sometimes mistaken and are created as a connection between places instead of a space for the people to stay in, enjoy themselves and meet others. The Kassab Mall at the University of Detroit Mercy, for example, stands in between the Universities oldest dormitory, Holden Hall, and the Student Life Building. Such public square is where major student events take place, but unless it is a programmed event, it is rare to see students “hanging out” at the Kassab Mall. The reason being is because the space is not an inviting space for people to spend their times in and interact with each other. It is a prime location due to being between two spaces full of student life. Therefore the public space is designed as a space to pass by instead of people being in. It serves merely as a connection between different points of the campus and does not cele-

brate the building of a community in the campus setting.

With that in mind it is important to note that connection spaces are not something negative, therefore together with connecting spaces there should be anchor spaces. Such are spaces that attract people into them and make people want to stay in there. The people in this case are what make the space. Without them they would still be a cavity. It may be a well taken care cavity, but still a cavity that lacks the main essence of a space, the people.

### *Movement*

As human being we are in constant movement. Such movement is most of the times a part of our everyday lives and has become a routine, such that one does not perceive it anymore. Take into consideration for example when one is walking in a sidewalk and it is unlevelled by a degree. Right at that moment, one is taken from their comfort level of walking through a leveled straight forward space. Or we can also look at spaces where the sidewalk formed puddles after a rain. At that point the movement is interrupted and the human becomes aware of the surrounding environment. Every step that is to be taken is thought of. The body's balance, how one leg is going to be the support, how the landing is going to be, if it is necessary to jump, all of these elements are thought of and the human being becomes aware of not only the surrounding environment, but also their own body.

Paul Verillio explores the 3rd spatial possibility for architecture referred to as the oblique plane.<sup>5</sup> The oblique plane is referred as the investigator of a tactile relationship between building and body primarily activated by disequilibrium. "Architecture will no

longer be dominated by the visual, the façade, but it will relate to the human body as receptive totality.”<sup>5</sup>

What Verillio means with the oblique plane is that the disequilibrium brings about the perception and consciousness of movement. Once one is taken away from their normality, a “switch” within their brain is activated and one becomes aware of the surrounding and their body movement. Architecture, through the exploration of disequilibrium, has the ability to make human beings become aware of their body and every movement they make, bringing in this experience to the person’s soul.

### *Movement, Dance and the Space*

Watching a dancer engage a space is a magical experience. As a spectator one can perceive that the dancer is more than moving through the space. The dancer is relating to the space in a different level. In the book “Body, Memory and Architecture” Bloomer talks about how dancers feel the space. Their experience is beyond superficial and it is about understanding and experiencing the space in a different level than others do. Dancers not only create a relationship to the space outside their bodies, but also sense an essential relationship to the inside.<sup>6</sup> How can the dancers’ engagement be translated to the experience of a person engaging in a public space? How can one’s experience in a public space be more than superficial and make an impact on someone’s life? How can a regular person walking through a space experience movement in a level that is beyond just moving from one place to the other without the perception of such and their body? How can one start to become aware of their own body and its surrounding as a basis to experience the space?

Such questions are embedded in this thesis exploration. A vital aspect of a dancer's maintenance of a sense of body center while moving in space is the continuous awareness of the pull of gravity.<sup>6</sup> Such perception of the space helps the dancer engage and feel the space in a different level. Architecture and design can do the same to a person. The manner in which a space is designed can start to make humans more aware of their body and space that surrounds them. Spaces can and should be carefully designed to give a broader level of experience to the human being, instead of simply being a passage way for example.

### *Movement, Skateboarding and the Space*

“There is an immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the body's deployment in space and its occupation of space...This is a truly remarkable relationship: the body with the energies at its disposal, the living body, creates or produces its own space; conversely, the laws of space, which is to say the laws of discrimination in space, also govern the living body and the deployment of its energies.”<sup>7</sup>

The above paragraph describes the experience of skateboarding and the engagement of one's body with the space while skateboarding. The experience of a skateboarder moving through space is such that can only be experience by jumping on top of a skateboard. A relationship is created between the skateboarder and the space, and the manner in which the skateboarder sees the space is different than a person walking. The space is analyzed in a different form, and every movement is calculated to achieve an end goal. Elements within the space are also analyzed. A ledge is seen as

more than a ledge, a bench is more than a bench. Every detail in an element becomes perceived and explored.

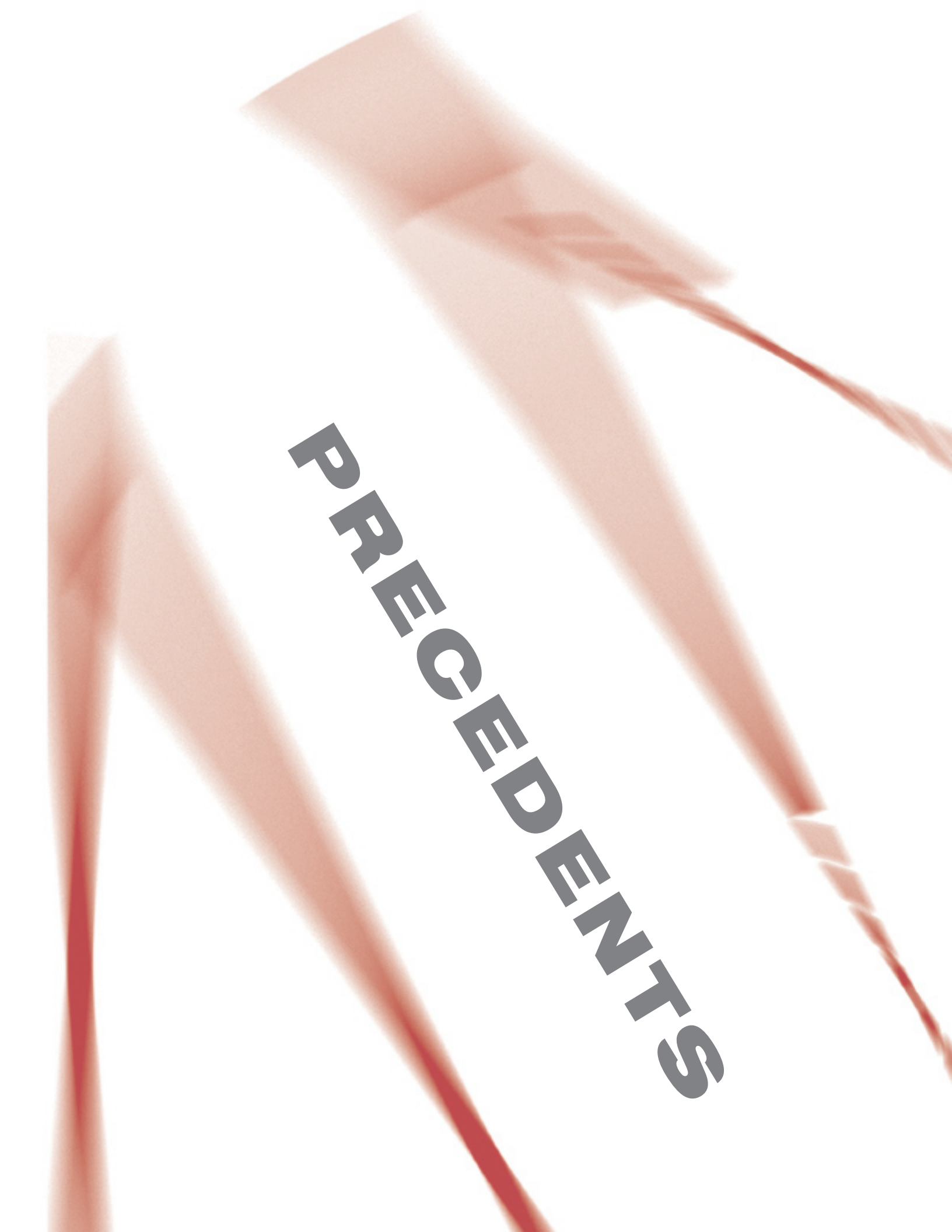
Skateboarding is an activity which makes the person become aware not only of the surrounding environment, but also their own body. The experience one has once on top of a skateboard is such that elevates the body acknowledgement. "Skateboarding uses, besides intense vision, a responsiveness of touch, sense, balance, hearing, muscular control, strength, agility and fluidity by which to perform."<sup>8</sup> In an interview to skateboarding magazine *SkateBoarder*, experienced skateboarder Peralta describes skateboarding as an "activity that you use your whole body and your whole mind...you can't help but flow."<sup>9</sup> Skateboarding movement is very similar to the type of movement a dancer does. The manner in which a skateboarder moves is "felt rather than seen."<sup>10</sup> The space is sensed and the experience is taken in, to later become a memory and a story to be told.

But how can skateboarding relate to architecture? Its relationship is closer than one may think. Skateboarding helps to rethink architecture's manifold possibilities. It produces space, time and self and it is architecture not as a thing, but as a production of space, time and social being.<sup>11</sup> Skateboarding takes architecture to a level of exploration and thinking which takes back to the essence of architecture. Architecture becomes more than a shelter, façade or shape. Through skateboarding architecture becomes a space where experiences are explored.







The background of the page features a soft, out-of-focus image of a hand holding a pen, writing on a document. The hand and pen are rendered in a light, warm tone, creating a professional and focused atmosphere. The text is centered over this background.

# **PRECEDENTS**



Rendering of proposed new park and redevelopment of Broadway in channel area



# bradford city centre master plan

ALSOP LTD  
Bradford, England  
2003-2008



Bradford City history has something in common with Detroit. In the mid 1990's race riots happened in the city, which affected the city both economically and socially. In order to promote new development, public and private sectors decided to invest in the public realm. The master plan looks into opening spaces that connect neighborhoods to the city center. To accomplish that, many unused buildings are demolished in order to open the needed public space. By removing the unused structures, the topography as well as waterways of the city are revealed, and a whole new landscape is found. Gardens, wetlands, orchards, playgrounds, and recreational fields are just some of the few elements found in the new landscape. The master plan is seen by the designers as a social response, since during the research phase of the project, the designers found that the residents of the city of Bradford did not identify themselves with the city as a whole, but with their neighborhood districts. Through the increasing of public spaces and pedestrian paths, the city hopes that it will encourage the development of new retail and entertainment activities to develop in the city.

The Bradford City Master plan is a very interesting approach to city revitalization project. In most master plan projects, buildings are added to the city fabric as a way to try to "mask" the cavities that are created within the city. In this case, the designers focused on the public life of a city. It is with the improvement of the public life that the city of Bradford hopes to make people proud of living in the city and being part of such community, and the development of the city is a reflection of the quality of life within it.





KEY

- 1. CHETHAM'S SCHOOL
- 2. CATHEDRAL
- 3. NEW CATHEDRAL STREET
- 4. MARKS & SPENCER
- 5. EXCHANGE SQUARE
- 6. CORN EXCHANGE
- 7. CATHEDRAL GARDEN
- 8. URBIS CENTRE
- 9. MARKET STREET
- 10. PICCADILLY GARDENS

# manchester city centre master plan

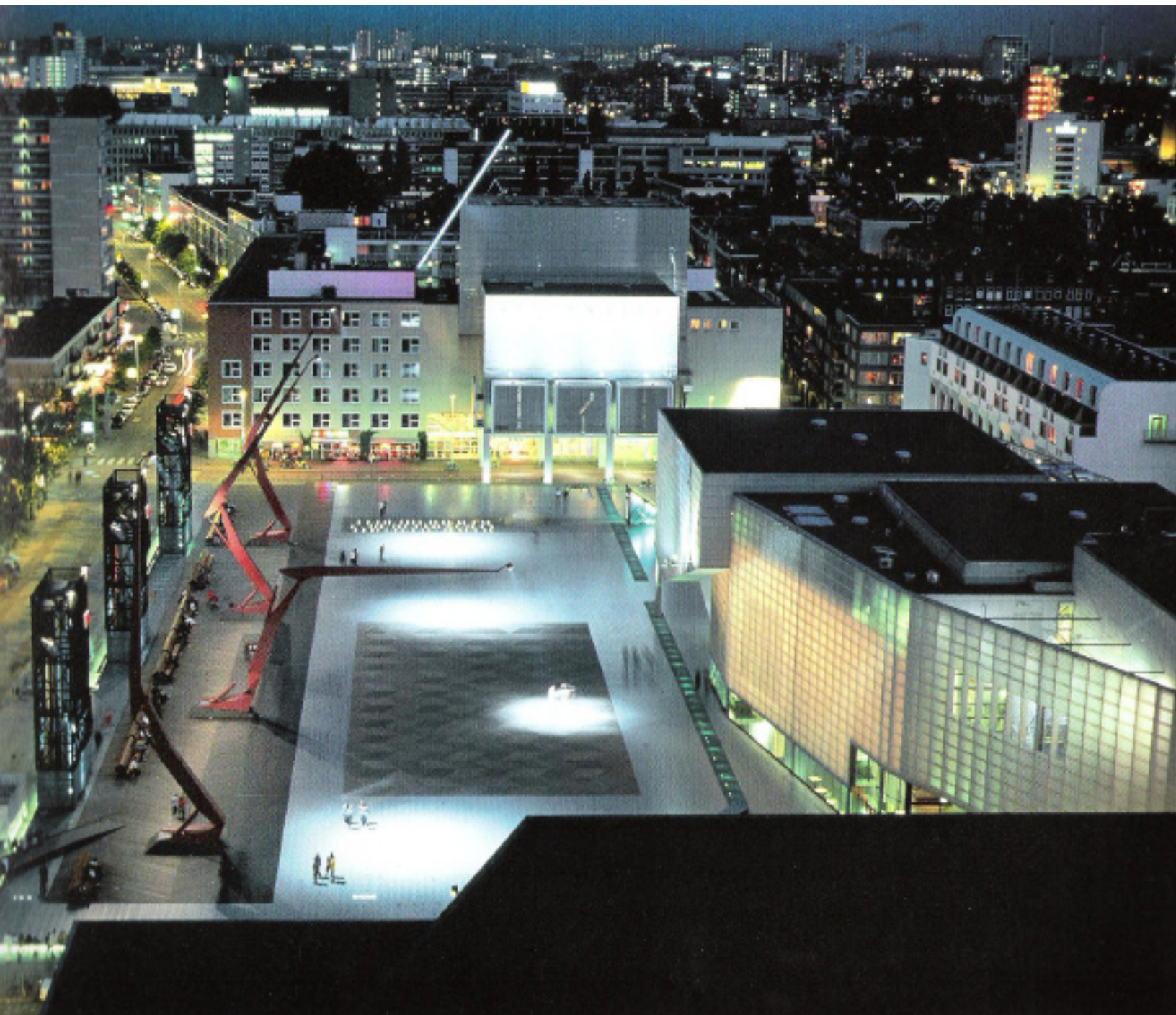
EDAW  
Manchester, England  
1996-present



In 1996 the heart of Manchester suffered a terrorist attack that destroyed over one million square feet of commercial and retail space, which affected the city not only physically, but also socially and economically. The new master plan not only rebuilds damaged structures, but it also creates new public spaces. The plan helped changed the city's public image by the implementation of new public spaces. Such spaces also helped with the revitalization of the local businesses that had been destructed by the bombing. One of the green spaces created in the master plan is what is the Piccadilly Gardens. The site where the Piccadilly Gardens lies used to be a parking lot. Now in its place, a very pleasant environment was created for the public life of the city to happen. Visitors to the Piccadilly Gardens can enjoy the large green law spaces as well as the interactive water feature.

In the Manchester master plan, the designers realize that by getting the public life of the city restructured and bringing people out of their homes was the best way for people to forget the horrible memories of the terrorist attacks. Public spaces help create a community environment in the city and create a place for public interaction to happen.







# schouwburgplein [theater square]

West 8 Urban Design & Landscape Architecture BV  
Rotterdam, the Netherlands  
1991-1996



The Theatre Square, as the name implies, has as its intent to act as a public stage for temporary events and changing uses. The designers in this case wanted to make the public as the first person and act as the “actor” instead of just a passive spectator. The plaza is slightly elevated from the above surrounding area to create a distinct boundary. Therefore in this case creating a boundary between the surrounding area and the square creates a dichotomy between what the designers wanted to accomplish (to create a public involvement) and what the boundary signifies. The boundary in this case intimidates the interaction of the street and sidewalk with the public square being also and becoming a barrier instead of just a boundary. Although the intent of leaving the space “empty” and let the public fill it in and create its own program, it not as simple as it looks. The space becomes a enormous open space and it fails to create a certain warmth and stimulate community building.







## flora grub gardens

San Francisco, CA



What could simply be considered a flower shop has turned into a community gathering place. This space not only sells flowers, but tries to make the public part of it and engage in its environment. Inside as part of the program, one can find a cafe as a support space for this community gathering space as well as an indoor and outdoor space for the display of the plants. Therefore such display is done in a subtle way. The display becomes part of the environment instead of being a plant showroom. It is the design intended to have people linger in the space instead of acting as a pass by space where people come once in a while to shop for some plants. It is a space where people who love gardening or someone that just likes being by plants can hang out, enjoy themselves and spend some good quality time.

In this small scale project, one can see how community gathering and engagement can be created in a simple manner and not only with a city master plan. In this case, a small private sector found something in common in between the people of the area and built upon that to help build community in the area, turning this into more than a mere flower shop around the corner



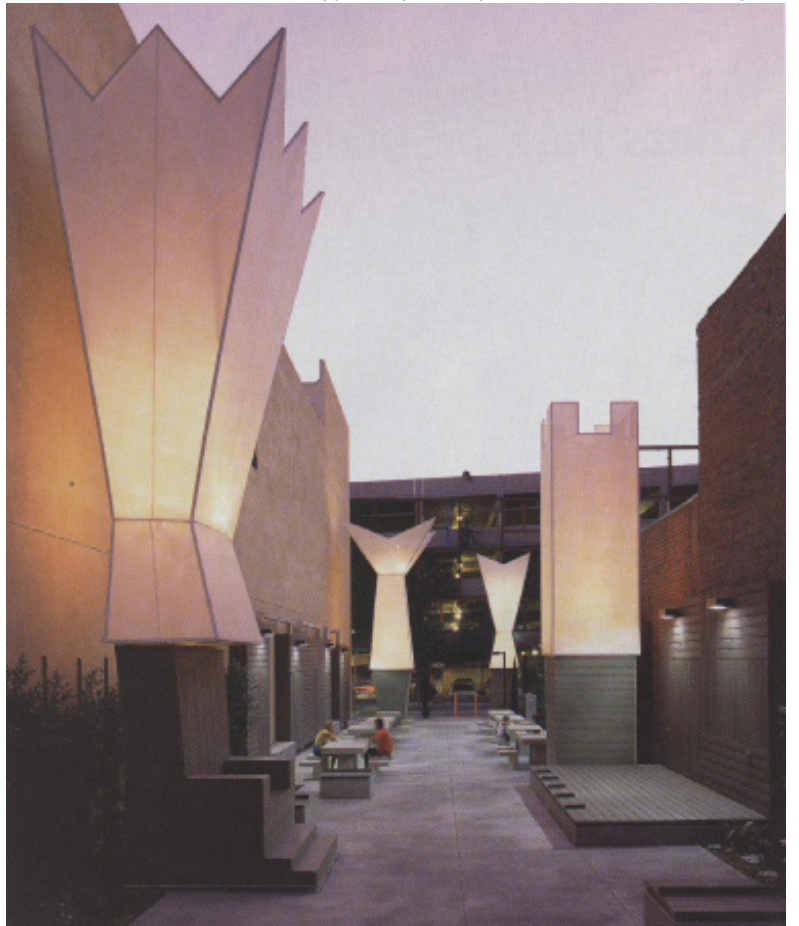


# chess park

Rios Clementi  
Hale Studios  
Glendale, CA



What is now known as the Glendale Chess Club match location used to be a dimmed passageway which connected a parking lot to surrounding shops and a theater. The passageway lost its function when pedestrians avoided going through the path since it was dark and uninviting. The city became concerned that the space would fall into further disuse [or misuse] and decided to transform the space into an usable environment. With that in mind, Rios Clementi Hale Studios were commissioned to create a pocket park that would engage the community. People were scared of going into the alley due to the lack of sense of security. With the addition of light poles the space became more inviting and people were driven into the space, becoming a space where one could go at any time of the day. The new lighting is what makes this space so successful. Alleys in pop culture are perceived as spaces where bad things happen. With the large scale lighting poles the space becomes more illuminated and contradicts the typical perception of what an alley is.





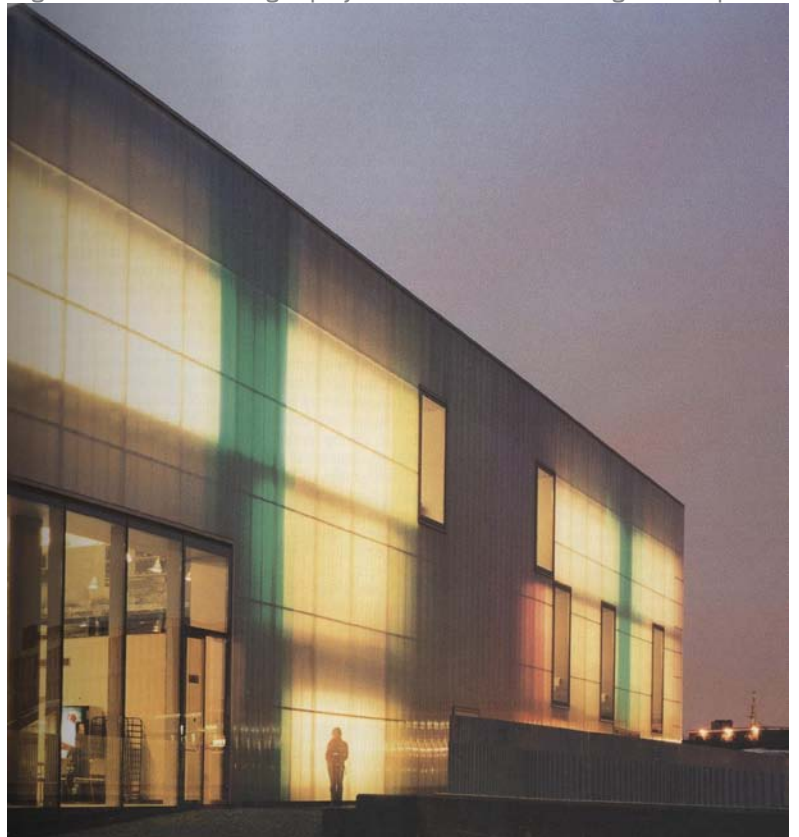


## laban dance center

Herzog & de Meuron  
London, England



The Laban Dance Center is a dance center dedicated to Rudolf Laban. Rudolf Laban developed important theories of choreography and dance notation, and is well known for his studies relating to body and movement. In this dance center, Herzog & de Meuron use of intense colors to provide a means of heightening the interior's streetwise vitality, promoting a secondary move. The building is wrapped with translucent walls which help create a relationship and engagement to the surrounding space. At night, the translucent wall reveals luminous interiors as well as shadows from the dancers, providing the passersby to engage with the structure. The light passing through the translucent wall provides an ever-changing colored backdrop. By day the building takes on to reflections of the surrounding, becoming part of the one. Therefore movement and motion is not limited to the dance studio spaces. Throughout the building, ramping floors, spiral stairs and dynamic curves engages one with the environment creating a kind of choreography as one move through the space.



The background features several rolled-up documents in shades of light brown and beige, with a quill pen resting on them. The documents are partially unrolled, showing their texture and the way they are tied together. The quill is positioned diagonally across the center of the frame.

# **SITE CRITERIA**



In order to select the perfect site for this Thesis exploration, some criterias were created for the selection of one.

*Urban location*

The site selected needs to be located in an urban location that lacks the human interaction aspect of a city.

*Cavity within the city*

With a cavity in the city it is meant that the site needs to be a forgotten space that has been marginalized over the years. A space which has been ignored and if there is a current activity in it, it is an unprogrammed and temporary activity.

*More than one, but connected*

It is expected that the site chosen may be numerous small spaces that are somehow connected. Such connection can be litteral or not.



The background of the page is a soft-focus photograph of a hand holding a pen, poised to write on a document. The lighting is warm and natural, highlighting the texture of the skin and the paper. The overall composition is clean and professional, suggesting a focus on precision and attention to detail.

# **SITE SELECTION**




When searching for a site location, Detroit was the city that would not come out of my mind. One of the reason being is that I have become familiar with Detroit and its history. But the other reason, and the reason that drove to the selection of such site, is because of the context in which the city of Detroit is. Detroit's tough past has affected the city economically, politically and most importantly socially. Its nickname "motorcity" is a true reality, since when one drives down the street, one does not see people walking on the sidewalks, but only cars riding down the street. This thesis plans on restructuring and improving the social life of the city and using this as a support for the revitalization of the city of Detroit.

The sites selected are in a part of town in which an effort to revitalize the community in that area has started. In this area, places such as a pharmacy, sports facilities, office buildings, community center and a few restaurants are part of the landscape. Therefore, such spaces are designed for the visitors and commuters that come by in the morning and leave in the afternoon. With many residential proposal running along Woodward, in order for an area like that to be reborn a community needs to be build, and it is with that in mind that such spaces were selected as the sites. They will serve as support spaces for the community that is about to grow in there, and it is its hope that such support spaces help create a community.



The background features several overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of red and orange, creating a dynamic, layered effect. A hand holding a pen is visible in the upper right quadrant, with the pen tip pointing towards the center. The overall aesthetic is modern and professional.

# **SITE ANALYSIS**



The site selected helps engage the body and mind in an unconscious manner. As one travels down the path [alley] one is in a tighter, dark space. The feelings that one feels as they travel down the path and the way the body moves through such space is different than when one gets to the node. The node is a more wide open space. When one lands in such space after coming from the path, the body changes the manner in which it moves and experiences the space. Such change between compression and release engages one's body movement and stimulates one's mind to a different level. The pictures to the right are a walk through the site. This site was chosen because of such connection to the body movement experience both physically as well as mentally. The graphical representation to the left shows in white the cavities selected to be explored.





To help with site analysis and comprehend the site location more in depth, figure ground of the site's surrounding was done. It was found in such observational study, That the surrounding areas of the sites selected are composed of many vacant lots that are mostly used as surface parking lots for the motorcity commuters tha live in the suburban areas of Metro Detroit. During such observational exercise, it was also noticed that although many of the existing buildings that surround the area look abandoned, they are not completely abandoned. Most of the buildings do not function to its entirety, but the majority has about 10% of the building occupied, may that be the bottom portion only or some apartments or offices in the upper levels.





- occupied building
- vacant building

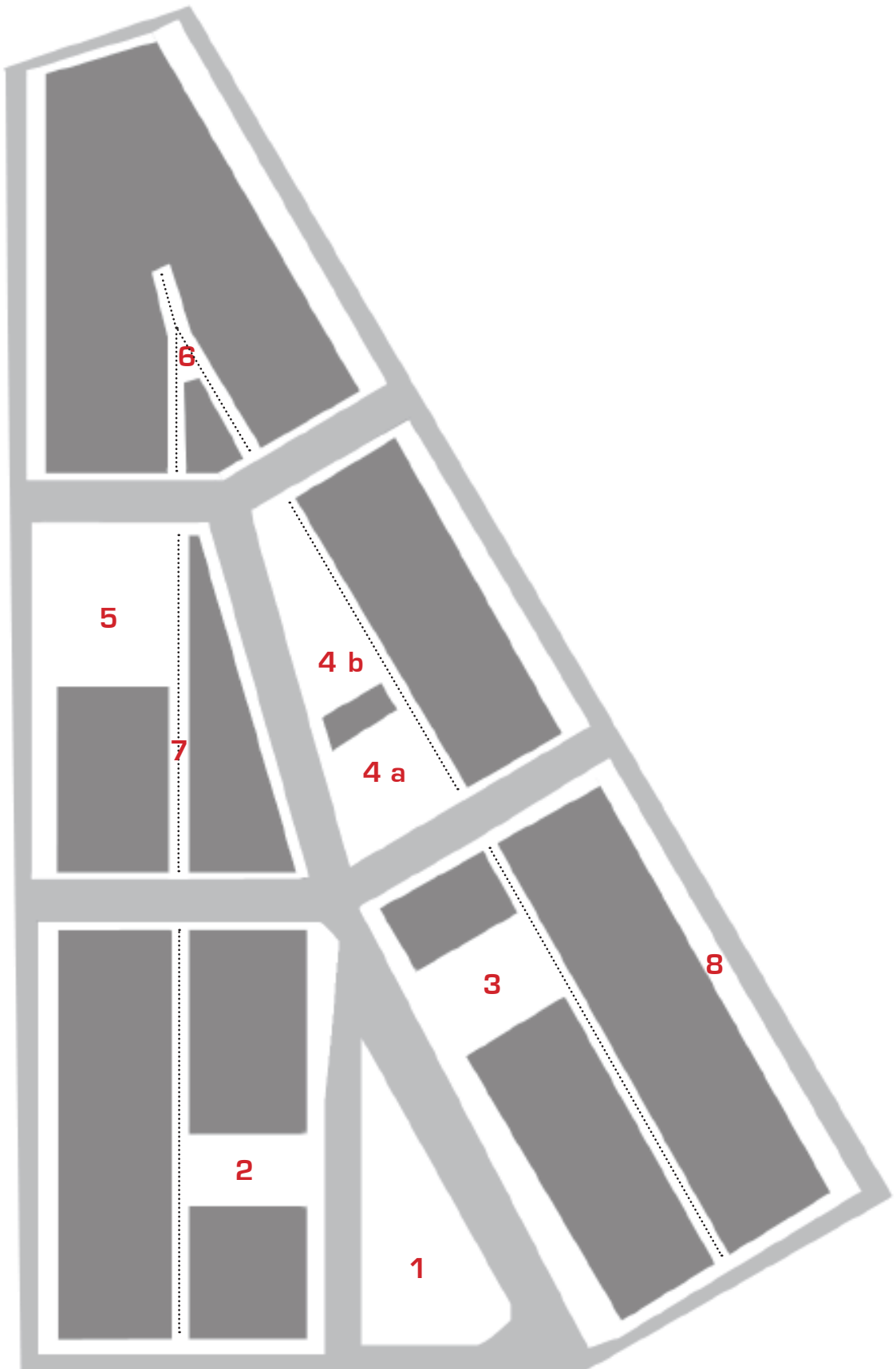


- people mover
- green spaces
- parking structure
- entertainment
- ally



A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a pen, writing on a document. The hand is positioned at the top right, and the pen is angled downwards towards the bottom left. The document is a light-colored paper with some faint lines. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white. The text 'S GOING TO EXISTENCE' is overlaid on the image, rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise.

**S GOING TO EXISTENCE**



This thesis exploration, being a master plan and reinterpretation of existing spaces, requires to first having a description of what is found in the existing conditions in order for the spaces to be later explored in depth.

## 1. Capitol Park

Capital Park is now a green area within the city of Detroit that has been left behind. The park received its name for being the side of the very first Capitol Building. Once the Capitol Building moved to Lansing, the building that was once existent became a library on the first floor and the city's first high school on the second floor. The reason for the placement of such building in this small triangular shape building is due to the Woodward plan, which had the triangular shapes around the city be the space for the city's public buildings. With changes throughout time, the building that was once existent was taking away to house a plaza and the monument of the city's first Governor. The space became a park on 1893, but due to Detroit's rough past, the site is now not the most desirable space for one to spend time in. Also as a programmatic feature of the existing site is the Downtown Detroit Bus Terminus, which is schedule to be moved to Rosa Parks Boulevard sometime in the year of 2008. With such change, the park's atmosphere is going to be changed. Most of the people that interact in the space are in there to wait for the bus, but once this stops being a major stop, the park will become another abandoned cavity within the cities many.

## 2.

This cavity is located between two existing semi abandoned buildings. With a size of approximately 6,425 square feet, this cavity is now used as a surface lot during the week and events for the commuter community that lives in the suburb of Detroit.

## 3.

This cavity is located between two existing semi abandoned buildings. With a size of approximately 10,650 square feet, this cavity is now used as a surface lot during the week and events for the commuter community that lives in the suburb of Detroit.

## 4.

This two cavities although separate share common elements. They are both placed in the corner of 2 streets [Grand River and Griswold for 4a and Clifford and Griswold for 4b] with an abandoned building in the middle between them. Therefore they share something different than the others, which is the “disappearance” of the alley, since one blends into the space and the two become one.

4a- Approximately 6,800 square feet

4b- Approximately 6,600 square feet

## 5.

This cavity 's main difference compared to the rest is that the building which is connected to is actually occupied. It is currently an office building with some retail in the floor. Therefore, the space is just like the others, used as a surface parking lot. The cavity is approximately 21,000 square feet.



**6.**

This is a space that is created due to being the point where both alleys meet. This space is surrounded by both occupied and abandoned buildings, but the building that is more connected to is the small V shape building located right in front of it. Currently it is a one story building that has traces of being a bar. The space creates such an interesting opportunity that recently in one of the site visits the site was being used as a location for a movie. The cavity is approximately 3,500 square feet.

**7**.....

The dotted elements in the key are the alley system that runs behind the cavities. Such alley system is now a literal connection between the spaces to be explored and is also a space to be explored. Its current condition is to serve as a service drive to existing business. Therefore, most of the alley is covered with trash and had broken pavement throughout.

**8.**

The rest of the identified spaces are the sidewalk which embrace the alley and the cavities. Now the sidewalks are just like any other with some trees and planters on them, but no space for a person to stop and interact with another.



A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a pen, writing on a document. The hand is positioned at the top right, and the pen is angled downwards towards the bottom left. The document is a light-colored paper with some faint lines. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

# IDENTIFICATION AND INTENT

Does every cavity within a city need to be filled and completely masked? Is it bad to have a cavity within the city fabric? This thesis starts to look at a city fabric and city's cavities from a different angle. A cavity in this case is not seen as something negative that needs to be completely filled with a mass, such as a building, as a way to attempt to create density within the city. This thesis is actually reversing the process of development by looking at the people and seeing them as the primary cause and impact within a neighborhood's growth. With that in mind, the cavities selected are going to be explored by looking at the human experience and engagement within the space as a primary source. The surrounding context, such as existing buildings, is going to be addressed but in this case in a delicate manner. Instead of addressing the vacant buildings and redesigning or taking them away, the intervention of the cavities that surround the existing building aspire to have a snowball effect in the surrounding. By bringing people into the city to enjoy and feel comfortable in the spaces created for them, pedestrian flow within the neighborhood will start to grow, which will later reflect on the neighborhood growth. Even though the primary focus of this thesis is in how to reactivate a cavity within the city as a way to impact a neighborhood growth, the surrounding environment is not to be ignored. In that sense, the spaces that are being explored around the existing structures, are going to address and be part of the existing, creating an interaction between the old and the new.

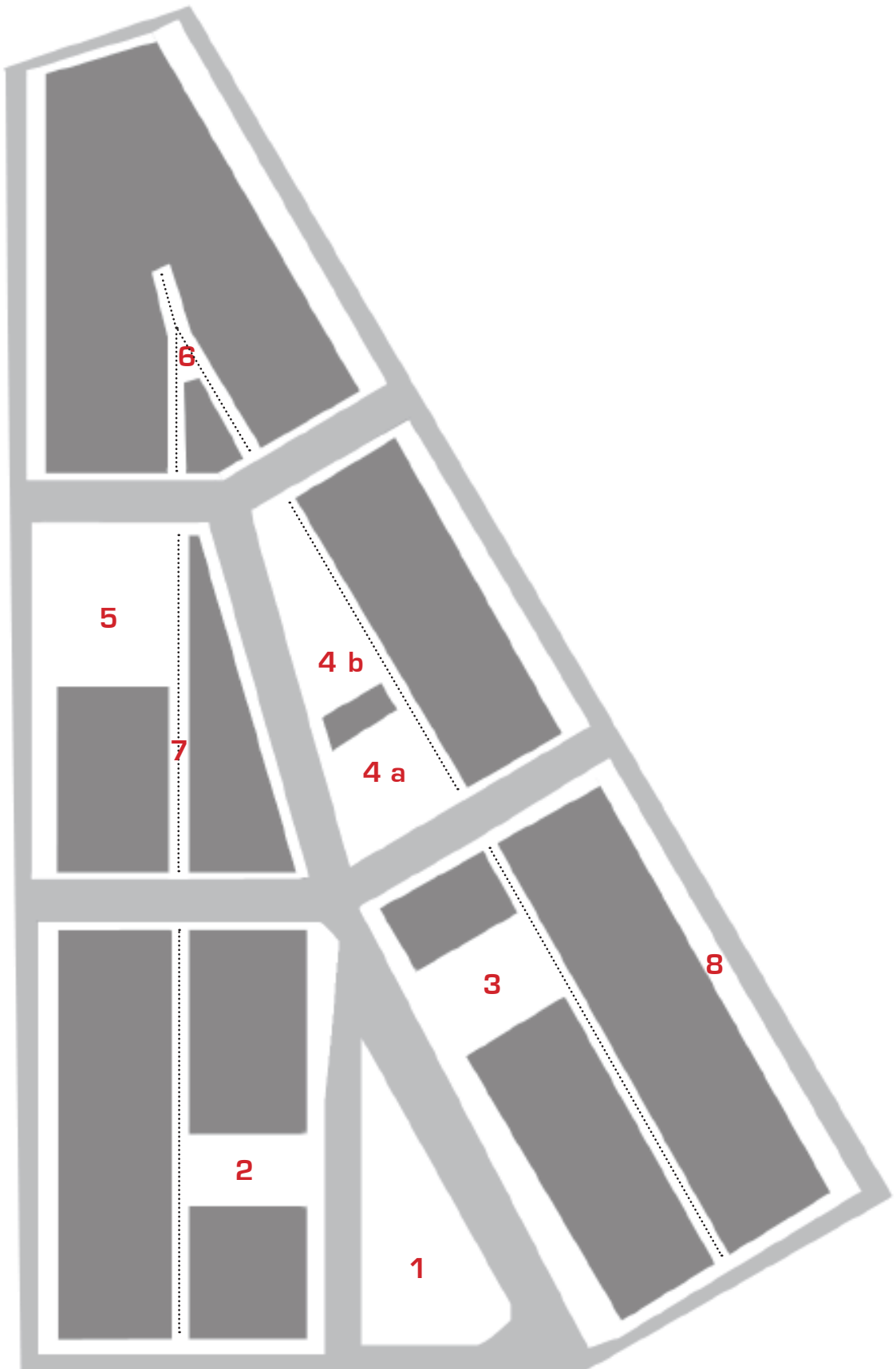
How are such thoughts and ideas going to be accomplished? To do so, spaces for the people are going

to be created in all open spaces that surround the existing structures. Studies of how dancers and skateboarders engage and experience a space will help with the development of the spaces designed for the people within the city. The cavities are seen as nodes where a main activity will happen that are connected by the alleys and sidewalks. The spaces created are intended to not create boundaries between different groups, and are meant to have all different people from different backgrounds and cultures to engage with each other.



The background features several rolled-up documents in shades of light brown and beige, with a quill pen resting on them. The documents are arranged diagonally, creating a sense of depth and history. The quill pen is positioned in the upper right quadrant, pointing towards the center. The overall aesthetic is that of an old, official record or a historical document.

# **PROGRAM**





The program of this thesis exploration is unique to what a typical architectural project program would entail. Since the intent of the thesis is to explore outdoor public spaces that focus on the people and their experience within the space, the best manner to portrait such is by a description of each space. Skateboarding and street dancing play an important role on the definition of this program. They are not only part of early studies of the engagement of the body, experience and space, but they are actually part of the program to be developed. Skateboarding at many times is seen as a marginal activity and street skateboarding is most of the time and unwelcomed activity within the city. The same can be said about street dancers. Many are seen by the close minded society as beggars when in reality it is an art. Both communities are what we can refer to as an underground community and they are seen in this thesis exploration as an essential part to the public's experience in the spaces to be created. Both arts, skateboarding and street dancing, are to be incorporate in the program without alienating these activities. In the contrary. Even though some spaces are going to be specifically programmed for such activities, they are not meant to alienate the skating community from the street dancing community from the rest of the users of the space. All of these users are invited to intermingle and interact with each other without the creation of barriers between them.

## **1. Capitol Park**

With the many changes to come for this existing green space, the programming of such needs to be

carefully thought of. This cavity will house some of the more functional elements from the spaces. They are:

- There is a large expectance of public to these developed cavities, therefore bathrooms with changing rooms and lockers are necessary.

- With the removal of the bus terminus from this area, all of the 6 bus shelters are not going to serve any use anymore. Therefore the number has to be reduced to a single bus shelter.

- Space for people to simply enjoy themselves and interact with others.

## 2.

This cavity is in a way connected to the Capital Park right in front. Due to such connection this cavity will be left more as an open space and house space for street basketball in order to attract individuals from all different ages.

## 3.

This cavity has as an emphasis to celebrate street dancing. Spaces designated for performance and practice of such art will be developed in this space. Therefore the street dancing experience is going to be going beyond the actual dancers and bleed into the general public's experience of the space. The landscape is going to be designed to present a type of unconscious choreography of the body moving through the space.

## 4.

In this case, the alley has disappeared. It is desired that the alley be again emphasized and celebrated. These spaces are going to be designed as one even though a building sits in the middle between the two cavities. This is what

is to be called the “garden.” It will be an exploration of what a meditation garden within the city is supposed to be. A space for people to stop, lay back, look to the inside of themselves and experience the space as a whole.

## 5.

Due to its location the main skateboarding hub is going to be located in here. This is not to be seen as a skate park since it is not to be seen as a segregation of the skateboarding community. Therefore it is a space in which the community can come together as a whole.

## 6. ....

The meeting point between the alleys is going to be treated as any other part of the ally is. It will house space for both the people running and exercising in the track as well as interventions for both the runners and skateboarders.

## 7

The alley is the connecting element between all the other cavities. This is where the fast pace movement will be primary and it can be seen as a sort of track where individuals can go running, speed walking, skateboarding and rollerblading. In the alley it is important to have a connection to the verticality of the space by addressing the walls of the existing structures.

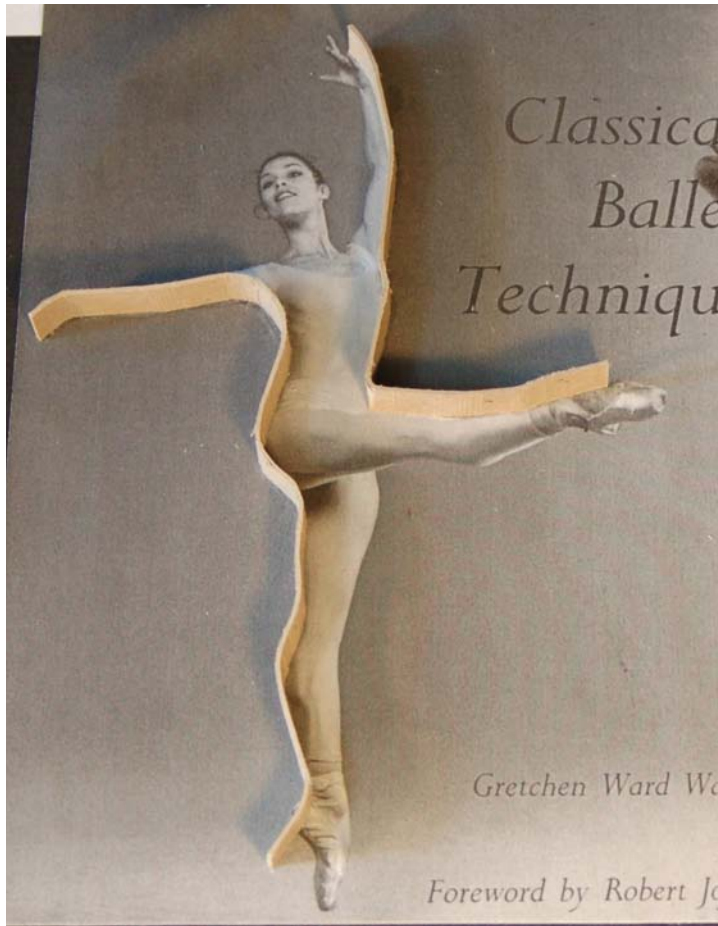
## 8.

The sidewalks are where the most interaction between the different communities are to happen. In such, elements will be designed to allow the interaction between the different groups of people to visit the space.



A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a pen, writing on a document. The hand is positioned at the top right, and the pen is angled downwards towards the bottom left. The document is white with some faint lines, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus light color. The overall tone is professional and focused.

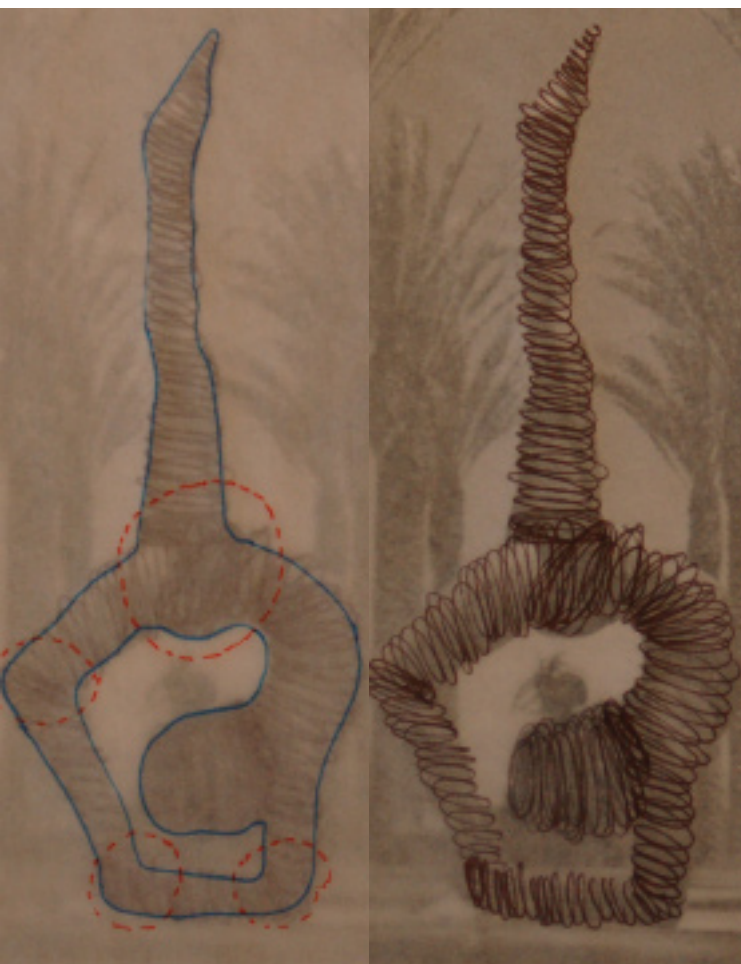
# **DESIGN PROCESS**



## body movement studies



Dancers perceive the built and surrounding space by FEELING the space. The level of body awareness and consciousness of body interaction with the space when one dances is something that this thesis aspires to explore in a public space. How can a human being doing an every day activity engage with the space and be aware of not only the surrounding elements, but also their body movement just like dancers do? The pull and push of gravity is an important element for dancers and such is celebrated in the movements that are created. With that in mind, studies of how the body elements emphasize, or deny, gravity were mapped. Through a series of strips cut out from chip board, the bodies of several dancers were highlighted so that a snapshot of a dancer in movement can be examined.





## body movement studies



The joints within the human body act as a sort of hinges to allow the human being to flexibly move through the space. Such hinges allows the human to explore the built environment in different levels and scales, may that be vertically, horizontally or inclined type of movement. Therefore when in movement in other for one to be able to stand up, there is the point of stress. The point of stress is where the body is being supported. It is at moments of unbalance that humans become aware of the pull of gravity and how their body must react to the instability of a situation. In this latter study, the body was mapped to emphasize the full movement and latter the “hinges” of the body were accented.



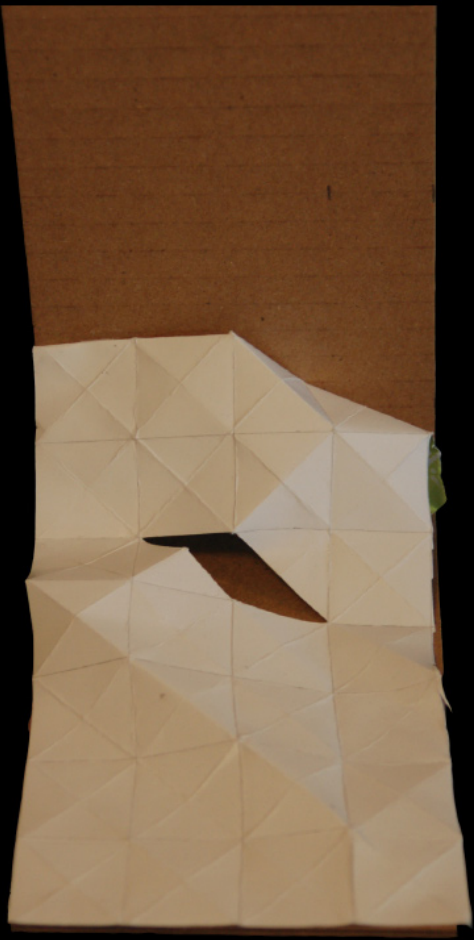
## exploration of the uneven plane

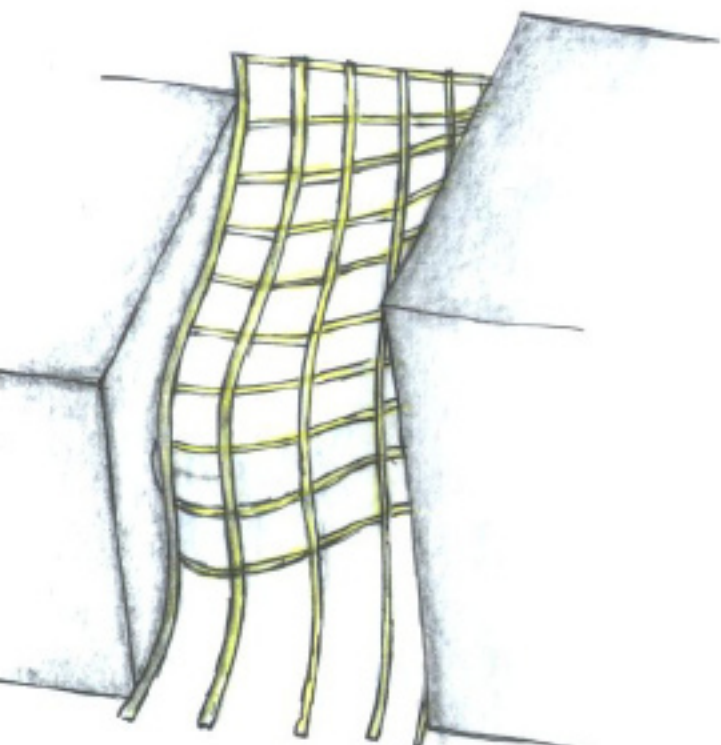


Paul Verilio in his investigations created what was called the oblique plane. The oblique plane is what Verilio called the investigator of a tactile relationship between building and body primarily activated by disequilibrium. With this in mind, a series of studies on the oblique plane were done. The oblique plane is to be incorporate in the design of the public spaces as an attempt to take the human movement throughout a space out of the usual smooth leveled plane. With the exploration and implementation of the oblique plane [or uneven plane as I would like to call], it is expected that the body and space awareness of the user of the space is increased. Such experience will be different from the normal everyday movement experienced and such will than become an experience to be remembered, a memory.

The uneven plane is broken into different level is this study models to allow for a greater change in the user's balance. These studies are explorations of different sections the uneven plane can be broken up and folded in and out, becoming part of the existing landscape.







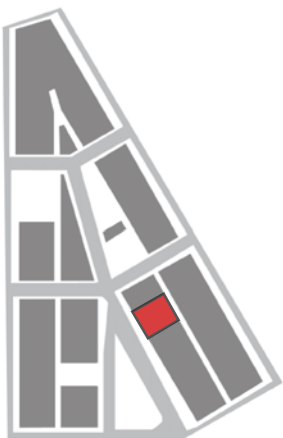
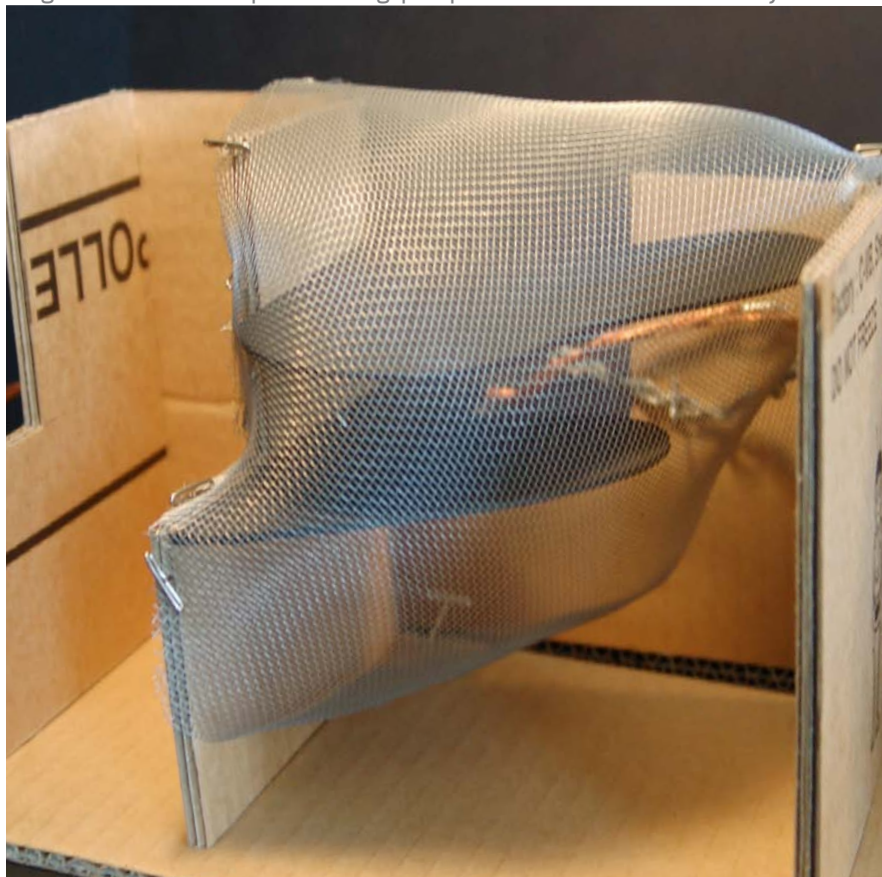
## **early design exploration**

The cavities started to be explored with real forms once thoughts and ideas were put together to investigate how the program will be physically interpreted.



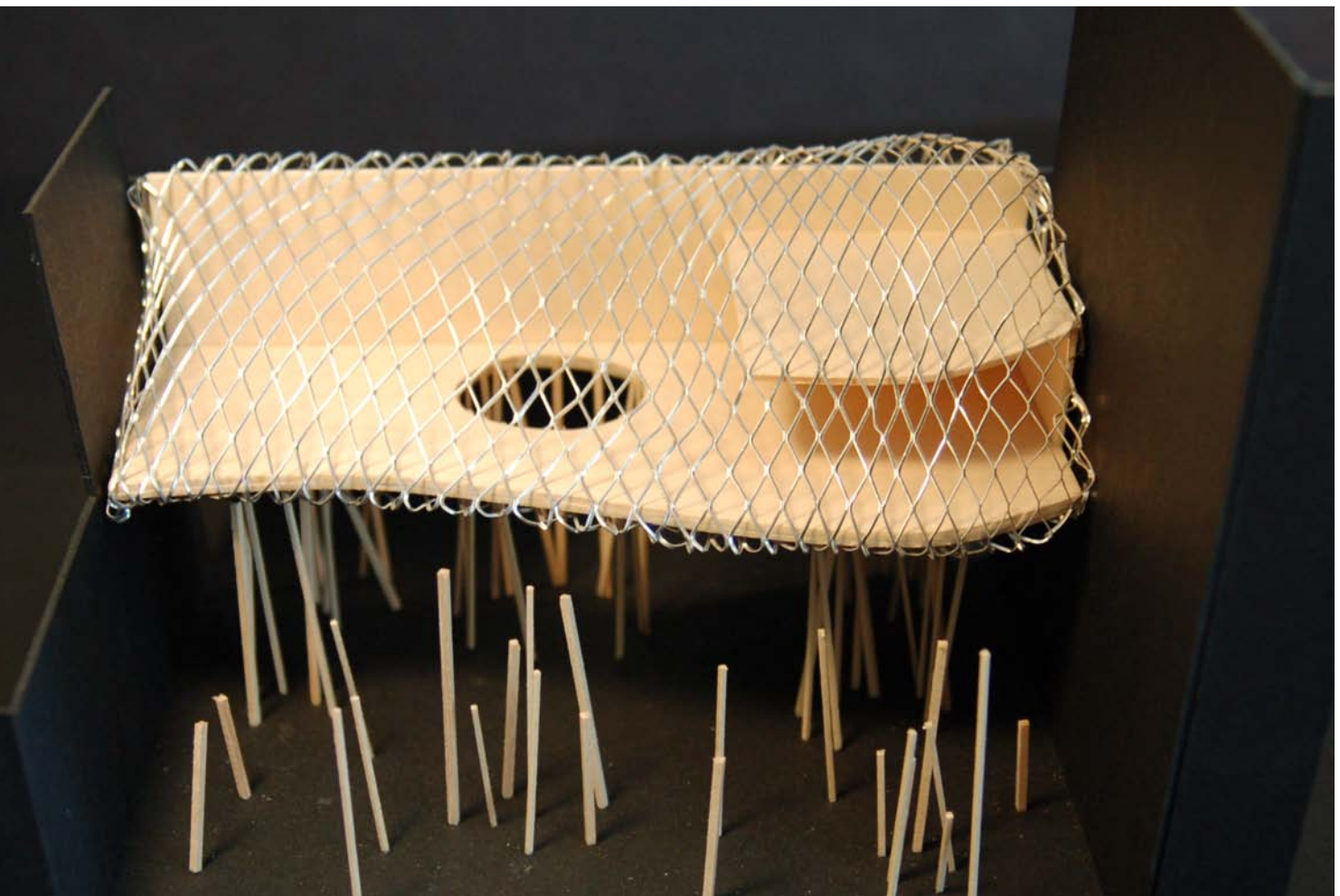


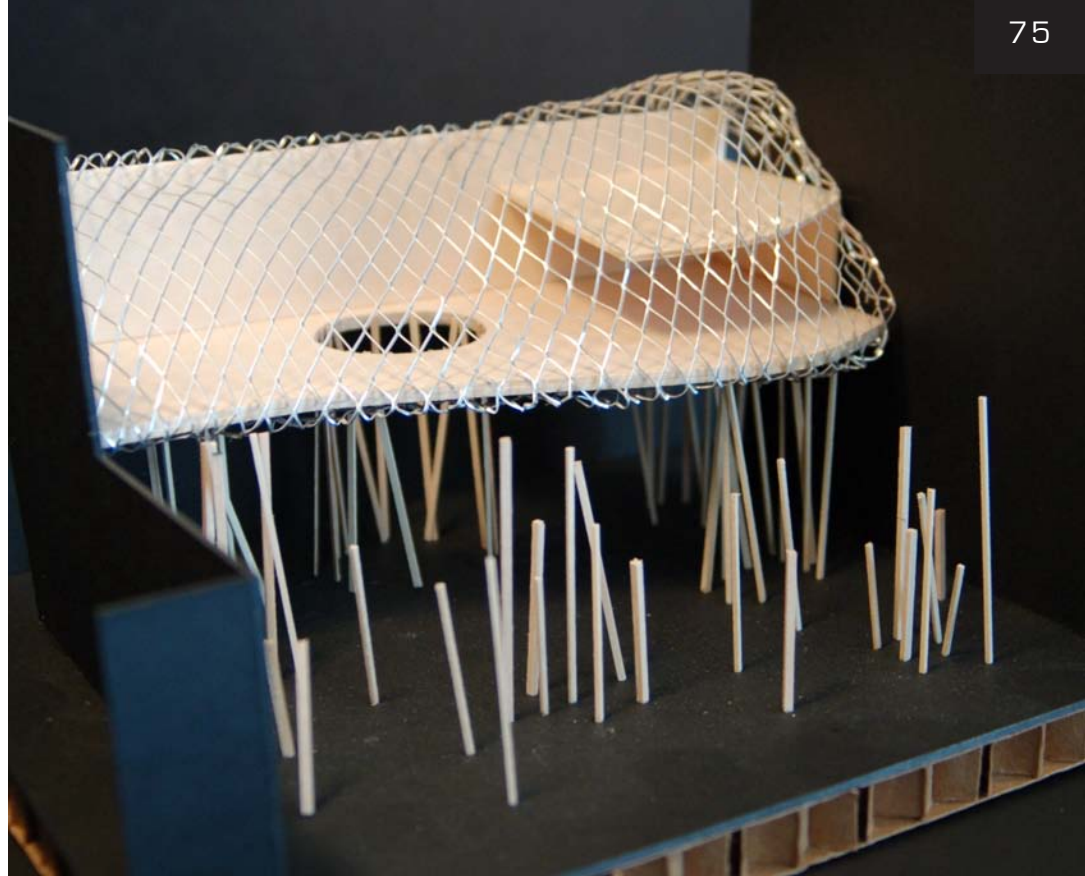
Dancing is one of the bases for the development of this thesis. Studies were previously made on how the dancer engages and moves through a built space. With that in mind, a space dedicated for street dancing is developed to be placed within one of the cavities. This space started as a loose interpretation of the facade. The facade in this case would be a glass structure completely transparent so that the public in the outside can still engage with the performers practicing in the space. The structure hangs from the two existing buildings on either side and starts to show dependency to the existing structures around the cavity. Through the hanging of the structure, a new cavity is created below. This cavity within the cavity is going to be a landscape space for the users passing by as well a space where street dancers interact in a more active manner with the public. The new structure is also positioned in an angle as an attempt to bring people into the hidden cavity.



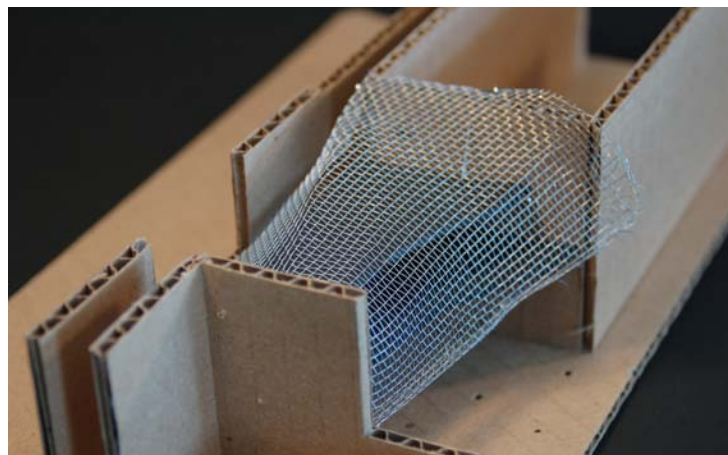
# DANCE

At this point in the design process, the dance space started to get more restricted and less loose than before. Floor plans were created and the space started to be more enclosed from the community than desired. The structure is still lifted from the ground and supported from the existing buildings with a glass structure embracing it; therefore the structure is also supported by thin steel poles. The poles also become part of the landscape making one's engagement with the space looser. Instead of a strict path for one to travel through, the steel poles form a choreography that changes every time one engages with the space. Every experience in the space is different from the one before, and this playfulness of spontaneous movement helps one engage with the landscape to a different level.

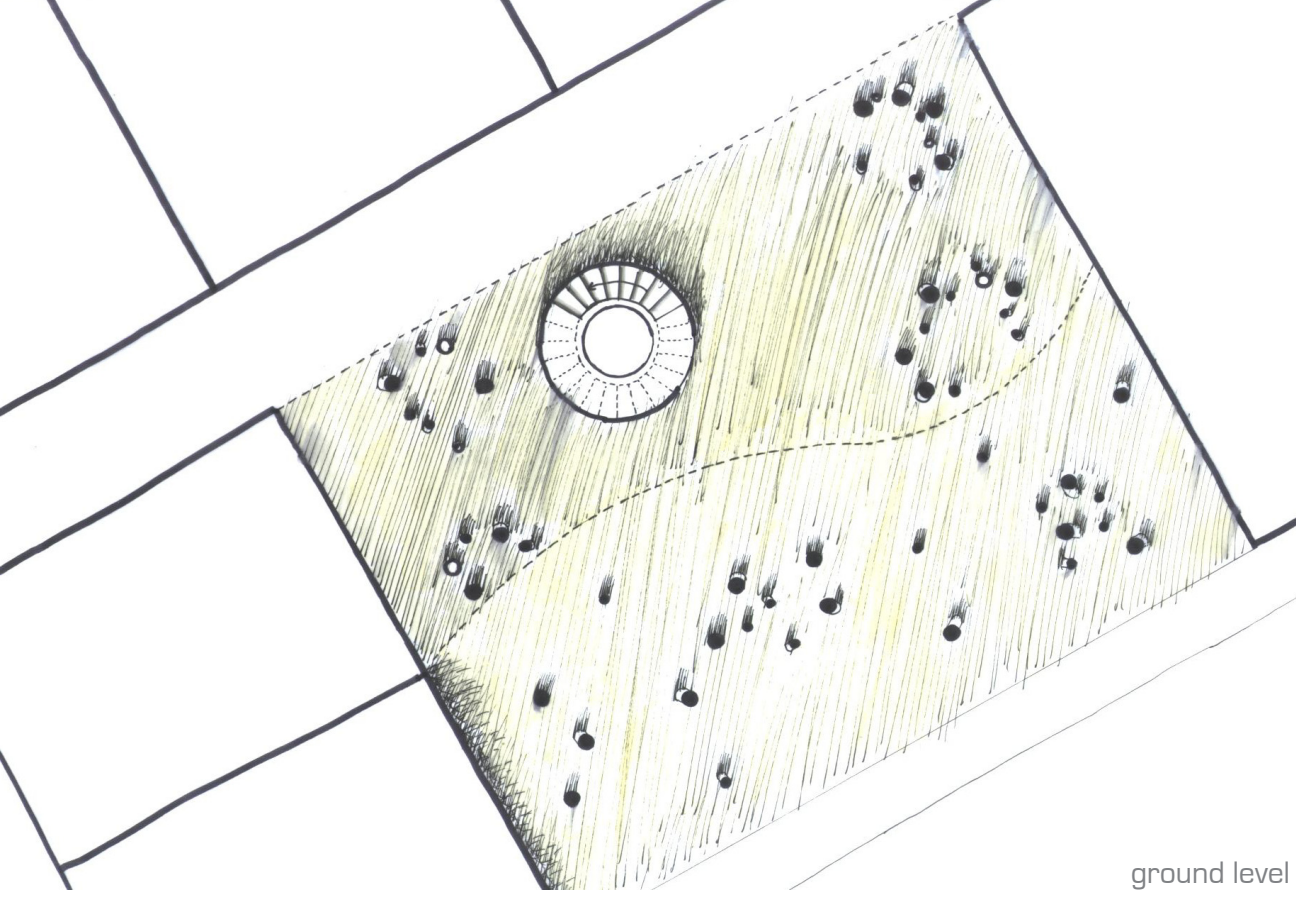




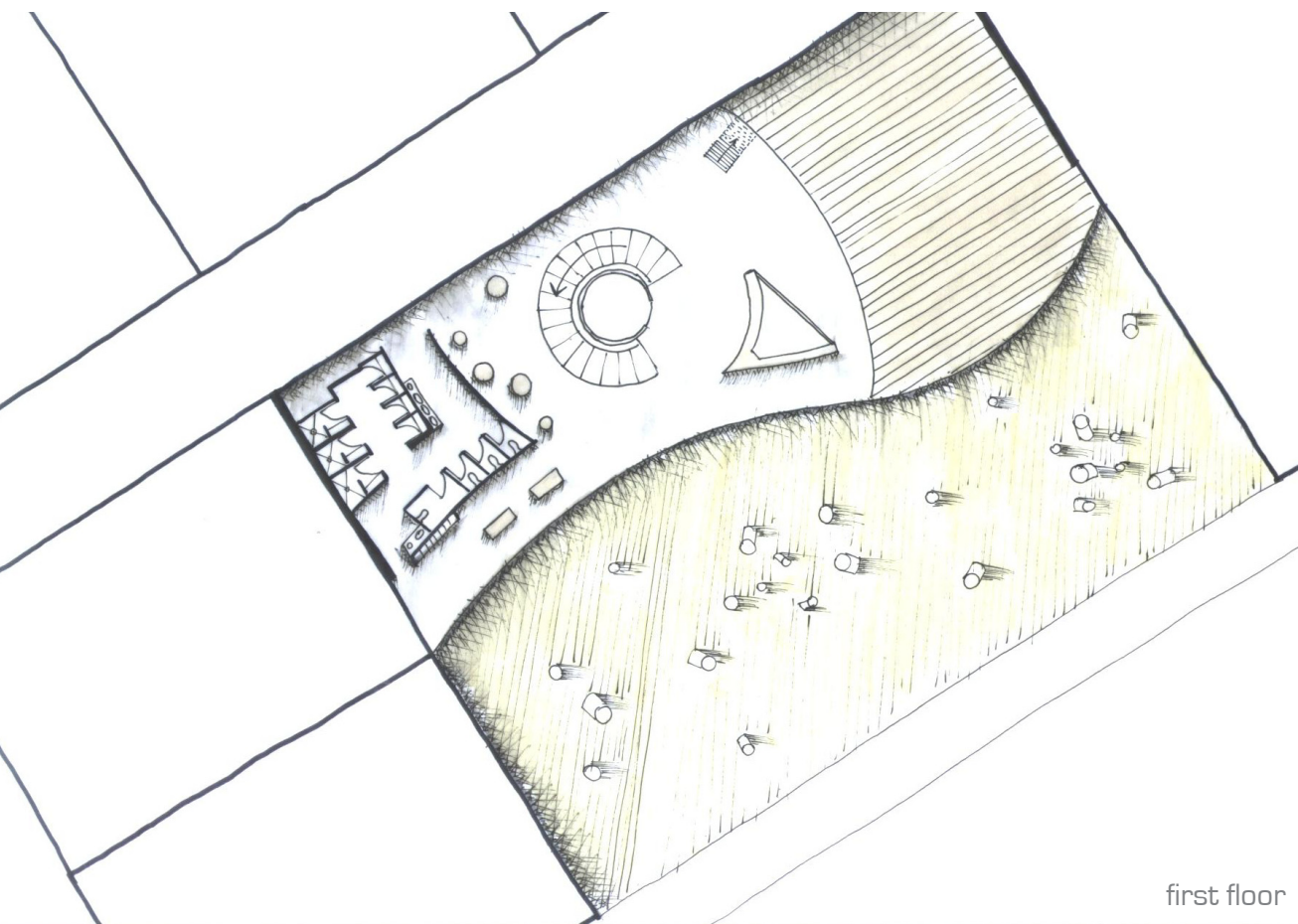
In this portion of the study, the building starts to become more tucked into the cavity as if it had been absorbed by it. The essence of pulling individuals into the space is lost and the design starts to pull the dance experience away from the public. At this stage, the dance space has become a dance studio that is isolated from the community, which was never desired, since the dance space is to be dedicated to street dancers. After designing and analyzing the way the design development of such cavity was going, some changes were necessary to be made to bring back the essence of this thesis exploration.



# DANCE

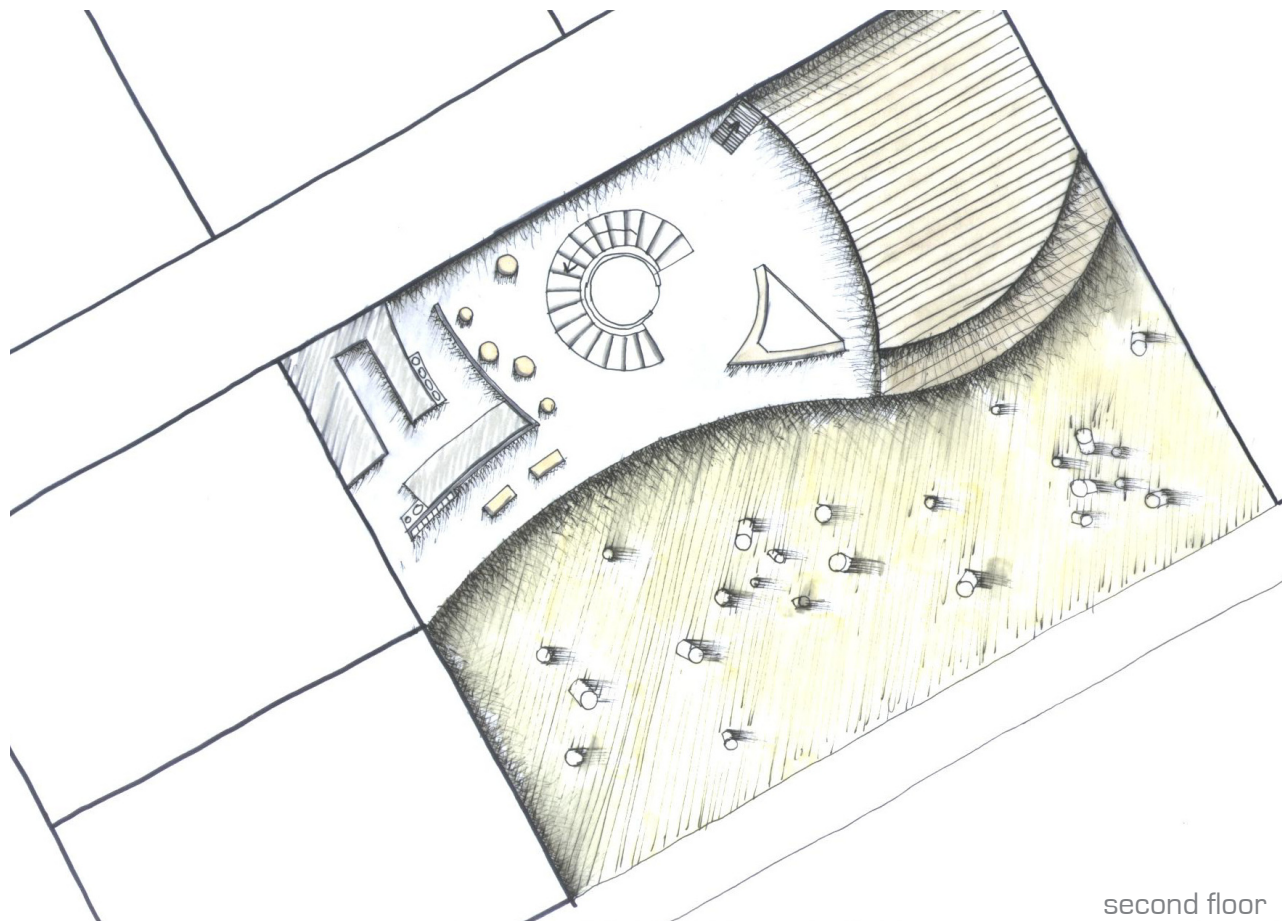


ground level



first floor

As part of a more restricted design process in this stage of the design process, floor plans were developed. There are three different levels to this portion of the design process. The ground floor is the public space and entrance to the dance studio. In the dance studio one finds locker rooms and two separate studios dedicated to practicing. This portion of the design process starts to take away from the interaction of street dancing with the users of the space; therefore the decisions made at this point of the design are later rethought and analyzed.

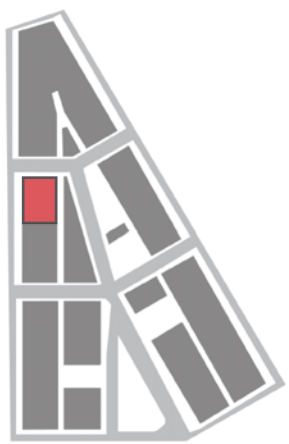
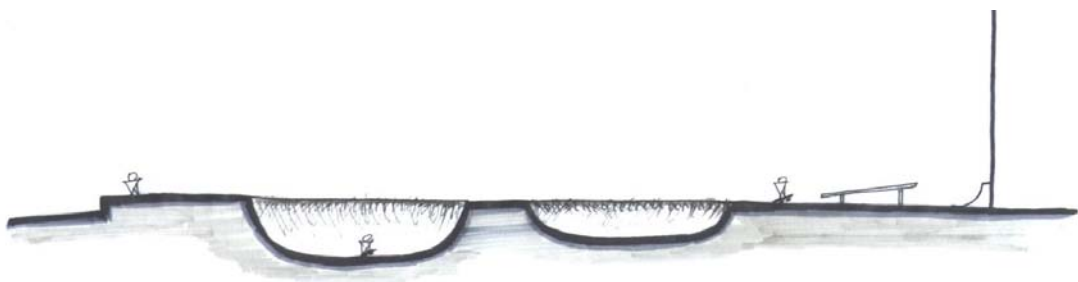
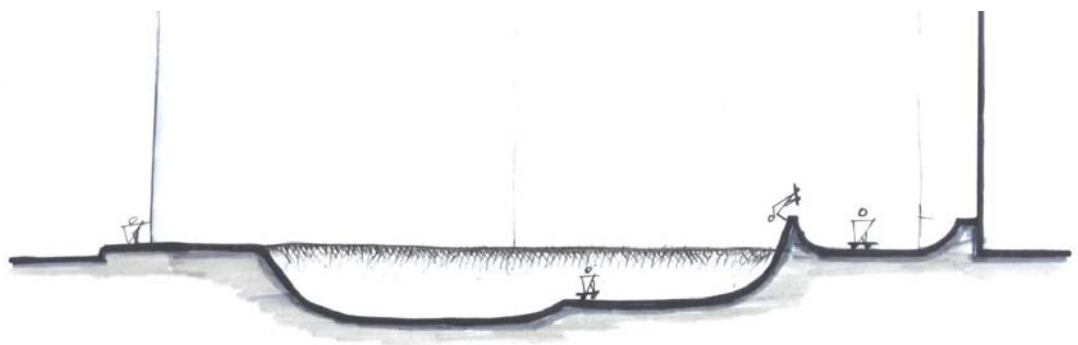


second floor

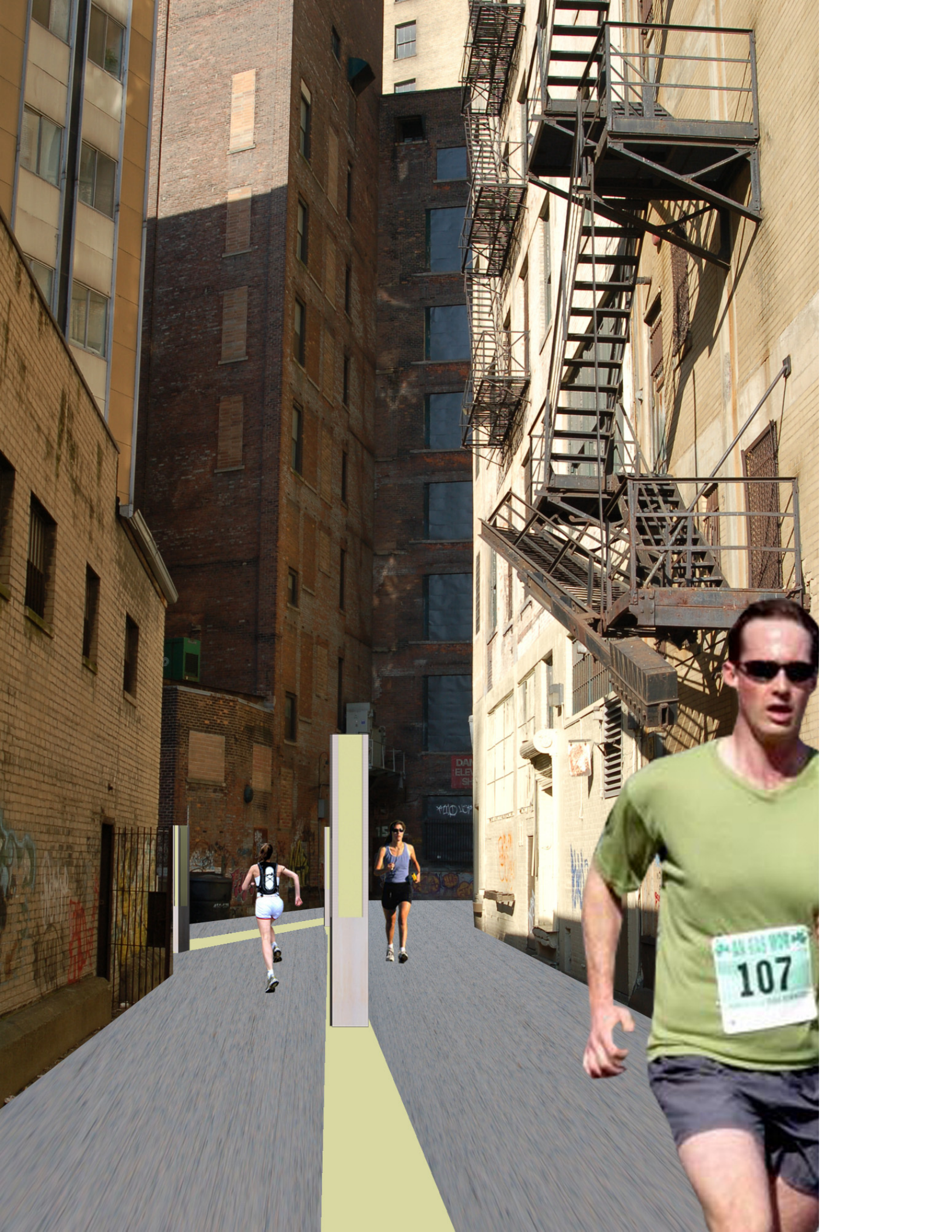
**DANCE**

As part of the program, a main arena for the skating community is created. This space is not to be seen as the only space to skate at, but it is where the skateboarding community can come together. This thesis within the city of Detroit is for the people; therefore it does not plan on segregating different groups in different cavities. In the contrary, the more interaction between diverse groups the better for this to be a successful insertion in the city of Detroit. In this “main hub” for the skating community, early studies explore the possibility of an in ground concrete bowl and a half pipe attached to the existing building. With this sketch study, both the ground and the verticality of the site are being emphasized. In skateboarding the two elements are always emphasized as a skateboarder moves through a space. As a skater flies in the air, he/she challenges the existence of gravity for seconds. Then one comes down to the floor and the impact of the wheels in the floor reminds us of that gravity is there. With that in mind, elements that emphasize the two opposites are explored in this sketch study of the “main hub” for the skating community.



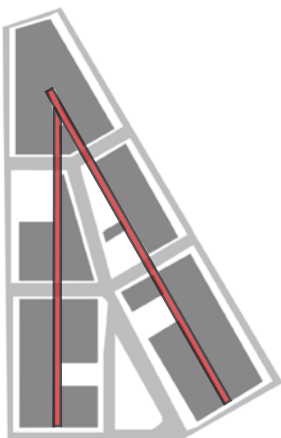


SKATE

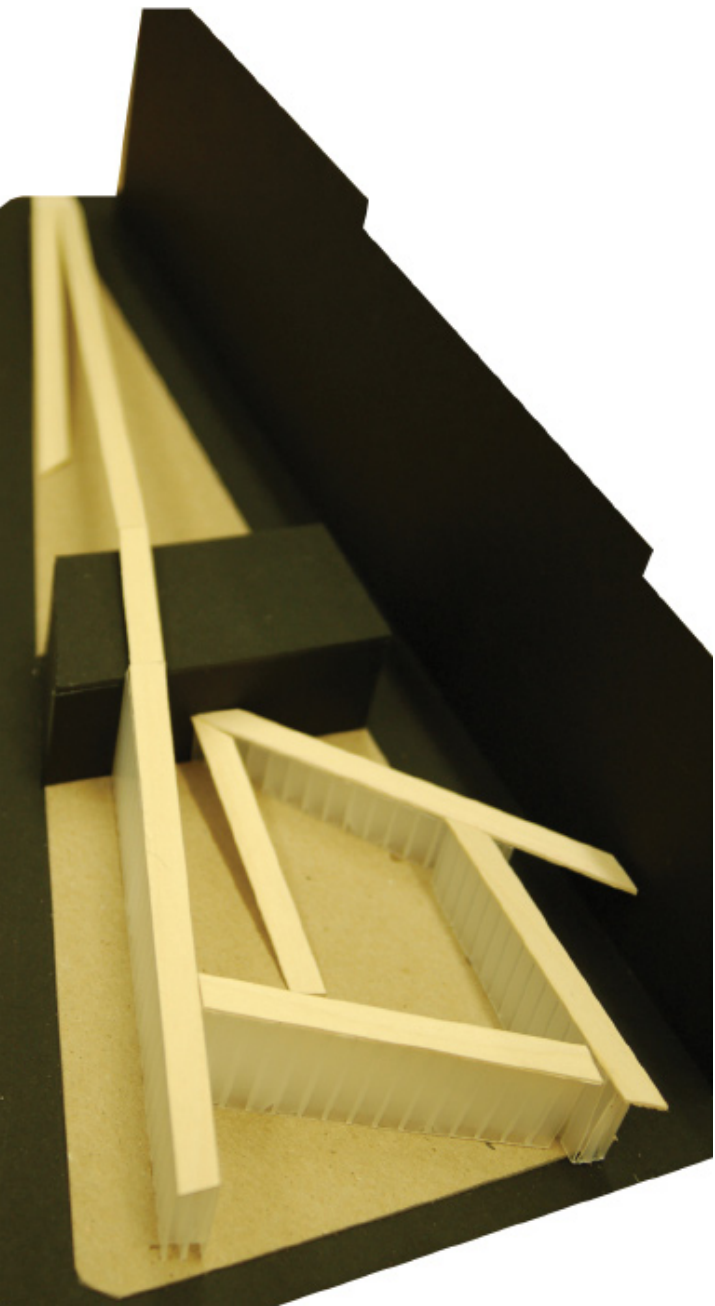




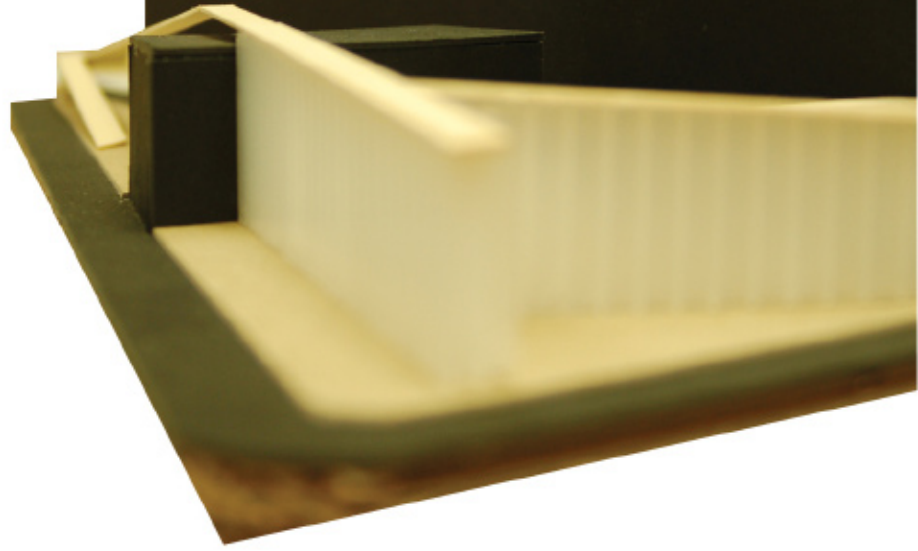
An alleys is usually seen by many as a cavity which one would not like to go to unless they are part of the delivery company and need to use the alley for service. This portion of the thesis plans on exploring this layer of the city's fabric to evolve to something that the community could use besides just as a service drive. With that in mind, this narrow and tall space is to be transformed into an exercise lane. The alleys are by its nature connected to the cavities that are being reactivated. Such connection helps in the reactivation of the alley as a community space. To make the alley a more inviting space, the most desirable element is good lighting. In order to provide such, a strip of light is incorporated along the whole way of the alley to serve not only as directional, but also to illuminate the space. To help with illumination, light poles extrude from the lighting strip on the floor, providing a more efficient kind of light.



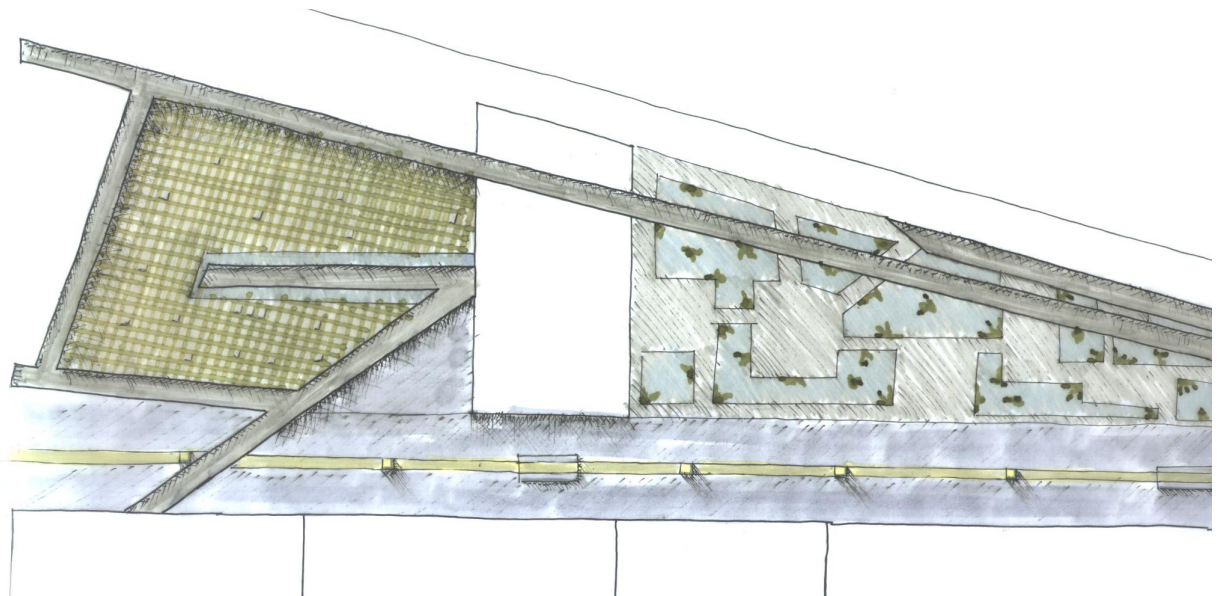
# EXERCISE



A space to pause and think. This is what the garden is defined. In this case, the notion of a garden design is being challenged. The interpretation of a garden in this case is simply a space for one to pause, relax and get in touch with their inner selves. That is what the essence of a garden is and that is what the design of this space tries to capture. Two spaces were created as one transition from one side of the bridge to the other. At the beginning of the bridge, one finds a horizontal plane with opening that house water plants. The connection between the concrete paving and the water create spaces where individuals can sit and enjoy the calmness of the space within the city. As one progresses through the ramp, one finds the second part to the garden, a sort of "secret" garden. This area is basically composed of squared concrete paving with grass in between each of them.



Although the space captures the essence of a garden, it imposes a barrier to the skateboarding community. Even tough signs of “skateboarding prohibited” may not be incorporated into the space; the design of the space restricts the interaction between skateboarders and the users of the space. With that in mind, the space will be rethought of so that different activities can take place.



# PAUSE



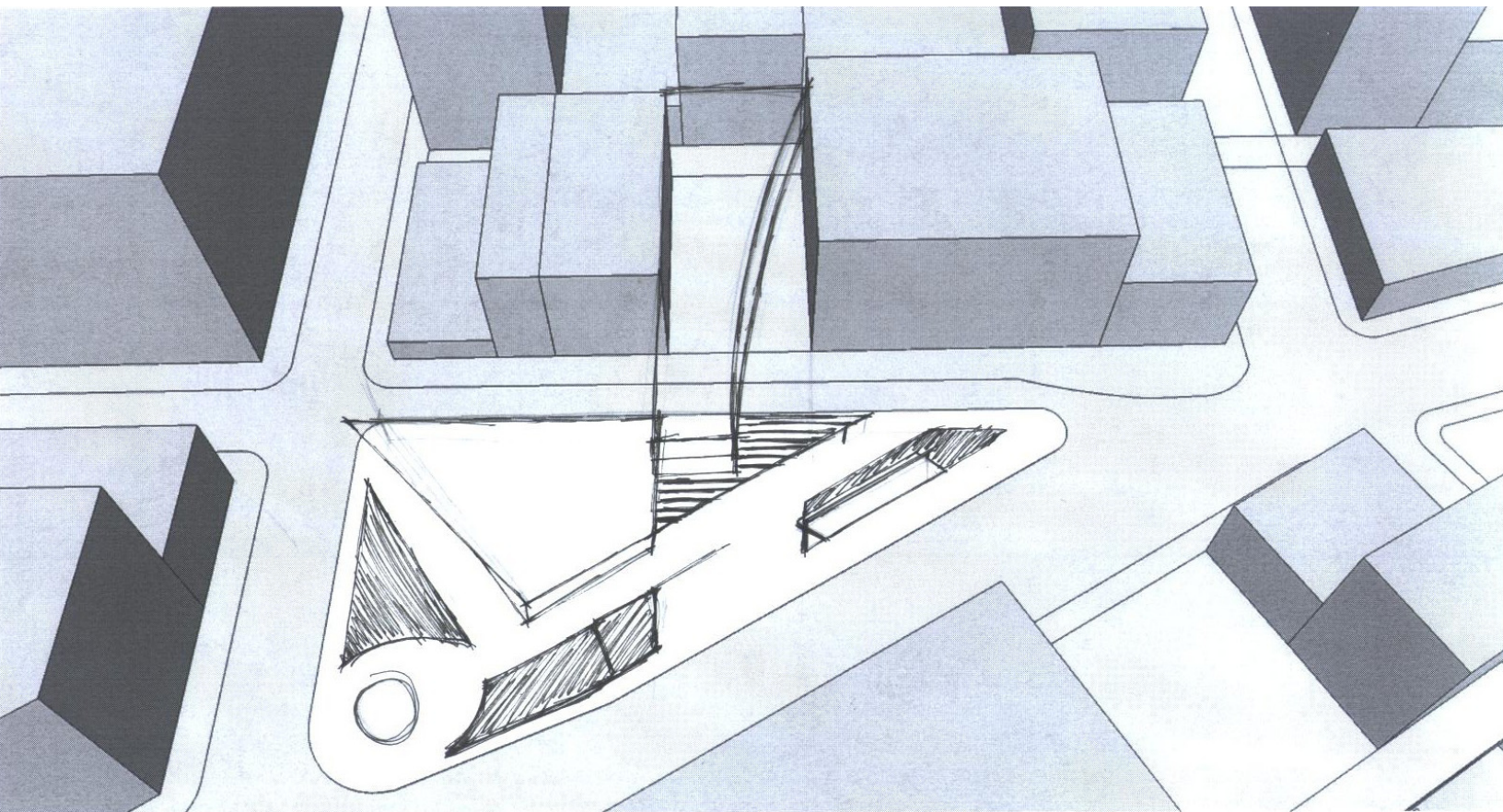


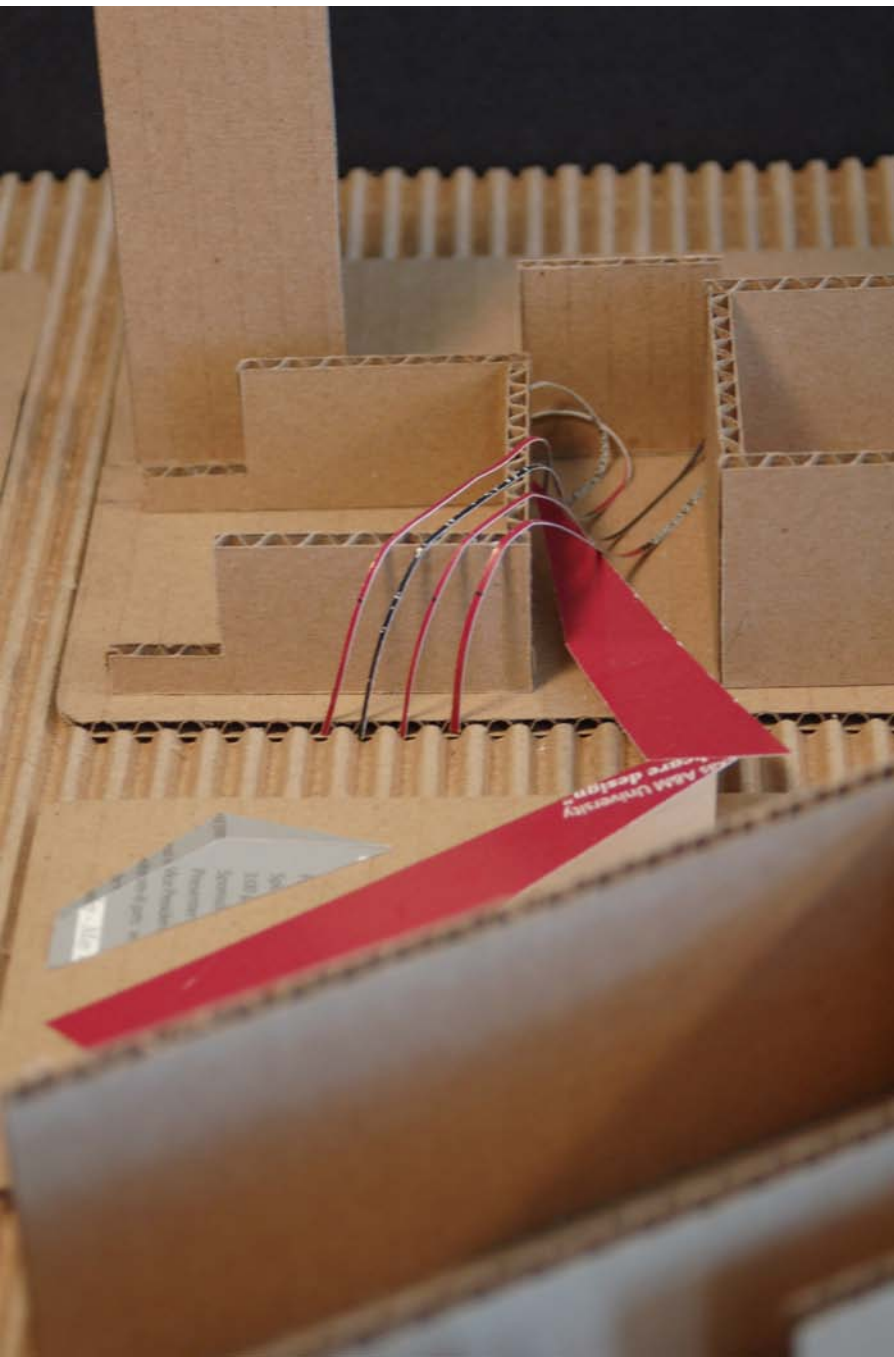
## **spatial studies**

To help better understand the existing conditions and structures of the site and how the cavities are connected, a series of spatial studies were developed. In these studies, the verticality of the site is explored as well as the ground. The two opposites are extremely important in the development of the human engagement with the surrounding and the existing structures through movement. Another element that starts to be explored is how to bring people into the cavities and alleys that are hidden in between the buildings. To do so, elements extruding out of the cavities and alleys are explored. The implementation of the extruding elements serves as a way to pull people into the “hidden” spaces.



These spatial studies were developed to bring back the essence of the thesis that was starting to be lost in some of the design sketch models seen before. Elements such as the pulling people into the cavities by addressing the sidewalk and street, the addressing of the existing structures and built environment, the exploration of the verticality and the ground and the deep engagement of the users with the space. These spatial studies also attempt to connect the cavities and treat this space within the city of Detroit as one continuous space instead of fragmented spaces. The sidewalk in this case starts to be more noted as an important element. In order for this thesis to be explored to the fullest, the sidewalk plays an extremely important role. The sidewalk is where the pedestrian flow is desired to be at, and the more pedestrian flow, the better for the reactivation of the cavities and the neighborhood. With this in mind, the cavities, the alley and the sidewalk start to be seen as one single space within the existing built space. The existing built spaces are now given more attention to, as for before they were sort of being left alone for someone else to notice. In order for this thesis to be successful, the existing structures need to be connected to the new structures. Such connection creates a literal and philosophical dependability, in a sense that one starts to perceive and celebrate not only the cavity that is being reactivated, but also the existing and abandoned structures [also seen as a cavity within the city].

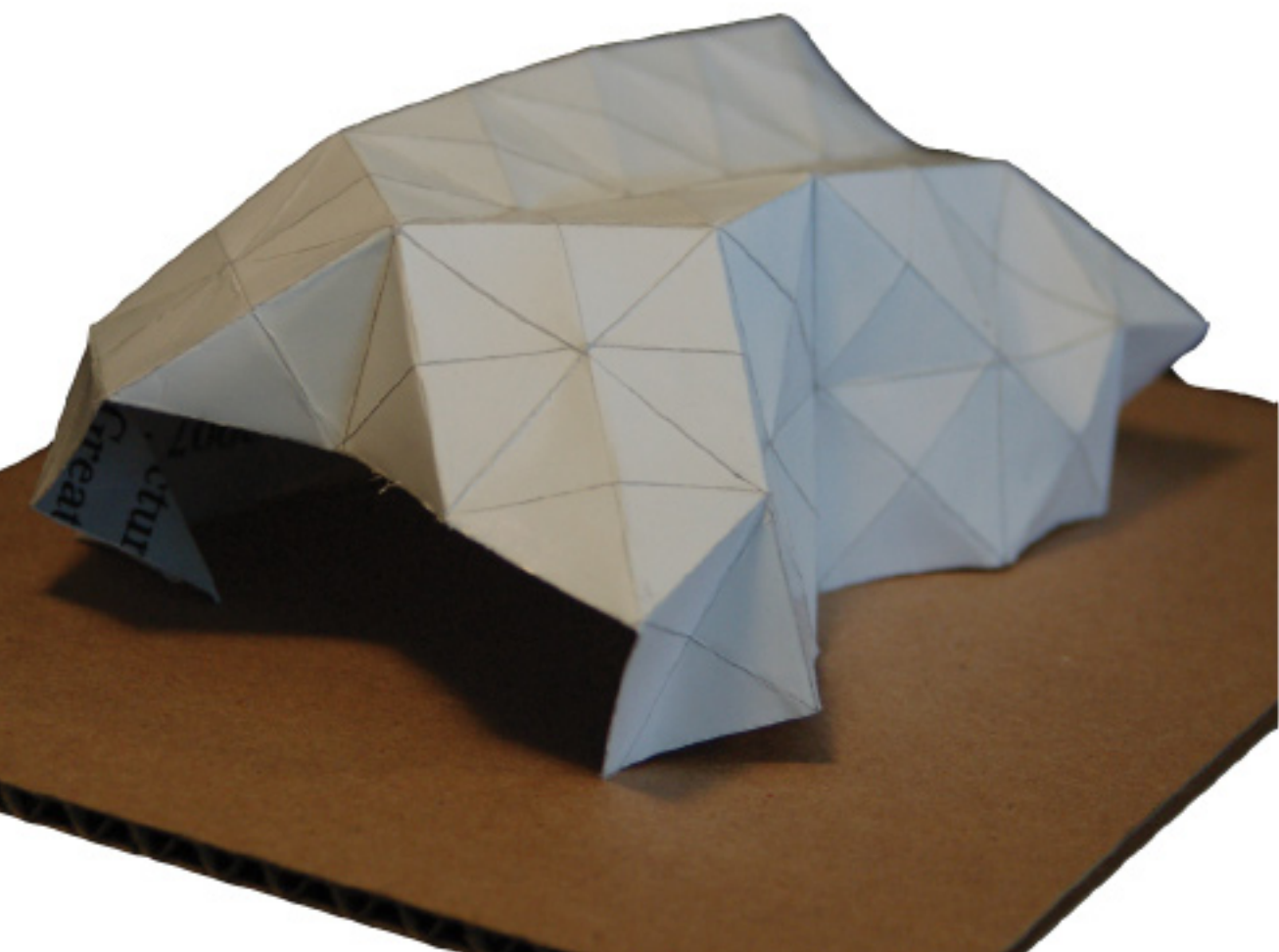




These sketch spatial studies start to demonstrate how the design is now being more truthful to the thesis essence and ultimate goal.



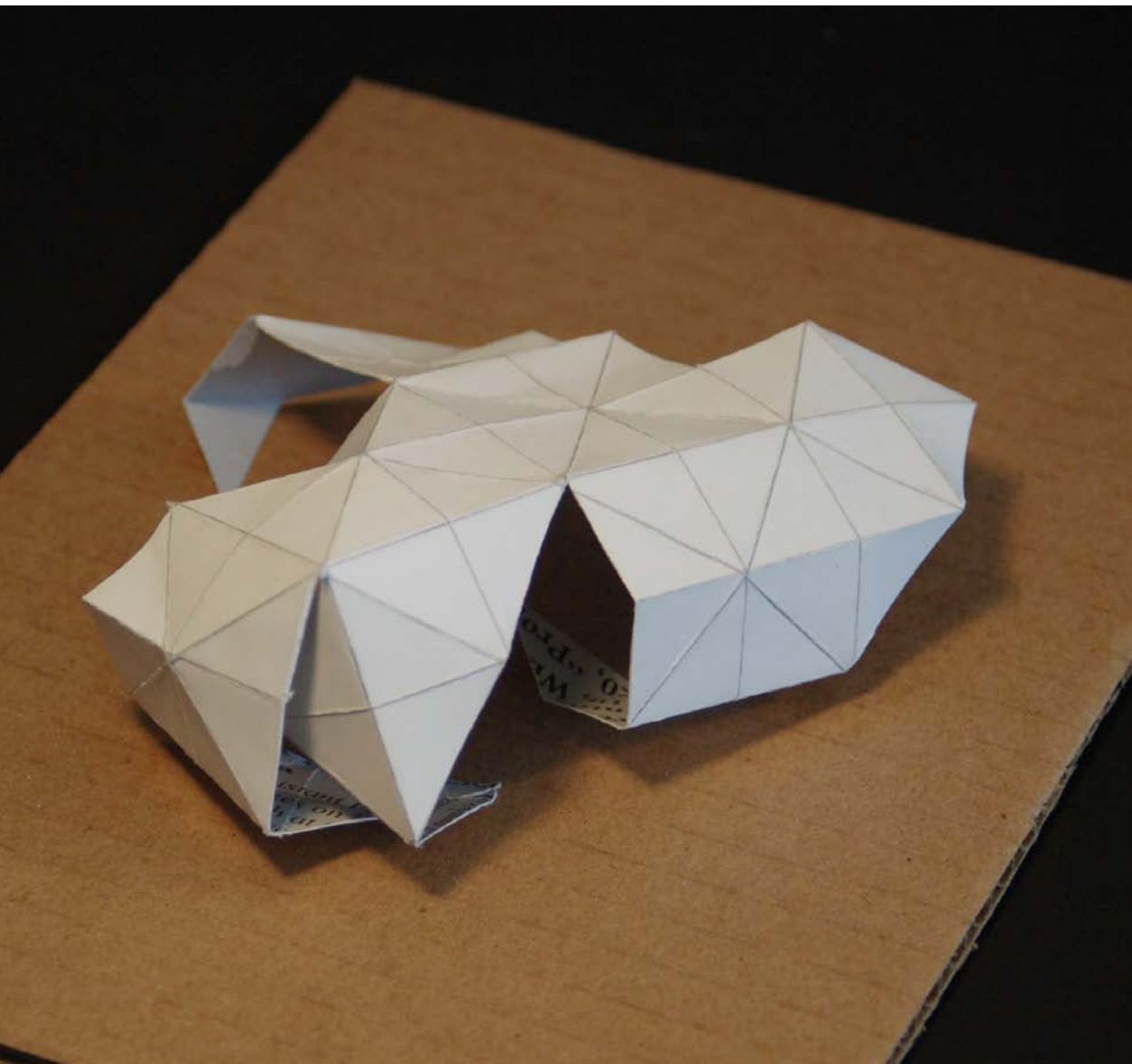


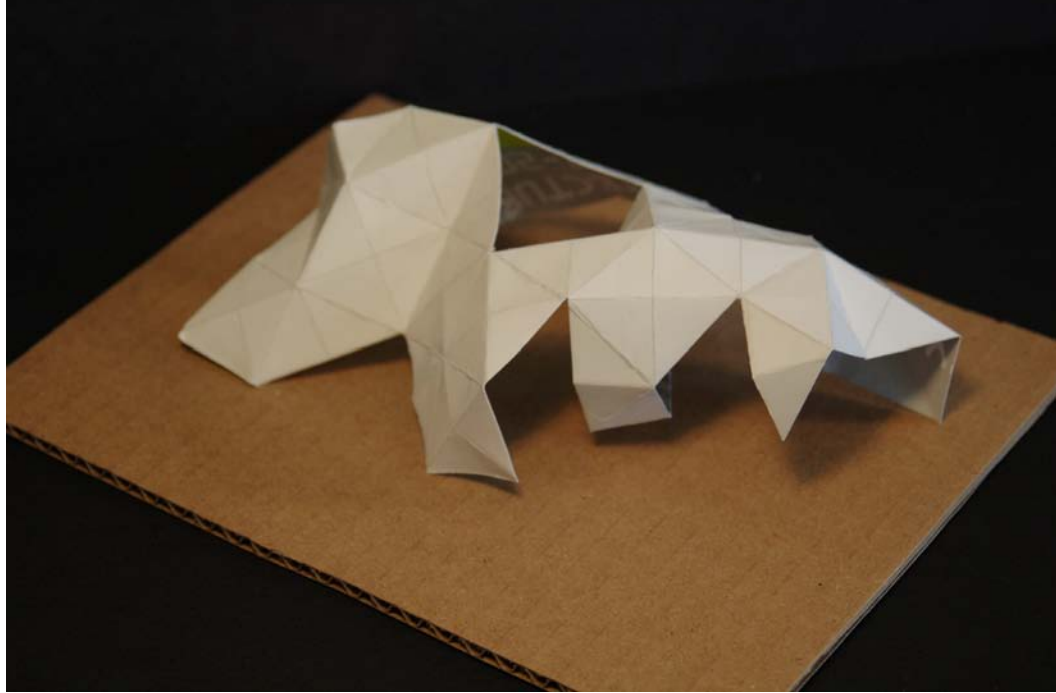
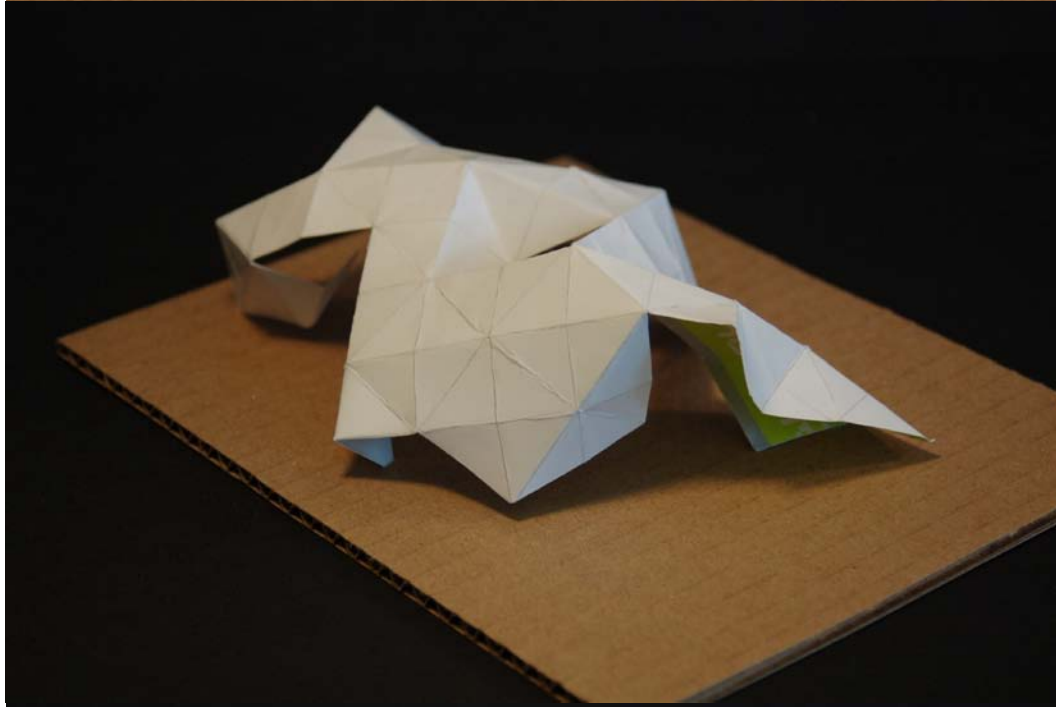
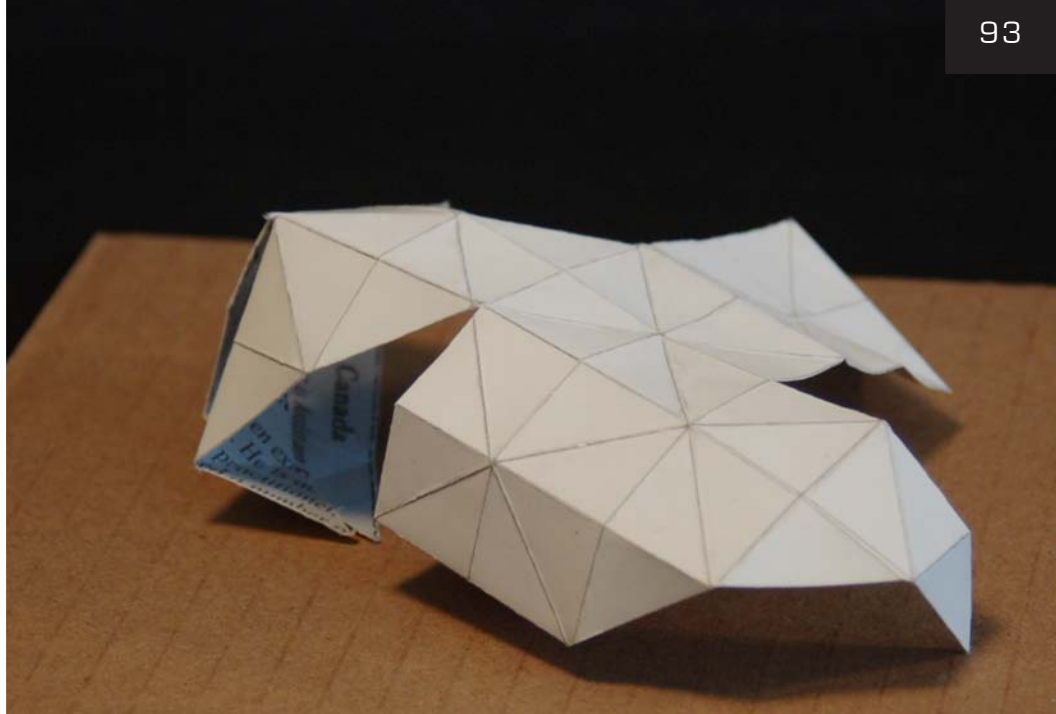


## **exploring the canopy**

In early studies of the element wrapping the dance space, a glass truss was explored. Therefore the wrapping started to enclose the space too much to a level that it was isolating the dance community from the rest of the users of the space. With that in mind, the wrapping of the dance space is being explored in here as a canopy. The planes of glasses that are present in early studies of the “wrapping” are examined in this study and treated as separate elements. The folding and unfolding of these glass elements create an opportunity for a canopy that protects users from the elements without isolating them from the rest of the community.

The glass pieces are broken up and create voids within the wrapping for the dance space. Such overlapping of shapes also explores the idea of movement being reflected in the embracing of the structure.







A hand is shown holding a rolled-up document, secured with a red ribbon seal. The document is partially unrolled, revealing a white surface. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.

**FINAL DESIGN**



1

1





This thesis exploration resulted in a master plan development of cavities within the city of Detroit. The cavities are primary spaces that have been left behind and marginalized. Therefore, in order for this thesis to succeed, all of the open spaces surrounding the areas selected needed to be explored and incorporated into this master plan development. This development is seen as a social response. With that it is meant that the cavities to be reinterpreted are going to be through the creation of spaces for the people to interact. Such interaction is what the focus for the development of the area is. Once people are brought to a space, a neighborhood starts to be formed and retail, shopping, housing, etc are a consequence of that.

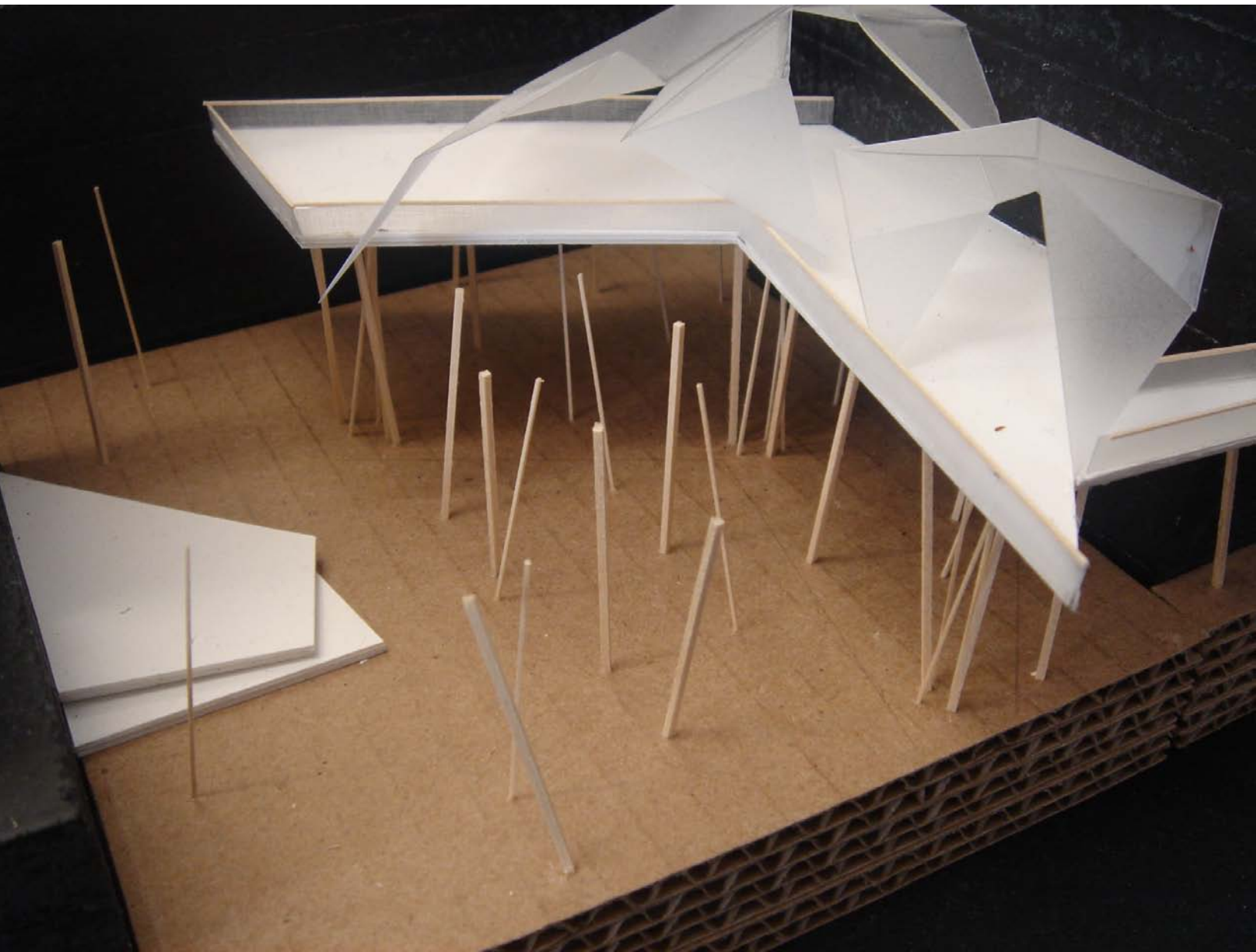
To the left is a large scale site plan illustrating the different cavities that are being explored. To start off, it is important to understand that the reactivation of these cavities are a celebration of the void, and there is no better way to celebrate it by incorporating spaces where the human being and their experience is the essence of the space. In this case the voids are being reactivated without necessarily being completely filled. Through an emphasis in body awareness and movement through the spaces, it is the hopes of this investigation that as humans we will start to become more aware of our body and our inner soul.

The program for this social development has as a focus the skateboarding and street dancing community. Therefore it is important to understand that these spaces are not for the sole use of such communities, but for any human being that values a deeper experience in their lives. Through the deep understanding of space and movement that both communities possess, it is hoped that the interaction between the two communities and the other users of the space became an exchange of knowledge and shared experience. It is through the interaction with people that human being's personalities are formed. Such interaction is important for one's development. In this case, the constant awareness of their body movement and space that both the street dancers and skaters possess will be highlighted in the spaces.

The design process for this thesis has been along the same line, but in the end it has found the true essence of what the thesis wanted to explore. For that to be accomplished, the existing structures started to be more addressed. It was felt that in the beginning of the process, the existing structures were being ignored. Therefore, there is no method to achieve the best end result with this exploration without noticing and highlighting the existing structures that surround the cavities.

The sidewalk, as noted earlier, became part of the cavity and small insertions within were developed in order to assist the engagement between different users. It is also very important to note that in the site plan a lot of concrete is used in the development of surfaces. The reasoning for such material choice is so that the skateboarding community does not feel isolated from the rest of the users. All of the users start to blend in with each other and the spaces suggest that different programmed and not programmed activities can take place in the space.

Lastly, as a manner to drive people in, the sidewalk and the street are engaged. Such engagement is to help pull people along the street to be curious with what is in the cavity space and want to be part of it. This move also starts to bring the cavity into the rest of the city, and highlighting that an open space within the city is not always a negative element.



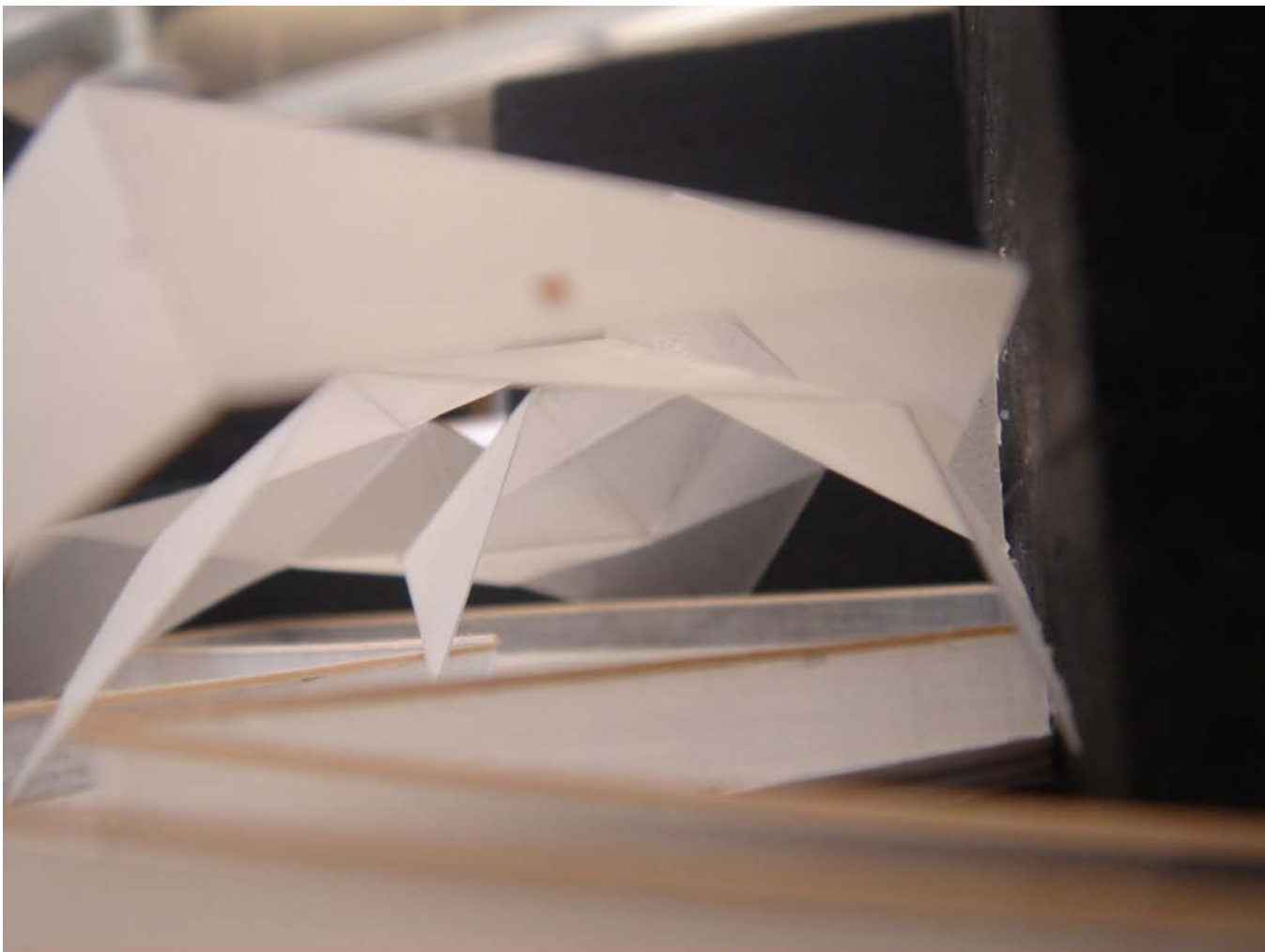
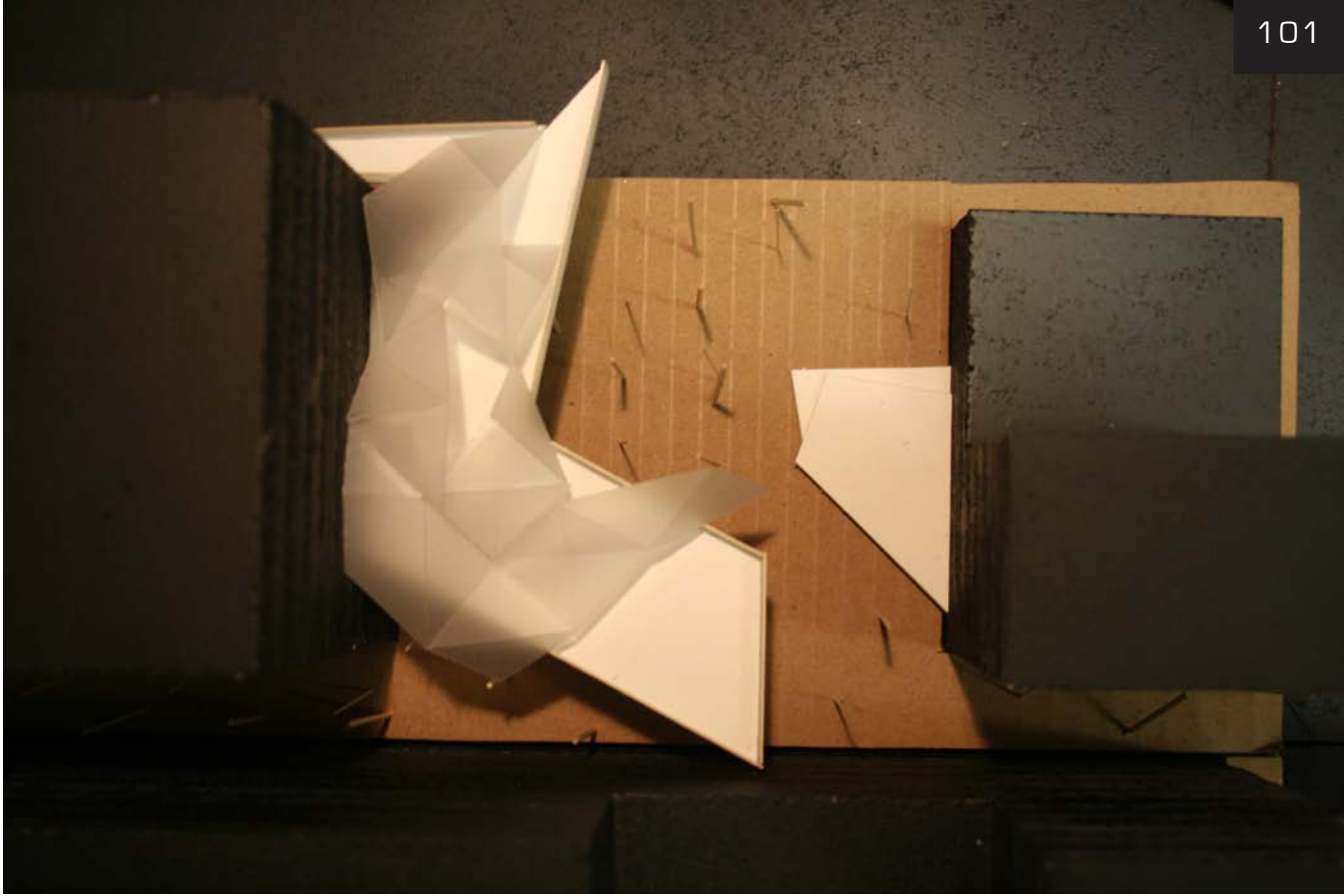


## **dance space**

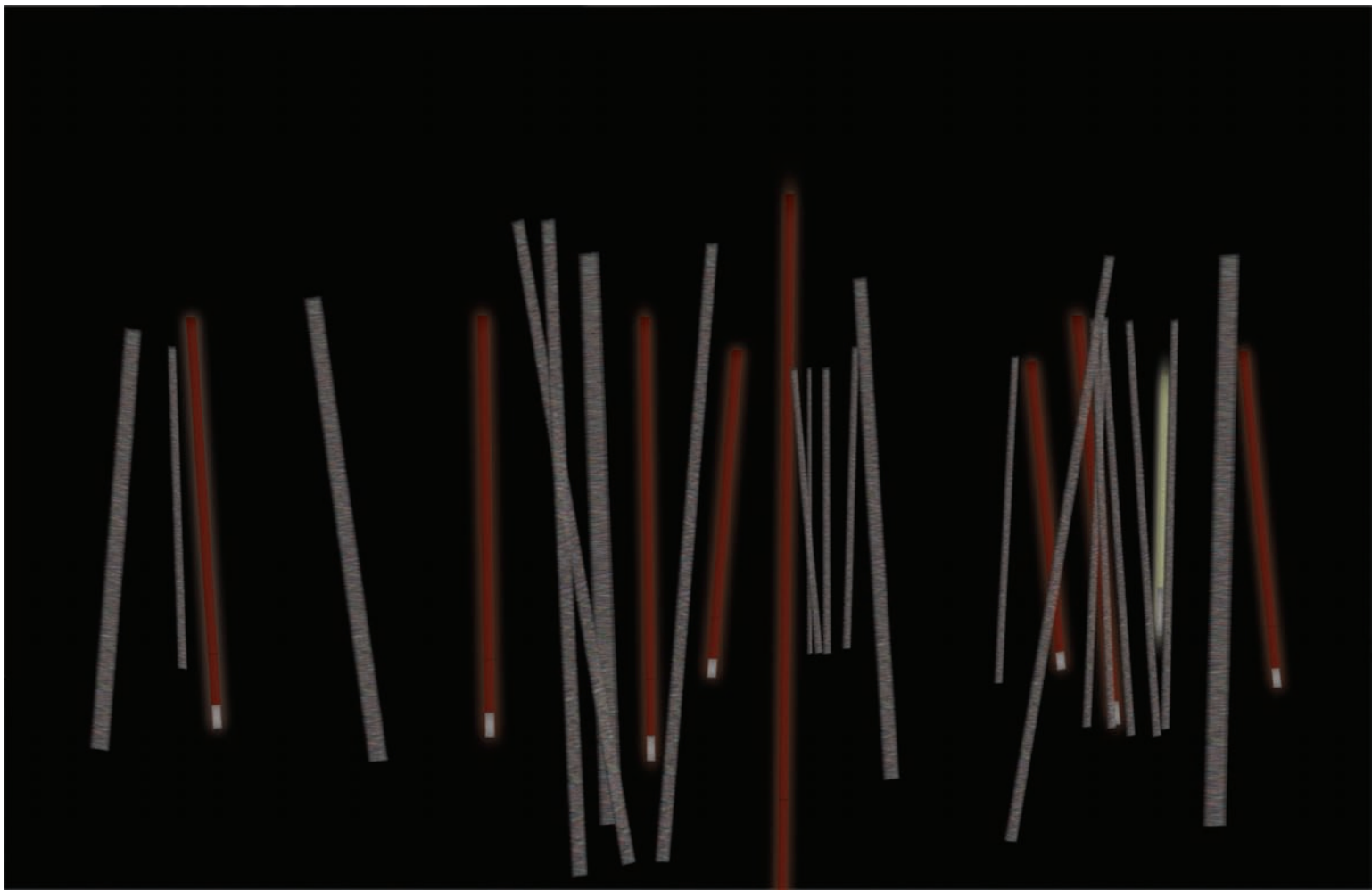
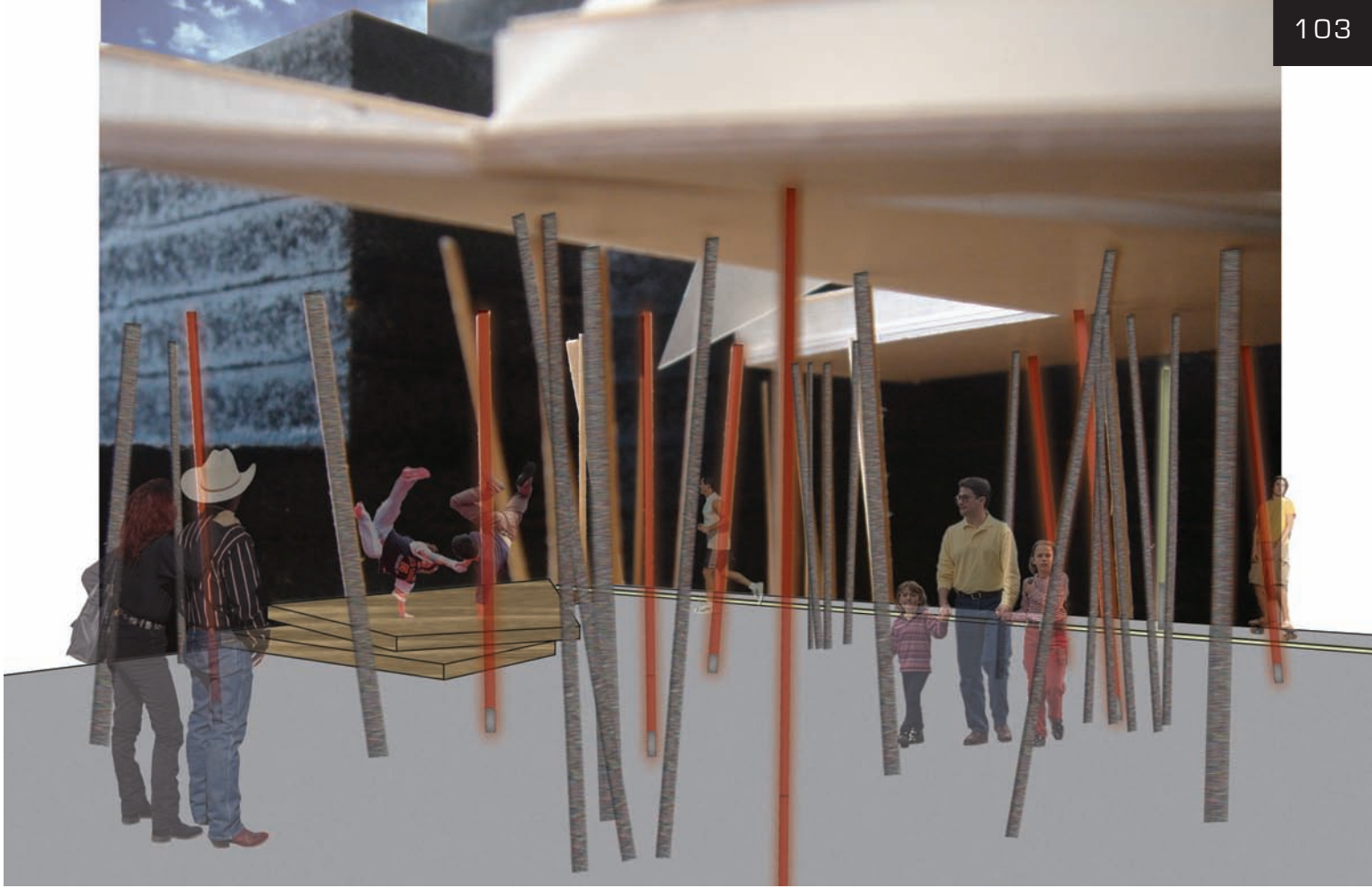
The dance space is the “main hub” for the hip hop/street dancing community. In this cavity an upper level was created, which is open to the general users of the space, therefore it gives more emphasis to the street dancers. It is a space for them to get away from the public eye and be able to practice. The space compared to earlier studies, is now a much more open space. The wrapping of a glass structure is still existent, therefore in a much larger scale. Such wrapping acts now as a canopy to protect from the elements. At the bottom a small stage is introduced. The stage is to allow for a greater interaction between the public and the performer.

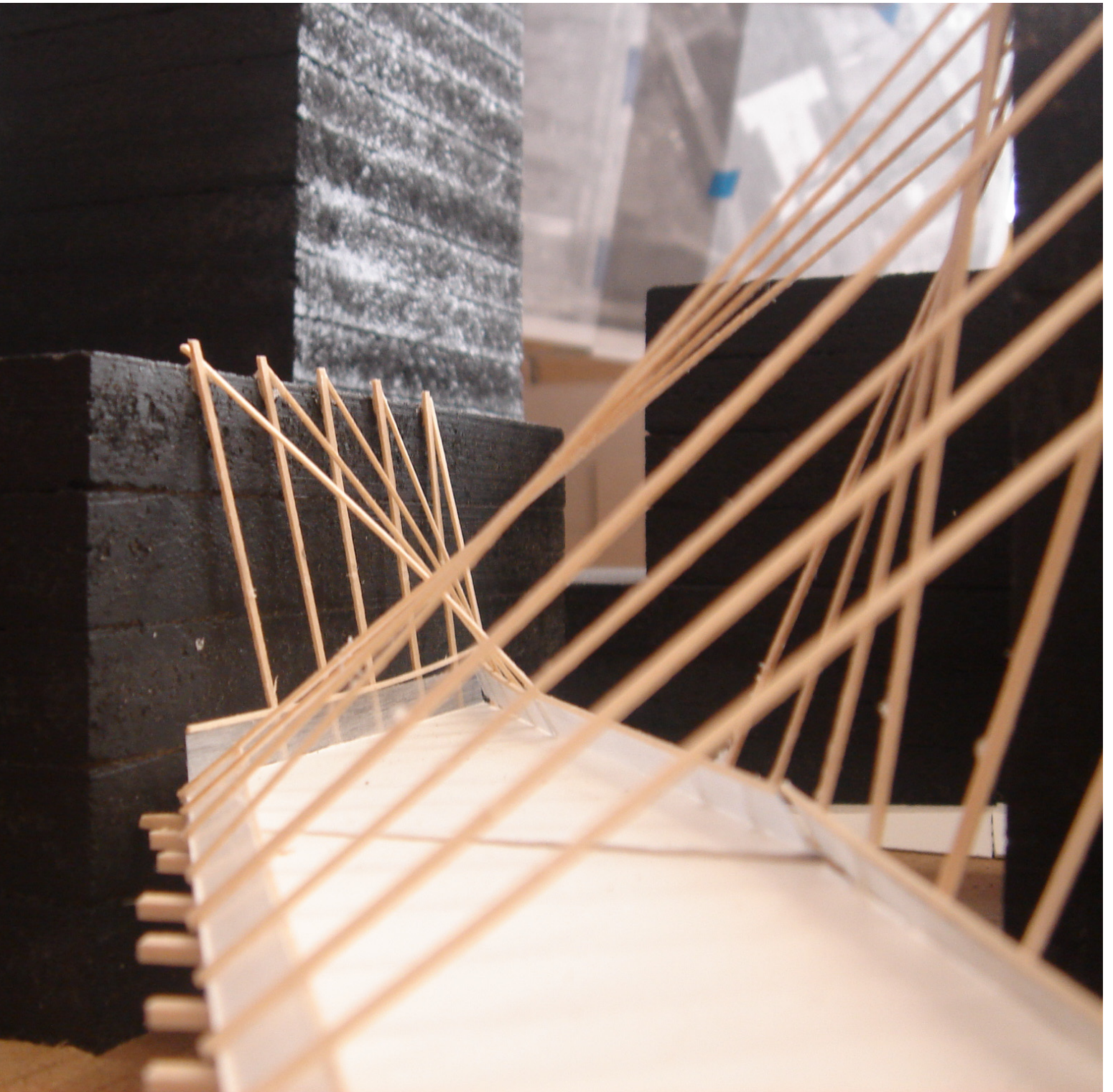
The canopy presents a playfulness of planes as if the structure was also in movement. The design of this space starts to become less rigid and although a program is detonated to the hip hop/street dancing community, it is not limiting to such activities. For one to reach the structure that is located higher, one must travel through a ramp [uneven plane].





The structure of the space above is supported by the surrounding existing buildings as well as a series of steel poles that extrude from the ground up. Such poles interact with the landscape, some being lights and some being the steel pole. The landscape in this area, like in many other cavities, is not restricted to a path in which one must travel through. The placements of the poles give freedom to the user of the space to travel and experience the space and one wish.





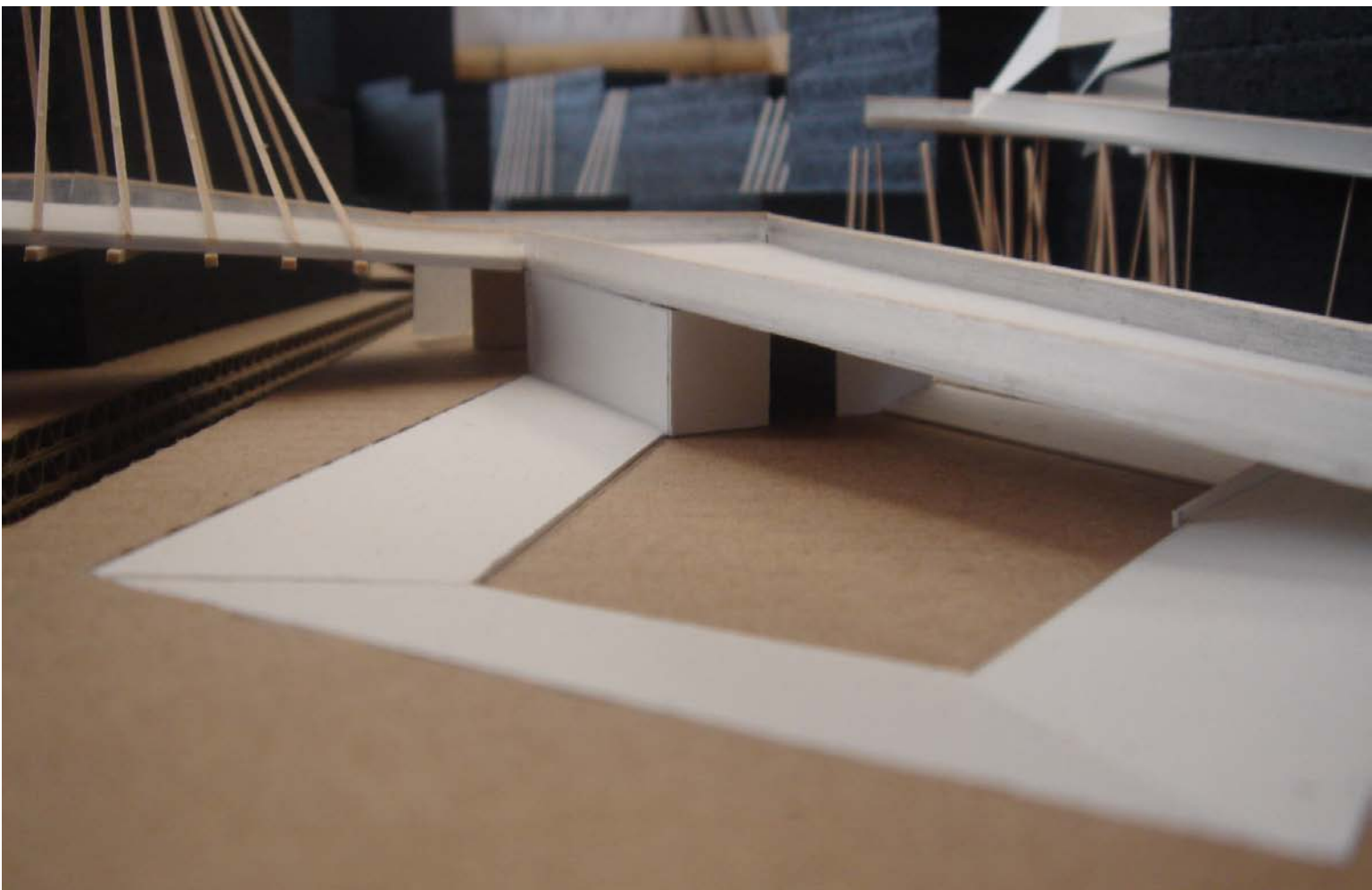
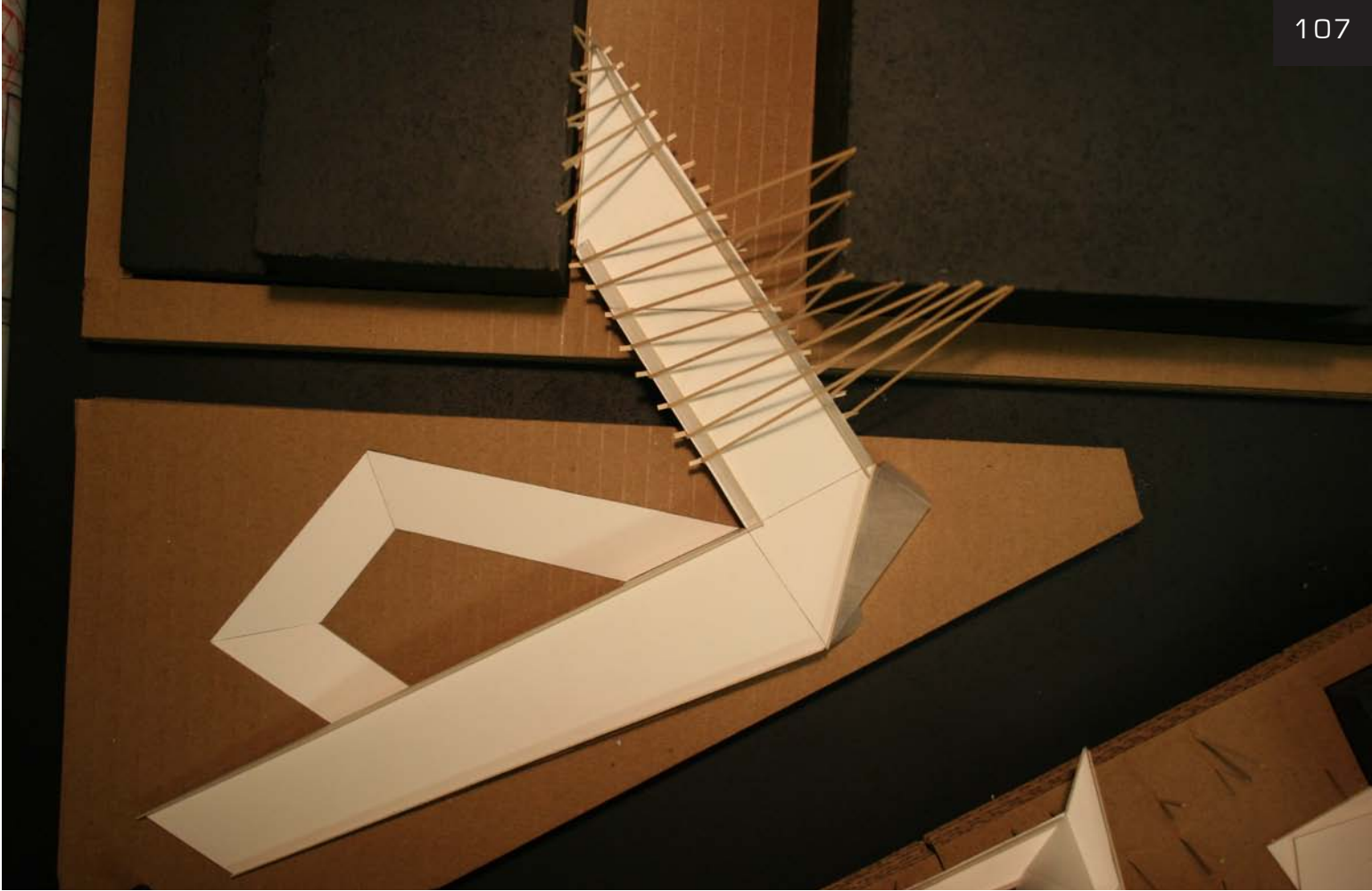




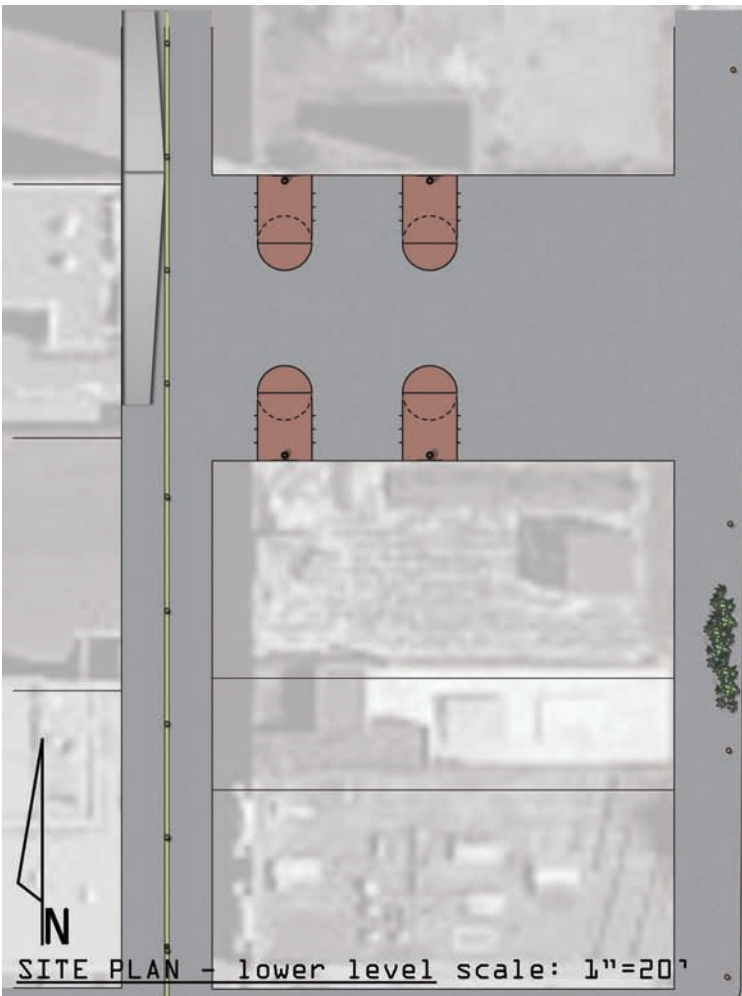
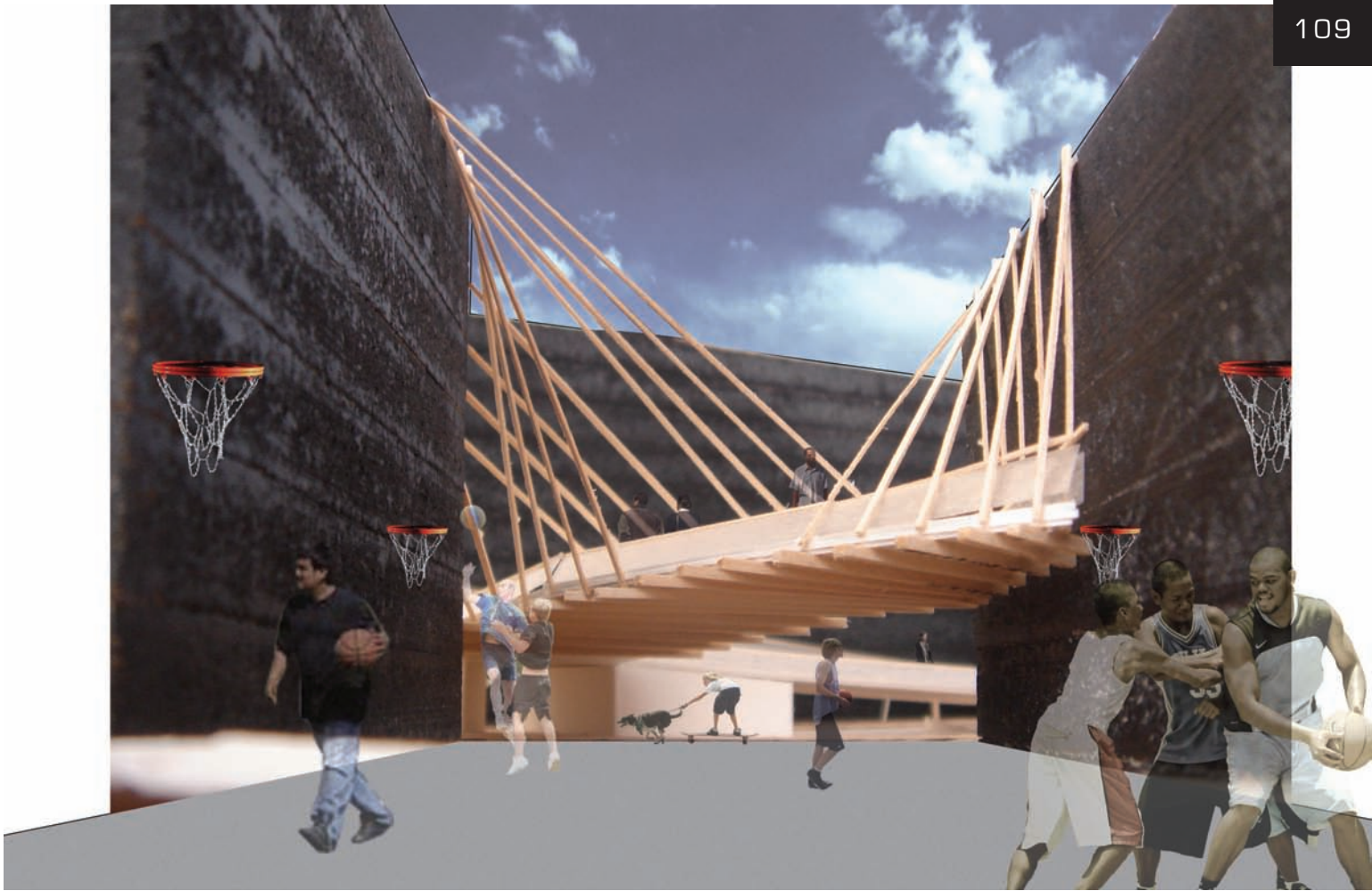
## capitol park and street basketball

In the design of this cavity, a structure that starts at Capitol Park and goes into the cavity was created. Such was an attempt to drive people into the space that is tucked in between two buildings.

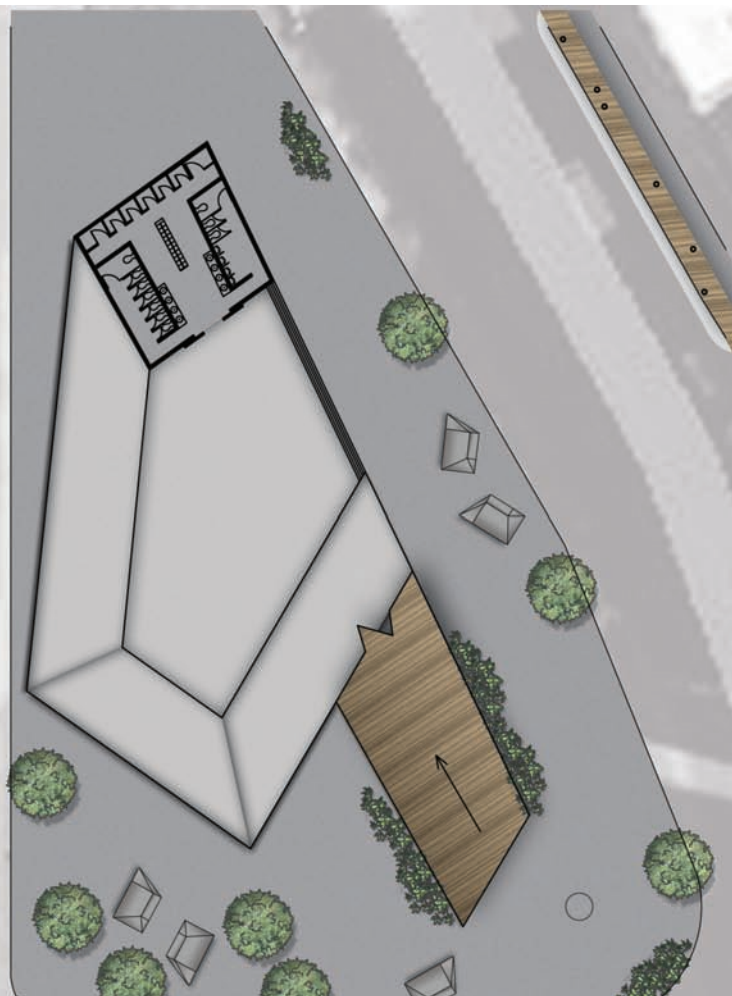
The bridge created takes one up to a different level where chess tables are located. Underneath the bridge a bathroom with lockers and changing room is house. Such was necessary due to the large number of people expected at the space. Also by providing locker rooms and changing rooms, individuals can come to this space right after work to exercise or simply enjoy themselves.

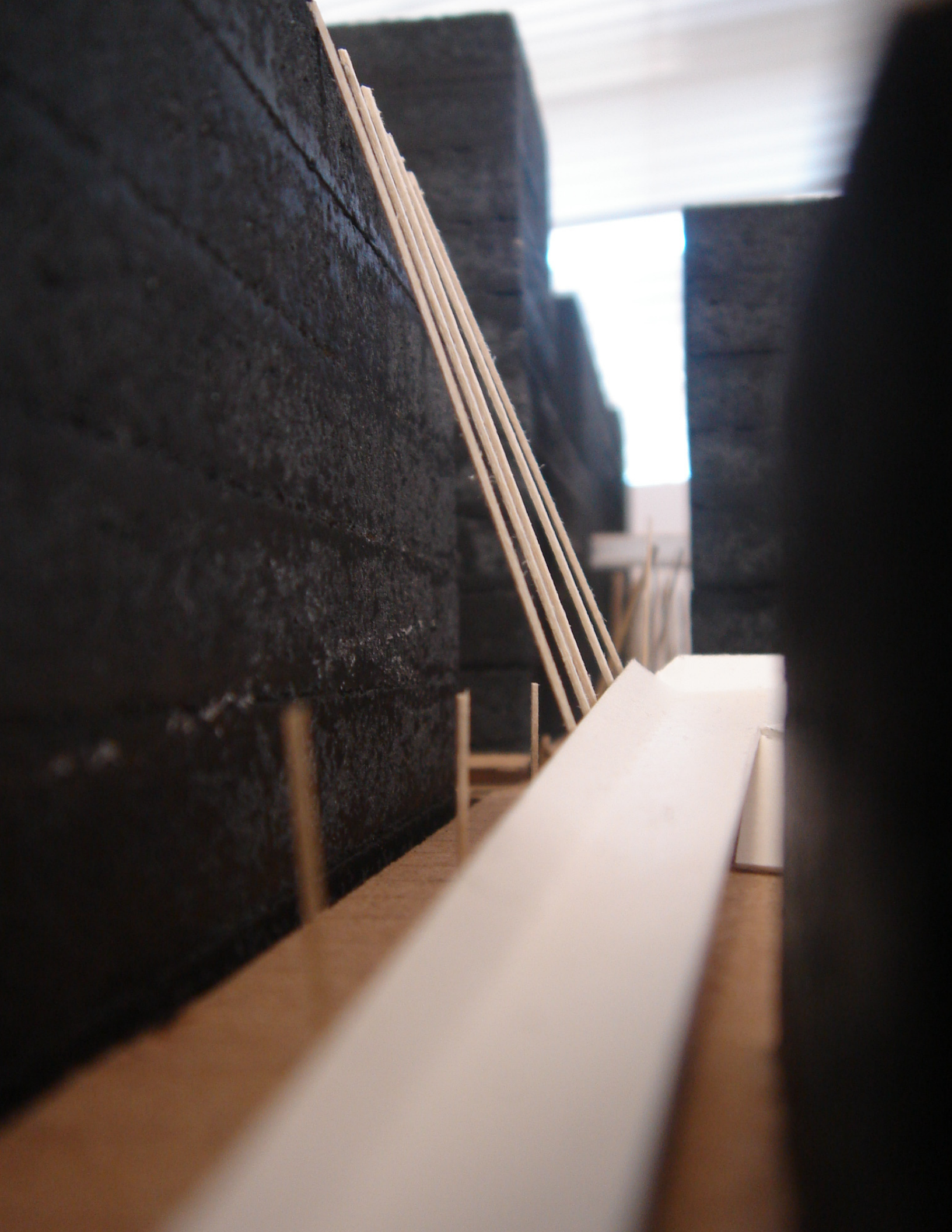


The cavity was pretty much left intact. The only element incorporated in it are street basketball courts and hoops. Such will allow for a greater interaction between different aged groups and individuals.



SITE PLAN - lower level scale: 1"=20'





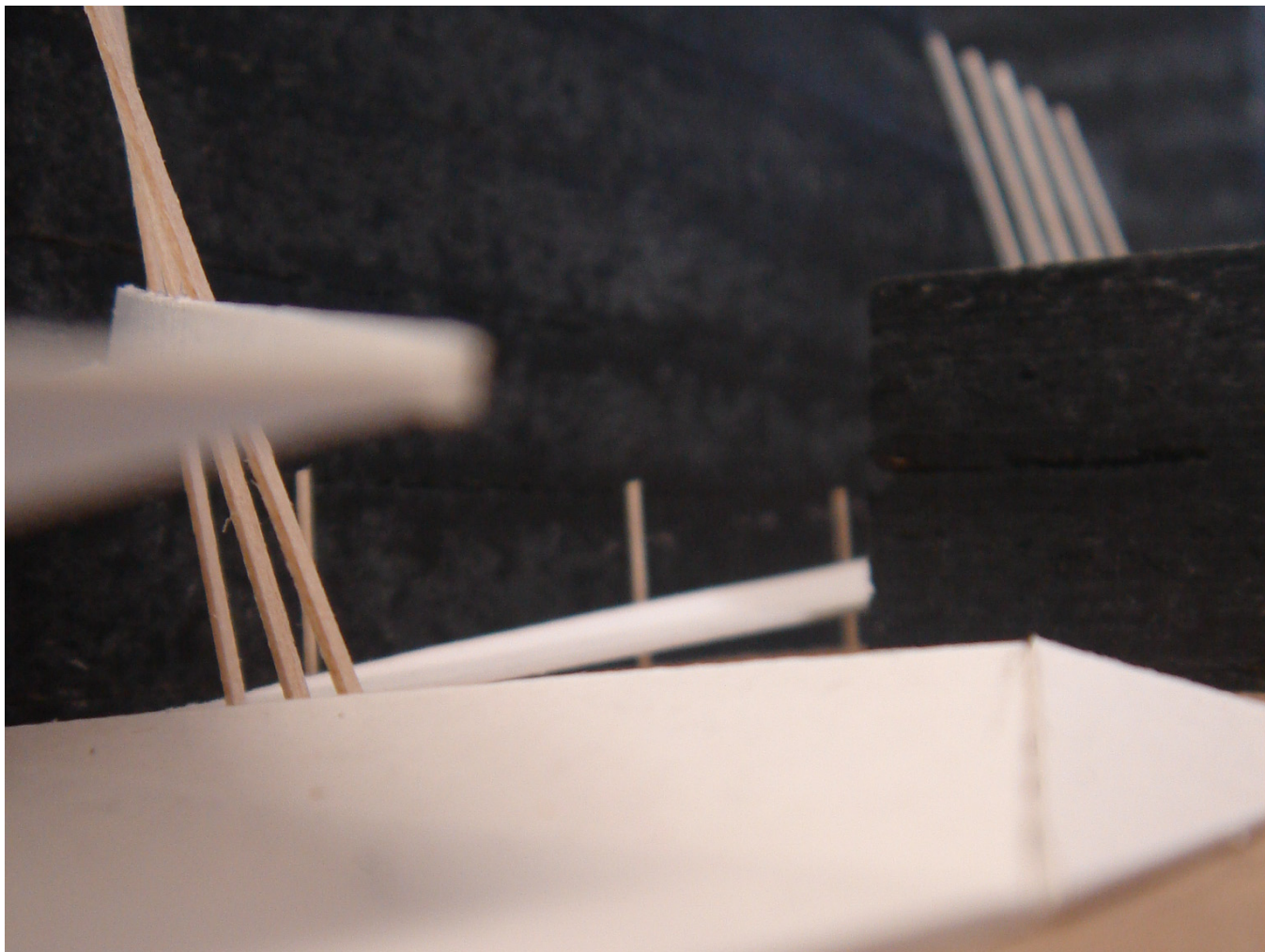
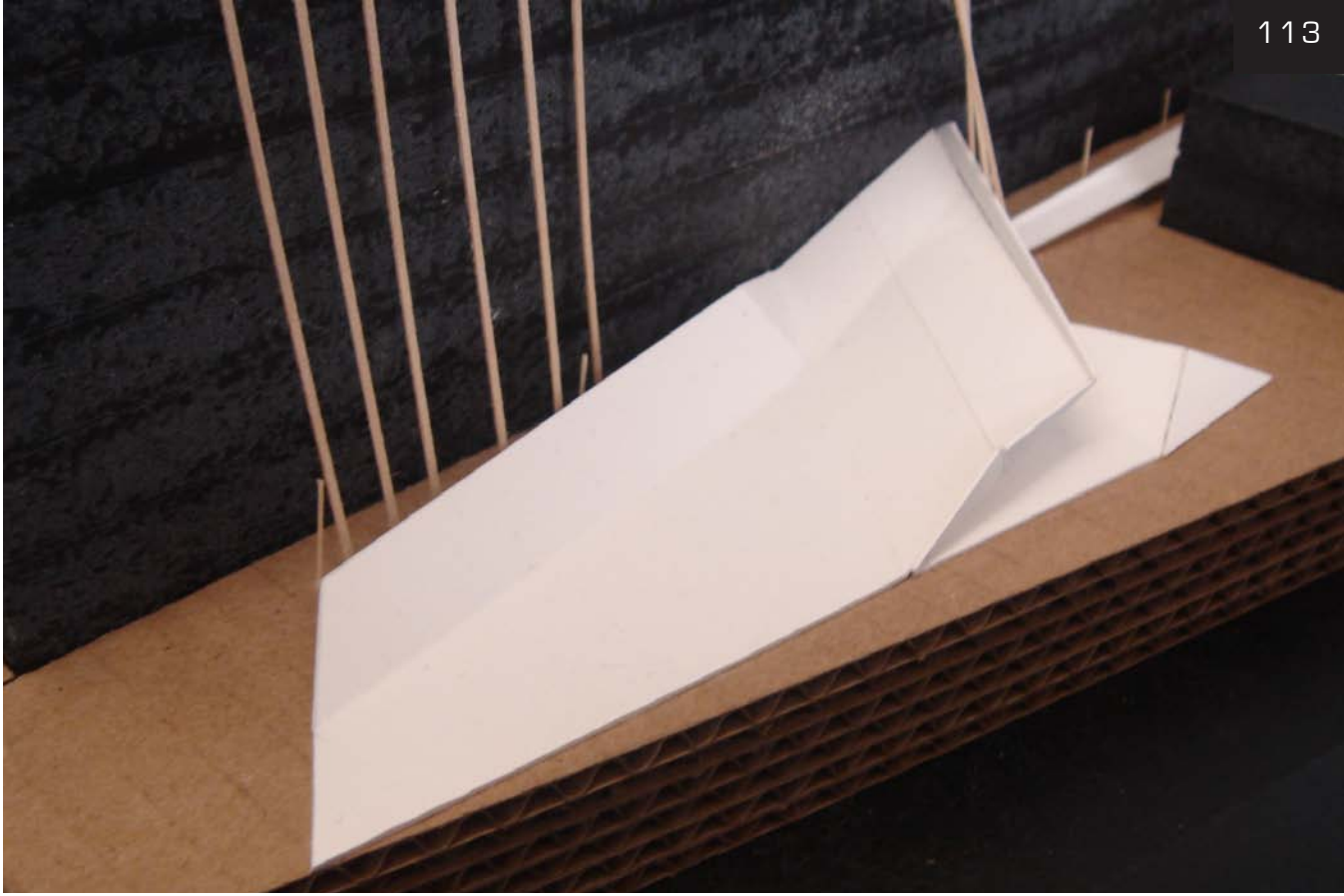


## **garden**

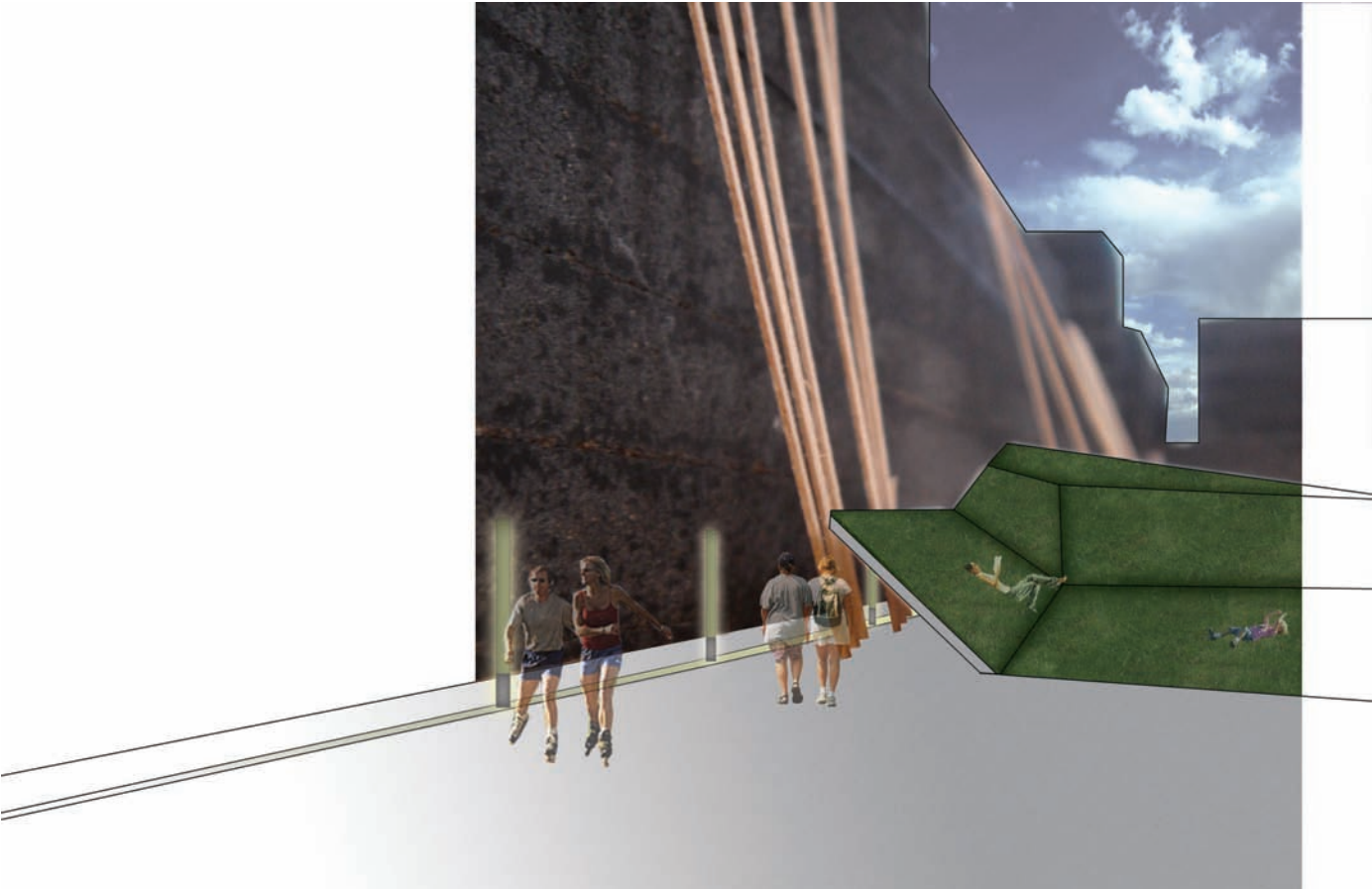
The garden is where one can stop and relax. In the design of this cavity, the uneven plane was taken into account and the folding of such plane celebrates the current undefined alley.

The planes are supported by structures coming from the existing buildings that surround the cavity. The structure lightly touches the existing structure and creates a relationship of dependency. Now what is an abandoned building, with the development of these cavities may be one day a office or residential building. The dependency relationship that is created between the old and the new helps a future developer to explore the existing abandoned building in a different manner than just simply taking it down and starting from a blank canvas.

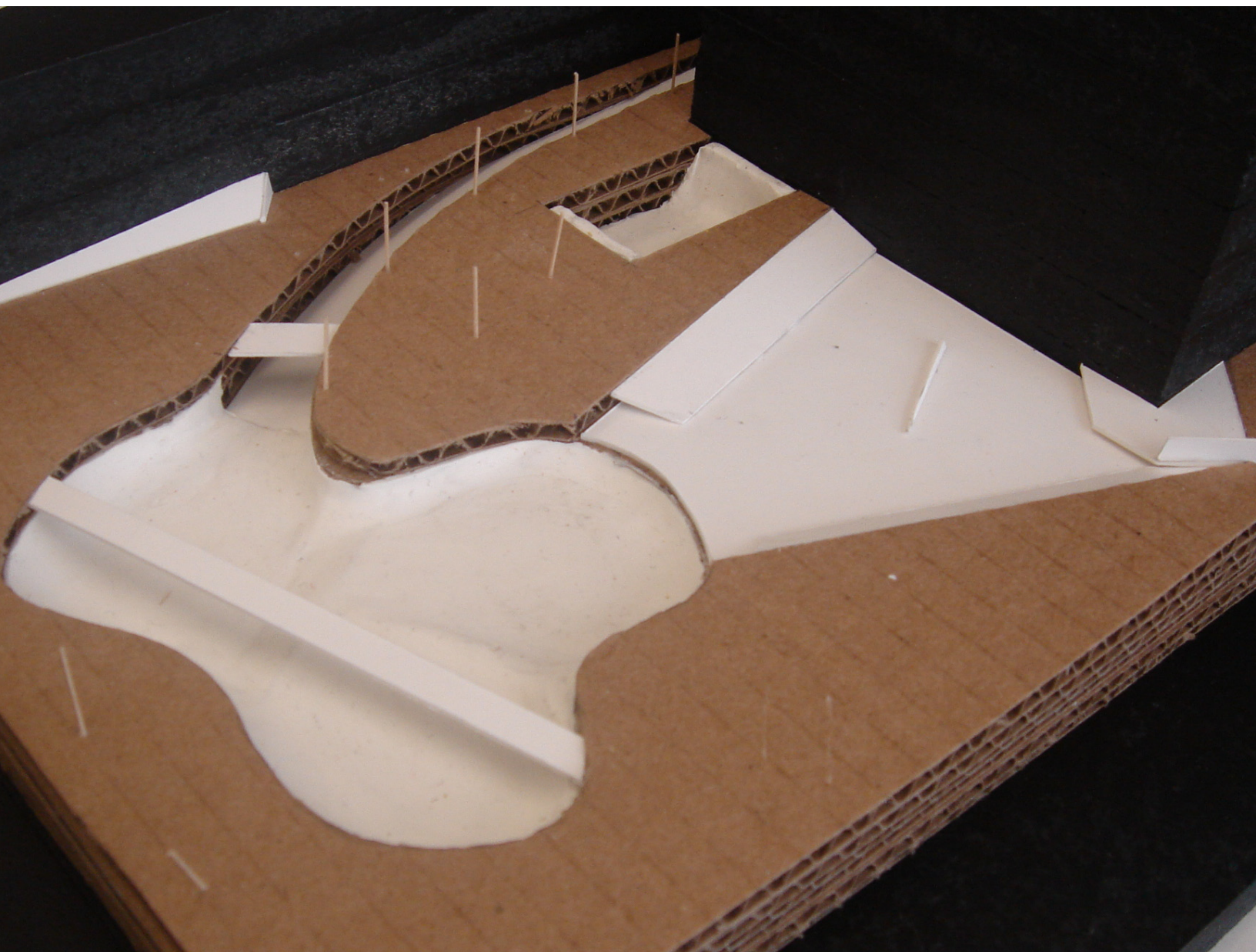


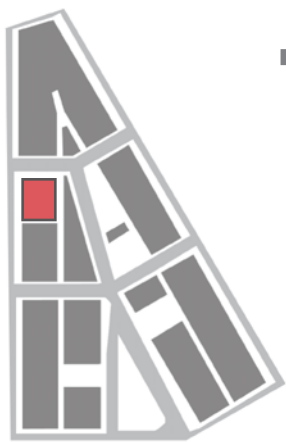


The use of the uneven plane helps create different spaces and celebrate the alleyway. Distinct activities can happen in the garden throughout the day. During daylight it may be a space where one goes to lay down and read a book, or where kids go play soccer, where during the night there is a possibility of the existing building that divides the site be a projected screen to display a movie for example.





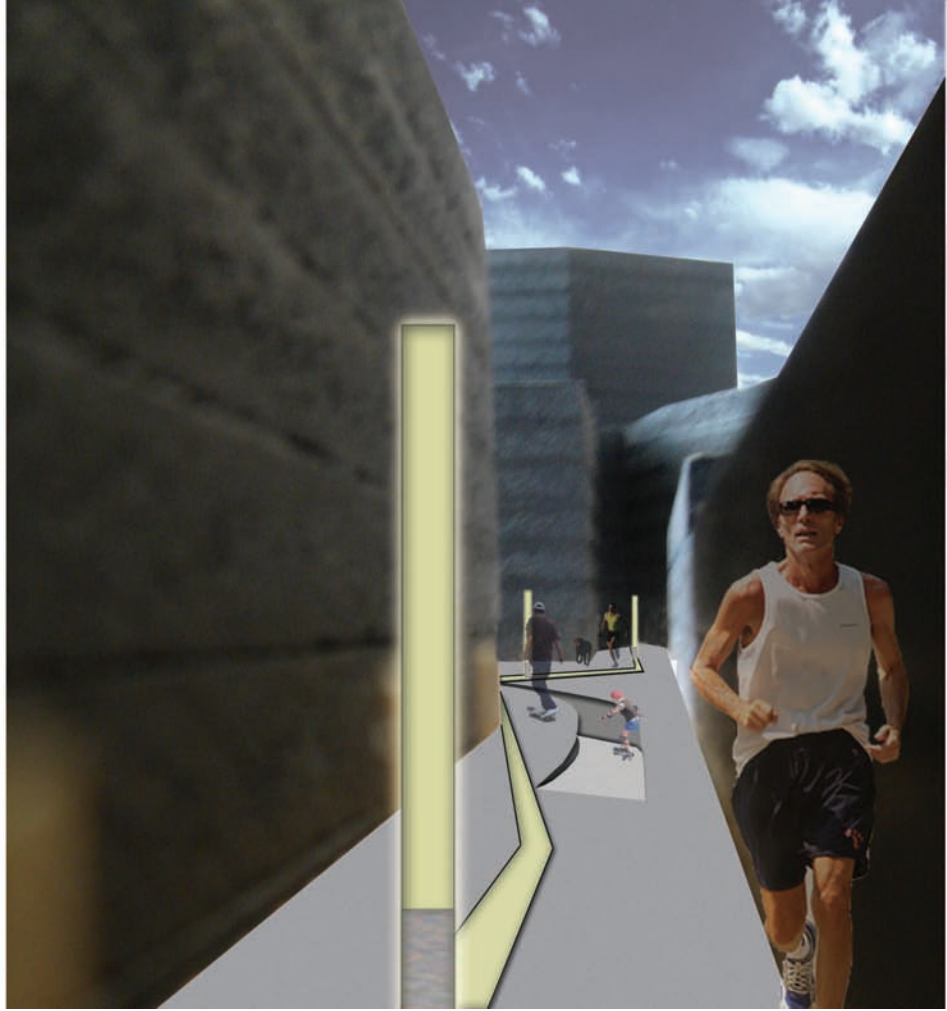




## skating space

Although skaters are more than welcome to any part of this design, a main hub for the community was created.

Trough the alley one can access the concrete bowl, creating a different experience for the skater.



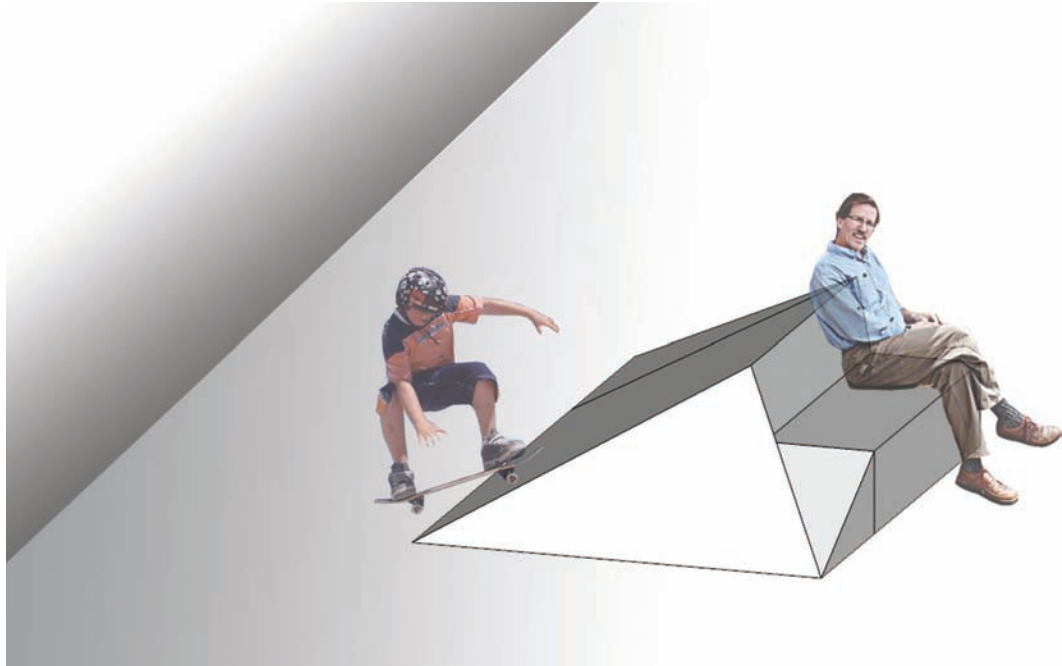
The alleyway allows for a new space for the community to exercise.





# sidewalk and alley engagement

New bench styles allow for the community to interact with each other.





A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a pen, writing on a document. The hand is positioned at the top right, and the pen is angled downwards towards the bottom left. The document is a light-colored paper with some faint lines. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white. The text 'NON-CONNECTION' is overlaid on the image, rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise.

# NON-CONNECTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explore cavities within the city and how they can be reinterpreted and reactivated by engaging the people with the space.

This exploration is seen as a social response. The creation of spaces for people to engage on is the initial step to start a snowball effect and help define a neighborhood.

The means in which the thesis was approached, was through careful studies of movement and engagement with the built space. By having this background study, the spaces created for the people within the city of Detroit attempt to be more than a park, but they are an existential experience to the human being. Through the exploration of different engagements with the built environment and diverse community, it is expected that one's experience at the space be unique at every visit and become a memory.

Through the exploration of the existing space, a parallel thesis was created. Such thesis starts to look at the existing structure that surrounds the space and how the spaces being created can positively impact the older existing structures. Most of them are currently abandoned; therefore a sense of dependency between the old structure and the new structures is created. Such relationship starts to challenge the later development that is to come to the area.

This thesis is believed to be a strong development view of an area. Instead of focusing in masking the cavities within a city by applying a mass, this approach is concerned about the well being of individuals and their experience within the space. As people start to become comfortable

and familiar with the area, the interest in the neighborhood will increase. By helping beings create memories of interaction with the environment, self and others, this memory will be saved in a good space within one's soul.



The background of the page features several rolled-up scrolls of parchment or paper, arranged diagonally from the top-left towards the bottom-right. The scrolls are rendered in a soft, light brown or beige color, with some showing faint, illegible markings or textures. The lighting is soft, creating a sense of depth and highlighting the cylindrical forms of the scrolls.

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Borden, Ian. Skateboarding, Space and the City - Architecture and the Body. New York: Berg, 2006







A background image showing a hand holding a pen, with the pen nib pointing towards the text. The image is in a light, semi-transparent style, creating a subtle watermark effect.

# **ENDNOTES**



- 1 Dictionary, [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)
- 2 "Dichotomy 15: Ground" – 2004 – page 55-68
- 3 Glazer, Nathan. *The Public Face of Architecture*. New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987 – "The Public Domain" – page 46
- 4 Glazer, Nathan. *The Public Face of Architecture*. New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987 – "The Public Domain" – page 46
- 5 "Folding Architecture – Spatial, Structural and Organizational Diagrams", Sophia Vyzovito, p. 134
- 6 "Body, Memory and Architecture" page 58
- 7 "Skateboarding, Space and the City – Architecture and the Body", Ian Border, p. 101
- 8 "Skateboarding, Space and the City – Architecture and the Body", Ian Border, p. 106
- 9 Peralta, interview, *SkateBoarder*, p. 58
- 10 *SkateBoarder*, vol.3 no.5, in Glen E. Friedman, *Fuck You Heroes* (New York: Burning Flags, 1994)
- 11 "Skateboarding, Space and the City – Architecture and the Body", Ian Border, p.1