Context | Collaboration | Renewal

AUBURN UNIVERSITY school of architecture, planning, and landscape architecture
Urban Studio 2015

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Contents

Introduction to the Urban Studio

Student Work : Avondale

Student Work : Woodlawn

Internship Profile

State of the Studio
Welcome to the Urban Studio

I am Alex Krumdieck, the Director of the Urban Studio and I have been fortunate to work with fifth year students from the College of Architecture, Design and Construction.

The Urban Studio is a teaching and outreach program located in Birmingham, Alabama. During the 2014-2015 academic year, we had 15 students who chose to come and do their final year of study immersed in an urban context. The Urban Studio challenges students to explore the inherent opportunities found in an urban setting. Our focus is that of making great places. Dealing with masterplans and neighborhood redevelopment, along with designs of public buildings, the students engaged in work across disciplines that allowed them to see the potential their work has to create great places when we look beyond the limits of our site. During their course work they also had the opportunity to collaborate with the professional community.

The following pages are reflective of their work.
Avondale
Strengthening the Urban Fabric

Avondale, an up and coming neighborhood within the Birmingham area, with recent public and private investments, steeped in history, has suffered decay over the past 50 years. Terminating at the site of Birmingham’s first zoo, the 41st Street corridor, formerly known as Spring Street, is the center of the Avondale area. Experiencing a resurgence over the past five years, the 41st Street corridor has a 100% occupancy rate, however, the full potential of the Avondale area had not been reached. The majority of activity in the area occurred at lunch time or during the evening near the Avondale Brewery. Avondale had become an entertainment area supporting visitors but not the community itself.

Whether one viewed the 3rd Avenue South and 41st Street intersection as the geographical center of the community or the intersection at 5th Avenue South and 41st Street, the majority of the community, including residential neighborhoods, lies within the 10 minute walking radius, however, it is not a walkable community, an issue that has fractured the community and hindered its growth.
ASSESS & LIABILITIES

After meeting with the members of the community, the students in both the Urban Studio Program and the Masters of Community Planning Program came together for an intense three day Charrette. Challenged by the community with the question: “How do we create a community that serves its members, draws and supports the neighboring communities, and has a strong economic base that will allow for future growth?” Students immersed themselves in the community and began the task of understanding the neighborhood. Analysis included connectivity studies with neighboring communities, researching the history of the community, the neighborhood character, understanding the pedestrian, vehicular and development patterns of the neighborhood, along with specific studies such as topography, hydrology, building typologies, and a current business inventory. At the completion of the three day Charrette the students presented their work and findings to a group of community stakeholders.

POINTS OF ENTRY AS SITES

Their findings fell into three categories:

Avondale needs to create an identity and designate the extents of their community;

Avondale is rich with amenities and history that are overshadowed by its liabilities;

Avondale needs to build on the “entertainment” image and become a “destination”

From these findings it was determined that the planning students would focus on the 41st Street corridor while the urban studio would determine four sites that would become “entry points” to the Avondale community. These sites, with appropriate interventions, would become a catalyst for growth. Each of these entry points was viewed on two different scales, the pedestrian scale as well as the vehicular. As the projects were developed and blended with the planning students work, a pedestrian fabric was created that would strengthen the identity of Avondale, creating a “Place.” A “Place” supporting the residents, as well as guests; a “Place” supporting interaction, a “Place” positioned to grow.
Projects

Avondale Park Cultural Center
Taylor Christiansen, Carlos Hernandez
Anne Johnstone, Michael Lewandowski

Avondale Community Center
Alex Buehnning, Alan Darpini
Matthew Mason, Kevin Thompson

Field to Fork
Don’Neshia Clark, Vince Lombardo
Jaslin Whaley, Terrance Wong

Spring Street Market
Charlie Abram, Keaton Ernst
Alex Hays, Quinn MacKenzie
Avondale Park Cultural Center
Taylor Christiansen, Carlos Hernandez
Anne Johnstone, Michael Lewandowski

This project seeks to accomplish two goals: to create a junction between Avondale and Forest Park, and to add another asset to Avondale park. The site is on the corner of 5th Avenue and 40th Street where the library currently sits. We believe that the library is a successful element of the park and the neighborhoods, but the current library design detracts from the connectivity of that critical corner because of its lack of presence on the street. However, we recognize the library’s importance and we want to further the idea of educational enrichment that the library offers. We are proposing to do this by designing a museum and classroom space to complement the library.
SITE CONSIDERATIONS

The museum celebrates local artists and hosts professionally curated traveling exhibits that will rotate throughout the year to ensure the museum always has something new to offer the community. The permanent collection of the museum will feature sculptures that begin inside the museum and permeate throughout the park. These sculptures have the opportunity to expand the success of the park and the scope of its reach, not only toward Avondale but also towards Forest Park.
URBAN RESPONSE

We placed the library on 40th Street, closest to Forest Park, so that it is more connected to the elementary school and residences. The classrooms and lecture hall wrap the corner, communicating with both the library and the museum, as well as with Avondale United Methodist Church across the street. The museum holds the 5th Avenue edge, and the restaurant address the 41st Street entertainment corridor while adding a new dining experience to the area.
AVONDALE CULTURAL CENTER DETAILS

Curtain wall, Solar Shade, Screen Wall, Monumental Stair
The key to selecting the site as a potential community and recreation center for the neighborhood of Avondale was identifying the eastern gateway into the community at the split of Crestwood Boulevard into 3rd and 5th Avenue. The site is exposed to a large majority of the traffic entering the community from the east and serves as a catch basin for the adjacent residential neighborhoods. This creates an ideal location for the community to gather and display its unity as a billboard to all entering. The design manifests the idea of community by separating all of the program into individual boxes that are united by a singular wrapping roof, much like individuals are tied together by the bond of a community. The building also serves as a billboard for the community by maintaining maximum transparency when exposing the most public functions to the street-front. The building was also designed to be as passive as possible so that the community is not faced with the massive burden of conditioning and servicing such a large building. The roof structure facilitates cross ventilation, gray water collection, and the mounting of solar panels.
ITERATIVE PROCESS
With the understanding that our building was not going to independently change the fabric of Avondale, it was designed to fit into an overall masterplan. The above sketches begin to layout our ideas for what that plan may be. This approach was possible due to a significant number of vacant lots on the site.

COMMUNITY CATCH BASIN
By placing the building at the split of the roads it acts as a billboard defining the entry to Avondale, while also serving as a catch basin for the surrounding residential districts. Single family homes maintain the existing pedestrian corridor on 4th Avenue, which then terminates at the community center. 3rd Avenue is developed with multifamily housing and commercial buildings due to the heavier traffic on this road.
Because of its extremely visible location, the site was chosen to be a community and recreation center to celebrate the unification of a community at its most traveled point of access. The community center houses event and meeting spaces in the smaller, 5th Avenue building. The 3rd Avenue building serves as the main recreation space.
The site posed some challenging problems aside from its triangular shape. The site sloped down 28 feet from both the split of Crestwood Boulevard and the southern most (5th Avenue) corners. This issue was mitigated by creating stadium seating that connects visitors from the plaza to the basketball court.
The 5th Avenue elevations step down from the larger scale at 3rd Avenue to communicate with neighboring residential district. 3rd Avenue had a much higher traffic level and needed to act as a billboard.

The central plaza remains open to allow movement between buildings, freedom to gather, and to funnel people to the main entry.
AVONDALE COMMUNITY CENTER DETAILS
Truss, Ground Connection, Roof to Wall Assembly
Field To Fork

Don’Neshia Clark, Vince Lombardo
Jaslin Whaley, Torrance Wong

This proposal taps into Birmingham and Avondale’s historical practice of food cultivation, preparation, and preservation through the adoption of a cyclical Field to Fork process. "Field to fork" refers to the stages of the production of food: harvesting, storage, processing, packaging, sales, and consumption.

The integration of a processing facility, culinary school, and restaurant into an urban farming site in Avondale engages the community through providing inexpensive locally grown produce and preserved goods. Additional incentives include the preservation of the rail lines to connect Birmingham and Avondale, sustaining the current culture that Birmingham and Avondale embody.
The figure ground map shows the aspects of connecting to local functions and businesses around the downtown Birmingham area. The drawing indicates our site (green), restaurants (red), Pepper Place Market (orange), and schools (blue). Large parks surround the site and are easily accessed through proposed greenway connections.
SITE PLAN
Connections into site through greenways

ABOVE
Program Site Plan

BELOW
Field to Fork Diagram
PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS
The program is divided into two main structures that diverts the greenway from Railroad Park into the heart of Avondale's Downtown district along 2nd Avenue South. The building to the west is the processing facility used to clean and package raw produce from the fields surrounding the building. Small greenhouses allow for extended growing seasons.
CENTRAL COURTYARD
Program can spill into the courtyard as an extension of interior spaces
FIELD TO FORK URBAN FARM DETAILS

Green Roof, Water Retention System, Skylights, Green House
The Spring Street Market aims to build upon existing catalytic sites of the Avondale Brewery and Park by creating a connection between the sites along the 41st Street Corridor. The market program fills a significant void in a major food desert of Birmingham. The street market is a study on possible improvements to the public realm of Avondale. The public spaces underneath the canopies serve as incubator spaces for small business. The plaza serves as supplemental public space to the grocery store and residential program on the corner of 3rd Avenue South. Through phasing the idea migrates along the corridor and aims to improve urban infill and redevelopment over time.
PHASE 1

The existing conditions of the 41st street corridor include numerous curb cuts and a corridor that varies between 5 and 6 lanes of traffic. While the Brewery provides exciting activities at night, daytime attractions are minimal. The first phase of improvements aims to expand the sidewalk creating a safer and more enjoyable daytime pedestrian experience. In addition, the insertion of diagonal parking provides for high density activity, reduces existing surface parking, and narrows the corridor to two lanes.

PHASE 2

The second phase of construction incorporates the use of canopy structures to incubate and grow daytime activity in Avondale. The placement of built structures on the southern end of 41st connects the existing catalysts of the Brewery and Park. The installation also aims to create an additional street market catalyst by providing shade, seating and market spaces on both sides on 41st. The new canopy structures and their corresponding storage buildings provide density to the sparse environment.

PHASE 3

Due to the newfound success of the Spring Street Market, new businesses seek open parcels in the area and begin to infill the missing buildings along the corridor. Urban infill displays the longterm results of street incubation based upon the Merchant Canopy Business Model.

PHASE 4

Phase 4 is crucial to securing the longterm growth of Avondale by creating residential diversity. The final phase includes two residential townhome products on 3rd Avenue South to supplement units above the market.
SPRING STREET MARKET DETAILS

Glass Roof, Canopy, Wall Section
Woodlawn
Embracing Context

Settled in 1815 by the Wood family, Woodlawn is a small community located four miles east of Birmingham. Located along Georgia Road, an original connector to the Mississippi territory, the farming family selected a fertile piece of property that would grow into one of Birmingham's prominent neighborhoods.

Originally named Rockville, the small settlement grew as the country grew and pushed towards the West. Upon the arrival of the first rail line in 1870, the town became known as Wood Station. Shortly after Georgia Pacific Railroad began servicing the new city of Birmingham in 1884, Wood Station was granted a municipal corporation and became the city of Woodlawn, named in honor of their founding family. By the end of the century, Woodlawn had grown to a population of 2,500. While Woodlawn grew, it became a community strong in spirit and full of pride. Its founding family remained in Woodlawn and gave back to the community by creating public parks and venues, strengthening the neighborhood and enriching the core principals of family.
In 1910, the city of Woodlawn was annexed into the city of Birmingham becoming one of the five original neighborhoods of Birmingham. Over the next few decades, Woodlawn continued to grow and became recognized as a good section of Birmingham full of the fine things in life. Woodlawn, as with many other urban communities, was unable to escape the effects of the social turmoil of the 1960s and the economic unrest of the 1970s. The introduction of the interstate system isolated the city of Woodlawn, intensifying the spread of urban blight, followed along with “white flight” nearly causing the destruction of the city.

In recent years, strengthened by private investors, Woodlawn has begun to experience a resurgence. Building on its history, the city has begun to reestablish the pride, sense of community and the core principals of Family.

As the Urban Studio became involved in the Woodlawn area, the Woodlawn Foundation, REV Birmingham, and several partners were delivering 64 new housing units, nurturing several small businesses, and providing a business incubator center. It was clear to everyone that Woodlawn was turning the corner and was poised to move forward. The students found the community full of pride. Although their economic situation wasn’t that of neighboring communities, the community was still strong. Challenged by the Woodlawn Foundation and REV Birmingham with further strengthening the area, the students began studying the site at the corner of 1st Avenue South and 56th Street and explored the idea of creating a mixed use building containing a grocery store, six retail spaces and 35-40 affordable housing units.
Thesis Projects

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Kyle D’Agostino
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STUDENTS
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Torrance Wong
Intersect

Michael Lewandowski

Birmingham’s proposed BRT route presents a major pedestrian gateway into the neighborhood of Woodlawn. One iteration of the proposal places the bus stop at the intersection of 1st Avenue N and 56th Street S, a block north of the given site. The market element of the program, similarly, presents a major pedestrian draw within the community. Positioning the market on the southern edge of the site allows it to behave as both a noise barrier from the adjacent train tracks and as a pedestrian anchor, drawing foot traffic along the rest of the building frontage.

Voids in the building mass between the market and BRT create a sequence of intersecting public and private space. Aligning public and private use in localized zones enriches the path between destinations and shortens the perceived travel distance. Additionally, harboring both local and visiting user types within these shared spaces will catalyze social interaction, revealing the daily lives and rituals of the residents of Woodlawn and bringing its culture out of the backyard.
PROCESS
The design begins with a thin bar layout along 56th Street South, maximizing energy performance, site tree conservation, and street frontage. Housing density and building height increase toward the denser, more active 1st Avenue South and away from the railroad tracks. The program is segmented into three buildings, framing a sequence of outdoor gathering spaces. The intersection of public and private space tethers each building together and creates an engaging pedestrian experience for visitors and residents alike.
Woodlawn’s current community driven identity is one that distinguishes this neighborhood from the rest of the greater Birmingham area. Despite the importance of the community aspect, Woodlawn’s downtown core does not address the need of dense street edges as well as strategically located public gathering spaces. Through the use of a manipulated bar scheme, the Woodlawn market and public space located on 1st Avenue South and 56th Street South become a catalyst for downtown “densification” and community interaction. The building form began to address the issue of downtown “densification” through putting a single bar of retail along the 1st Avenue South street edge, allowing the community members and retail stores to occupy the sidewalk edge. The scheme is further manipulated through pushing back and raising a portion of the building to create a public space on the corner of 56th and 1st and a market underneath the building. By doing this, the market can begin to spill out into the public space and activate the street edge. Residential entry sequences are accessed through the courtyard spaces and accentuated as towers in the building massing.
STEP 1:
Hold the street edge of 1st Avenue South while addressing downtown Woodlawn.

STEP 2:
Push a portion of the building back into the site in order to create a public space on the corner of 1st Avenue South and 56th Street.

STEP 3:
Raise the pushed back portion of the building to create a market space that can interact with the public space.

STEP 4:
Accentuate vertical circulation towers to residential units in courtyard space.
GROUND FLOOR PLAN
Site Plan With Surrounding Context

1ST & 2ND FLOOR PLAN
Residential Unit Distribution
Woodlawn is currently experiencing revitalization both in the commercial and residential sectors. However, these two areas of revitalization are not physically connected to one another. The mixed-use program of this project physically connects commercial and residential activity, suggesting that on a neighborhood scale, these two zones should become more integrated. 1st Avenue South is the corridor that links Woodlawn, so development along this street is crucial to initiate the connection of the commercial and residential zones.

On the pedestrian scale, the integration of public and private manifests itself in the design of the building, particularly in the way it addresses its 1st Avenue frontage. It begins with an abstraction of the rhythmic downtown elevation language typical to Birmingham: heavy brick piers perforated with warehouse windows and large openings on the first level with storefront glass infill. The living units on the upper level apartments are extracted from behind the brick facade, their wood paneling recalling the warmth of the interior. In this way, the building is flipped inside out, expressing the lives of the people of Woodlawn and forging a connection between the culture of the interior and the culture of the street.
CAN LIGHTS
STEEL BEAM
STEEL TUBE SUPPORTS CANTILEVER
STEEL ANGLE EXPOSED ON ELEVATION
CONCRETE DECKING
METAL FLAT SEAM ROOF
FLASHING
GYP BOARD, SHEATHING, AND INSULATION
METAL FLAT SEAM ROOF
FLASHING
ANGLE HOLDS BRICK
WATERPROOFING
ROOFING MATERIAL
STUD WALL
WOOD BLOCKING AND FLASHING
CONNECTING DIFFERENT ZONES
WALL SECTION AT EXTRUDED RESIDENTIAL UNIT
WALL SECTION AT EXTRUDED RESIDENTIAL UNIT
WALKING FROM THE BRT

WALKING SOUTH ON 1ST AVENUE SOUTH
SKETCHING

In the spring semester we were to study both the abstract and concrete elements of architecture through sketching. Sketching these seemingly unrelated objects and experiences helped us subconsciously develop our thesis projects, see things with a different perspective, and focus on aspects of design that might have otherwise gone unstudied.
My proposal for this project is to remove the negative value from affordable housing in three ways: a new economical way of building that promotes flexibility and diversity, social engagement with promotes community and public gathering spaces, and superficial aesthetic way that promotes the pride in ownership. The housing program is repetitive module language that consist a base module unit that is manipulated, stacked, and mixed to create a hybrid row house and walk up house typology. The market and retail program are combine to create a market hall that is a hub for local vendor, small business, and a community gathering. This market hall is intersected by a community building that consist of shared amenities for the housing program. The site consist of four major outdoor spaces that respond to both public and private program elements that intersect on the site to promote social engagement. The elevations were studied in detail to respond to the context of Woodlawn, while creating a façade that responds to this new way of building economically.
Modular construction is a process in which a building is constructed off-site, under controlled plant conditions, using the same materials and designing to the same codes and standards as conventionally built facilities— but in about half the time. Buildings are produced in "modules" that when put together on site, reflect the identical design intent and specifications of the most sophisticated site-built facility— without compromise."
SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

The housing units also incorporate porches, where information is shared from porch to porch. The market is a place where the community can connect and also intersects with the shared amenities for the housing units. Both the community and the surrounding communities can engage in this space. The retail is combined with the market to create a large market hall, where the space becomes a hub for small business and entrepreneurs in the area.
IMPORTANCE OF SKETCHING

Sketching is a very important tool for a designer. Not only is it possible to make visual records of existing designs, but it is also useful to work out new design ideas. A sort of visual brainstorming, to consider first thoughts in greater depth and refine initial ideas. It can also be used to communicate design ideas to other people. Sketches do not have to be works of art. Their primary function should be informative and communicate design ideas.
Convergent Spaces
Alex Buehning

The project is based on the premise that a number of diverse and extroverted public spaces within a mixed income neighborhood can improve Woodlawn’s sense of community and attract a higher level of diversity.

The project is more than a study of how affordable housing achieves dignity and a sense of ownership; it studies how the removal of social and physical isolation often associated with mixed income housing developments can foster social interaction between residents, the community and the city. The site is designed to create pockets of activity, each working to support a diversity of activities and catch surrounding districts. Diversity comes not only from these different levels of activity, but the variety of people drawn onto the site. This structure is meant to support the existing community and to build within it by internalizing some of the community’s interactions and encouraging skilled entrepreneurs to enter the community and open a business. This supports Woodlawn and maintains community pride by capitalizing on the existing amenities within the neighborhood and not duplicating existing program.
Woodlawn has an existing network of amenities, including resources like Social Venture, the Rev Urban Food Hub and City Meats market. The site strategy aims to capture surrounding districts with pockets of activity activated by small retail and market spaces, encouraging neighbors to interact as they move from store to store. This strategy also encourages skilled entrepreneurs to enter the community and open small businesses.
DIVERSE INTERACTIONS

The project fosters interaction at several different scales. Residents of the site, members of the community and visitors from throughout Birmingham come together on this site to enjoy a variety of activities of interactions. Each of the different residential units has a different relationship to the public basic on the pocket of activity it is situated over. Residents of each of these units will live differently based on the activities they overlook.
SCALE + CHARACTER
The building responds in scale and character to both the neighboring downtown core and residential district. The 1st Avenue South elevation has a flat roof communicating directly with the language of downtown and mirroring the size of the adjacent AT&T Building. The elevations along 56th Street South communicate to the residential district behind the site, mimicking the gabled roof forms in a contemporary way.
Throughout the drawing course I felt I truly achieved the ability to sketch as a way of observation in order to inform my design choices made in studio. It afforded me time to study subjects such as contrast and texture, while also taking the time out of studio to find local case studies relevant to my project.
Historically, the Woodlawn community included parts of the Crestwood neighborhood, but over time a strong disconnect has developed between them, partly due to the physical boundaries of the railroad tracks and a steep elevation change.

In recent years, Woodlawn has moved toward recreating a holistic community, and with a strong community presence already in place, this project could expand this ongoing effort by providing places where people can gather.

The project develops the sight-line between downtown Woodlawn and residential Crestwood as a strong axis which runs through the site and acts as a physical and visual connection. The market and residential program elements are arranged along this axis with the market pushed forward, creating a meeting point while keeping complete transparency along the path. The areas where different program elements mesh together create visible places which may encourage diverse interactions.
Woodlawn’s downtown area is created by 1st Ave N and 1st Ave S pinching together. The site is located in a unique place between 1st Ave S and the railroad tracks. There are many community amenities close to the site. These amenities highlighted in orange are a few of the many where community interaction occurs.

1) Allocate program on site.
2) Break down scale to respect context.
3) Create axis between Crestwood and downtown Woodlawn.
4) Push market out and create meeting point.
Second and Third residential floor plans. Total of 36 units including efficiency townhouses and apartments above retail and market.
STRUCTURE
The structure consists of steel frame for the market and retail with a concrete platform above. The residential above and the townhouses are constructed of wood framing.
SKETCHING

Getting out and discovering the city while sketching was a great experience for me. Sketching is essential to design in order to get a concept across in a quick fashion.

Matthew Mason
Situated at the edge of the perceived downtown core of Woodlawn, this development looks to catalyze activity on 1st Ave South and 56th St South through a series of carefully programmed edge conditions. Using two bars that push and pull away from the 1st Ave street edge, a series of public and private edges are created. The pivotal northwest corner of the site begins to serve as the central public zone that begins to make functional ties back to Social Venture and the up-and-coming 55th Place.

As the parti developed through the iterative process, the goal was to develop an architecture that was optimally responsive to the programed edges of the project. The challenge of creating an architecture that could playfully interact with these edges at a human scale kept the project from being overly heroic and considerate of the surrounding textures and sales.

The idea of focusing on the personal experience of these edges drove the decision to allow each edge its own particular identity. Some edges bleed into one another as a means of creating public conditions, while others look to create private edges for the residents through shading and the framing of particular views.
Programming and Location:
The site plan demonstrates the potential the project has not only to begin to tether different textures of Woodlawn’s fabric together, but to also begin to emphasize the importance in developing functional and symbolic connections with other buildings in the community. In terms of programming, retail and market components find themselves working with the public space on the lower levels.
RESIDENTIAL AXON

The Market bar contains studio and three bedroom units on the upper floors. In order to maintain a consistent bay size, the sleeping rooms for the three bedroom units sit above the living, kitchen, and dining areas of the three bedroom units. They also stretch out to cover the area above the studio unit. This creates dynamic facade conditions for the 1st Ave Elevation, and also looks to continue activating the edges of the building by giving residents a view out onto the central public space. With sliding glass partitions on the ground floor, balconies on the second floor, and bedrooms looking out from above, every story of the building gives the inhabitant a way to interact with the public realm, regardless of whether the inhabitant lives on site or is just visiting to shop for groceries.
BLEEDING EDGES
View of Market Edge

EDGES AS PRIVACY
View of Water Wall Area

EDGES AS AN AXIS
View through the Site

EDGES FRAMING VIEWS
View of EBCG from back of Development

Kevin Thompson
SKETCH STUDIES
During the design process, it became critically important to develop an understanding of all that an edge condition could be. These are just a few of the various types of sketch studies that were conducted in and around the downtown Birmingham area. Once it became understood that the project was geared toward the development of edges, it became essential to understand that edges had the capacity to function, but also make bigger connections at bigger scales. The goal with these particular studies was to understand edges at the level of something as small as a bench, to something as large as a skyline. The sketches begin to make clear just how many ways edges can perform: we see ground planes that lure the eye downrange, edges that frame views, edges that point toward something more significant, edges that exist purely for function, and edges that begin to make contextual separations with hard and/or softs moves.

Kevin Thompson
56th Strt Mrkt
Aleksander Hays

The project aims to utilize the market’s program as a connector piece in Woodlawn. The market’s form captures movement and activity—connecting adjacent neighborhoods and Woodlawn’s residents back into the core of downtown Woodlawn. Setting the stage for growth and revitalization along the inner downtown streets.
What proved to be invaluable upon completing the sketch class was the way I learned to draw through imagining, rather than drawing through copying or replicating. Abstracting or finding the gestural qualities in a piece and transferring the key elements is what makes a drawing truly communicative and successful.
Woodlawn Community Park
Don'Neshia Clark

A more public and central gathering space can enhance and strengthen the potential of the Woodlawn community. The proposal introduces an urban public community space that can potentially enhance and strengthen the fabric of the Woodlawn neighborhood. The site will serve as a connector piece in helping to bring and serve various communities and locals. This gathering space is that of a unified piece in helping to enhance, and strengthen the potential of Woodlawn but also provide and serve the communities in and around it.
The site will serve as a connector piece in helping to bring and serve various communities and locals.
SITE PLAN
The community park is activated by supporting elements such as retail shops, cafe, market and pavilions allin which help to draw people from the edges of the site to the center gathering space where activities such as birthdays, farmers markets, weddings and family oriented functions can occur.
Axon and sequence perspective walking through the park.
GATHERING SPACES IN BIRMINGHAM ALABAMA

The above perspectives are various drawings from Railroad Park, Advent church and Linn Park detailing a sequence of gathering and community spaces that allow people to observe and congregate.
Woodlawn has the ability to utilize its strong infrastructural connections to the surrounding neighborhoods of eastern Birmingham. However, largely perceptual, barriers hinder the potential successes of the existing conditions and contribute to the idea that Woodlawn is isolated.

The proposal aims to utilize the site’s adjacencies to Crestwood North and the commercial and civil core of Woodlawn and to reinforce and establish connections across and through the site to adjacent residential areas.

These goals are achieved by holding the street edge and improving the street design of 1st Avenue South, continuing the commercial activity momentum from 1st Avenue North, and providing pedestrian-friendly access to and from the site.
CONNECTIVITY AT MULTIPLE SCALES

The project site is located where the commercial and civic cores of Woodlawn intersect with the community’s residential zones. 1st Avenue North and 1st Avenue South are major thoroughfares that connect Woodlawn to Birmingham’s city center and the suburban neighborhoods to the east. The momentum from the major thoroughfares does not extend along the cross streets as easily.
HOLDING STREET EDGES

Redevelopment of the site’s edges was a critical component. The travel lanes on 1st Avenue South and 56th Street South were reduced to enhance the pedestrian corridor and increase the barrier between vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The most public program elements—retail shops, a cafe, and an urban grocery—are adjacent to the sidewalk; residential spaces are located above and set back from the building edge.
REV Birmingham and Woodlawn United have started a revitalization framework for business and economic growth of Woodlawn, encouraging local neighborhood development. As a catalyst, this project aims to work hand-in-hand with the efforts of this partnership by providing both retail diversity and new mixed-income housing options that cater around a diversity of community gathering spaces.

At the heart of the site is the large-span Food Market. The Food Market holds more than 15 market stalls starting at 225 sq. feet and allows spaces for selling fresh produce and goods, local food venues, and even restaurants with outdoor seating.

The idea of retail diversity is spilled onto the street with the retail/housing building along 1st Avenue South. Eight larger retail spaces engage the pedestrian-active, tree covered street while having a diversity of housing options two stories above (efficiencies, one and two bedroom).

A micro-community situated on the southeast side of the site provides an additional, much-needed building concept of a vibrant, healthy community of 600 sq. ft. homes. The Micro-community allows neighbors to develop relationships beyond the family and sharing private amenities like a fitness room, community kitchen, and laundry center all in the common house.
REV Birmingham and Woodlawn United have started a neighborhood revitalization movement, an initiative of creating a holistic community. To create a holistic community carries a need of diversity in people, program, and gathering places. My project facilitates this unique network of ideas by providing common gathering spaces, retail diversity, and new mixed-income housing alternatives.
192 193

EFFICIENCY

UPPER FLOORPLAN

1 Bedroom

Loft Style

INTERSECTION AT 56TH ST & 1ST AVE. S.

LOOKING ACROSS 1ST AVE. S.

1ST AVENUE SOUTH ELEVATION

66TH STREET ELEVATION

56TH STREET ELEVATION
SECTION CUT MODEL THROUGH RETAIL/HOUSING BUILDING ALONG 1ST AVE SOUTH
SKETCHING FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

The sketch course has helped me loosen my fingertips and allowed me to flow my ideas from mind to paper. Transferring from what I learned in class to my project, I ultimately decided to do my whole project by hand from concept to final presentation. I’ve learned the importance of sketching and the ability it has to an idea of visualization and layered with complexity.

Torrance Wong
Woodlawn is experiencing a community revival through a resurgence of small business and numerous initiatives determined to strengthen the local community. As this growth occurs, the community will need space to expand, but it will also need space to congregate and interact. Intersections is about responding to this need by creating connected public and private spaces to develop a narrative of strong social connection within Woodlawn.

Intersections is comprised of several distinct pieces; a new market that will enhance the wellness of the community, retail, office and cafe spaces that will give entrepreneurs a highly visible location and draw the community in, and 46 new housing units offering various living options. In between these programmed zones, community space intersects with private spaces negotiated through a series of spatial thresholds.

The front plaza space provides room for the cafe to extend outdoors under the shade of the tree. In addition, the market and residential entry border this space, activating each of the edges in a unique way. The larger community space that intersects the middle of the site is framed by two small pavilions that bound the space with a permeable edge. Two courtyards branch off of this central space providing more private spaces for the residents.
WOODLAWN CONTEXT

The project is sited at a critical juncture between the residential neighborhoods of Woodlawn and the developing businesses and community spaces. In response, the building negotiates the intersection between living spaces and the public realm.

DIAGRAMS

The parti comprises of a street edge occupied by retail, cafes, and office (orange) as well as the market (green) which are nested around a universal service core (blue). The residential spaces (yellow) are on the interior of the site and above the retail areas.

SECTION PERSPECTIVE

Public and private spaces overlap and transition into one another. The highly public streetscape transitions into a more contained community space which connects to semi-private courtyards.
VIEW OF COMMUNITY SPACE
The interstitial zone forms a place for various types of gatherings supporting the many activities of a diversified community.

DETAIL SECTION
The building is steel framed with a series of small cantilevers at the balcony conditions above a continuous glass storefront below. The balconies are clad in wood and are supported by a continuous beam that runs over the receded column line.
URBAN SKETCHING

The act of physically documenting visual and atmospheric conditions provides us with a means of critically researching natural phenomena and the underlying forces of the built environment. Light, texture, proportion, and detail inform our visual understanding of a place and suggest a character or purpose for the spaces we occupy. The varied qualities we encounter demand an equally eclectic palette of materials for documentation. Pencil, pen, or paint; all tools have unique characteristics in the ways in which they can transcribe and subsequently convey information.
With the public realm of Woodlawn, AL disappearing over the years, this project, the Woodlawn Marketplace, aims to give those spaces back to the community. The plaza has programmatic elements strategically placed around it to enhance and promote healthy community interaction on a daily level while also providing the community with a place to gather and hold events.
OVERLAPPING PROGRAM
The retail portions in blue hold the edges of the site, pinching the market (orange) and residential entries (yellow) into the public space of the plaza. Housing overlaps the entire market, tying the retail portions together. The market and the plaza act together to blend the interior and exterior spaces of the marketplace.
ABOVE
Unwrapped Screen Elevation

BELOW
Door Diagram

ABOVE
Screen Diagram
Hand drawing and observational sketching are two very important tools that help teach us to slow down and actually “see” what it is that we are looking at.
The average American has been estimated to spend 2 years of their life waiting in line. Recent studies have suggested people complain less about waiting when they have something to do. Hence, the importance of mirrors in elevators and tabloids magazines at the grocery store. The same logic can and should be applied to the urban experience of bus transportation, the forgotten and miserable space of our modern day public realm. Woodlawn maintains significant potential for improvements to bus transportation because the public realm has been historically and is currently episodic in nature. Episodic meaning, a series of loosely connected events singularly related to an individual user. Throughout the years, the public realm of Woodlawn has migrated from the high school to a park and diminished into a parking lot. Yet existing episodes in the church, High School, Rev Retail and Social Venture remain as assets with the potential to be coupled with public realm improvements. In order for existing episodes to reach their full potential, sequence must be established. The order in which related events and users interact.
ESTABLISHING SEQUENCE
With an established sequence new relationships begin to occur at the macro scale of the urban experience and the micro scale of the every day routine, where bus transportation is something worth waiting for because it offers people with "something to do".
RETAIL SEQUENCE
The programmatic sequence of ground floor retail is accessible from the north and south ends of the site. The north end features a collonade providing rain cover between the bust stop and market. The south end provides higher visibility to retail on the street frontage with protruding signage canopies.
EVENT SPACE

Various events could occur as the midpoint to the approach sequence. From concerts, sporting events, zumba class, farmer markets, and everyday food truck access, the event space utilizes the blank market facade and the alley as main drivers for the agility of the space.
The start and ending point of the sequence also occurs from the Crestwood neighborhood approach. This connection serves as a gateway to Woodlawn engaging adjacent residents. The double sided retail and double sided entrances of the project are significant for creating relationships with all users and providing convenience to those that wait for the bus and intrigue to users that don’t often wait.
Woodlawn Market & Community Center
Carlos Hernandez

The Woodlawn Market draws inspiration from local initiatives already generating positive change within Woodlawn with the intent to build upon and further the scope of these programs. By creating a hub of shared commercial and social resources for these programs and the community at large, the Woodlawn Market seeks to develop new connections between health, education, community, and food.
SITE CONSIDERATIONS

Situated on the block adjacent to Social Venture, the market will be the first step in developing a campus for Social Venture and the Woodlawn Foundation which is situated to catch the 55th place commercial corridor and proposed BRT stop while bridging the downtown area to one of Woodlawn’s residential textures as well as Crestwood. The campus would be rounded out by mixed use infill on Social Venture’s corner parking lot and light industrial infrastructure on the track edge that also shares its resources with the community.
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The market is built on the idea of community kitchen as a place where people come together and share the experience of eating and learning. The kitchen acts as both cafe and educational kitchen lab, lending its resources to community and demonstrations from REV’s Urban Chef Corp. The kitchen lab shares space with the market in an open hypo-style, which allows the market to be organized as a collection of independent vendors. This allows space for produce from local farmers through REV’s Urban Food Project as well as food related startups supported by Social Venture’s entrepreneurial infrastructure. The community focused program is continued on the second floor with wellness class rooms that connect to a roof terrace above the market.
SKETCHING FROM LIFE

Observational sketching is a critical learning tool for an architect. Practicing representing what is seen allows the creation of better representations of objects and scenes in the mind. Sketching from life also allows for the distillation of ideas so only the most essential mood is captured in drawing.
Internship Profile

The students of the Urban Studio spent sixteen weeks interning at firms in the Birmingham area. This allows the students to develop professional connections, build their Internship Development Program (IDP) portfolio, and gain valuable work experience.

Participating Firms:

ArchitectureWorks
Barret Architecture Studio
Krumdieck Architecture & Interiors
Christopher Architecture & Interiors
Standard Creative
Rob Walker Architects
Birchfield Penuel & Associates
Davis Architects
Williams Blackstock Architects
Golden Construction, LLC
Giattina Aycock Architecture Studio
Dungan & Nequette Architects
Sims Architectural Studio
Boomhover Phillips Architecture
ArchitectureWorks, formed in 1995, is based in Birmingham, Alabama. We are dedicated to the craft of our profession and providing excellent service to our clients. We aspire to create memorable places through the exploration of the dialog between architecture and its surroundings. We believe that an inclusive, collaborative design process is essential to the success of each project. As stewards of our environment, we value opportunities to implement sustainable design principles with our clients. We continually endeavor to make a positive difference in the world through our work, our client relationships, our commitment to community and our respect for the natural environment.

Barrett Architecture Studio is a generalist firm, meaning that its work includes a broad range of project types, with its focus primarily in the private sector – including churches, commercial office and retail, private schools, multi-family and single-family residential to name a few. Because of the Principals history working in the Birmingham District, most of the firm’s projects and clients are within 60 miles of Birmingham. In addition to Alabama, BAS is licensed to practice in Georgia, North Carolina, Florida, and Indiana.

Krumdieck Architecture & Interior Design has provided distinctive design solutions for a wide range of commercial and residential project types since its formation in 1993. During that time, our firm has earned a reputation for commitment to design excellence, attention to detail and responsiveness to the needs of our clients.
Christopher Architecture and Interiors
3040 Independence Drive
Homewood, AL

Every designed space has a story. With each of our projects we seek a collaboration with the client to tell that story. Working with a pallet of materials and colors appropriate to each space, we seek to balance the pragmatics of budget and lifestyle with a proportioned and elegant design. The projects within these pages are the results of several of our recent collaborations. What unfolds in each of these designed spaces is just the beginning. These are stories which will be told slowly over the years to come.

Standard Creative
825 C 39th St S.
Birmingham, AL

STANDARD CREATIVE!, a full service commercial and residential architecture firm, was founded by a group of young architects led by Bruce Lanier in 2006. After spending over 10 years within the industry, Lanier wanted to offer a better working environment to both other architects and clients. By opening STANDARD CREATIVE! on their own terms, they were able to build a creative, energetic, and adaptable firm. This allows the architects freedom to create their designs in an open and honest environment, while also offering clients a more comprehensive approach than is presented in typical firms.

Rob Walker Architects
2229 1st Ave S. # 110
Birmingham, AL

At Rob Walker Architects, we believe the architect’s role extends beyond the traditional services. We serve as a close advisor and partner to the clients for the entire process. Our knowledge and experience helping to sift through the labyrinth of regulatory, financial and management issues that every development project entails has yielded successful projects for our clients. Rob Walker Architects, LLC is a design firm with a wide array of expertise in the building industry. Rob Walker Architects’ experience with mixed-use developments, office buildings, multi-family residential, single-family residential, educational, and restaurant facilities provide the broad spectrum of knowledge to each project.

Jaslin Whaley
My experience at Rob Walker architects was a tremendous learning experience. I always felt welcomed and excited to start a new task. Each day was a new experience, I was paired with project architects on several different projects. During the internship I worked on various projects, including restaurants and apartments.

Birchfield Penuel & Associates
2805 Crescent Ave. # 200
Birmingham, AL

Birchfield Penuel & Associates’ endeavors to develop long-term relationships with select healthcare, institutional and wellness clients of this region, providing experienced senior leadership and responsive project implementation consistent with the Client’s vision. The firm is composed of a staff of nineteen design professionals and support staff. The entire BPA staff has extensive experience in the planning, design, and implementation of these project types since over 85% of our project volume is related to this specialty. A comprehensive integration of our Client’s vision, program, budget and schedule towards an innovative design solution defines our success.

Aleks Hays
I’ve always enjoyed custom homes so getting to work on some of the preliminary designs was something I found fun and interesting. Seeing how closely the firm worked together internally as well as with clients showed that it takes an entire team plus a good client to achieve the best design possible.

Jaslin Whaley
Working with Bruce Lanier at Standard Creative was an invaluable experience. It was the perfect merger of architecture, woodworking, and community involvement. There were many times where I worked on projects in the architecture office, and then spent the rest of the day in the shop.

Aleks Hays
My experience at Rob Walker architects was a tremendous learning experience. I always felt welcomed and excited to start a new task. Each day was a new experience, I was paired with project architects on several different projects. During the internship I worked on various projects, including restaurants and apartments.

Charlie Abram
During my time with Birchfield Penuel and Associates, I was exposed to a variety of project types including healthcare, civic, and industrial storage projects. My responsibilities for each project were similar, and I enjoyed the freedom to bounce between project types.

Aleks Hays
I’ve always enjoyed custom homes so getting to work on some of the preliminary designs was something I found fun and interesting. Seeing how closely the firm worked together internally as well as with clients showed that it takes an entire team plus a good client to achieve the best design possible.
In 2005, the firm relocated its headquarters to the historic BEBCO Building in downtown Birmingham. Previously a 1920's car repair shop, the space was transformed to house the architectural studio, conference rooms, and support spaces of Davis Architects. The firm is proud to have a continued presence in the City of Birmingham. Seeing the opportunity for growth in other markets, Davis Architects opened a new office in Atlanta in 2008 in the Midtown West District just west of downtown. The Atlanta office focuses primarily on multi-family, retail, and mixed-use development, as well as institutional projects.

In 2012, Davis Architects celebrated 100 years of continued operation. The firm is proud to have served the State of Alabama and the Southeast for so many years and looks forward to another 100 years of continued service. Since the firm's founding, it has developed a reputation based on integrity and a deep personal interest in each project, regardless of size. This same interest, a meticulous attention to detail, and the extensive cumulative years of experience in all types of design, assure an innovative, individual approach to the needs of each client in its practice, reaching from Birmingham, Atlanta, the Southeast, and abroad.

Anne Johnstone
While working at Williams Blackstock Architects, I was tasked with going on site visits to measure and document existing conditions, developing Revit models for projects, producing Sketchup Models and renderings for presentations, and correcting construction documents as needed.

Kevin Thompson
My time spent with Davis Architects was unique, as I was given the opportunity to start a project, go through the schematic, development, and construction phases. We started with a client and existing building, and my last week of work was spent finalizing a set of construction documents.

Alex Buehning
As a young professional it was unbelievably exciting to work with Davis on a variety of large scale projects at various levels of completion. It provided a lot of clarity to my career aspirations experiencing every step from schematic design to construction.

In 1994, Williams Blackstock Architects was founded to provide inspiring design through a close collaborative relationship with our clients. Almost two decades later, having executed millions of square feet across the US, the firm remains committed to this simple but powerful approach. Since its origination, the firm has grown quickly and continued to evolve and remain at the forefront of the ever-changing design industry.

Over the years, our firm has established a reputation for success by collaboratively working with our clients as a team member and communicating clearly. With every project, our goal is to provide the highest level of service and expertise. Combining architectural experience with both client and contractor input enables us to provide innovative, visionary design solutions which are inspirational, pragmatic and functional.

The mission of Golden Construction, LLC is to provide honest, accurate general contracting and construction management services to our clients. While providing construction services, we will conduct our business in a manner that instills the client with confidence in our company as a steward of their construction funds and the provider of high quality constructed products.

Our clients will realize added value in our pursuit of their repeat business, for it is repeat business that will provide the sustained growth of our company.

Golden will ensure the very same care taken with our clients is also extended to our subcontractors. Relationships with our subcontractors provide us the tools needed to build successful projects for our clients.
Boomhover Phillips Architecture
200 28th St S.
Birmingham, AL

Our goal is for each project to be distinct, personally reflecting our client’s interests and needs. We pay great attention to preliminary programming, closely listening to our client’s wants and concerns while meeting the project’s budgetary and programmatic requirements. Through extensive planning and detailed drawings we bring to life our client’s personality, interpreting it into a custom product with engaging architecture and interiors.

Sims Architectural Studio
2318 2nd Ave S.
Birmingham, AL

Sims Architectural Studio, Inc. (SAS) embodies individuals representing many years of history and experience in the design and construction of a variety of project types. Currently, we are a firm of 10 people dedicated mainly to the design and construction of projects of quality and distinction.

Our talented staff has a rich background of architectural experience that ranges from resort to retail design, master planning and design of schools and government facilities, to the design of institutional facilities. Currently, 90% of our projects involve the design of healthcare facilities.

SAS is currently in its 19th year as a design firm.

Dungan & Nequette Architects
1906 Cahaba Road
Mountain Brook, AL

Our firm does a wide variety of projects for clients from Nova Scotia to the Bahamas and points in between. We would say our culture is not at all corporate. It is a fast-paced kind of culture, full of people that are passionate about creating thoughtful and beautiful places. We dress casually most days, just comfortably but professionally.

We have about twenty employees in our three design firms and enjoy great relationships, being creative and working with our clients. Internally, we work hard and have fun. We are self-starters. When looking for potential studio members, egotism and self-importance are dimly viewed. It’s a fun and comfortable environment, not without trials as with any career, but we enjoy our time together and it shows in the quality of our work. We could not achieve this level, without the culture and spirit we enjoy.

Giattina Aycock Architecture Studio
1827 1st Ave N. #100
Birmingham, AL

Since 1966, Giattina Aycock Architecture Studio, Inc., has worked to deliver well-conceived, constructible architecture with lasting value. We provide comprehensive architectural services including building and interior design, master planning, site design, feasibility studies and related services. We believe in the practice of problem-solving, with a mission to find value through creative thinking.

Taylor Christiansen
My internship at GA Studio/BLOX encompassed the design process holistically, providing the opportunity to engage in schematic development as well as detail intensive design and fabrication of manufactured modules.

Vince Lombardo
My experience at Dungan Nequette touched on many aspects of the architecture profession. I enjoyed having a hand in the design and production of residential and university projects as well as getting to participate in the firm’s culture.

Donneshia Clark
During the course of my internship I was involved in a variety of healthcare and residential projects. I worked on a series of projects from 3d modeling, construction documents, rendering, program/schematic design, interiors and being involved in client ownership meetings.

Alan Darpini
After completing the fall semester at the Urban Studio, Alan left for Barcelona to complete his architecture thesis.
The design methodology for the Urban Studio Renovation is based around three core principles: visibility, collaboration, and agility. Visibility describes the buildings relationship within the context of Birmingham. The highly visible location on 20th Street and 3rd Avenue North creates an opportunity for strong pedestrian and vehicular relationships. Users exiting the city utilize the one-way street of 3rd Avenue North as one of the major thoroughfares traveling east toward the interstate. Pedestrian traffic along 20th Street, the major spine of the city, is considerable. Collaboration describes the existing and proposed identity for the Urban Studio. Collaboration occurs most significantly today between academia and the profession. The future proposal aims to maintain this relationship and enhance collaboration across the disciplines of industrial design, architecture, and graduate students. Finally, with collaboration as a goal agility describes how the interior should perform to reach the greatest potential. All the spaces within the building are designed to account for as many different group sizes and uses as possible.
Many studies have been conducted to anticipate the visibility of the interior from the exterior. The two sketches to the right display the pedestrian interaction and the vehicular interaction as those users move farther away from the building.
Above are the different scenario proposals for different uses of the ground floor corner space. From banquet halls, summer camps, lecture series, and different types of gallery layouts, the design of the space attempts to be as flexible as possible.
The glass wall separates the studio space from classroom space on the second and third floors. The glass material is magnetic and accepts a dry erase marker allowing for group process work and final pin-ups.
The two walls are the backdrop for visibility and the vertical connection for the entire building. The third floor ceiling plane is significant because it is readily visible from pedestrians on the sidewalk.