Program

The new design for the Urban Studio Renovation is based around three core principles: visibility, collaboration, and agility. The program begins with a highly visible public component on the ground floor. This space provides the opportunity for temporary gallery exhibits, banquets, alumni gatherings, summer camps, and lectures. The basement incorporates a digital rapid prototyping shop, classroom and storage space for students, and the second and third floors house the student design studios and classrooms. The existing building area is 15,000 square feet.

Visibility

Located in the Birmingham Green Commercial Revitalization District the building maintains a highly visible corner presence in a significant district of the city. High pedestrian and vehicular traffic provides the opportunity for positive social impact beyond those who reside within the building.

Collaboration

The Urban Studio is a unique program offering young architecture students the opportunity to collaborate with the professional community before transitioning into the workforce. The proposed renovation aims to build upon the relationship between academia and the profession in addition to creating new collaborative opportunities for other disciplines within the College of Architecture, Design and Construction. The new Urban Studio building will offer industrial design, architecture, and graduate programs the valuable opportunity to collaborate with one another.

Agility

The spaces within the building are designed to account for different program scenarios and group sizes, but more importantly, the design decisions are agile through minimal impact to the existing building. These design considerations provide the current occupant with flexibility in addition to those who may occupy the building in the future.
221 20th Street North began its first life as Porter’s Clothing Company, a men’s clothing retail store. The building later transitioned into a Shoney’s Big Boy followed by MedTown Pharmacy before becoming the home of Auburn University’s Urban Studio.
Currently the Urban Studio only occupies the ground floor but is able to expand to all four floors. The existing stair is narrow with winders, the proposal extends this staircase into one of the two existing elevator shafts and provides a new, second staircase on the 20th Street edge for essential life safety improvements. The second and third floors hold significant architectural potential with large steel frame windows providing experiential views of the city.
The Urban Studio resides in the close proximity of three major historic districts and lies within a 10 minute walking radius of several of Birmingham's Major parks.

Building core elements (grey) and enclosed classroom and meeting room spaces (yellow) are setback from the corner establishing the highest agility and visibility in the most significant area of the building.
The ground floor seeks to be an amenity to the general public and different organizations associated with the University. These six studies document the agile narrative of the ground floor corner space, accounting for activities ranging from different galleries, banquets, lectures, summer camps, and workshops.
The goal of the renovation is to maintain as much of the existing building as possible. Black poche notes existing structure and orange poche refers to new additions. Most significant is the addition of a mezzanine on the ground floor. This improvement takes advantage of the 21’6” height of the ground floor generating additional square footage and housing the administrative offices and outreach firm. The outreach firm would be a new addition to the Urban Studio program attempting to build upon the collaboration between students and professionals and generate positive social impact in the community.
The image above represents the light wall establishing a physical connection between floors two and three and metaphorical vertical connection throughout the entire building.

The images below describe the studies of visibility occurring at the pedestrian and vehicular scale.

Sections
Potential Expansion

Acquiring 2007 3rd Ave. North would add over 8,000 square feet of office space to the Urban Studio across four floors (intermediate floor between ground and second floor of the Urban Studio not shown). 2007 3rd Ave. North also has an operational elevator, eliminating the need to install a new elevator into the existing Urban Studio.
Ground Floor: Gallery

Gallery configuration on the ground floor where student work is displayed. The glass wall provides acoustic separation between the main corner space and auditorium seating.
Ground Floor : Event Reception

Reception configuration on the ground floor for Auburn University events in the heart of downtown Birmingham.
Second Floor : Studio

The second floor studio most significantly represents the light wall. The glass encases the existing column structure preserving the buildings character and creates an acoustic boundary between classroom and studio. The glass accepts dry erase markers and magnets allowing for rapid pin-ups. The main studio space is entirely open for the consistent spread of conversation with a library, restrooms and plotting equipment tucked behind the orange pin up wall.
Downtown Corner

The light wall and articulation of ceiling planes engages people inside the building and on the street. The enhanced visibility inspires positive social impact for Birmingham residents and users associated with Auburn University.