

An aerial photograph of a river flowing through a landscape. The river is dark and winding, with a bridge crossing it in the middle. On the left bank, there is a dense forest of green trees, interspersed with some residential buildings and a parking lot. On the right bank, there are more trees, a large building complex, and a parking area. The overall scene is a mix of natural and developed areas.

NEW

**Phase I:
Strategic & Architectural
Program Workshop Series**

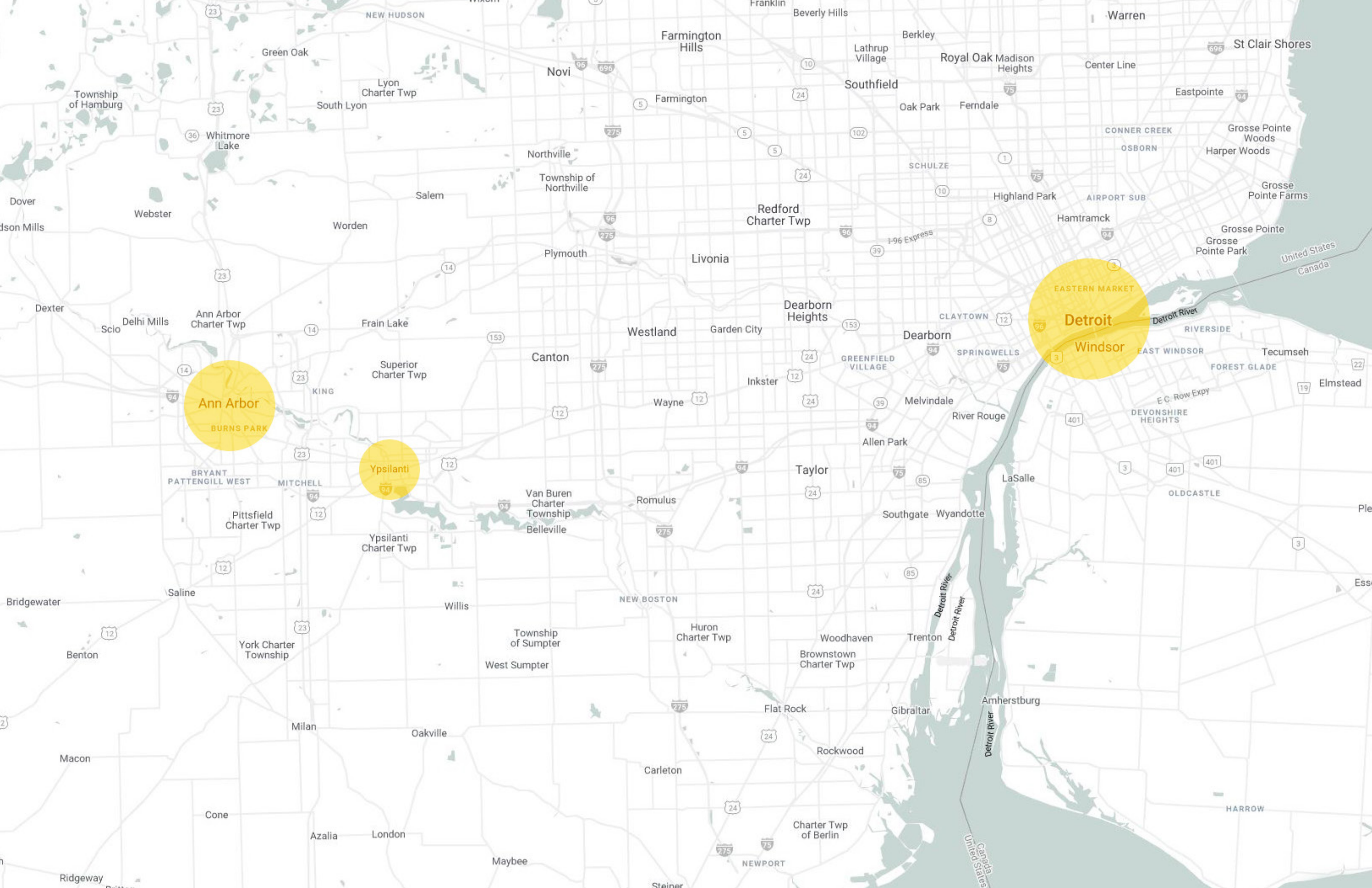


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Designing Justice + Designing Spaces

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Letter from Yodit Mesfin Johnson

I remember the first time I learned of the history of the NEW Center. It'd been a junkyard transformed into an arts incubator by local philanthropists. The anchor tenant, [Art Train](#), had a vision that the arts should be available to everyone, everywhere. Though they've since moved on, they rooted the tenets of inclusion and accessibility which remain rooted in our organizational DNA. They continue to inspire our staff, board and I, as do the missions of our nearly 40 tenant and affiliate partners. Yet, despite our founders' best intentions, NEW and the NEW Center have yet to fully embody these values.

Disparity abounds in our community. Our county is the 3rd wealthiest in the state of Michigan. Ann Arbor, where NEW is headquartered, is the most educated city in America. One of the largest and best healthcare institutions in Northern America, Michigan Medicine, is less than a mile from the NEW Center.

Washtenaw County is also the eighth-most economically segregated metro area in the U.S. Here, access to opportunity is often determined by race and place. The county is divided by development patterns established through racist housing and lending policies. And the impacts of historical segregation persist, especially across the distribution of power. Presently Washtenaw County is home to over 2,400 nonprofits; one for every 150 residents.

Yet, poverty, houselessness, food insecurity, and other disparities are widespread, especially among our Black and brown communities. We still have long strides to make towards inclusion, equity & justice. The erasure of Black and Brown people locally is reprehensible. Far too many have been pushed to the edges of our county and the margins of humanity.

Indigenous and Native peoples' pasts, presents, and futures exist here too, though they're often overlooked. The land and waters of this region are historically and culturally important to the Indigenous people who continue to steward this place. Though much has been destroyed and erased, there's overwhelming evidence for Indian habitation of this area over several centuries. The existence of local burial grounds, the springs in the area, the large number of converging trails, the cultivated land along the Huron River, and the placement of a French trading post here, all point to significant Native presence.¹

My personal experience growing up in Detroit and blooming in Washtenaw guides how I think about place, space & belonging. I'm bringing forth these experiences as we begin re-imagining NEW's relationship to the built environment. The stories of Black and Native people in Michigan, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti,

and Washtenaw County are all around us. While they have been erased, they can still be uncovered.

When we launched our [Champions for Change](#) program, we took our Leaders of Color Fellows to the Historic [Idlewild community in Baldwin, MI](#). It was important to me that local leaders of color—at the time there were less than 1% leading nonprofits in Washtenaw County—know the centuries long history of Black organizing and community building in our state. Similarly—in partnership with the [African American Historical & Cultural Museum](#), local historians, and longtime residents—we took all of our Fellows on a historical walking journey through Washtenaw County. The NEW Center is just blocks away from a historically Black neighborhood dating all the way back to the 1800's. Wheeler Park, also nearby, is named for Ann Arbor's only Black mayor, Albert Wheeler. Today, the neighborhood has been renamed and few Black families remain.

What I'm longing for, not just as NEW's CEO, but as a resident of Washtenaw, a nonprofit founder, and a fierce advocate for social change, is a space that inspires our collective dreams. I am stewarding the original vision and co-creating new visions that foster radical imagination & ideas for a future where everyone has the possibility to thrive. A space that welcomes established organizations and our future

worldmakers, artists, activists, elders and more. A space that honors the land and its history. A space that is accessible and affordable and environmentally conscious. A space that accelerates transformative impact in our communities alongside *mission focused people, orgs and community members who are realizing their visions of a just and thriving society*. A space that offers programming and events that enable people to connect, share ideas and develop equitable solutions together. And a space that makes historically marginalized people in Washtenaw County **know** that they belong here. But we are more than just a space. *When we're together, we inspire and equip each other to realize our visions for a just and thriving society.*

Our partnership with Deanna Van Buren and the DJDS team is rooted in our shared desire for restorative justice. Rather than focusing on punishment, this philosophical approach relies on values such as respect, participation, trust, accountability, and healing, together. We're exploring what it means to build and develop space that can cultivate joy, imagination and change. I'm thankful for this journey, and for all of our partners who have come alongside to help us transform the future, together.

Building together,

Yodit Mesfin Johnson
NEW President & CEO

¹ "The Untold History of Ypsilanti: Our Native American Past." 21 Apr. 2014, <http://markmaynard.com/2014/04/the-often-overlooked-native-american-history-of-ypsilanti/>. Accessed 19 Oct. 2021



Project Introduction

Background

NEW is a nonprofit organization that has been providing support services to other nonprofit organizations in Ann Arbor for the last 30 years. It began by providing support for artists, but its reach expanded, and now it is an incubator for a wide variety of nonprofits in the city.

NEW is located at 1100 North Main Street in Ann Arbor, on a narrowing piece of land flanked by the train tracks and the Huron River to the east and Main Street and the trails of Bluffs Nature Area to the west. The full enjoyment of this seemingly idyllic location is hampered by the fact that the area historically was, and continues to be, a heavy industrial area, and that Main Street at that location is a fast, four-lane road with no traffic lights.

Much has changed in Ann Arbor and in the world over the past 30 years; in particular, there has been an increase of wealth in mostly middle to upper middle class white populations, which has resulted in a higher degree of gentrification in towns and cities and a corresponding displacement of people of color from historically black neighborhoods. Yodit Mesfin Johnson, NEW's Executive Director, observed these changes and wanted her organization to better reflect the makeup of those needing help in Ann Arbor and its vicinity. She knew there was more that

NEW could be doing as an organization, and so, in 2019, she embarked NEW on a process of reimagining and better defining the organization's values. In the course of this process, the team at NEW articulated a desire to become a place of true transformation for themselves, for the communities they were currently serving, and, perhaps most importantly, for a set of local communities that were not currently being served. The team at NEW updated their image and values accordingly. After those updates were complete, the NEW team decided that their next step should be figuring out how to tangibly model this new set of values and priorities—in the design and even potentially the location of their physical facilities. They wanted to become a nonprofit organization centered in restorative justice, racial equity, and deep transformation, and they wanted this identity to be physically represented in their building, the NEW Center.

With the help of Invisible Engines and Proxy, NEW was introduced to the work of Designing Justice + Designing Spaces (DJDS), and a spark was ignited.

The Vision

The vision for the NEW Center will physically open the building, supporting the aspirations of NEW to become a place where the internal community of the building can come together with

the broader community in spaces that support interconnectedness. To do so, the Center will have places where members can host events, break bread together, and share their collective dreams. Gathering spaces that support a diversity of programming, an increase in accessibility and fluid movement through the building, and art integrated throughout will all create a place where the silos of race and culture are broken down. Both inside and outside the building, the center will pay homage to the native land it sits on, and it will increase the physical and visual connection to—and occupation of—the landscaped areas around the site.



Designing Justice + Designing Spaces

Led by Black women, DJDS is a nonprofit professional services firm that uniquely blends architecture, real estate development, community engagement, and social activism to work to end mass incarceration through place-based solutions that address its root causes: poverty, racism, unequal access to resources, and the criminal justice system itself. DJDS works alongside the individuals most impacted by the criminal justice system and mass incarceration to co-create new spaces. Through new construction or the repurposing of existing buildings in sites across the country, including those that were formerly used as spaces for incarceration, DJDS designs, builds, and develops beautiful new community assets that support groundbreaking initiatives and serve as replicable prototypes.

DJDS is solutions-oriented, and we work with systems-impacted people, their communities of care, community-based organizations, and innovative municipalities to reimagine new buildings and spaces. The technical knowledge that we bring to the table enables our partners and others to see what’s possible, but our real power lies in our abundance mindset and radical imagination, which shake traditional thinking and institutional approaches to problem-solving. Each building or planning effort is an opportunity to open hearts and minds to alternative solutions, and our team carries the tools to facilitate these dialogues. There

is deep integration between design, engagement, finance, and advocacy in our work, because we bring tools, techniques, and mindsets from all our disciplines to advocate for alternative futures. Our secret sauce at DJDS is our people and the diverse lived experiences we bring to the effort that we believe will enact this change.

The DJDS Model

DJDS is building pilot projects that are essential to move us toward a world without prisons and jails. As an interdisciplinary creative firm, we combine expertise in architecture, real estate development, community engagement, and advocacy to develop prototype projects that will serve as models for building typologies that support the transformation of our communities and the transformation of our justice system from punitive to restorative. By combining these areas of expertise and collaborating with strong program partners and systems-impacted advocates, we are able to create new concepts grounded in relationships, trauma-informed practice, and evidence-based design research.

Our client work is solutionary and emergent, and it typically focuses on bringing projects from ideation through concept development. The deliverables that result from this process enable our clients and

partners to raise capital dollars for their projects. We also develop our own projects—from concept to site control and refinancing—and in these cases we serve as owner, real estate developer, and designer. Additionally, we occasionally provide consulting services to mission-aligned organizations on topics such as real estate development, community engagement, and process planning.



Partners

PROXY

Proxy is a company that represents mission-based organizations and small businesses that want to improve their physical environments in order to uplift their people and their purpose. The organization believes that everyone deserves good design, and good design is possible for everyone. The organization partners with clients to ensure a holistic approach to their spaces at every stage: forming the initial idea and the strategic thought partnership needed to develop it; acquiring the financial resources to realize the space; finding and managing design and construction professionals to build it; and developing strategies for long-term space management and sustainability.



“Creating, renewing, preserving, sustaining” has been the vision of Silman since its inception in 1966. Over its 55-year history, the firm has served as a structural engineering consultant on more than 24,000 projects, bringing a joyful and creative ethos to noteworthy architectural works of all types and scales across the United States.

Silman fosters an approach centered on constant collaboration between owners, architects, and consultants to provide the highest quality structural engineering services possible.

Silman’s Building Equity Initiative expands and formalizes the firm’s efforts to provide pro bono and low bono professional engineering services to support nonprofits and public programs. The goal of these efforts is to utilize engineers’ technical expertise to create spaces that strengthen communities and contribute to societal equity, particularly in the areas of housing, education, healthcare, and access to culture.

As part of a commitment to creating more efficient structural systems, Silman has incorporated sustainability into its standard specifications and introduced high performance metrics into all its designs. The firm is also a signatory of the SE2050 Commitment, which has the goal of achieving net zero embodied carbon structural systems by 2050.

The Process

“ Delight in more than just the basic satisfaction of nourishment or another need, but something more that entices, indulges, and sparks curiosity and connection.

— Design Workshop Participant

Concept Development Process

Why

We seek to change the narrative of power through the development of solutionary spaces that address the root causes of mass incarceration. DJDS's bold idea is that by transforming the spaces and places where we do justice, we can help our society make the shift from a punitive justice system to a restorative justice system. We hope to see peacemaking centers in every community in this country and to end the age of mass incarceration.

Because many of our projects are new typologies and are intended for communities that require significant external financing, the Concept Development Process is critical to explaining and evaluating: (1) what exactly we intend to build, for whom, and why; (2) how thoughtful design can amplify, build capacity, and possibly improve outcomes for program partners; and (3) how much upfront and ongoing capital is required to build and maintain the project.

Process

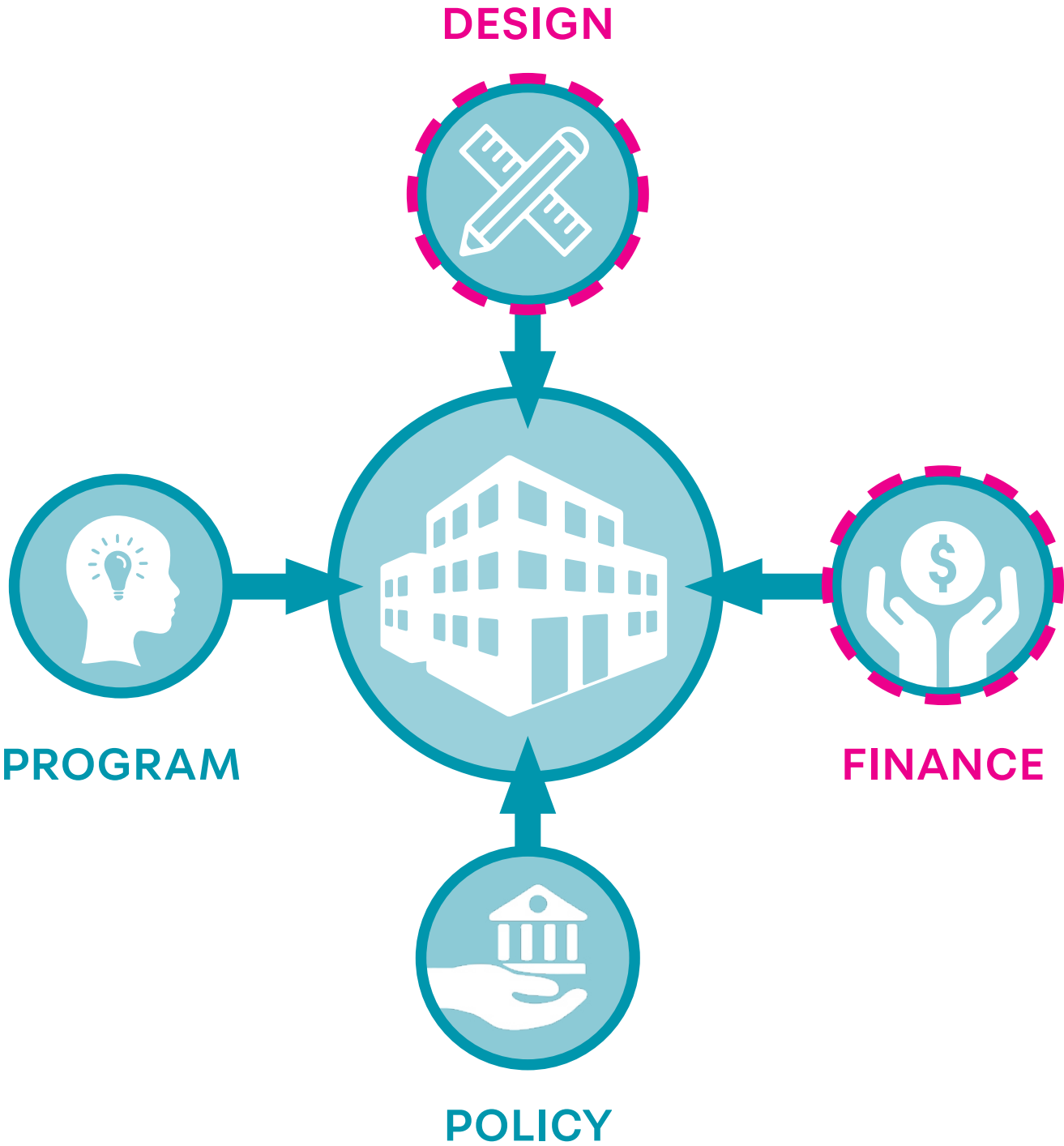
In collaboration, we can unite in design and development to catalyze reinvestment in communities of color and end mass incarceration. The Concept Development Process has distinct steps, which can be divided in phases to suit different projects:

- Pre-design** — Data Collection, Analysis, and Design Ideation
- Conceptual Design** — Integration, Iteration, and Concept Finalization

While data collection and analysis can be time-intensive for the partners involved, these steps are vital to inform the visioning stage of Concept Development; they are also typically some of the most exciting and galvanizing activities for the project's stakeholders and the community, because they bring everyone together to dream up the layout of the project, using interactive tools and workshops. The holistic vision that results provides a conceptual framework with which to begin the journey to a fully realized project.

The complete expected cycle of the development of a project, as well as where we are in this process for NEW, is illustrated in the “What Time Is It?” graphic on page 8.

The following pages explain the inputs, analysis, and development options that resulted from Phase I for this project.



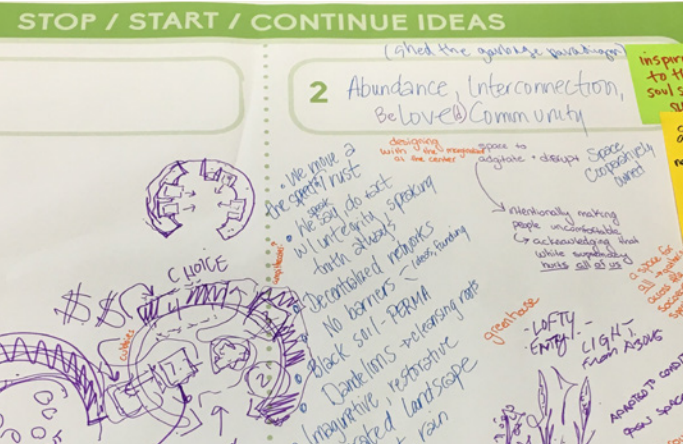
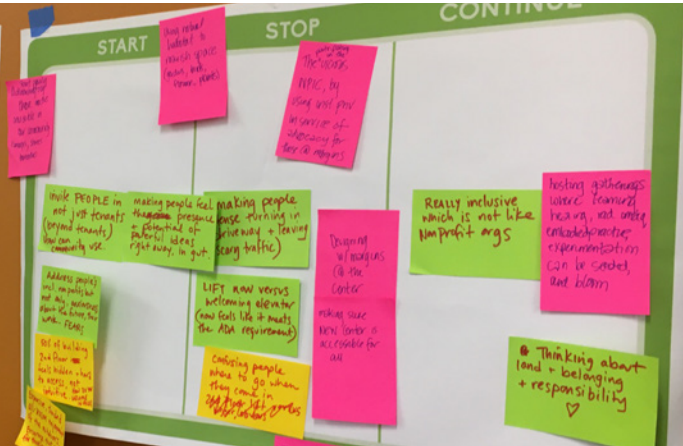
Community Engagement Process

Who and How

DJDS believes in meeting communities where they are. We acknowledge the innate power, assets, skills, and resources that communities have to solve problems, and we recognize that those closest to those problems are often the ones with the solutions. We practice deep listening to tap into the expertise of the communities we work in; we use customized processes and tools to ignite radical imagination; and we are not afraid to tackle big problems, to address injustices that make people feel uncomfortable, or to try new ways of working. We also engage policy-makers where needed as a critical part of the design process, as we work together to shape the physical infrastructure. Accountability is the foundation of our multi-layered process of engagement, a process that prioritizes those most impacted by racism and unequal access to resources in order to yield economically and socially sustainable development that is truly integrated into the neighborhood.

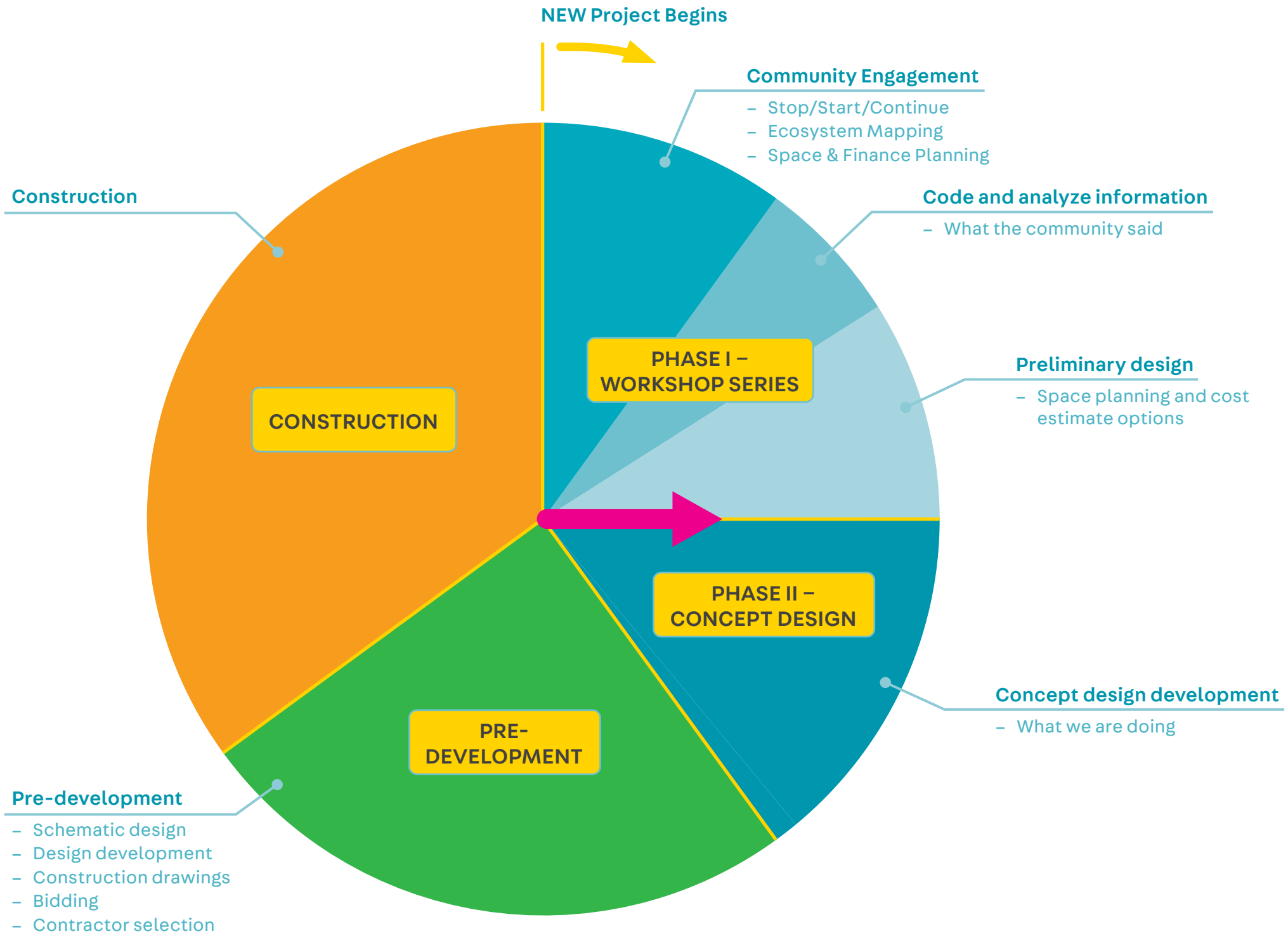
The Community

Our community for this project consists of the staff at NEW, NEW’s board members, NEW’s tenants and affiliate organizations, the broader community, and some funding partners.



What Time Is It?

This clock establishes what has been accomplished so far, where we are now, and what is to come in this multi-phased process to reimagine the NEW Center.



Phase I

Strategic & Architectural Program Workshop Series

“ We could serve as a cloud kitchen
for BIPOC folks just starting out.

– Design Workshop Participant

Inputs: Precedent Research

Intentional Program-and-Place

There were many precedents that we found to inspire the spatial design of the NEW Center. The nine shown here are programmatically rich as well as aesthetically beautiful. Each of them represents a welcoming place to bring people together to collaborate and connect, and each contributes to the positive transformation of their local community. NEW's values were used as a guide to collect these precedents. These examples are located in the San Francisco Bay Area, in Ann Arbor, elsewhere in Michigan, and beyond. They include business incubators, places of restorative economics, community and cultural centers, innovative workspaces, and social justice centers. Each one incorporates communal workspaces, airy lounge spaces, collaborative conference rooms, and productivity-fueling private workstations, all of which were recurrent themes in the workshop results. The NEW Center is intended to be a space of coming together to learn, meet, celebrate, and work, for employees, tenants, community leaders, and the public. We believe that place matters, and our goal is to harness the power of design to amplify NEW's mission and values as well as the vision of the collective. This goal is possible when program and place are aligned.



CO.ACT DETROIT



RESTORE OAKLAND



STATION F



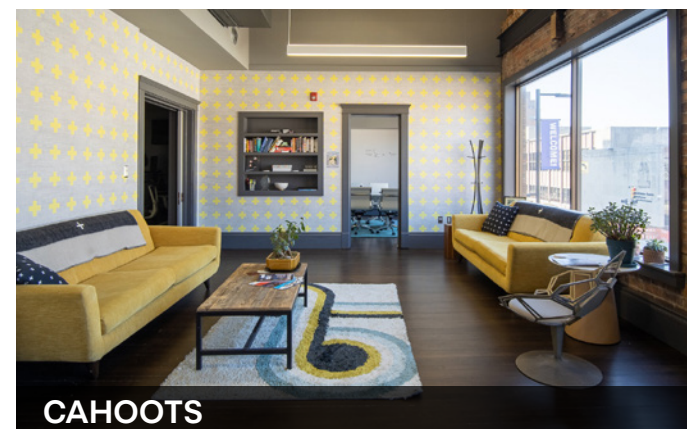
ARCUS CENTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP



ARTTHAUS STUDIOS



CONVENE



CAHOOTS



BIG OAKLAND



THE ALLIANCE CENTER

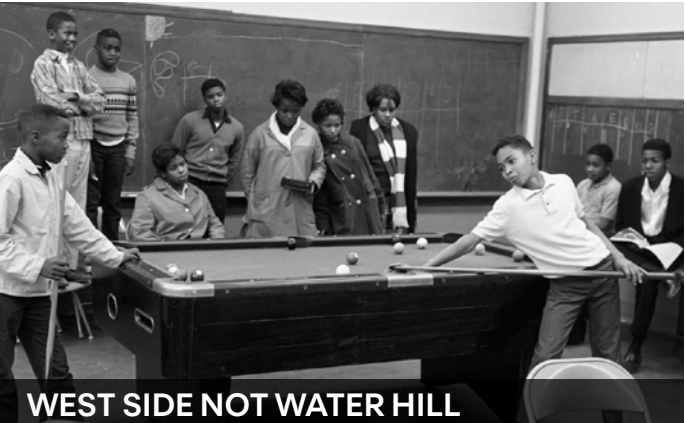
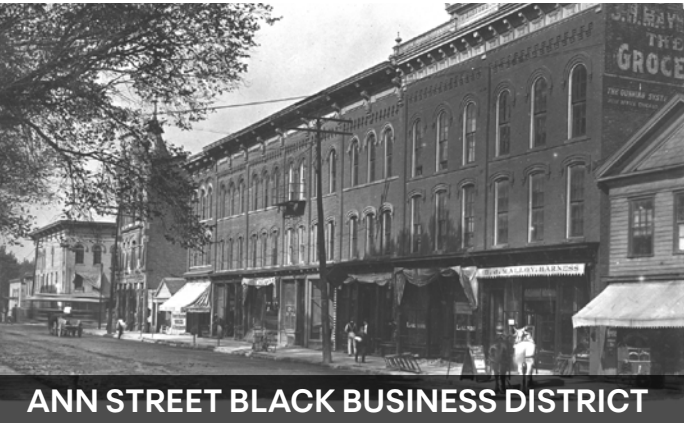
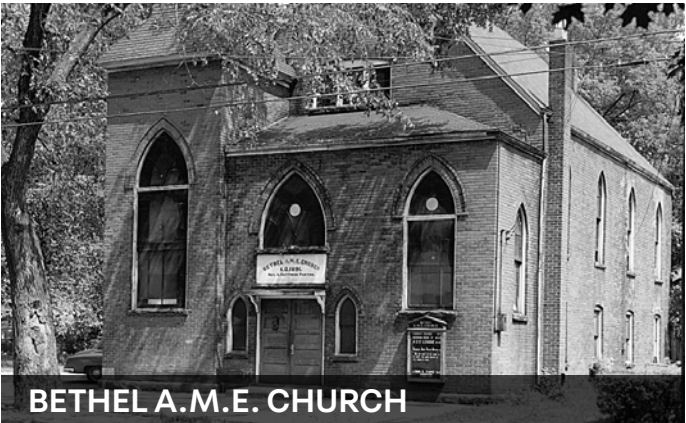


Inputs: Historical Context

Ann Arbor was developed on the land of native peoples, the Three Fires Council. This confederated nation consists of three distinct tribes: the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Bodéwadmi (Potawatomi), the three of which formed an alliance to protect their common interests and fight European invaders. Eventually the land was stolen from the tribes, but members of the tribes still exist in Michigan.

The first African Americans that settled in Ann Arbor did so in the original downtown of the village. This area around Broadway Bridge, what we now know as Kerrytown, was once called Lowertown, which was a major stop on the Underground Railroad. This and other originally black neighborhoods have gone through many iterations of gentrification, starting in the 1990s and continuing to this day, reflecting the history of systemic racism and economic divestment that has been the norm across the country.

The recognition of the history of this place does not just inform our process of design; we also intend for it to be intentionally represented throughout the physical spaces of our concept designs. It will be represented in native planting in the landscaping, which will be designed to honor and nurture the natural environment that the building exists in; on the walls of the building, in the form of written acknowledgments and pictorial representations of local legacy; and on the materials and colors chosen, to articulate the recognition that we, and those who will come after us, are standing on the shoulders of those who came before, and that everyone is welcome.



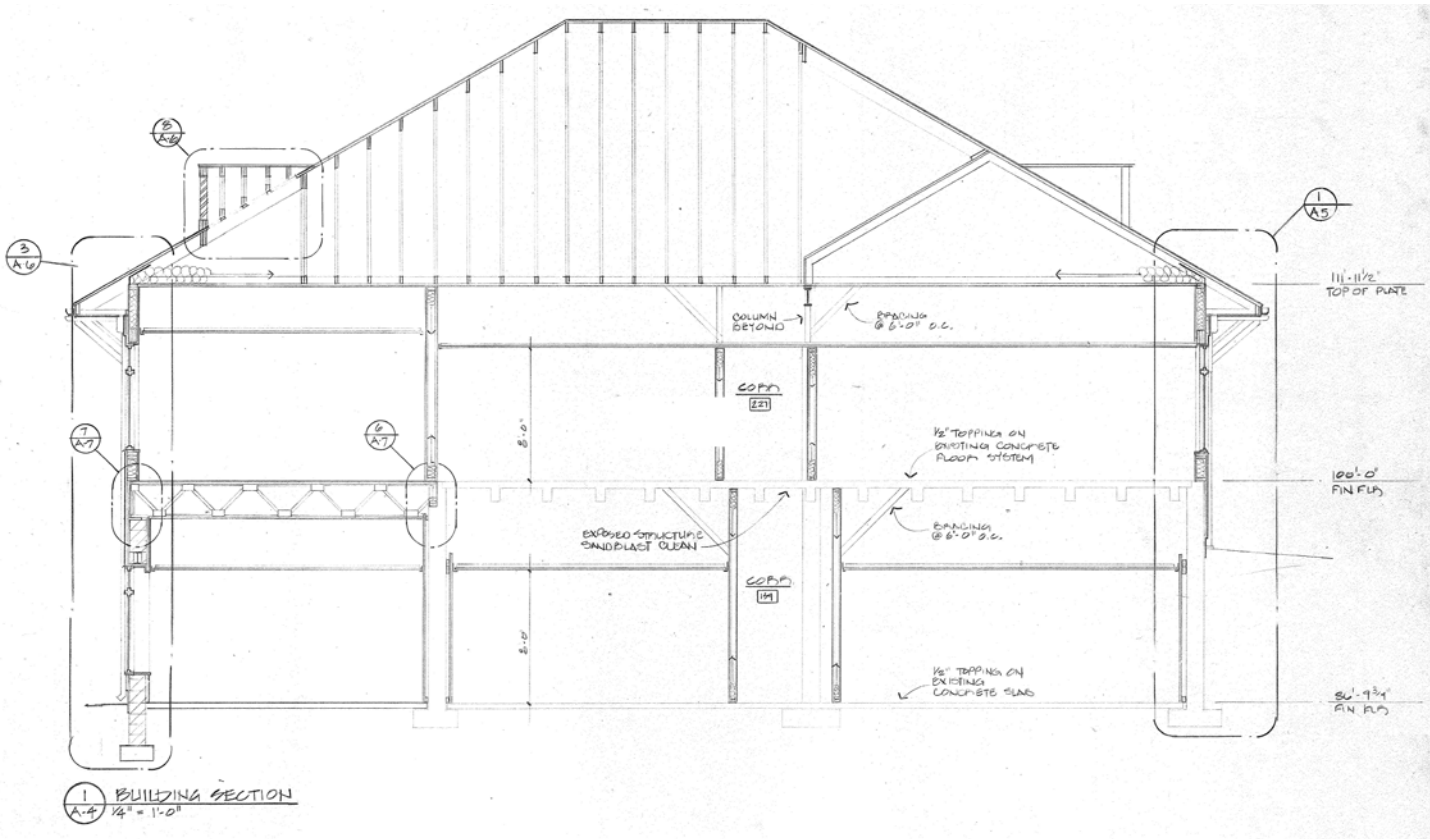
Inputs: Building Analysis

The building was first built in 1900 as part of the railroad infrastructure, and it was remodeled in 1991 when the stair tower and a two-story addition to the east were added. Most of its construction is concrete block walls and steel floor and roof joists, with concrete retaining walls on the north and west sides since the first floor is partially buried against the terrain. These construction materials make the building more resilient against fire but also increase the transmission of impact sound, something that participants of the workshops commented on.

Although the building is generally in good condition, there are a few areas that require addressing and/or additional investigation. Two known issues that need to be addressed are the north exit from the second floor, which is in a state of disrepair, and the entrance, which floods regularly. The initial inspection has confirmed that all of the existing partitions on the first floor and most of the existing partitions on the second floor could be removed; however, the walls along the eastern line of columns appear to be supporting some of the roof weight, which would have to be confirmed before final design decisions are made. This type of investigation will require some localized opening of walls and ceilings, which will have to be conducted by Silman (our structural engineer partner) and a local contractor.

The building originally had higher ceilings, which have since been lowered to the current height of eight feet. Some of this ceiling height, probably 12-18 inches, could be given back to the spaces by rerouting or re-arranging sprinkler conduits, HVAC tubes, and/or other utilities.

Pending further discovery of how the roof loads are carried through the building, there appear to be no major physical impediments to building the design concepts developed with the NEW community. One other factor that will influence the final representation of the NEW Center will be the input of the Ann Arbor Planning Department; at the time of delivering this document Ann Arbor is in the process of reviewing their Zoning Guidelines, which are likely to be updated before there is need to apply for any permits.

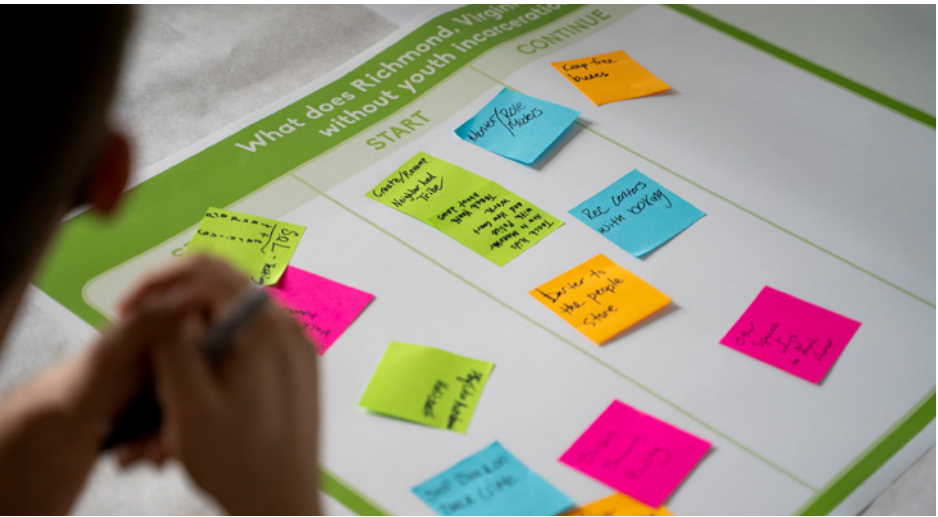


Inputs: Engagement Activities

Stop/Start/Continue

This activity is one of the first steps in gauging the temperature of communities that may be impacted by a project. It provides participants with an opportunity to give feedback on aspects of their communities that they like and dislike, and to share things they wish their communities had and/or that they would like to see improve.

The exercise was done twice using two different prompts: “*What does this space need to (stop/start/continue) to embody and further the vision of NEW?*” was asked with NEW’s staff and board members; and NEW’s tenants ideated around the question of “*What does NEW need to (stop/start/continue) to help your organization flourish?*”



Ecosystem Mapping

Using Who, What, Where, Why, and How cards, participants explore the ecosystem surrounding a project or initiative, considering how it can be designed for the benefit of the community. This exercise often surfaces opportunities and precedents to investigate.

We asked NEW’s staff, their board, and selected community members to explore their ecosystem around four topics: (1) eatery spaces that honor differences of peoples and ideas, (2) spaces for lifelong learning, (3) outdoor spaces that encourage creativity, and (4) providing exceptional service to visitors. We did this in order to identify existing examples of these concepts as well as to further understand the qualities and emotions the reimagined NEW Center should uplift.



Space and Financial Planning

This is a collaborative design exercise during which participants work together to arrange the different spaces and activities they would like to see in their space. This tool helps individuals understand the spatial requirements for different types of spaces and activities, which in turn helps to guide participants’ vision so they can make informed decisions about what to prioritize, as well as where their chosen spaces and activities can be situated within a building or on a site. The financial planning part of the exercise ties the size and complexity of different spaces to a cost, so decisions can also be made based on a fictitious but concrete budget.

We used the results of our prior workshops to develop the spaces for this activity, and the two floors of the existing building and the exterior areas were used as the spatial envelope for the gameboard, upon which staff members of NEW and a small group of tenants exercised their space planning skills.

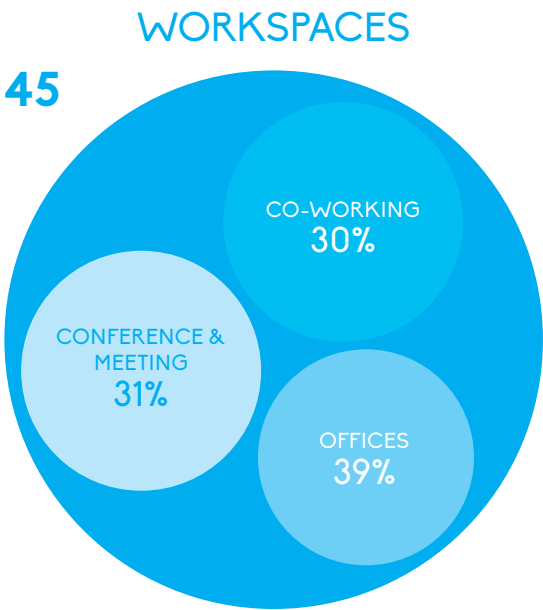
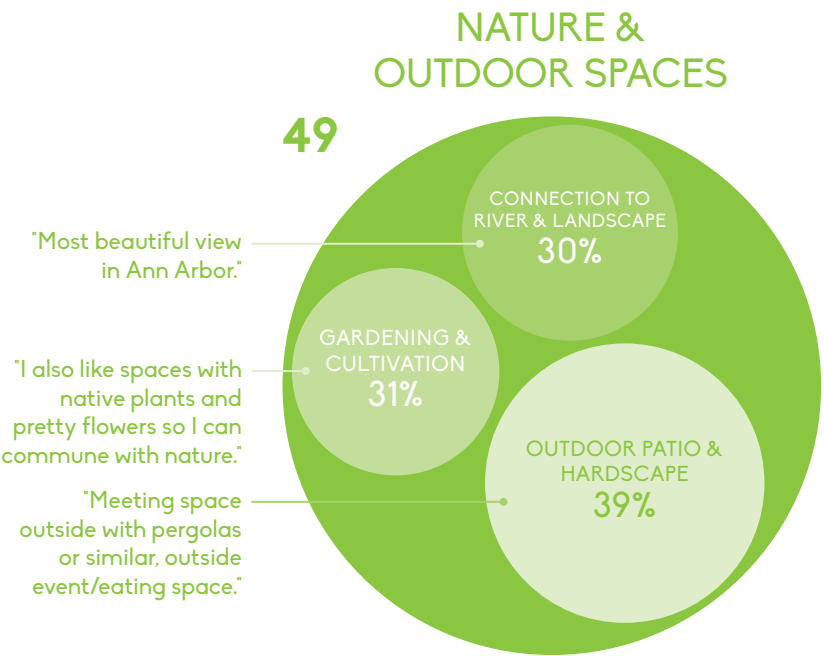
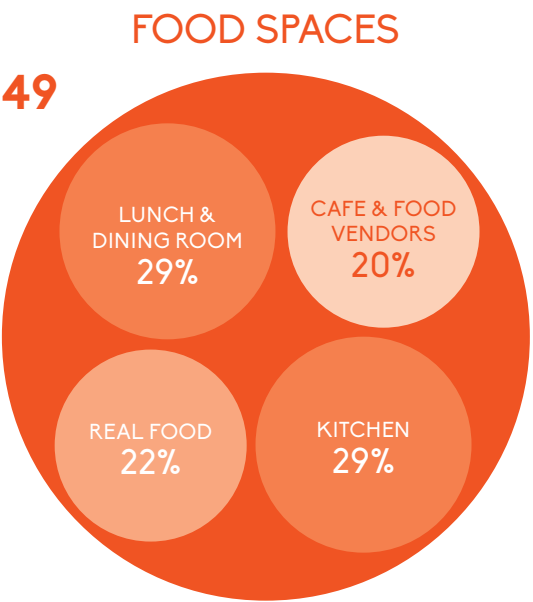
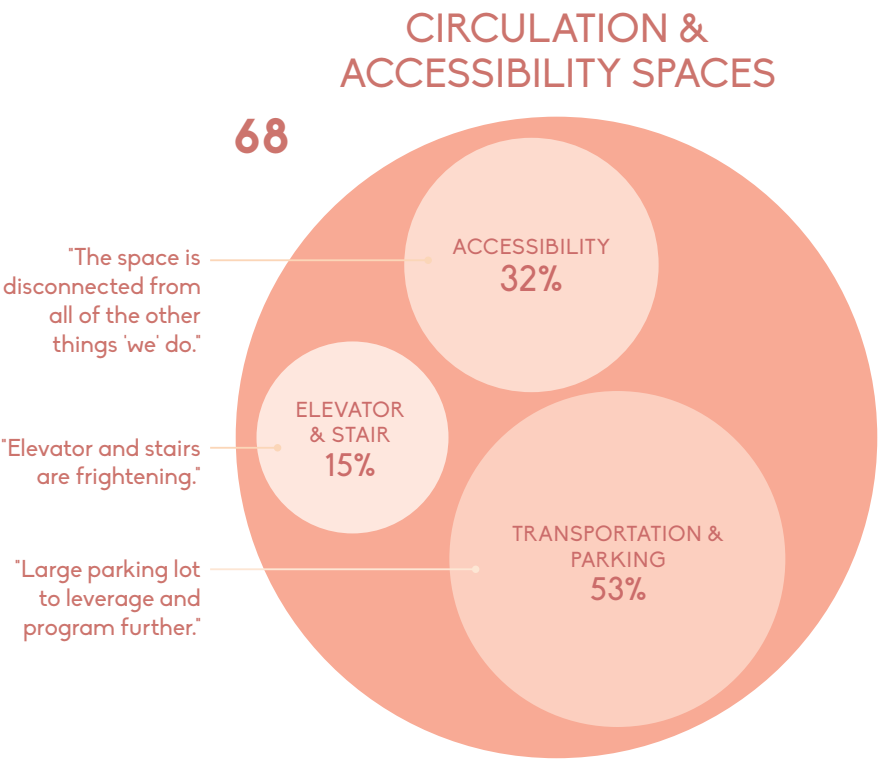


Outputs: Workshop Reports

Architectural Programming and Uses

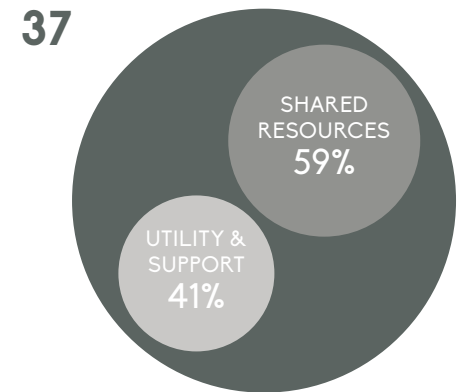
Communal spaces, Food spaces, Arts and Culture spaces, and Nature and Outdoor spaces are the top priority spaces identified by NEW's staff, board, tenants, and selected community members to be included in the building. Many individuals also talked about small, private spaces, from offices to do quiet work to spaces to regenerate and have personal time.

Of the 425 responses received, the overwhelming majority of comments were related to the importance of circulation in and accessibility to the building.

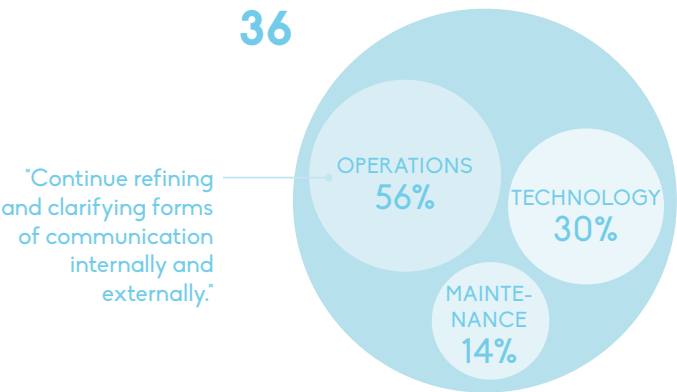


Outputs: Workshop Reports (continued)

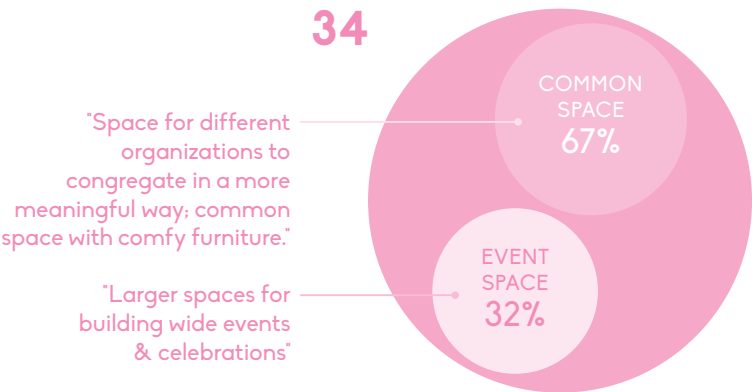
UTILITY, SUPPORT, & SHARED RESOURCE SPACES



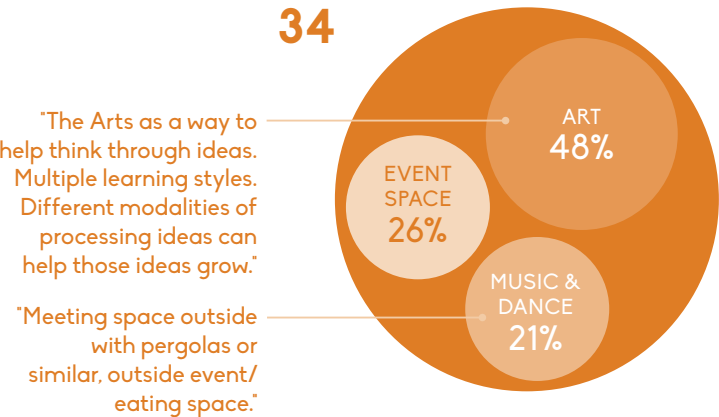
NEW OPERATIONS



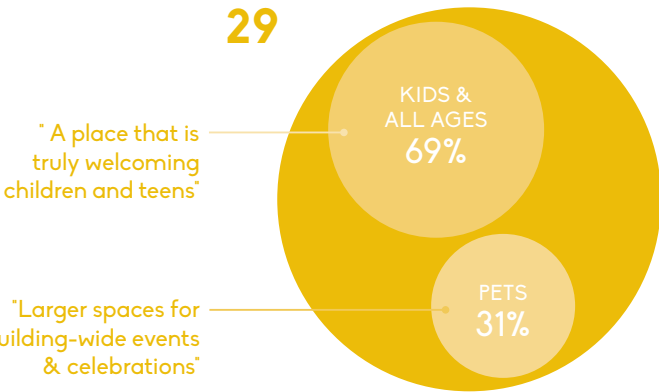
COMMUNAL SPACES



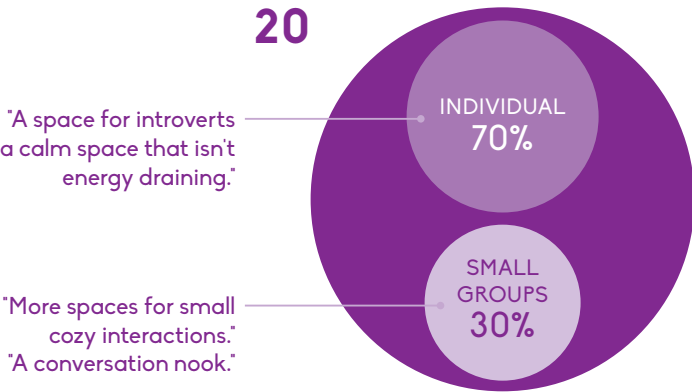
ARTS & CULTURAL SPACES



YOUTH & FAMILY SPACES



PRIVATE & INTIMATE SPACES



LEARNING & TRAINING SPACES



LOBBY & RECEPTION SPACES



RETAIL SPACES



Data Analysis: Qualitative & Environmental Concepts

Twenty percent of the responses received during our data collection related to two types of feedback: desires related to qualitative characteristics and desires related to environmental characteristics. Qualitative aspects involve what it feels like to be in a space; they are typically not visible or tangible, but they still influence the user’s mood, ability to concentrate, and relate to others. Environmental characteristics refer to the perception of sound, light, and temperature, and they are directly related to personal comfort. By addressing both of these types of feedback, we create safe environments that demonstrate that users are respected and that they have an important role to play in the community.

Listed here are seven key design element categories that can be used to organize feedback on design. These categories include both qualitative aspects and environmental characteristics. Participants identified traits and topics within these categories that they felt would support their emotional and physical well-being.



HISTORY & STORYTELLING

We acknowledge that we occupy land that belonged to others and was forcefully taken from them, and that these stories need to be surfaced. There are also narratives that unite us and help us design a future together. Participants requested spaces to highlight and be immersed in these histories, spaces in which to celebrate the “mosaic of human family,” spaces to accommodate the range of communities NEW serves, and spaces in which to hold ceremonies.



WELCOMING & INVITING / HOSPITALITY

Although these concepts can also refer to personal relationships, a building design should always foster hospitality and should emphasize a sense of belonging and of community that unites all its users. The workshop participants overwhelmingly noted the need for a generous and open entrance area, ways to encourage sharing information and spaces, and the creation of an inviting setting that is present throughout the building.



BIOMIMICRY & SUSTAINABILITY

Biomimicry, the introduction of natural-based design, has been proven to improve the human experience of the built environment, and it should be a basic standard of design available to everyone. Sustainability refers to technical solutions that take advantage of natural resources or help replenish them. In this category, participants widely requested more windows, solar panels, water management solutions, and accommodation for electric vehicles.



SENSORY ELEMENTS

The term “sensory elements” refers to design elements that engage the senses, including lighting (natural and artificial), privacy, sounds, scents, and thermal comfort. The increased access to natural light as well as acoustical attenuation and separation were two topics in this category that were highlighted by participants.



SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

Signage and Wayfinding are design elements that make a building or a space easy to navigate and understand. The majority of the participants commented on the difficulty of finding specific rooms and getting lost; they asked for better signage and lighting inside and outside of the building so it is easy to navigate without having to ask.



LAYOUT & ORIENTATION

This category refers to the users’ experience and perception of the layout of the building. Participants commented on feeling too enclosed because of the many small rooms and narrow hallways, which lead to confusion and disorientation, and on feeling distanced and disconnected from other occupants within the same floor and between floors.



FURNISHINGS, FIXTURES, & EQUIPMENT (FF&E)

FF&E refers to design elements that are movable and non-permanent fixtures in the space. Participants expressed preferences for “open and flexible furniture,” “objects of comfort” such as “blankets, pillows, cushions,” and “seating that makes me feel welcome.”

Data Analysis: Themes

Relationships, Connections, and Collaboration

The idea of casually or intentionally coming together to exchange ideas and experiences, as a way to reinforce the idea that we are all connected and must support each other, was a strong theme that came out of the engagement workshops.

The following concepts were mentioned:

- Drive connection and unplanned interactions
- Relationship-based partnerships that transcend contractual status
- Sense of belonging and community
- Create a Village



“Show each other our gifts and that we all have contributions.”



“We should not just consider NEW’s values, but all of the values of all the other people in the community.”



“Share our burdens and what we take on so we can make the village.”



Data Analysis: Themes (continued)

Diverse, Flexible, and Able to Grow

A large number of responses emphasized the need for a variety of space sizes and for flexibility in their use, elevating the idea of community as well as the idea that uses do not have to always be defined, and as a way to make room for future needs.

The main concepts mentioned were:

- Multiple scales of spaces
- Spaces with multiple uses, extra functionality
- Modularity and operability of furniture and spaces



“Some private spaces, some collaborative, some open spaces.



“Freer space to connect and engage in a variety of ways.



“We need a variety of concentration spaces and interaction spaces.

Data Analysis: Themes (continued)

Diversity of People

Responses regarding diversity of people referred to the past, the present, and the future of the organization and of the spaces we occupy.

Some of the main concepts included:

- Connecting the community and the tenants through diversity of issues and work being done
- Supporting and welcoming marginalized communities and returning citizens, intentionally desegregating our spaces and cities by creating a more sustainable model
- Include for-profit organizations as part of the tenant mix
- Address privilege



“We want to be a space where 'systems' level work can happen and where we can bring the ecosystem together.



“Opening it up to marginalized communities for resources and refuge.



“A physical space that could encourage NEW to be a hub for interactions between community members at large.

“The ability to meet the needs of the entire community with different kinds of services and programming.



Data Analysis: Themes (continued)

Learning

The importance of learning, and of spaces to learn in, appeared in a significant number of responses by participants.

The following concepts were mentioned:

- Importance of education
- Best practices and shared knowledge
- Nourishment and growth



“To cultivate leadership and to empower leaders of color and to help white leaders dismantle racism.



“Trainings that allow tenants to connect and have community.



“A place with a sense of nourishment and growth.



Data Analysis: Themes (continued)

Innovative Ideas

Another recurrent theme was the idea of inspiration and fostering innovation.

These concepts were highlighted:

- Abundance over scarcity
- The building as an incubator
- A place to keep dreaming

“Design elements which inspire people to share information.



“Delight in more than just the basic satisfaction of nourishment or another need, but something more that entices, indulges, and sparks curiosity and connection.

“Cultural shifts, NEW is designing culture.



“To inspire new ways of thinking, being, and doing.



Data Analysis: Themes (continued)

Joy and Celebration

Ideas involving celebration of cultures or self, joy, and laughter as a way to bring people together were present in many workshop responses.

Some of the main concepts included:

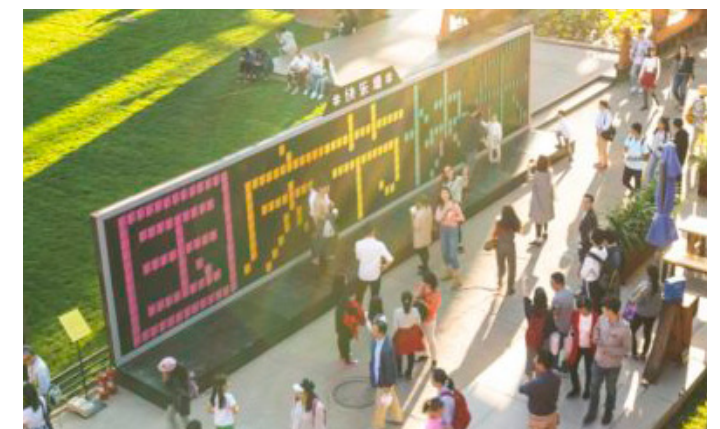
- Quality time together
- Celebrate culture
- Freedom to run

“Spaces for fun and laughter.”



“Create a central gathering space...to welcome and celebrate black people and culture.”

“An outdoor multi-purpose celebration space that we could rent for all sort of festivities



Outputs: Exploring Design Concepts

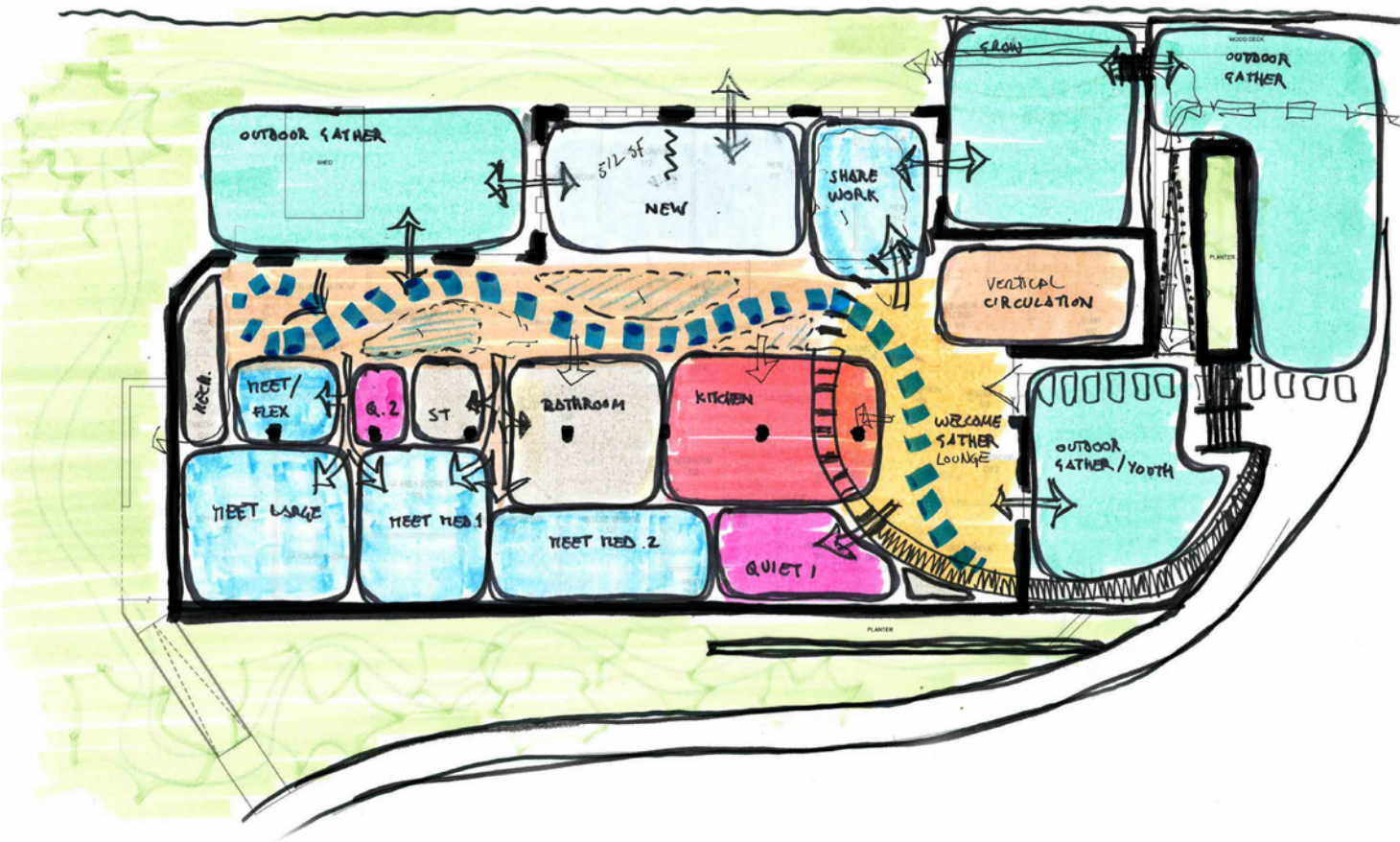
Design Process Summary

The deep analysis of the workshop results identified a series of architectural characteristics and needs that were so powerful they could not be ignored, and they became our guiding design principles. The main characteristics were:

- Increased connectivity between floors and across the building, including a larger elevator;
- Activated and welcoming entry area;
- Increased direct connection to the outdoors;
- All spaces of the building support the idea of gathering and meeting;
- Flexibility of use of spaces through the use of demountable walls;
- Large area for events and celebrations;
- Arts and culture embedded in the architecture—in its walls, floors, and ceilings;
- Importance of a kitchen as a place to come together;
- Increased openness between workspace and circulation;
- Intentional access to and use of the landscape all around the building;
- Outdoor spaces on the second level; and
- Importance of rainwater and flood mitigation.

These guiding design principles were included in different manners in six initial design ideas. Through a final round of presentations and comments, the needs and wants identified through the workshops were further defined, and the designs were synthesized into the two design concepts included in this document. These two designs continue to prioritize and represent the guiding design principles in different manners to emphasize specific experiences.

Although the flexibility of use will allow meeting rooms to be replaced by tenant spaces, and there are ample community work areas, both options still allow for less work area than the current building has. Whether or not the remaining space needs to be supplemented in a different location was not a subject of this exercise.

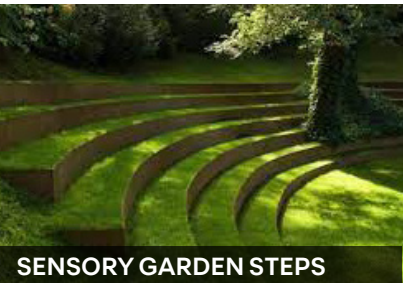
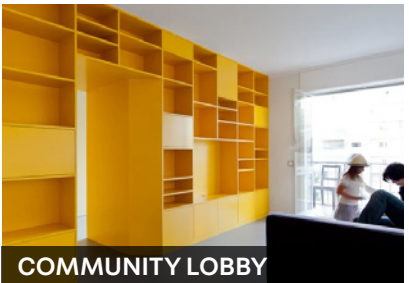
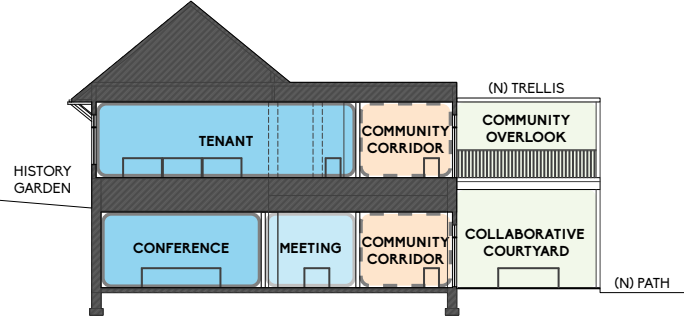
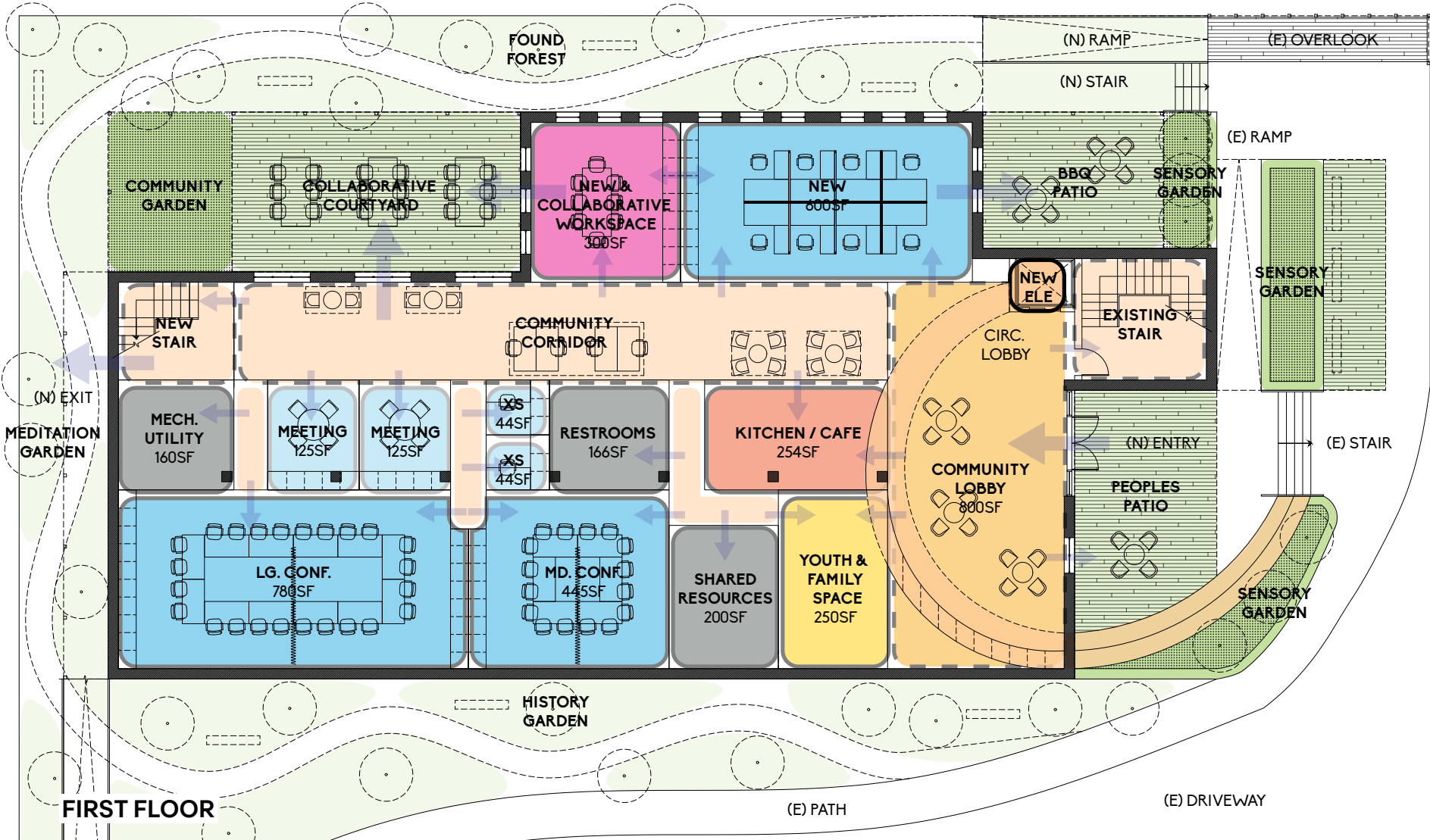


Design Option 1: Community Corridor

This concept revolves around the idea of clear circulation through active, wide corridors that also serve as the place to come and work together and to generate casual interactions. Throughout the building, the corridors are the conduit in which the social life of the building happens, and they are visible from all rooms through the use of glazed walls that also bring light to the spaces situated further back.

The generous entry is both a welcoming space that helps a visitor get oriented, and an interactive and multi-use area, which introduces the idea of being in community that continues through the corridors on both floors. Its connection to a new entry patio and sensory garden also sets the stage for the importance of access to the outdoors that resonates in both levels.

This option separates the more public aspects of the building, most of which are situated on the first floor, from the private tenant rooms on the second floor, while still allowing everyone to come together along the corridors and in the lobby.



Design Option 1: Community Corridor (continued)

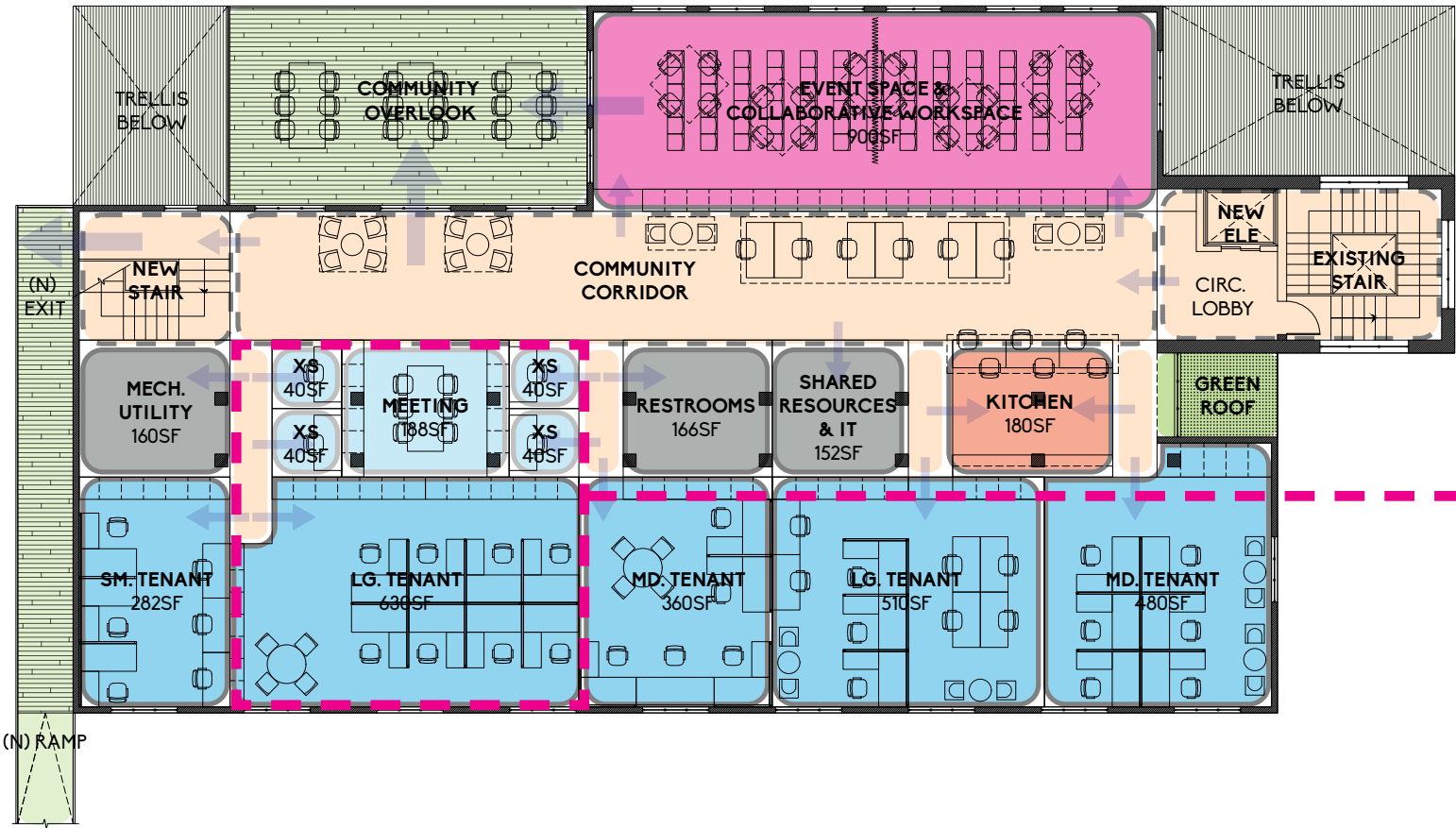
Highlights

- Simple, clear circulation that connects both floors;
- Widened, occupiable hallway;
- New stair at end of corridor to increase connectivity between floors;.
- Expression of biophilia, organic representation within the spaces and the architecture;
- Thickened, occupiable wall that connects the outside and the inside;
- Food is at the heart and connected to the entry space;
- Less but larger tenant spaces in favor of more collaborative spaces; and
- Curved walls can be costly.

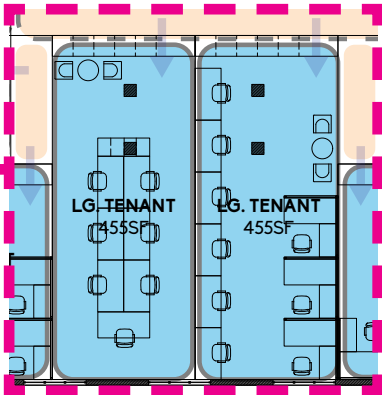
Areas

Room Type	Existing Program (approx. SF)	Proposed Program (approx. SF)
Welcoming Space & Lobby	509	953
Meeting / Work	1,228	1,918
NEW	1,037	900
Tenant Space	6,074	2,243
Event Space	0	917
Communal Space	0	1,797
Youth & Family Space	0	248
Private & Quiet Space	0	0
Kitchen / Eating	95	434
Stair / Circulation	1,652	822
Restrooms	345	334
Mechanical / Utilities / Shared Resources	470	688
Total Program Space*	11,410	11,254

* The difference in area is due to the new stair.



SECOND FLOOR



ALTERNATE LAYOUT



DECK



COMMUNITY OVERLOOK



MEETING ROOM



QUIET SPACE

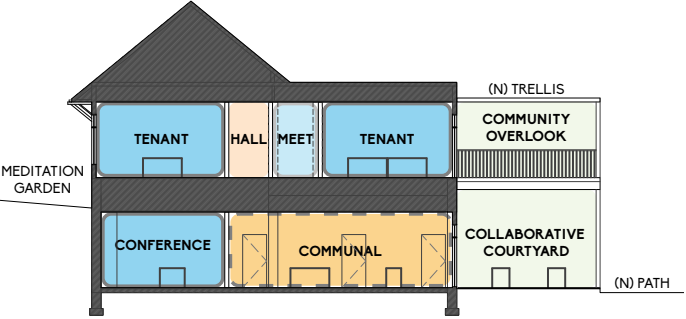
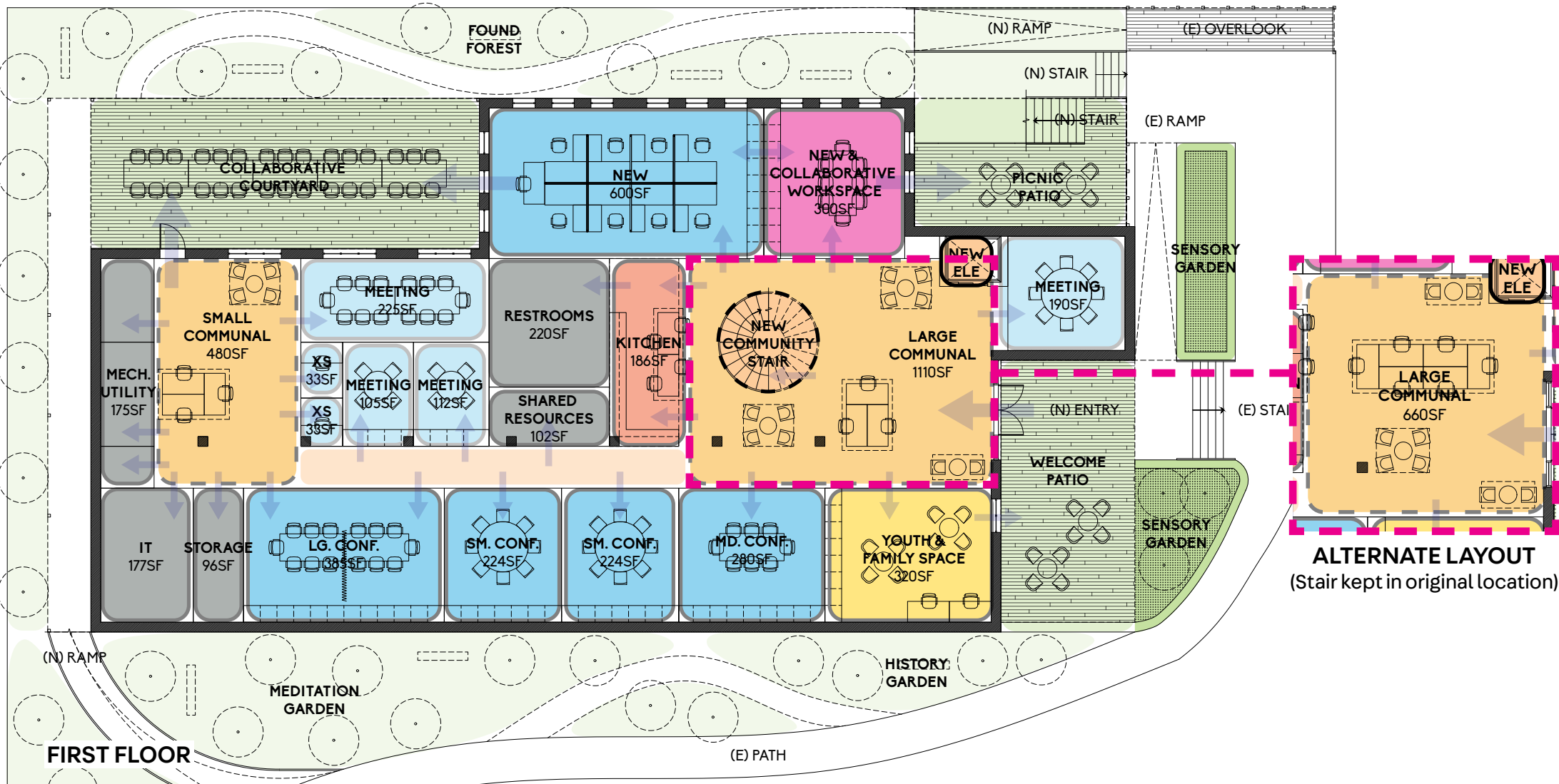


COMMUNITY CORRIDOR

Design Option 2: Places to Come Together

This concept originates from the idea of community as the center of all activities. This is represented by two large gathering spaces on each floor, one at each end of the building, that provide opportunities for tenants and visitors to interact, work, and break bread together; simplify the access to the resources and workspaces; and also connect to the outdoors. The circulation within the building remains simple and it is minimized so that these places to come together become a destination in and of themselves.

This concept also proposes moving the stair from the corner tower to be prominently represented in the large entry lobby. In doing so, the two floors are more directly connected and the separation of activities between floors is less pronounced; the active communal spaces can work more as a single area when needed. A variation to this design, shown on the side bubble, shows how the concept can still be possible without relocating the stair.



Design Option 2: Places to Come Together (continued)

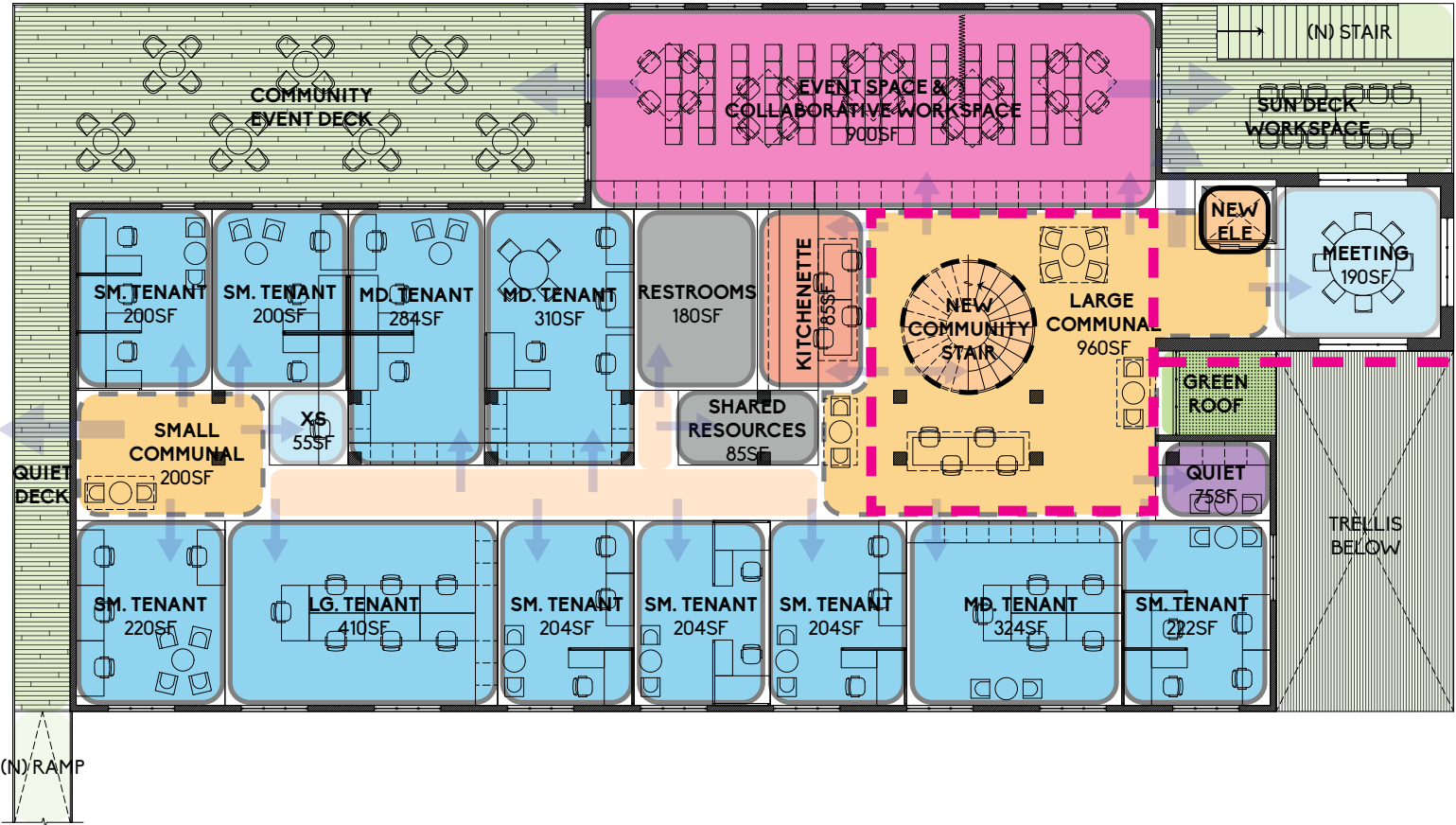
Highlights

- Activated ends on both floors with access to outdoors with public areas opening to them;
- Larger dedicated youth space;
- Reduced hallways—easier to orient around building with two main focal points on each end;
- Need for second means of egress at front;
- Costly to move stair; and
- Smaller size spaces overall.

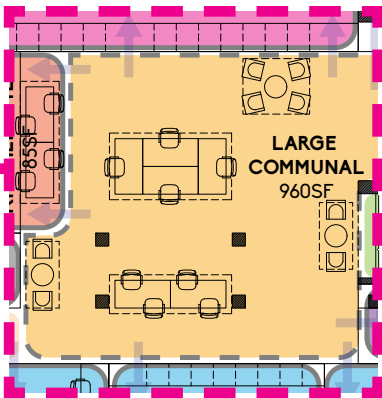
Areas

Room Type	Existing Program (approx. SF)	Proposed Program (approx. SF)
Welcoming Space & Lobby	509	0
Meeting / Work	1,228	2,060
NEW	1,037	900
Tenant Space	6,074	2,789
Event Space	0	917
Communal Space	0	2,419
Youth & Family Space	0	319
Private & Quiet Space	0	74
Kitchen / Eating	95	325
Stair / Circulation	1,652	663
Restrooms	345	403
Mechanical / Utilities / Shared Resources	470	636
Total Program Space*	11,410	11,505

* The difference in area comes from the removal of the existing stair and addition of the new stair.



SECOND FLOOR



ALTERNATE LAYOUT
(Stair kept in original location)



SMALL COMMUNAL SPACE



SMALL TENANT SPACE



KITCHENETTE



LARGE COMMUNAL SPACE



QUIET SPACE

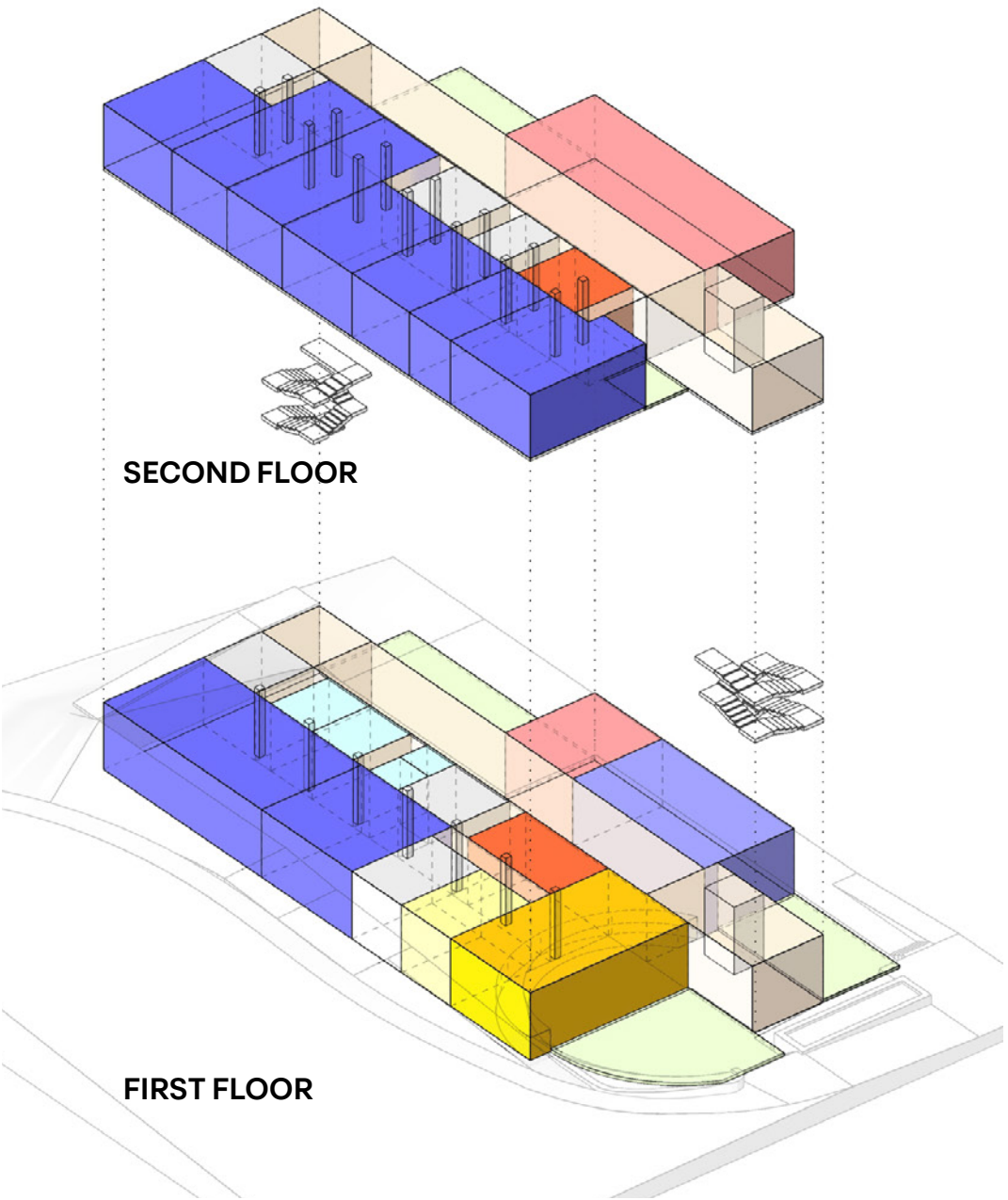
Preliminary Market Analysis

As of May 2021, office space in Ann Arbor with specifications similar to that in the NEW Center (Class B office) was leasing at rates of \$28-\$32 per square foot. In the last 3-4 months there has been fluctuation in the market, and the same office space is now leasing at \$22-\$25 per square foot, a considerable reduction. This drop is indicative of a trend of businesses leasing smaller office spaces (under 1,000 square feet) as many continue to allow remote work arrangements and correspondingly keep smaller workforces in their offices.

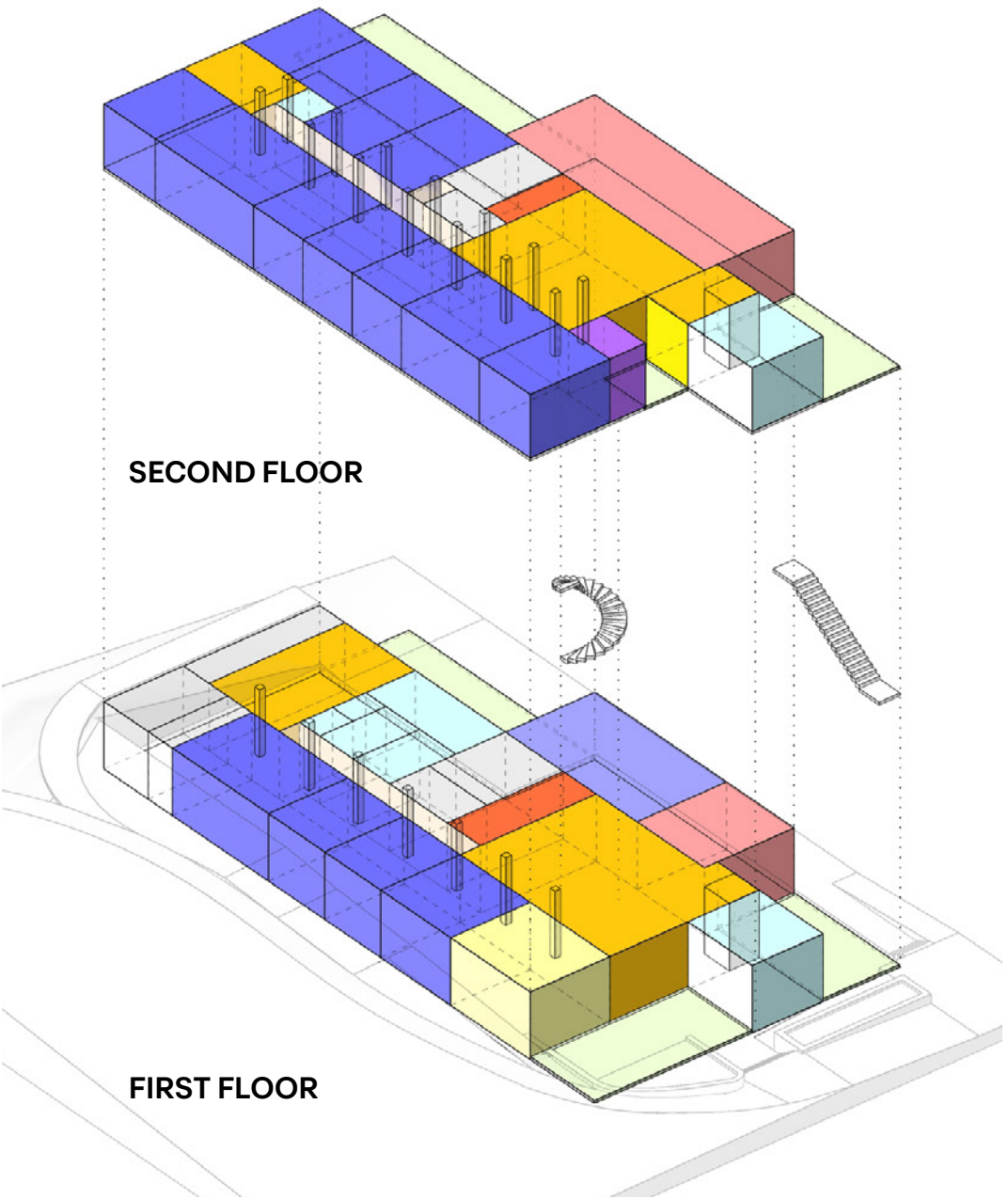
NEW is in a unique position to respond to this market shift because they currently have—and are proposing to continue to have—smaller workspaces. Having these smaller workspaces is an instant value-add for NEW, as well as for the region, and while these market conditions persist, the NEW Center should be able maintain a very small vacancy rate and the ability to demand rate increases (3-10% for those applicable tenants) year-over-year. We expect that this may potentially persist for 2-3 years.

The images on this page show how the meeting and tenant spaces (shown in dark blue) could be modified to provide larger office spaces without undermining the overall feel of the building, if the market conditions were to change.

Option 1: Community Corridor



Option 2: Places to Come Together

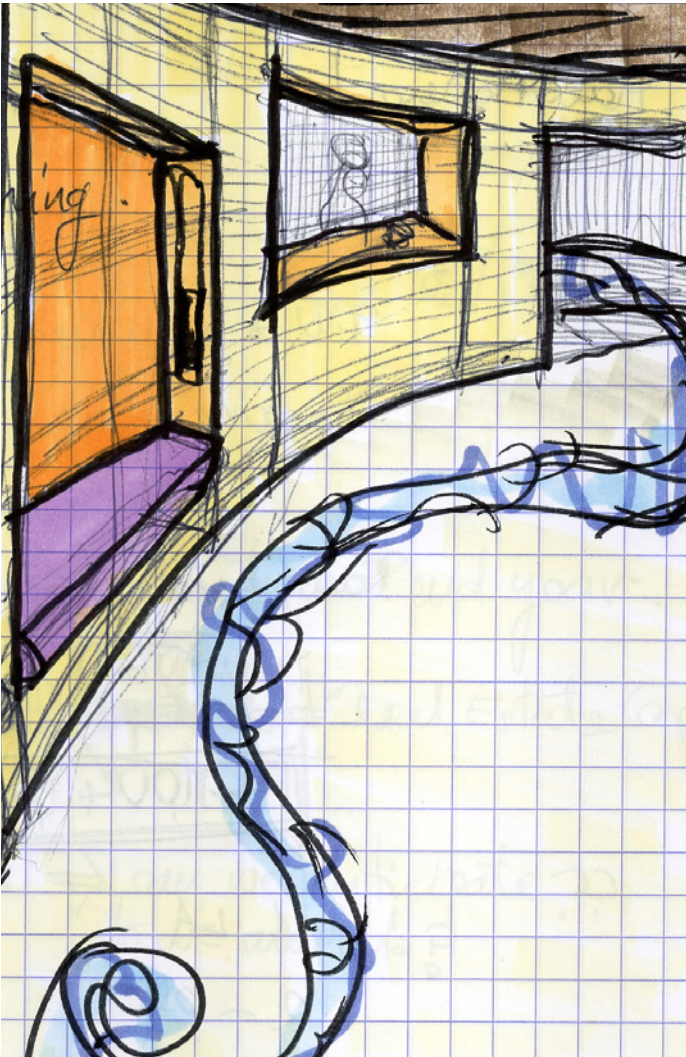


Development Cost Assumptions

At this conceptual level, any estimate of the cost of construction is based on “rough order of magnitude” amounts and other assumptions, and carries a possible variation of +/- 20 - 25%. Additionally, the last 18 months have seen an unprecedented increase in construction costs across the country, and it is expected that construction of this project will not start for at least another 12 months, so it is particularly difficult at this moment to predict construction costs. The estimates below account

for some of these variables, and they also include a significant contingency. These costs will be refined in partnership with a construction manager and/or construction estimator at the conclusion of each phase of the project, to allow NEW to develop a more precise budget and plan a fundraising strategy before construction begins. The costs of consultants and of furniture and equipment are not traditionally included in the cost of construction, some additional guidelines are included here for reference:

COMPONENT & ASSUMPTIONS	ESTIMATED COST
Building Renovations (~11,500 sq ft, at \$200 - \$250/sq ft)	\$2.3 - \$3 million
Improvements to the Site (~1 acre, at \$1.5 - \$2 million/acre)	\$1.5 - \$2 million
Estimated Subtotal	\$3.8 - \$5 million
Contingency (25% recommended best practice)	\$1 - \$1.2 million
Estimated Total Construction Cost	\$4.8 - \$6.2 million
Consultant Costs (Architects, Engineers and other consultants ~20% of the above costs)	\$1 - \$1.3 million
Finishes, Fixtures, and Equipment (~11,500 sq ft, at \$75 - \$100 / sq ft)	\$0.9 - \$1.2 million
Estimated Grand Total	\$6.7 - \$8.7 million



Development Cost Assumptions (continued)

NEW’s Revenue Evolves with the Building

NEW’s revenue from tenant space is approximately \$200,000 annually. Each of the Design Options articulated in this document propose reducing private tenant space by more than half, compared to the current available areas, while adding flexible and collaborative work areas.

Making up approximately half of the building’s traditional expected annual tenant revenue could present a challenge; however, the proposed Design Options introduce significant new opportunities to diversify revenue. Through maximizing the flexibility represented in the designs and undertaking strategies to bring in new users, the anticipated loss of traditional tenant revenue could potentially be balanced or surpassed, while providing more—and increasingly relevant—ways for people and organizations to use the building and come together in community:

- The inclusion of co-working areas has the potential to bring more people and organizations in and provide new ways for people to use the building, possibly at a more financially accessible threshold than previously. An average membership level of 50 co-workers at a time, each paying a monthly \$100 subscription fee, would generate \$60,000 in new revenue annually.
- Meeting spaces are another potential source of revenue, especially if the spaces are made available for public rental. Sixty hours of conference room time rented out each month, at a rental rate of \$50 per hour, would generate over \$35,000 in new revenue annually.
- The proposed Design Options would give NEW an expanded ability to host conferences and other events. Two event rentals per week, at an average rental rate of \$600 per event, would generate over \$55,000 annually.

In considering these potential new revenue streams, however, NEW should address the potential for additional affiliated expenses and overhead:

- Some amount of time and marketing effort to ramp up co-working memberships, as well as interest in using the space in these new ways.
- Other organizational changes, including additional property management, may be needed to accommodate and support this new set of multi-use spaces and alternative revenue streams.

How Will the Transformation of NEW’s Home be Paid For?

NEW currently holds and services debt related to its building, and refinancing the building should be investigated as a possible way to raise the capital necessary to implement the proposed redesign. Additionally, the current political and social movements in the country provide unique opportunities to fund this project through philanthropy and other fundraising efforts, especially from federal, state, and local government sources.

There are also a variety of other financing tools that should be explored. Since the cost of the project is likely to exceed \$5 million, New Markets Tax Credits

(NMTC) might be possible. Some attention should also be given to the environmental history of the site, and whether tools like Brownfield Tax Increment Financing (TIF) are applicable. And, finally, PACE (property assessed clean energy) financing may be able to fund the energy efficiency upgrades that are likely to be part of the project.

All of these options will be considered in the next phases of the project, as the complete scope of work becomes better defined.

	TENANT SPACE	CO-WORKING	MEETING SPACE	EVENTS	TOTAL
Current Revenue	\$200,000 / year				\$200,000 / year
Potential Future Revenue	\$90,000 / year	\$60,000 / year	\$35,000 / year	\$55,000 / year	\$240,000 / year

Next Steps

Phase II – Design Refinement

Phase II of this project is planned to start in late November of 2021. It will consist of additional gathering of information and conversations to develop a single design option, including answering as many of the questions as possible around the existing site and structure noted in the Building Assessment section, establishing initial contacts with the Ann Arbor Planning Department, and collaborating with a local architect and landscape design team to further solidify the design, and with a contractor to update the preliminary construction cost estimates. Further market analysis and any requirements for additional spaces and presence in other localities, such as Ypsilanti, are not part of this phase and, if needed, may be managed by Proxy and the local team.

DJDS’s involvement on this project will conclude in Phase II, at the end of which the local design team and Proxy will continue to work with NEW in the pre-development phases (green pie wedge on the image on page 8) and guide the design to its completion.



**“NEW is a space where
collision happens and
inspires our collective
dreams.”**

– Yodit Mesfin Johnson



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