

THE CONDUIT | AN ARTISTS' COMMUNITY

PROBLEM STATEMENT

CONTEXT

Artists were the first pioneers to rent and occupy the vacant warehouses and factories of Milwaukee's Historic 3rd Ward, developing a community of artists and galleries that became attractive to the general public and brought more people to see the district. Over time this brought about the resurgence of the whole district and the preservation and/or adaptive reuse of nearly every historic structure, and the construction of many new buildings on vacant sites in the district. But with this resurgence has come a vast increase in property values that have displaced nearly every artists loft, studio space, and small artist-run gallery, forcing them out to distant low-rent districts or other cities entirely.

The intention of this project is to stop and reverse that outflow of artistic talent, and to develop an affordable "Artists Community" in the 3rd Ward where they can afford to live, work, play and prosper in the company of other artists such as painters, sculptors, printmakers, digital artists, dancers, and musicians.

In this conjectural scenario, an artist/developer has assembled a patchwork parcel of land. She wants to build new structures for artist's housing and studios. She also wants to build and/or renovate spaces for artist's working studios and a gallery and cafe where their work can be exhibited and directly sold to the well-heeled public. The developer and the board of artists working with her are also very interested in the Artists Community becoming the most important part of the 3rd Ward's "Gallery Night". Four times a year, thousands of persons interested in the arts flock to the 3rd Ward for Gallery Night, attending openings at commercial galleries. It is the intention of this project to offer not only a new gallery to the mix, but an artist's café and several artists' studios that would all be open to the public on Gallery Night. It is also hoped that an "Artist's Square" could be developed on the property such that compelling outdoor art events could occur there, drawing thousands to come to the community and become patrons of the arts.

SYSTEMS

This project will investigate the constructive potential of materiality for its poetic possibilities. Another goal would be to avoid the use of fossil fuels like natural gas, for example, in the heating of the facilities and rely upon mechanical systems that can be powered by electricity, the medium of almost all renewable energy sources like wind, geothermal or photovoltaic solar. The clients have also read extensively about wood being the only material for building a structure that captures and holds carbon, rather than releasing large amounts of it to the atmosphere as steel and concrete structures do as these materials are produced. They have asked the architects for a wood structure building.

COST CONSTRAINTS

The hard construction budget for the Artists' Community is modest in scope and will exert powerful control over design solutions: \$29,000,000, exclusive of utility and landscape (which includes paving) costs, which will be paid for by a donor. The client will maintain a separate budget for all soft costs, including a 10% contingency. The architect must choose to work within one of the three conceptual cost categories: low, medium, or high (each category proposes a given set of material, construction, and mechanical limitations). Succinctly put: higher cost categories equals opportunity for higher quality materials, efficient mechanical systems and structural opportunities. (My design fell within budget using a medium-high cost category).

PROGRAMMING (Simplified)

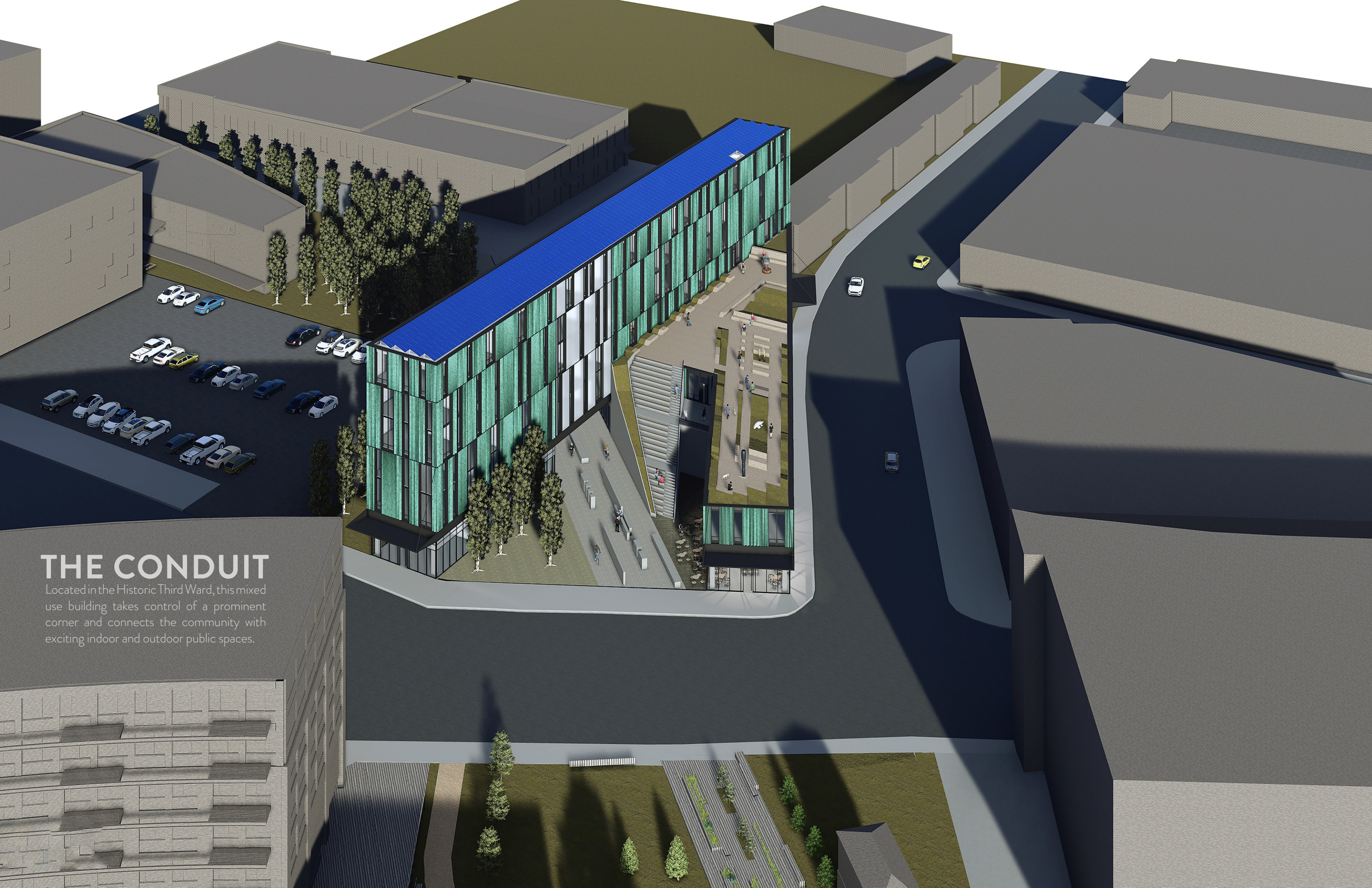
60 Apartments	Entrance & Orientation
10 Townhomes	Changing Exhibition Gallery
7 Artist Studios	Artists' Cafe
15 Loft Studios	Cafe Back of House
Makers Space	Apartment Lobby
Library	Administrative Suite
Event Space	Mechanical

DESIGN CONCEPT

My desire to create a communal development where outsiders felt as much a part of the live-work complex as those who live there drove the formal and visual design. The Conduit maximizes the oddly shaped parcel of land to achieve "community" by providing clear inside-outside relationships and exciting public spaces. Not only did I intend to meet the project intent of creating a self-sufficient community of artists whereby they can work, live, play and prosper within a single complex, but I aimed to create a development integrated into the neighborhood. I felt a visual and communal bond should exist between the architecture and its site context, adding meaningfully to the identity of the Historic Third Ward. Such a design necessitates public space likened to a park, offering a place to go for a stroll, a place to relax, reflect, or just be with friends or family. These exterior spaces should be strengthened and activated by the interior programming—exhibits, a café, and a maker's space; yet, they should be exclusive such that they work in the absence of events and gallery nights affected by the program.

Beginning with a bar scheme that divides the site into a North and South side, the development was then programmed to cluster living spaces, display spaces, and community spaces on the South, and then to place auxiliary and work functions to the North. The ground level houses all the non-dwelling program, while artists and their families enjoy the south-facing views from the next 5 storeys of apartments.

The entire site is connected with a pedestrian/bike path that slices through the new construction and terminates with a grove of poplar trees (a native tree to the site). This path is designed in relation to an existing park across the street—both the park and my site exists atop what was once a railyard. As such, they are visual nods to the train tracks that ran through the sites. The path is then articulated as a material change on my building, adding a visual cue to the history of the site, as well as designating an important junction in the development: the Artist's Square, which provides the critical space that welcomes people into the community, where they are attracted by the paintings, sculptures and other creations that are publicly showcased outdoors. As this is a significant means for artists to sell their work and make a name for themselves, I endeavored to enrichen the space with a monumental stair whereby people can access the roof terrace, or lounge on the integrated benches; furthermore, I surround the Square with the cafe, a maker's space, and indoor gallery such that spectators have multiple points of interest to flow between. A flowing exchange of interest is the most desirable outcome.



THE CONDUIT

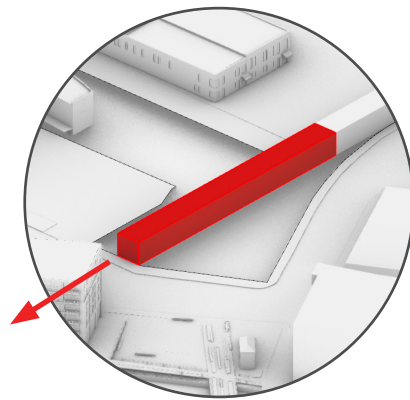
Located in the Historic Third Ward, this mixed use building takes control of a prominent corner and connects the community with exciting indoor and outdoor public spaces.

SITE and FORM

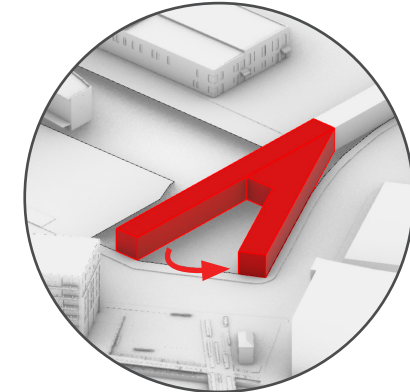
The site selected for this project is a strangely-shaped parcel North of Summerfest Way (East Polk) in Milwaukee's Historic 3rd Ward. To the SE of the site is the new "Trestle Park", where a new bike and pedestrian crossing involving the existing historic Swing Bridge is envisioned.

Previously a railway yard for the Chicago and Northwestern Rail, the site is known to have badly contaminated soil, presumably from leaking tanker cars and/or "Midnight Dumping" of industrial chemicals, and/or contaminated fills. The typical recommended treatment by the Wisconsin DNR is to maintain all contaminated soil on site and install a cap consisting of a membrane and clay to prevent human interaction with the contaminants. No basements are envisioned with the contaminated fills and high-water table as hindrances. The soils under the polluted fills are silts of very poor structural capacity and will probably require deep steel piles driven down to stone bedrock to support any new buildings.

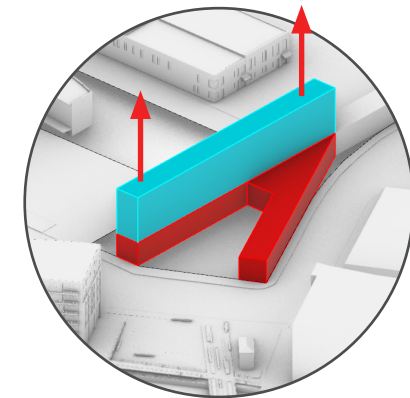
For this project, we were to select and develop either the historically designated existing building or our new construction apartments. I chose the new construction on the south side of the parcel.



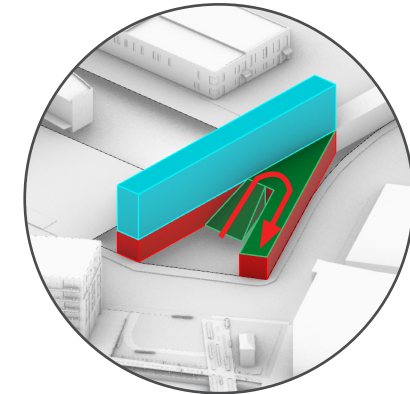
PULL
A bar is pulled across the site that divides the site into North and South



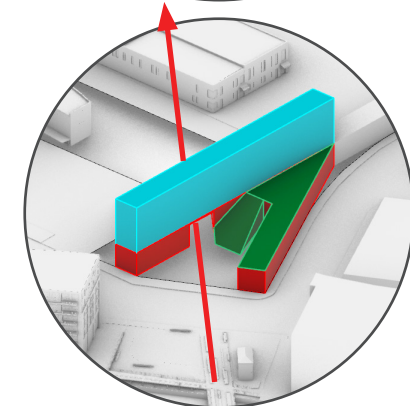
KICKER BAR
Meets zoning to build on lot line and provides required program space



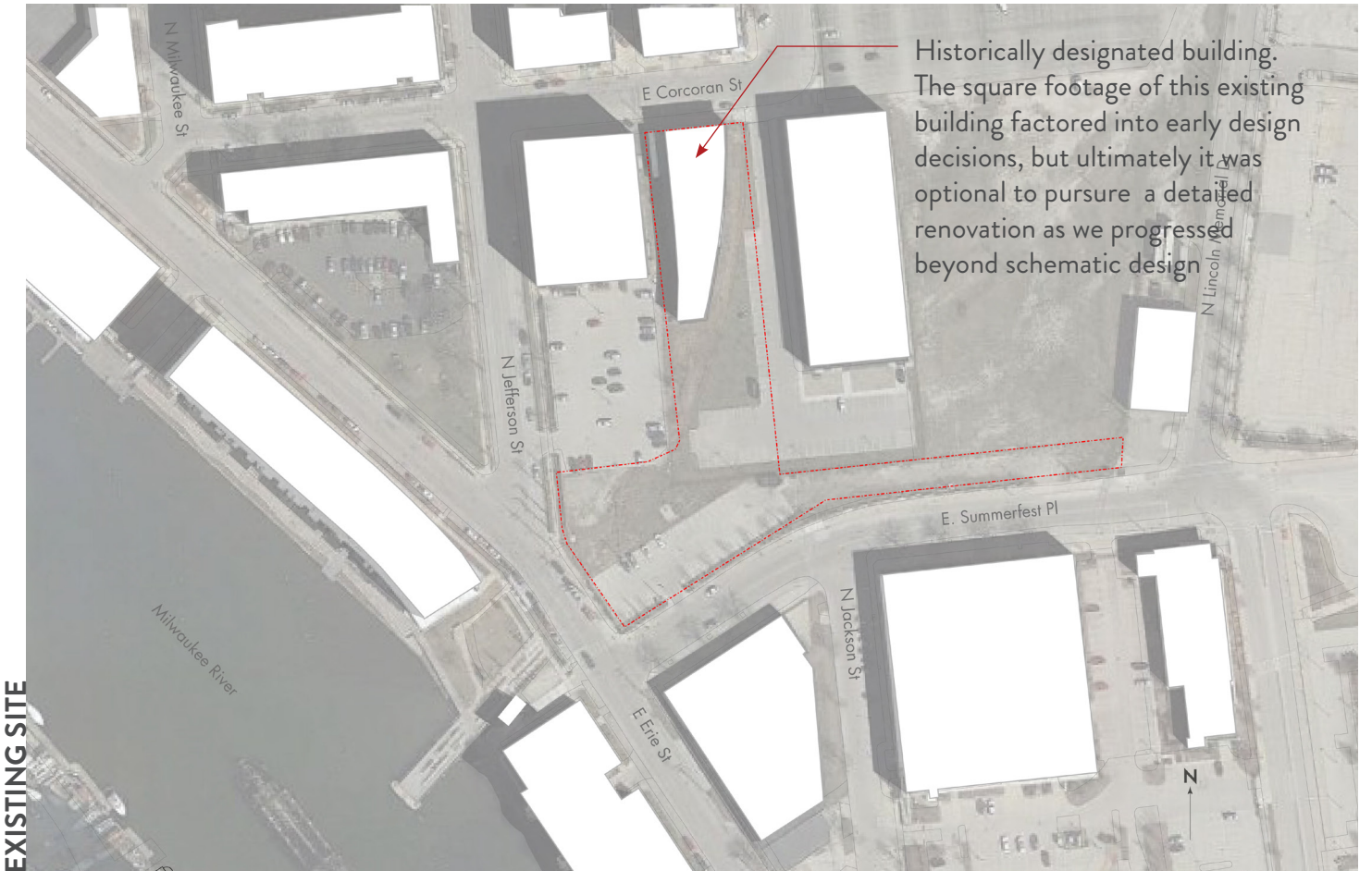
HOUSING
5 floors of residential units are planned with south-facing apartments



COMMUNITY
Roof terrace and access engages the public

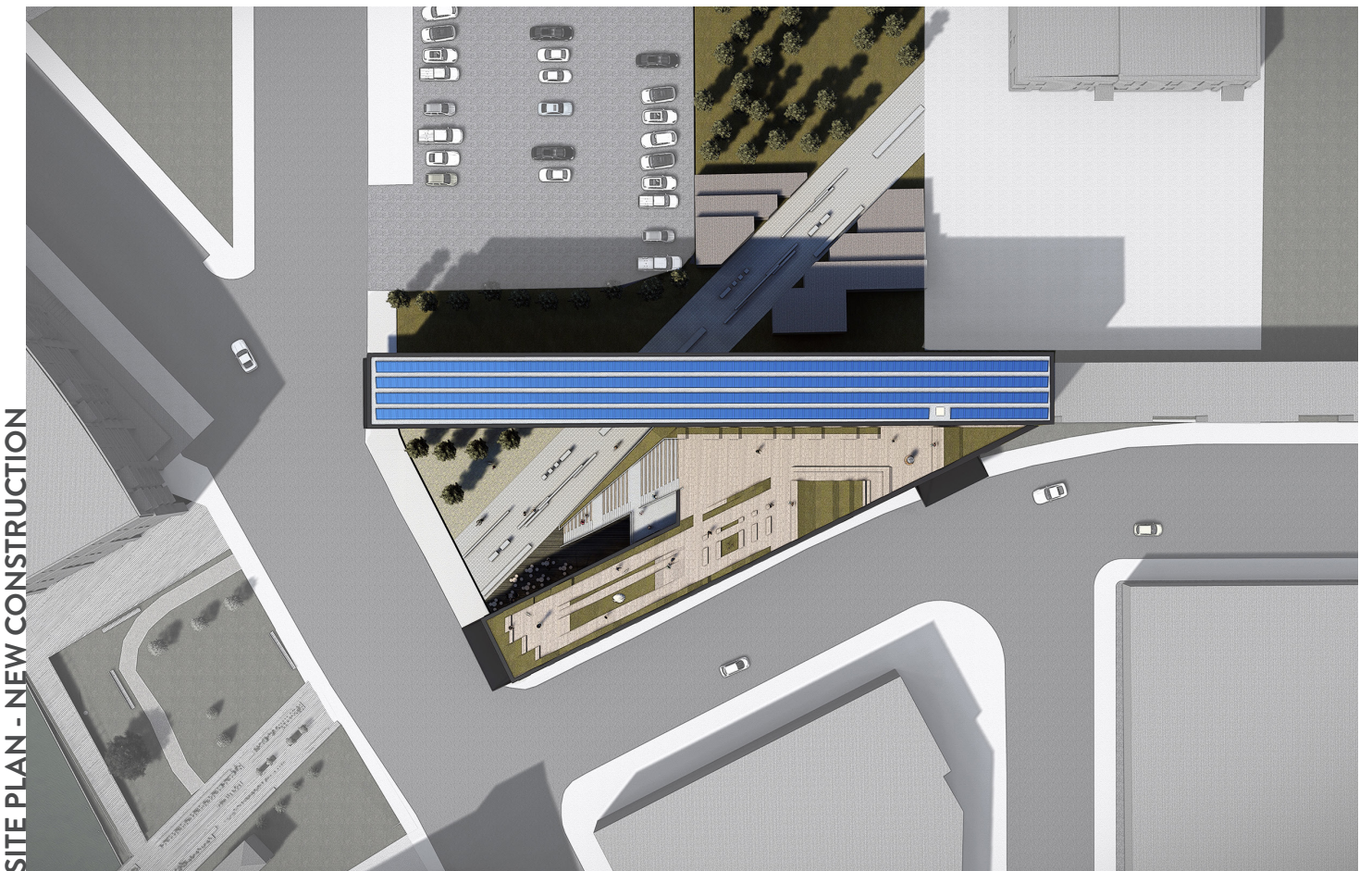


SITE CONTEXT
A passage to connect North and South to the existing pedestrian path



Historically designated building. The square footage of this existing building factored into early design decisions, but ultimately it was optional to pursue a detailed renovation as we progressed beyond schematic design.

EXISTING SITE



SITE PLAN - NEW CONSTRUCTION



PEDESTRIAN PATH

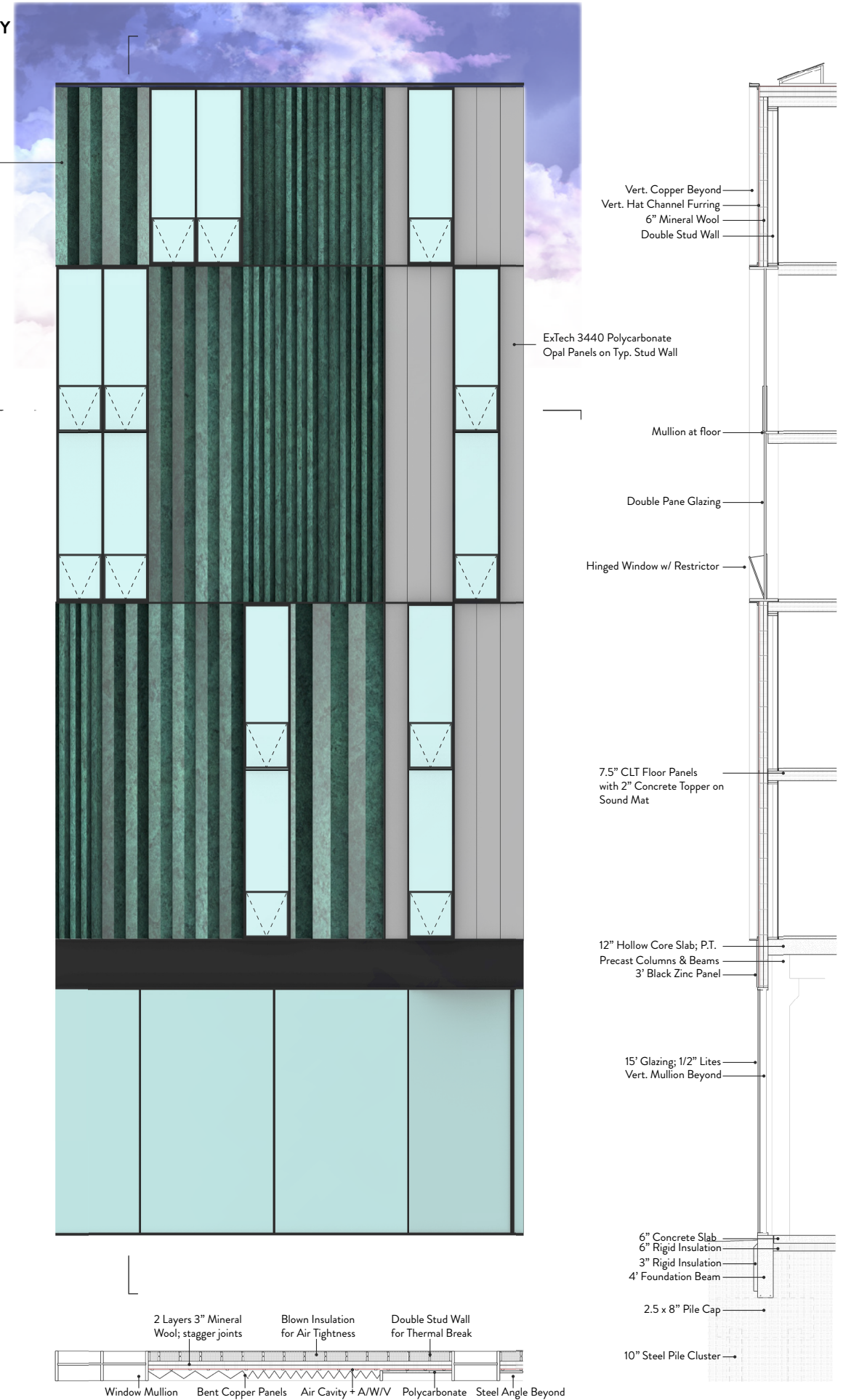
Trestle Park (foreground), was designed using the historic train yard as inspiration. A city plan to reactive a turnbridge in middle of the river (behind) suggests a future path that could cut through my site. I propose an extension of Trestle park, manipulating the design intent by providing artist walls and pedestals for art displays, and further articulating the path as a material change in the cladding



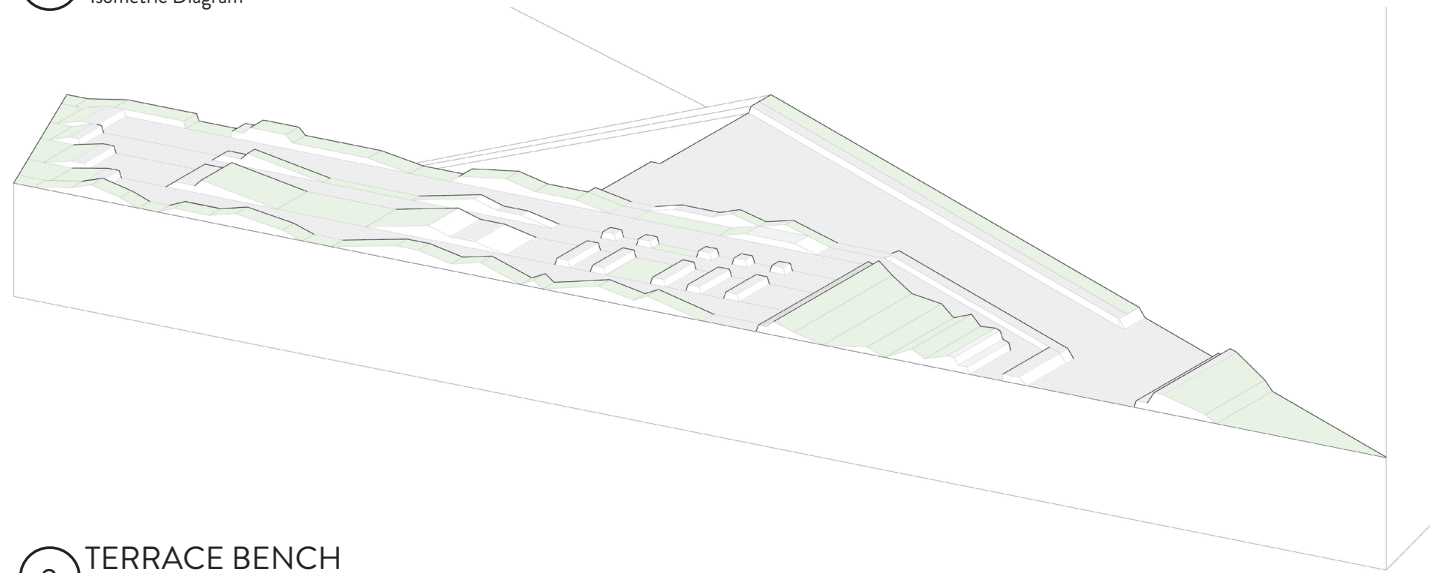
City plans to reactivate the turnbridge in the river will connect this path to the opposite side



TECTONIC STUDY
1/4" = 1'

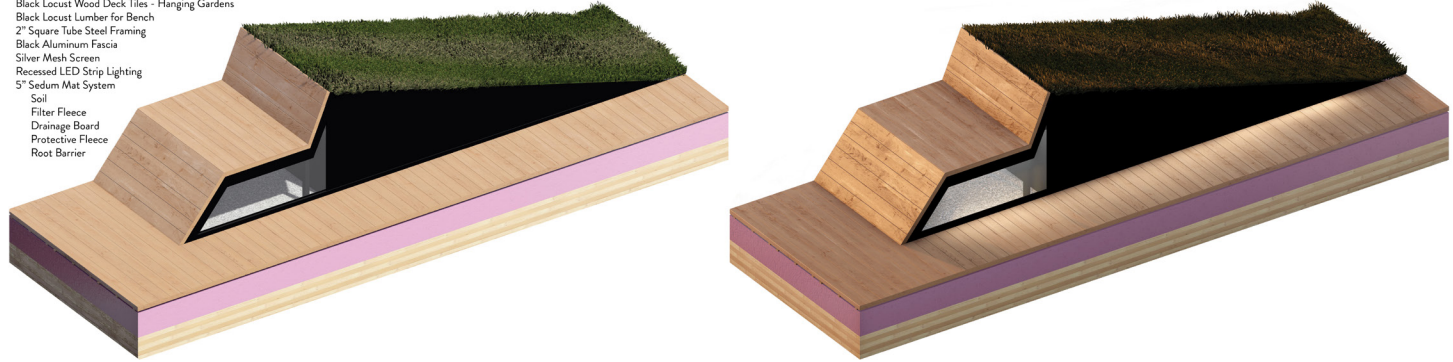


1 ROOF TERRACE
Isometric Diagram

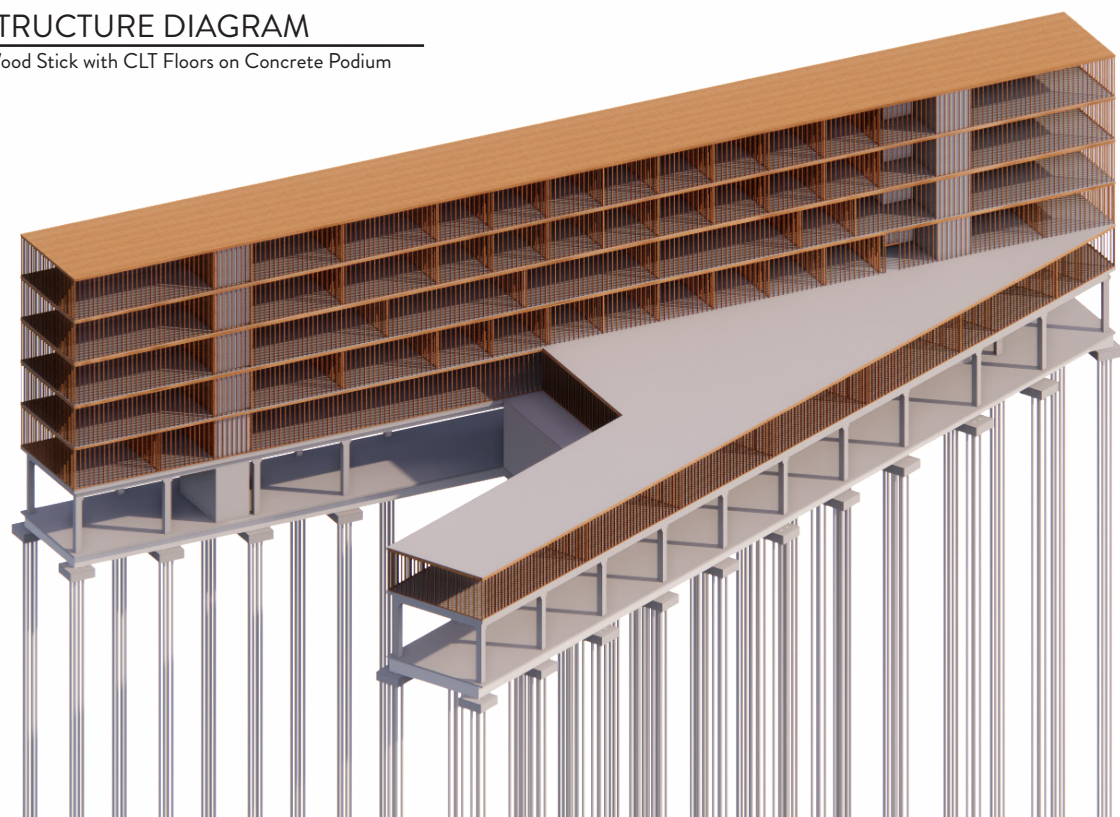


2 TERRACE BENCH
Day and Evening Render

7.5" CLT
8" Rigid Insulation
Cut-to-Form Rigid under Sedum Mat
Black Locust Wood Deck Tiles - Hanging Gardens
Black Locust Lumber for Bench
2" Square Tube Steel Framing
Black Aluminum Fascia
Silver Mesh Screen
Recessed LED Strip Lighting
5" Sedum Mat System
Soil
Filter Fleece
Drainage Board
Protective Fleece
Root Barrier



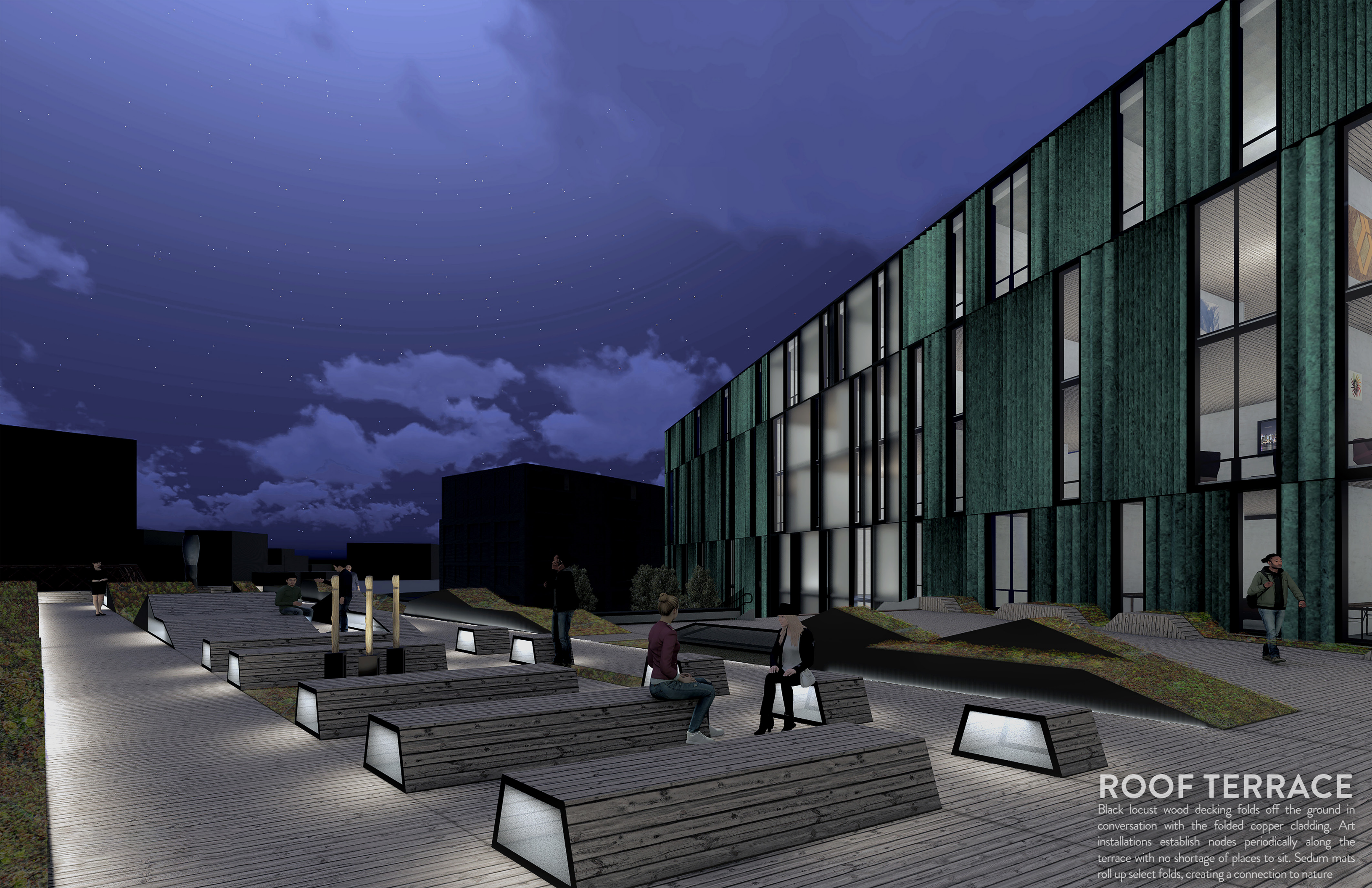
3 STRUCTURE DIAGRAM
Wood Stick with CLT Floors on Concrete Podium



VISUAL EXPERIENCE OF CLADDING

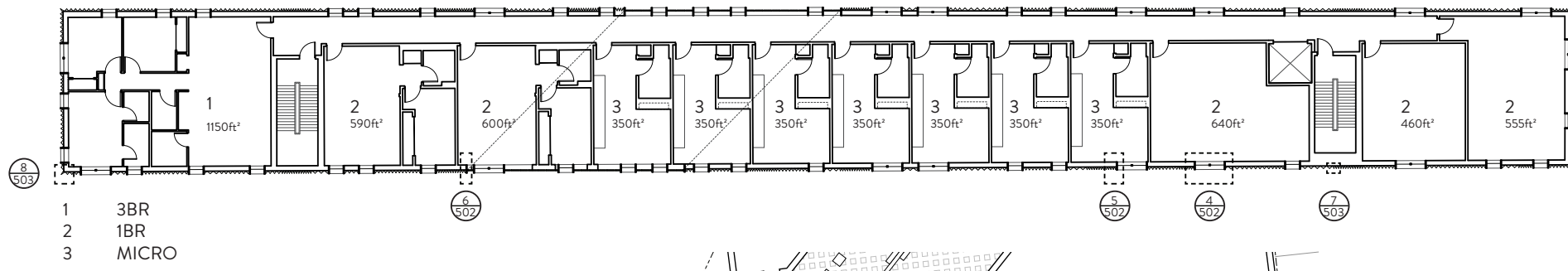


90 DEGREE AXON OVERVIEW

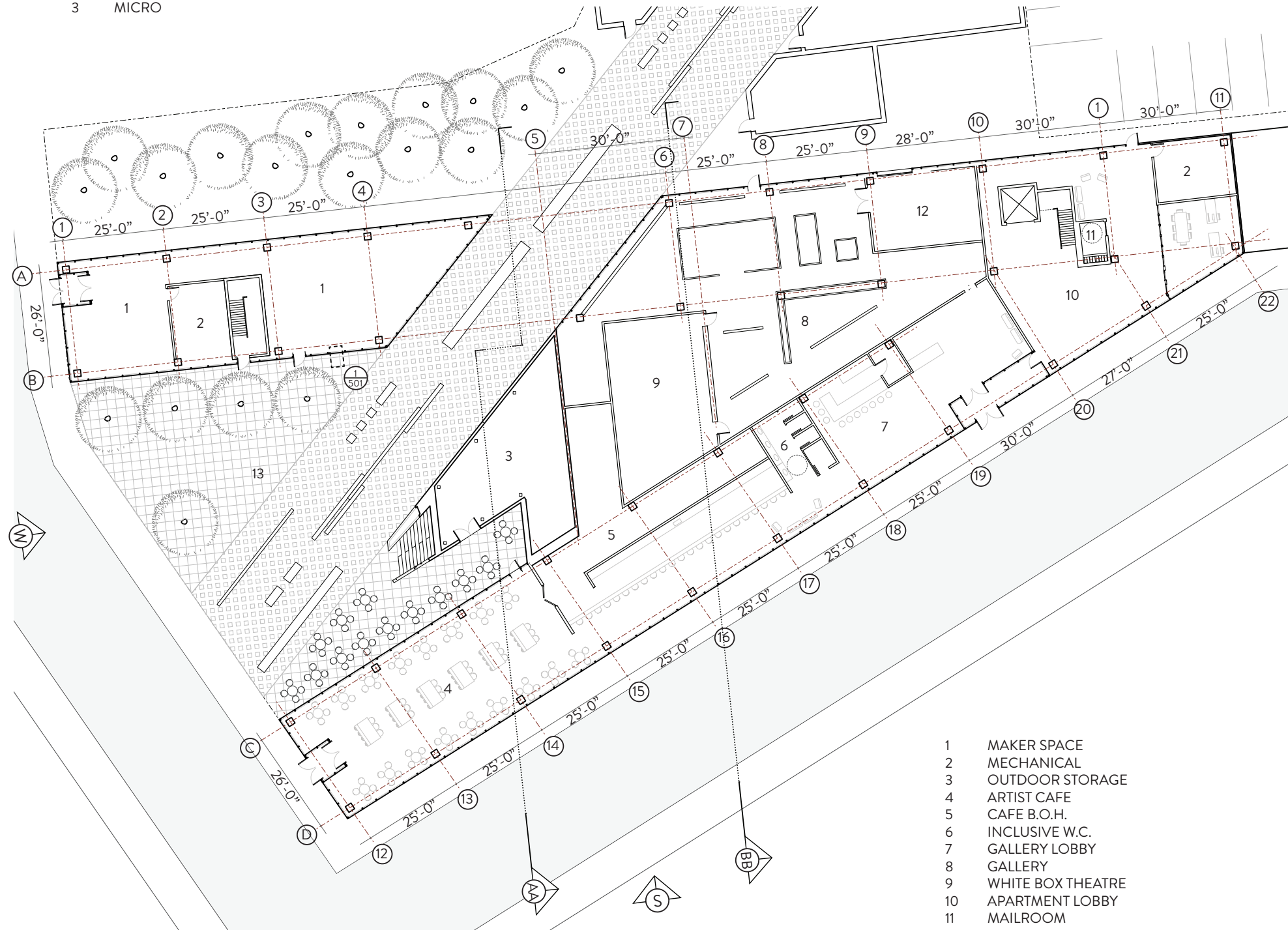


ROOF TERRACE

Black locust wood decking folds off the ground in conversation with the folded copper cladding. Art installations establish nodes periodically along the terrace with no shortage of places to sit. Sedum mats roll up select folds, creating a connection to nature

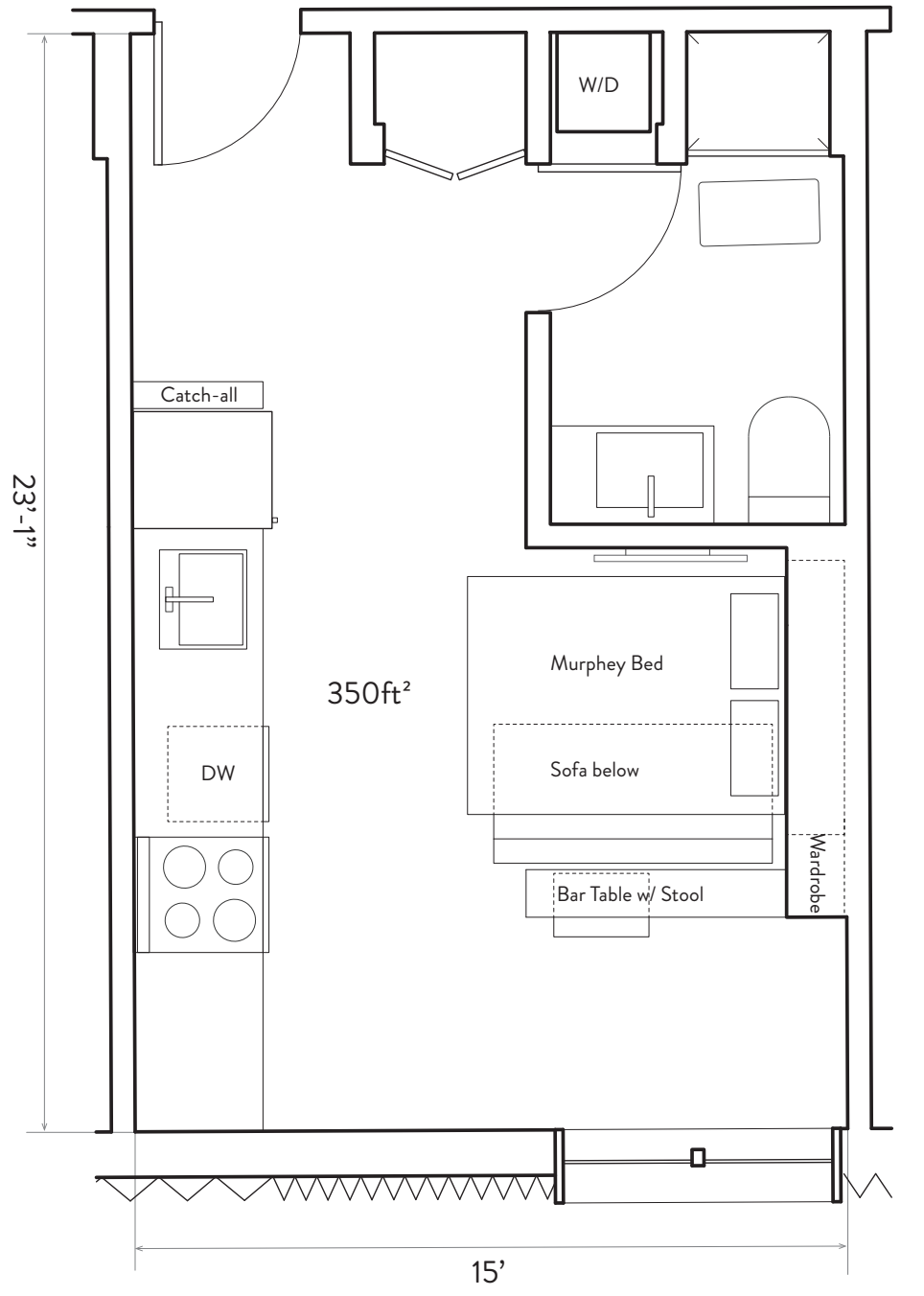


2 TYPICAL UPPER FLOOR PLAN
3/64" = 1'-0"

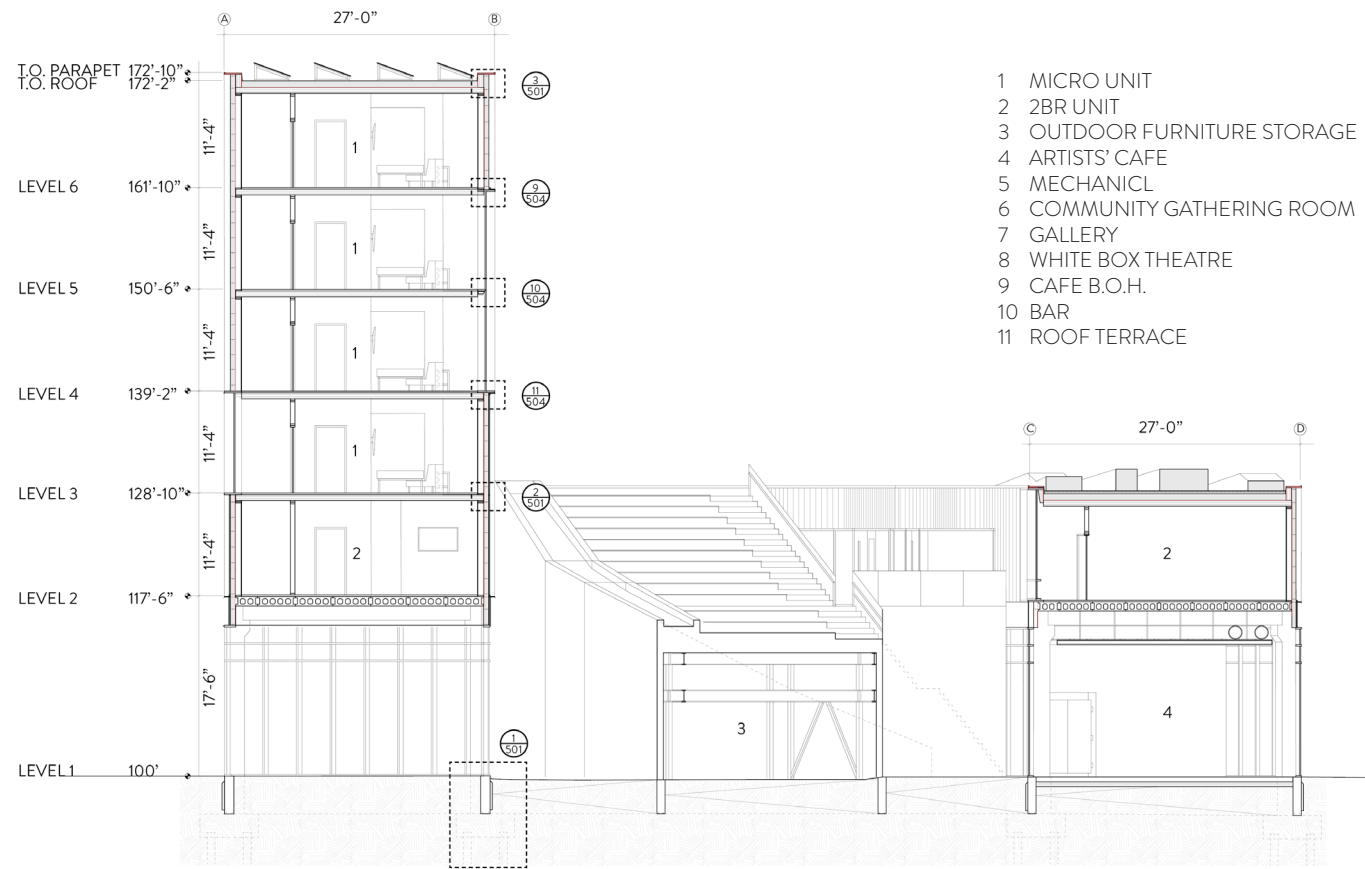


- 1 MAKER SPACE
- 2 MECHANICAL
- 3 OUTDOOR STORAGE
- 4 ARTIST CAFE
- 5 CAFE B.O.H.
- 6 INCLUSIVE W.C.
- 7 GALLERY LOBBY
- 8 GALLERY
- 9 WHITE BOX THEATRE
- 10 APARTMENT LOBBY
- 11 MAILROOM
- 12 STORAGE
- 13 ARTIST'S SQUARE

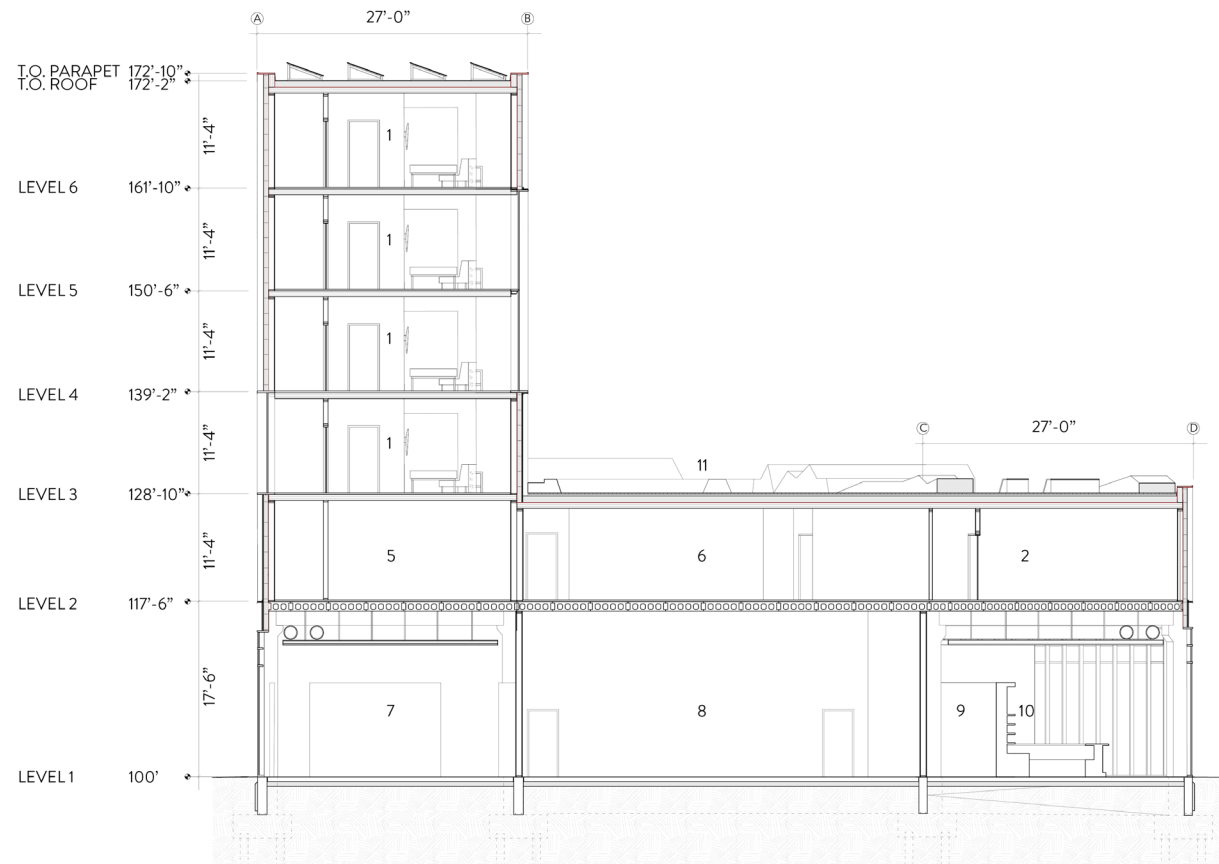
1 FIRST FLOOR PLAN
3/64" = 1'-0"



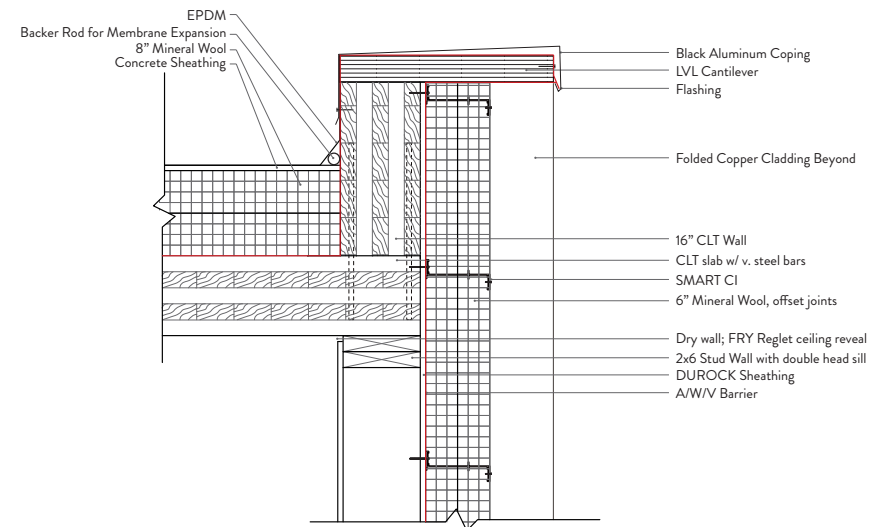
3 TYPICAL MICRO APARTMENT
3/8" = 1'-0"



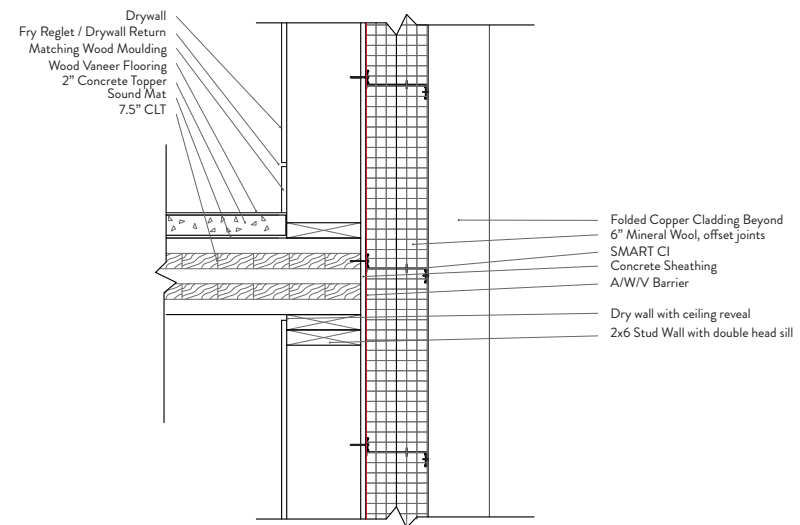
1 SECTION AA
 3/32" = 1'-0"



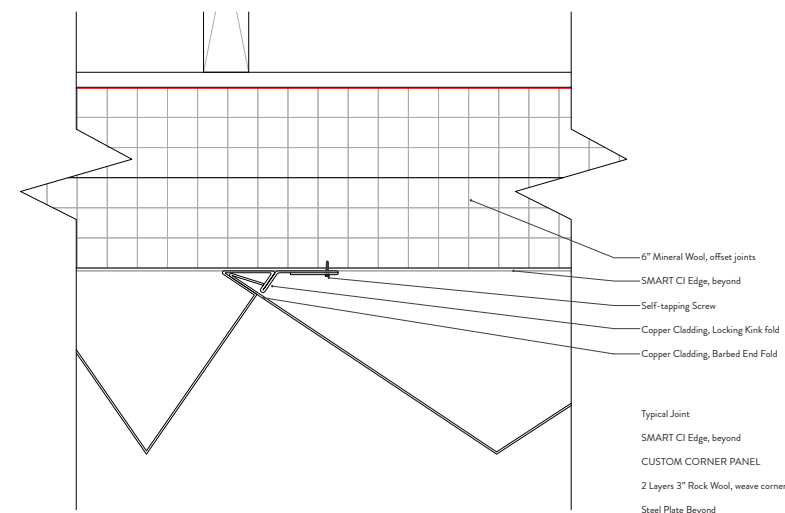
2 SECTION BB
 3/32" = 1'-0"



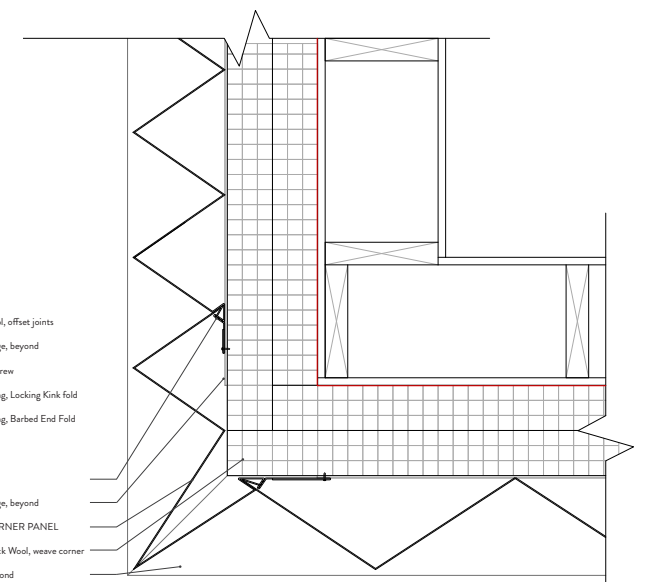
1 WALL MEETS SKY
 1-1/2" = 1'-0"



2 WALL MEETS FLOOR
 1-1/2" = 1'-0"



3 TYPICAL PANEL JOINT
 6" = 1'-0"



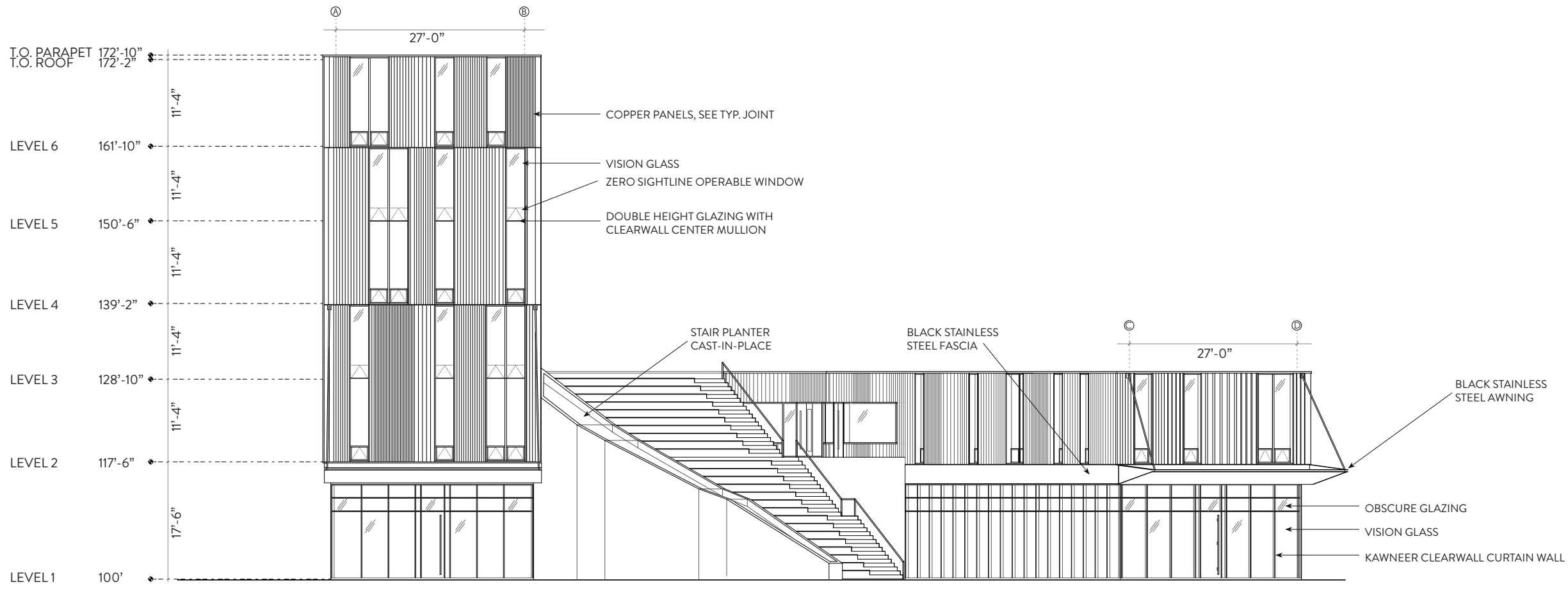
4 CORNER TURN
 3" = 1'-0"

DETAILS

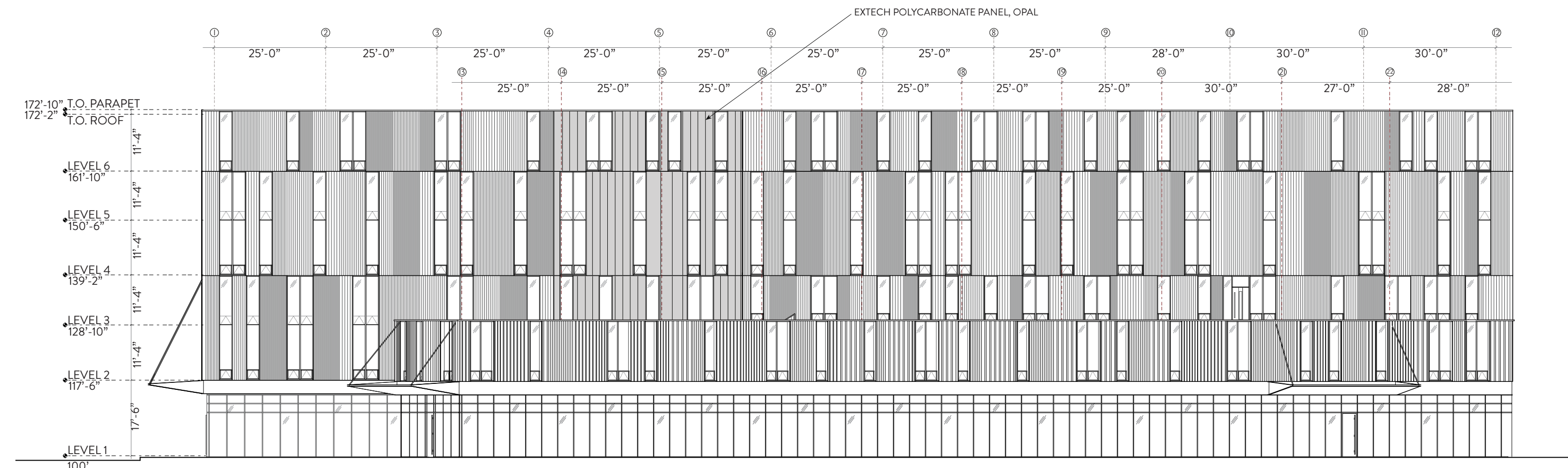
A small construction set of 12 details coupled with major drawings ensures feasibility of construction, entering the realm of plausible and leaving behind the skeptical concept. Further investigation into material selection and existing products ensures the design meets the expected aesthetic within the given budget.

ELEVATIONS

As a long bar scheme, the varying density of copper folds provides a gradating effect and visual intrigue with shadows and light that changes as the Sun moves throughout the day. Tall fenestration and two double-height sections communicate with the vertical panel system, and strengthens the aesthetic hierarchy.



1 WEST ELEVATION
1/2" = 1-0'



2 SOUTH ELEVATION
1/16" = 1-0'



ARTISTS' SQUARE

Two arms open towards Trestle Park across the street welcoming passers-by. This plaza hosts space for resident artists to showcase their creations. Plenty of seating in this cozy setting helps attract people to stick around, and a cafe provides options for food and drink.