

ACSA Faculty Design Award

2015-2016 Winner Submission Materials

Blue Barn Theatre & Boxcar 10

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BLUE BARN THEATRE & BOXCAR 10

PRECISION & LOOSENESS. Conceived as a new arts hub in a rapidly changing district near downtown Omaha, an experimental theatre opens to the city through a public open space anchored with a mixed-use building. Three related projects share an integrated half-block to transform the relationship of cultural facilities and public / private space towards a collective urbanism.

Though designed for separate owners, the projects share a common language and a unified site strategy including innovative storm water retention and reuse. The multipurpose open space, owned by the Blue Barn Theatre, has been designated a public space known as Green in the City. From the project's onset the developers and architects envisioned a collective and collaborative approach to this urban environment that embraced the precision programming required for its intended uses (theater, restaurant, housing...) with a loose approach to team formation and project resolution (the spaces and structures are intended to transform over time.) Thus, we chose to hold a competition for the design of the open space. The landscape design team was selected by national design competition coordinated by the architects.

In its twenty-fifth anniversary year the Blue Barn Theatre engaged the architects to design a ground-up future home for the innovative theatre company. The challenge was to design a new building increasing the capacity of the company while maintaining the upstart scrappiness and risk-taking ethos of the Blue Barn Theatre. Our goal has been to enact an exciting urban environment out of the highly specific / technical requirements of the theater alongside a framework that would allow programmatic and material improvisation. At the core of the Blue Barn is the theater with a 1000 sq. ft. stage and 99-seat house, a hybrid of proscenium and black box types. However, with the opportunities afforded by the new site and looking to expand the potentials of the theater, the Blue Barn sought to mediate between the technical and functional demands of a modern theater, a desire for opened and engagement with the city, and the excitement of continual and unpredictable evolution.





The theater building presents a reinterpretation of the conventional black box theater. At Blue Barn, the literal blackness of the theater interior promotes focus but the form of the space, including the fixed seating and textured wood acoustic wall system, give the theater a unique character not normally associated with the black box type. There is no physical proscenium, but the opening between house and stage forms a precise frame proportion as desired by the company. Black curtains aid in reconfiguring stage and house boundaries and a very large door at the back of the stage opens the theater to the exterior performance area and public open space beyond.

This big door allows the protected space of theater (normally hidden from the outdoors) to connect the abstraction of the theater space with the realities of the city outside. Flexibility is not perceived as the absence of form but instead the presence of unique and carefully considered infrastructure. This innovative layout supports a variety of theater configurations from the conventional proscenium to the less common alley theater and environmental theater forms. The ability to open the box changes the theater's flexibility, allowing the ability to stage different events and communicate with the city and neighborhood in ways that will alter the perception of the Blue Barn itself. Where the traditional black box theater provides opportunities for dramatic innovation inside a limited realm, new types of performances and engagement with the city / public are now possible.

At Blue Barn, the remaining theater program is organized concentrically around the black box and stage void with the back-of-house operations arranged along the south side of the building against the party wall with Boxcar 10. To supplement the Blue Barn, the developer of Boxcar 10 has proposed a mixed-use building that will reinforce the arts-focused neighborhood with a much needed dining spot and housing. The building complements the architecture of the Blue Barn but is distinguished by the dominant residential volume, an exterior black box that is close in plan to the proportions of the theater interior.

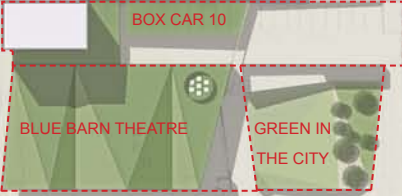
As the architects and design coordinators of this site, we think of these combined buildings and landscapes as one larger project with the shared goal to invigorate the site and neighborhood through innovative programming. Arts, housing, entertainment and recreation work in tandem to create a social hub for the city. These are buildings and spaces that will change with inhabitation.



Residential community of Dahlman

PIERCE ST

PACIFIC ST



BOX CAR 10

BLUE BARN THEATRE

GREEN IN THE CITY

10th ST

11th ST

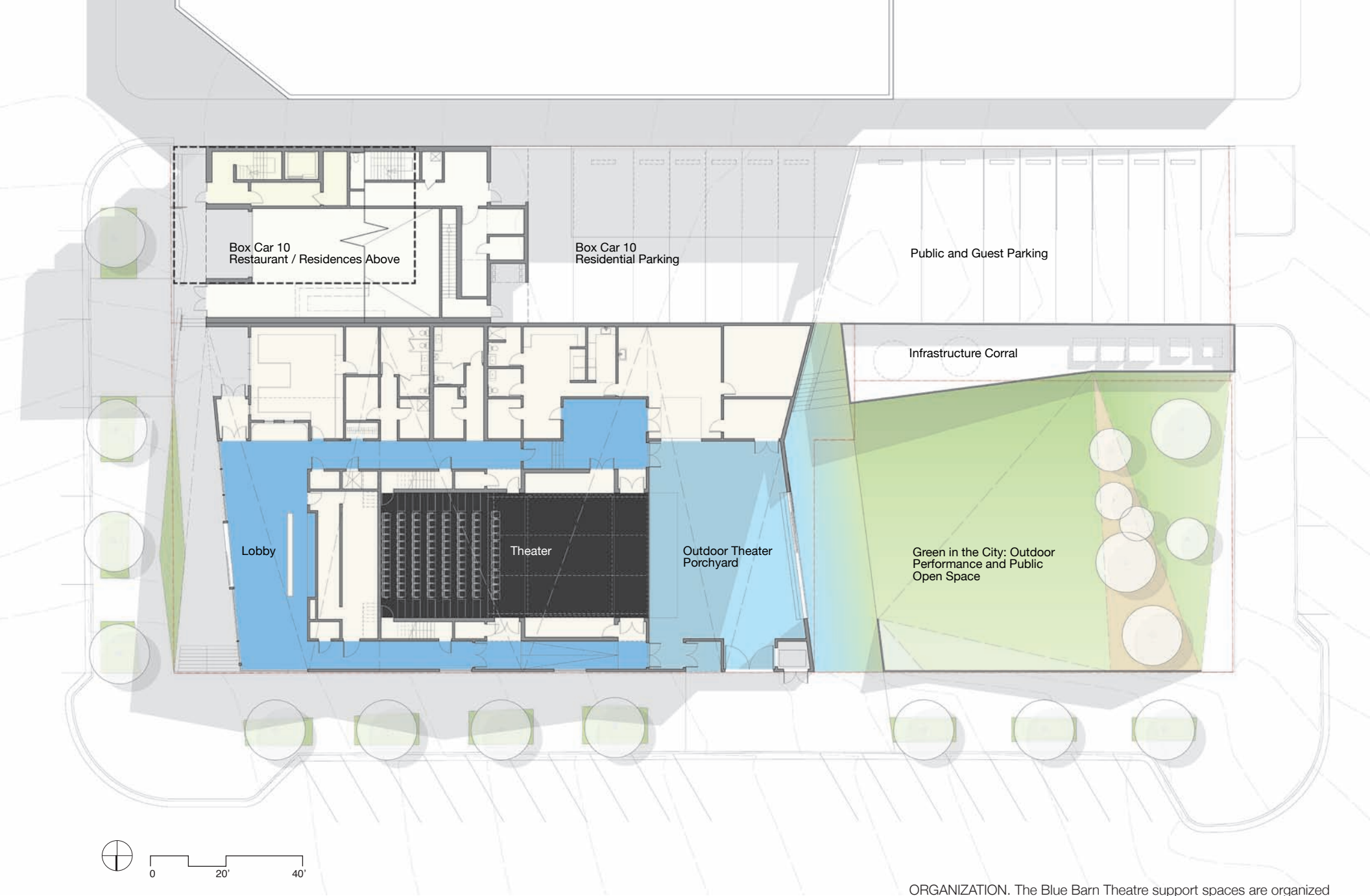
Missouri River Waterfront

Downtown Omaha

Old Market District

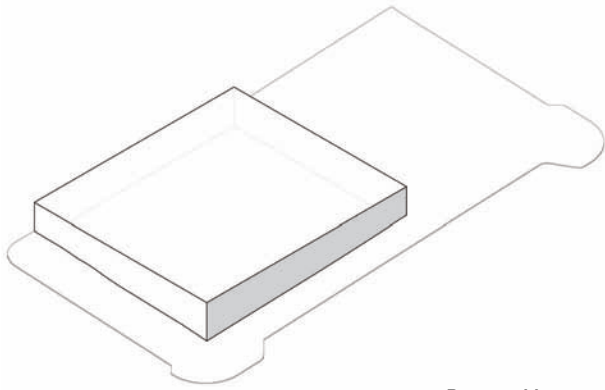


LOCATION. Just south of Omaha's active Old Market on a sloping site, this arts hub combines a 13,000 sq. ft. facility for the Blue Barn, a non-profit dramatic theatre, with Boxcar 10, a 10,000 sq. ft. mixed-use building and Green In the City, a 7,500 sq. ft. public open space. The open space was designed by others in response to the building designs and site concept developed by the lead architect (author.)

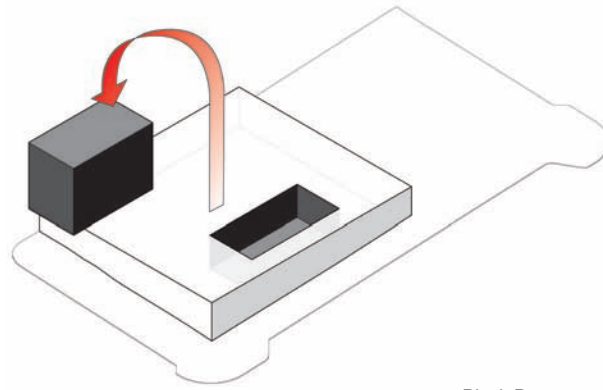


GROUND FLOOR PLAN / SITE PLAN

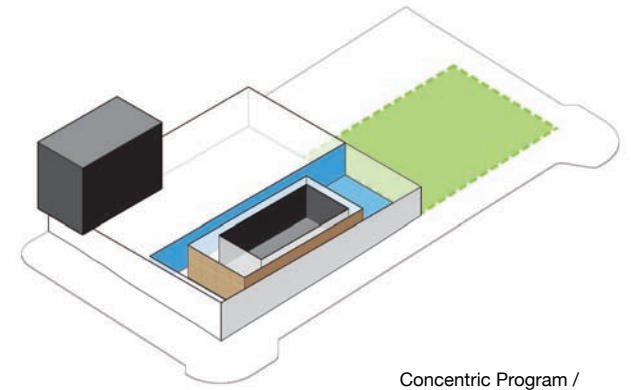
ORGANIZATION. The Blue Barn Theatre support spaces are organized concentrically around the modified black box with the back-of-house operations arranged against the party wall with neighbor Boxcar 10. To supplement the Blue Barn, the developer of Boxcar 10 has built a mixed-use building, also designed by the architects of Blue Barn, that reinforces the arts-focused neighborhood with a much needed dining spot and housing.



Program Mass



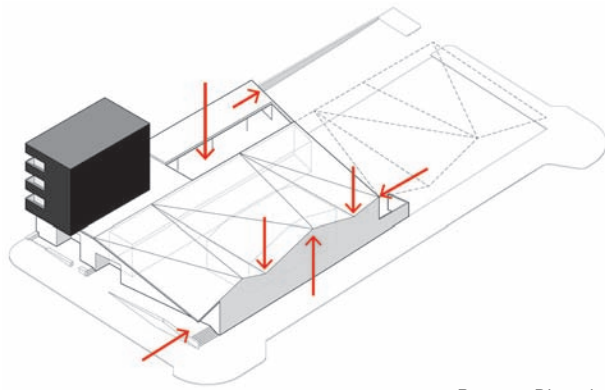
Black Boxes



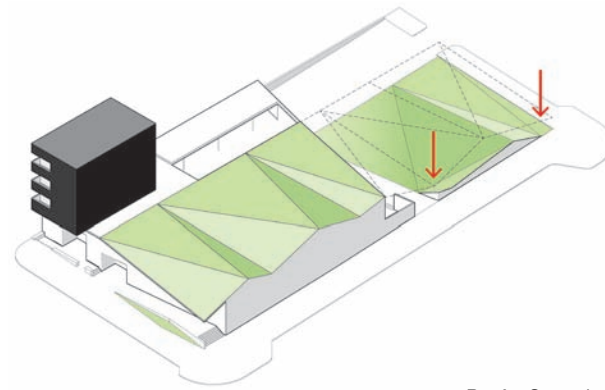
Concentric Program /
Indoor - Outdoor Theater



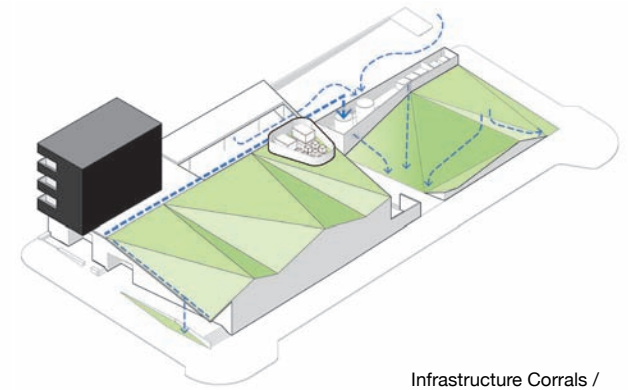
EAST ELEVATION



Program Distortions



Roof > Ground

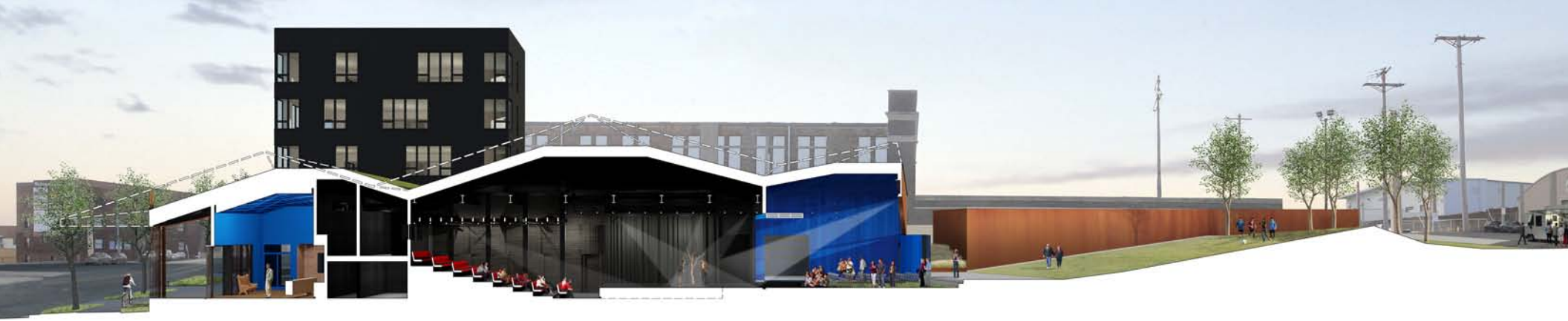


Infrastructure Corrals / Storm Water Collection

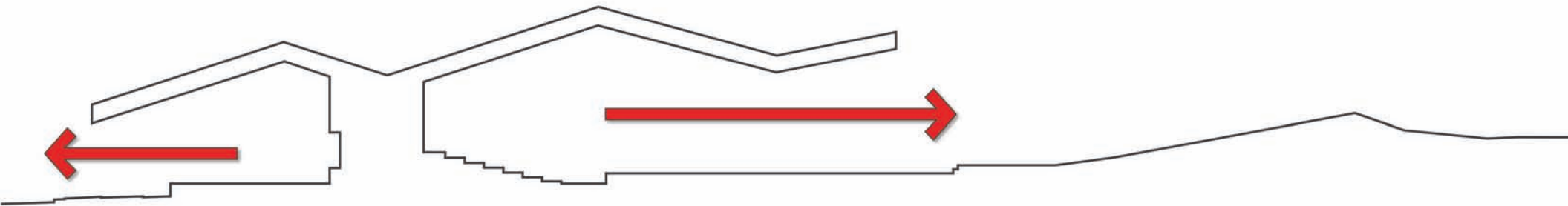


EXTERIOR FORM. Reminiscent of its namesake, the shape of the Blue Barn Theatre is informed both by internal forces of the program, structural, and HVAC requirements as well as by roof and site drainage. The Blue Barn Theatre, Boxcar 10, and Green in the City are integrated by a shared storm water reclamation system.

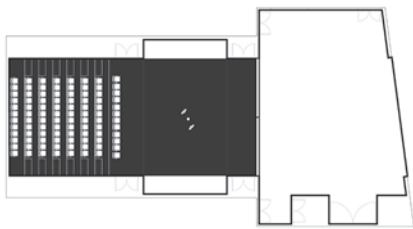
NORTH ELEVATION



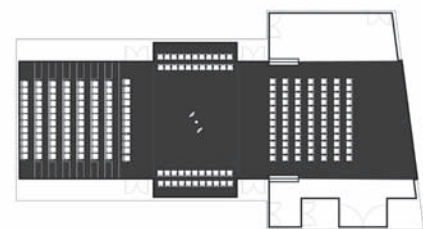
THEATRE SECTION



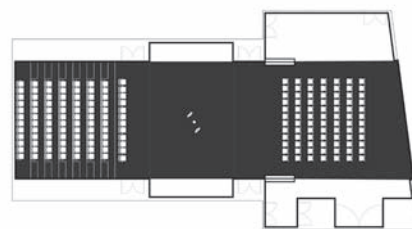
SECTIONAL DIAGRAM



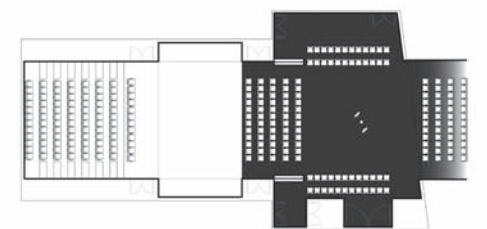
FIXED SEATING / STAGE



INDOOR / OUTDOOR ALLEY THEATRE



THEATRE IN THE ROUND



OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE

OPEN THEATRE. The ability to open the box changes the theatre's flexibility, allowing the company to stage different events and communicate with the city and neighborhood in ways that will alter the perception of the Blue Barn itself. Where the conventional black box theatre provides opportunities for dramatic innovation inside a limited and controlled realm, new types of performances, theatrical configurations and engagement with the city and the public are now possible.

STAGING CONFIGURATIONS

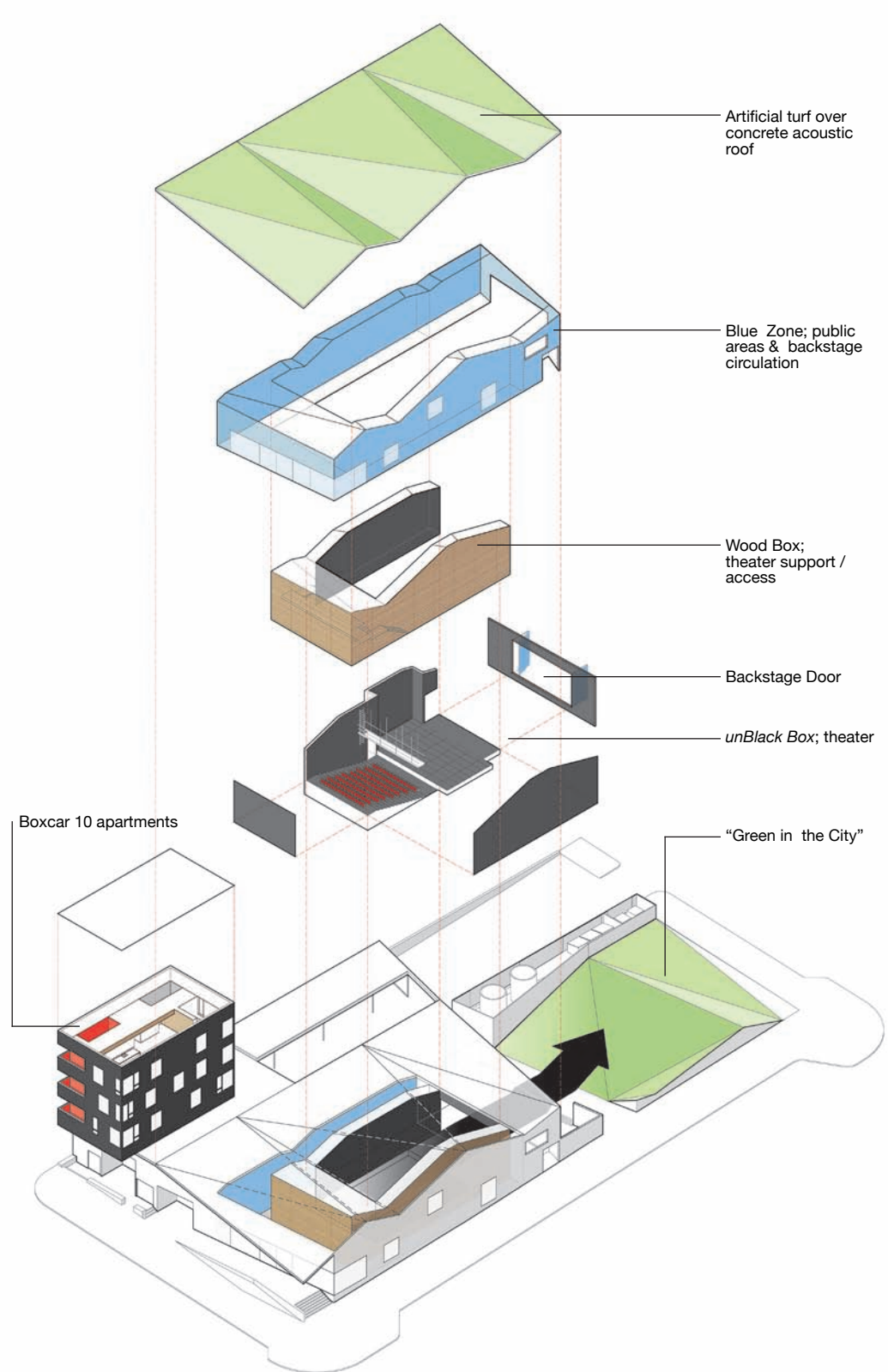


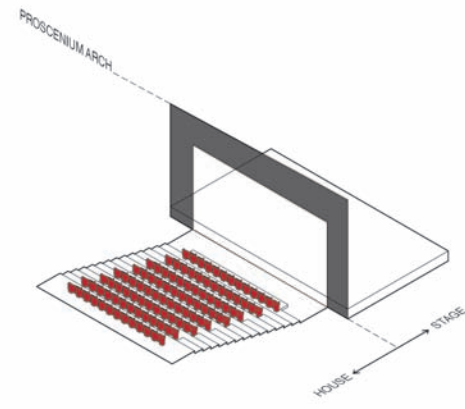
**BOXCAR 10 MIXED-USE
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**GREEN IN THE CITY
PUBLIC OPEN SPACE**

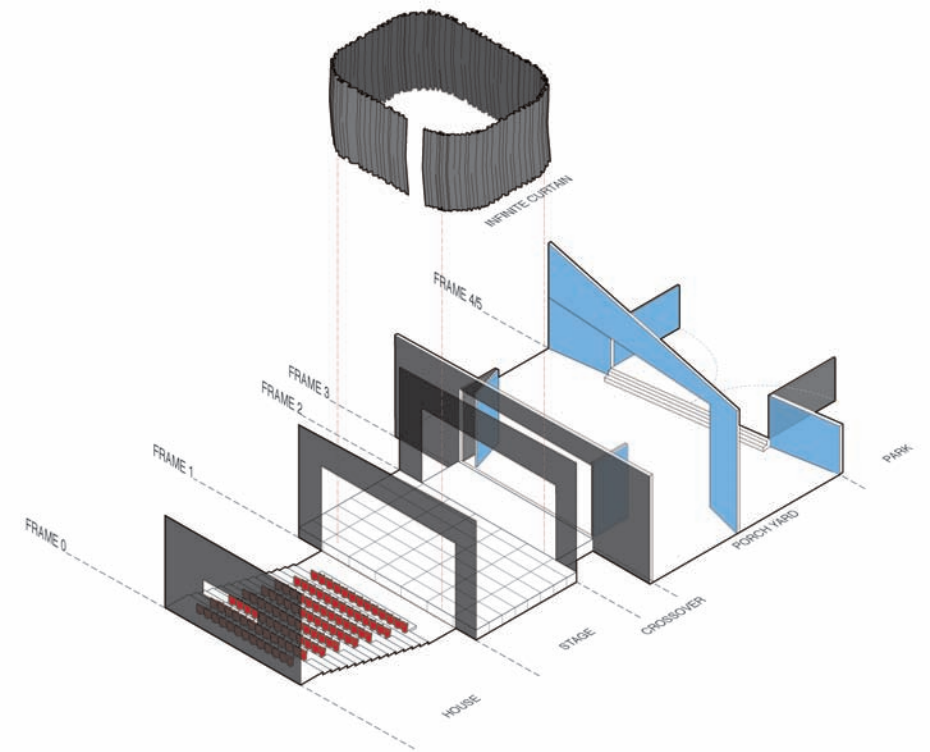
BLUE BARN THEATRE

OPEN THEATRE. A very large door connects the abstraction of the theatre space (traditionally hidden from the outdoors) with the realities of the city outside. Flexibility is not perceived as neutrality or the absence of form but instead as the presence of unique and carefully considered infrastructure. This innovative layout supports a variety of theatre configurations from the conventional proscenium to the less common alley theatre and environmental theatre forms.



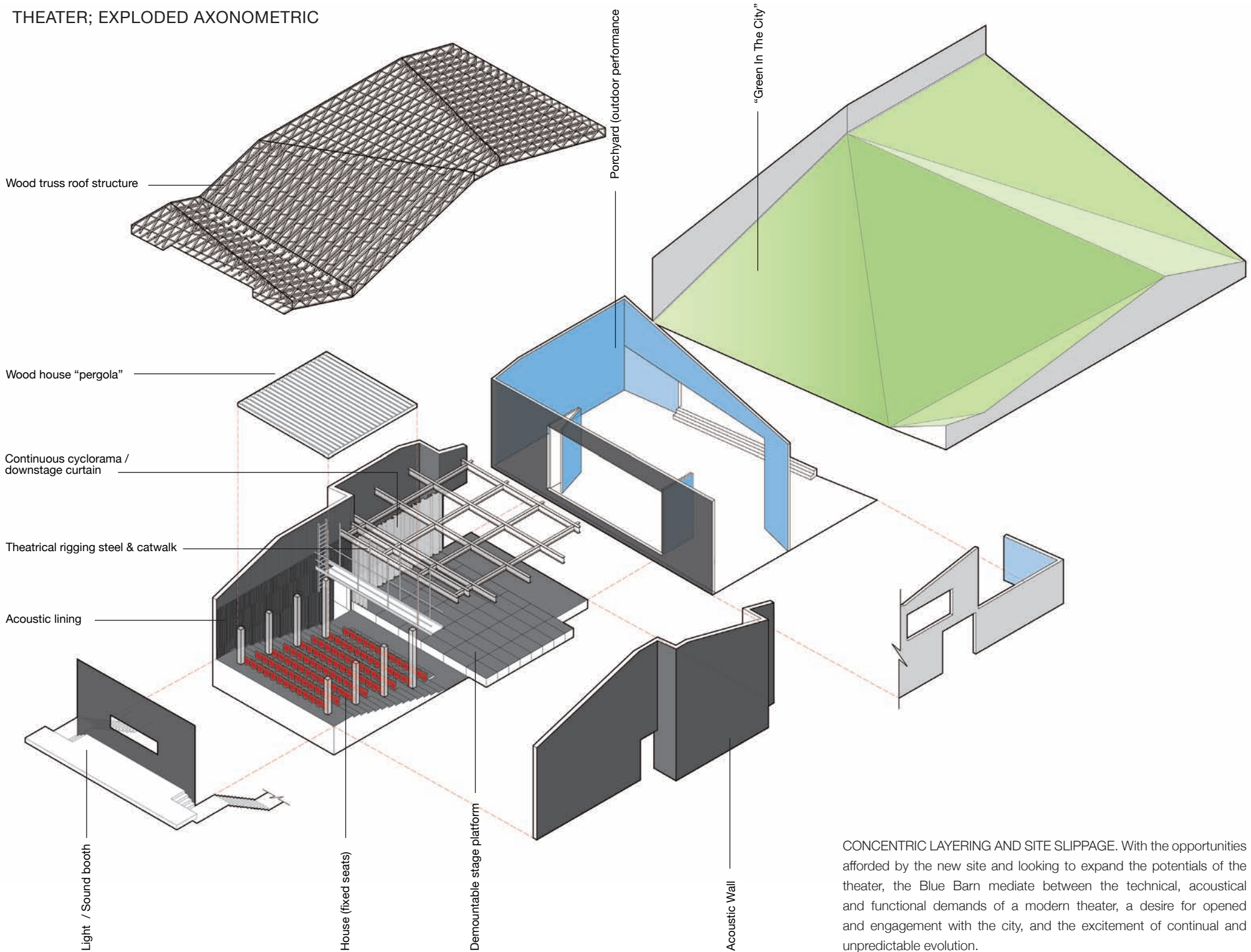


TRADITIONAL PROSCENIUM ARCH



BLUE BARN PROSCENIUM FRAMES

THEATER; EXPLODED AXONOMETRIC



CONCENTRIC LAYERING AND SITE SLIPPAGE. With the opportunities afforded by the new site and looking to expand the potentials of the theater, the Blue Barn mediate between the technical, acoustical and functional demands of a modern theater, a desire for opened and engagement with the city, and the excitement of continual and unpredictable evolution.



BEYOND THE BLACK BOX. The Blue Barn reinterprets the conventional black box type. The literal blackness of the theatre interior promotes focus but the form of the space, including the fixed seating and textured wood acoustic wall system, give the theatre character not normally associated with the black box. There is no proscenium (or, alternatively, there are many layers or proscenia), but the opening between house and stage forms a precise frame proportion as desired by the company.



THE BIG DOOR; OPENING THEATRE TO PORCHYARD

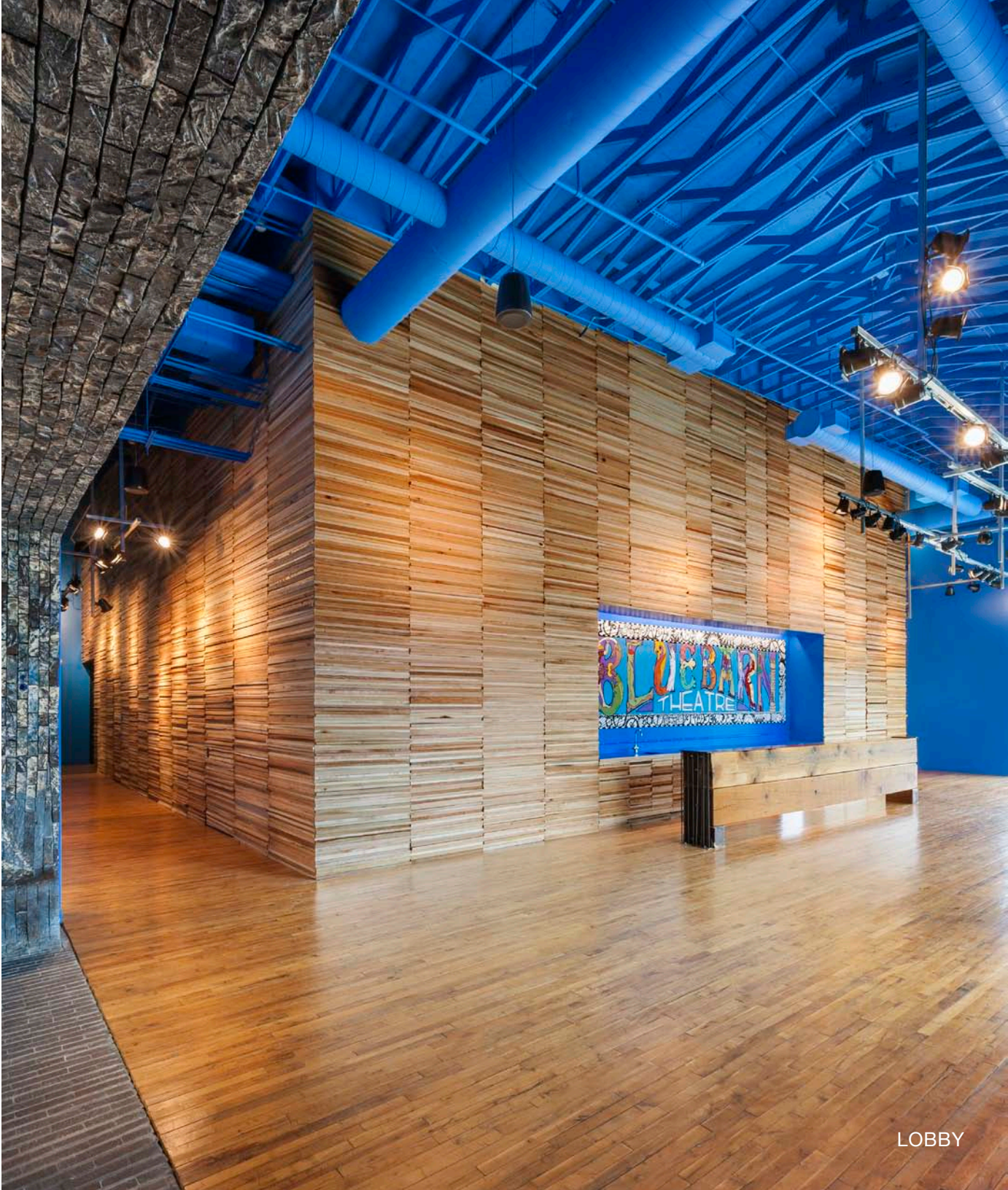
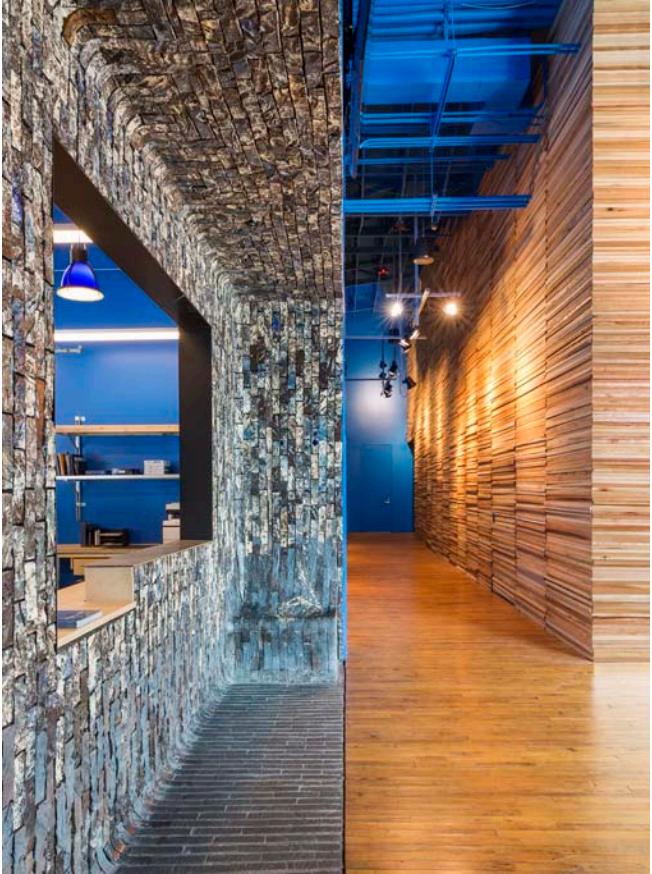


PORCHYARD FROM GREEN-IN-THE-CITY



VIEW FROM NORTHWEST

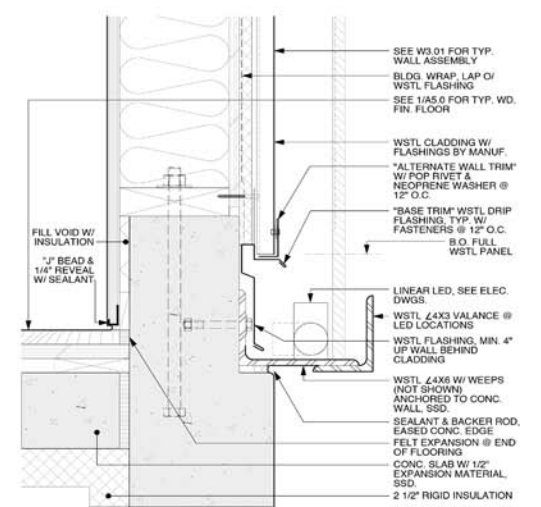
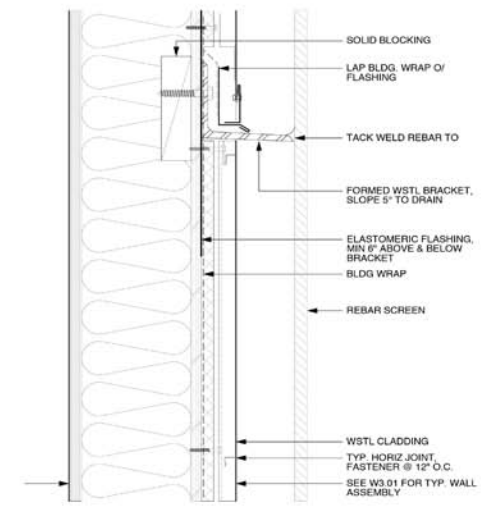
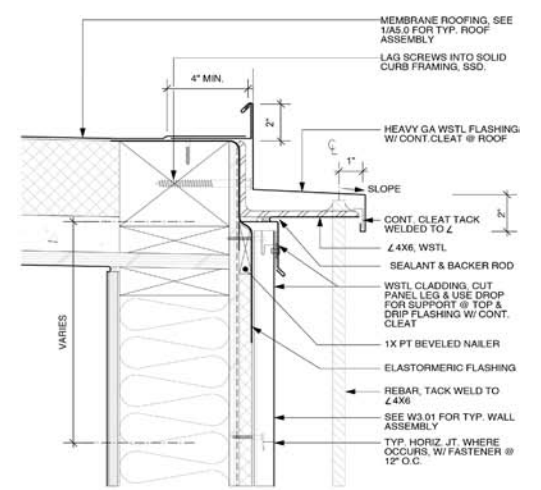
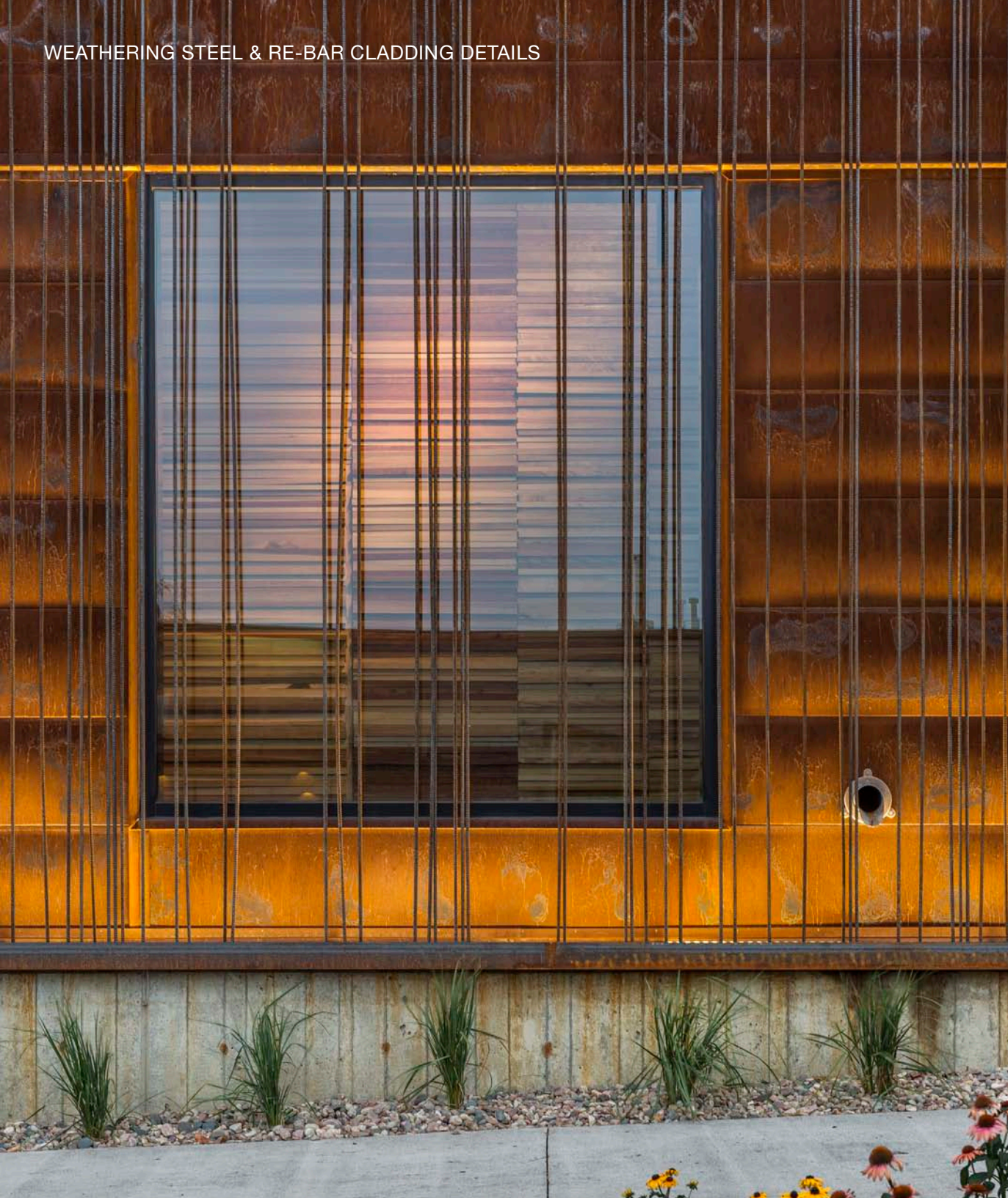
INTERIOR MATERIAL EXPERIENCE. Salvaged materials applied on precise surfaces add texture and richness to the layering of spaces and thin surfaces with the black theatre at the center. Heavy timbers used throughout as furniture and structure are salvaged from storm-downed trees in the Omaha area. In an original approach to design-team formation, the architects commissioned 4 artists to create functional installations that serve the practical needs of the theatre. These images show the custom glazed brick vestibule & box office by _____, the lobby lighting, "Stagecraft" by _____, and the bar & wood floor by _____. This approach freed the architects from the constant burden of authorship.

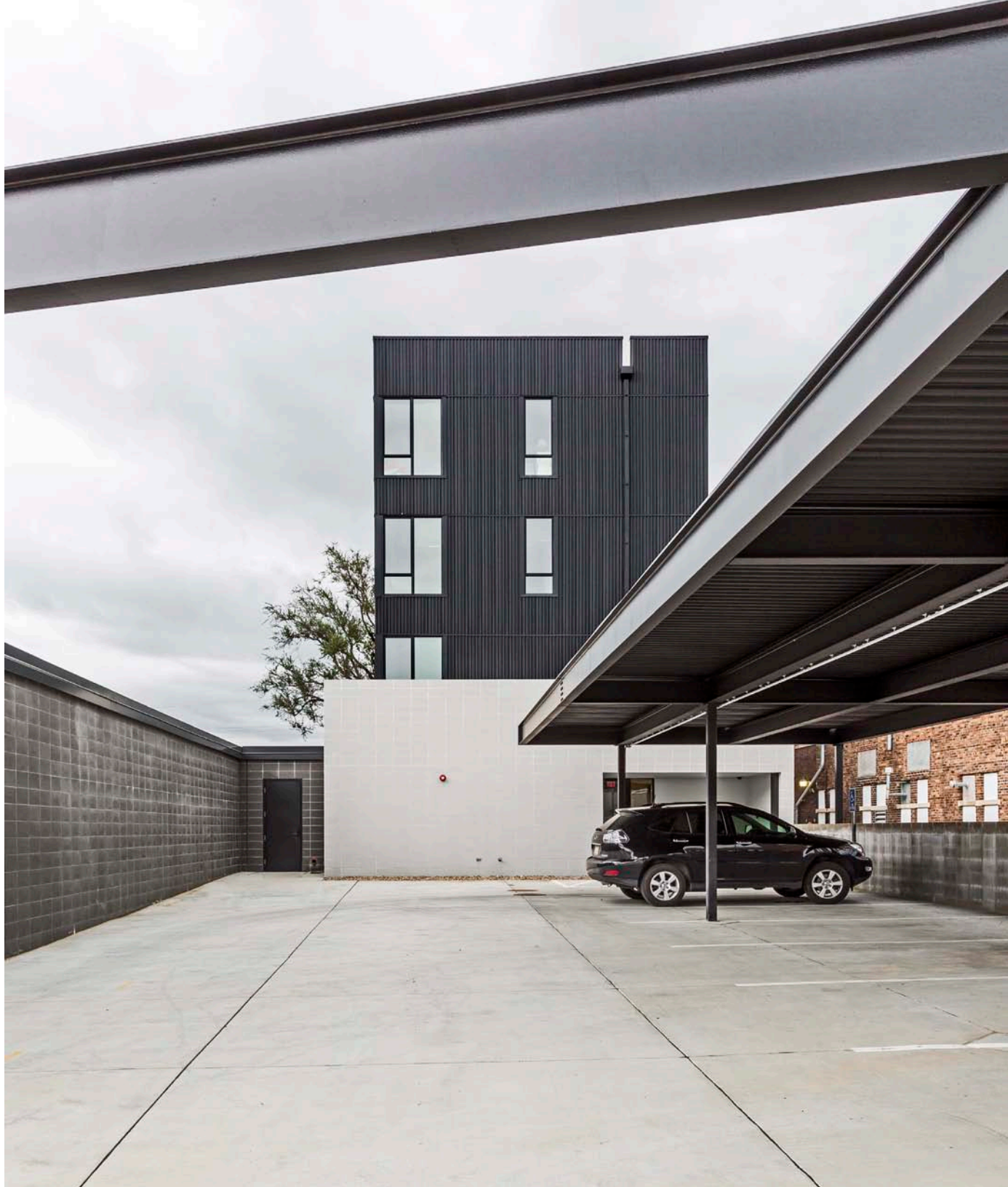


EXTERIOR MATERIALITY. A unique layered system of weathering steel sheet metal panels with concealed fasteners sits behind a diaphanous screen of exposed rebar suspended from weathering steel brackets. Boxcar 10 is clad in weathering steel and burnished block at the base and box-rib metal siding with concealed fasteners above. Boxcar 10 is clad in weathering steel and burnished block at the base and box-rib metal siding with concealed fasteners above.



WEATHERING STEEL & RE-BAR CLADDING DETAILS





BOXCAR 10



As the architects and design coordinators of this site, we conceive the combined buildings and landscape as one large project with the shared goal to invigorate the site and neighborhood through innovative programming. Arts, housing, entertainment, and recreation work in tandem to create a social hub for the city. These are buildings and spaces that will change with inhabitation.