

# : designing the message

by Johanna A. Allan





**Thank you to all of those who were an influence on who I am today.**

Designing the Message  
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18	.	.	.	.
30	.	.	.	.
46	.	.	.	.
52	.	.	.	.
72	.	.	.	.
76	.	.	.	.

# contents

- • abstract
- • thesis paper
- • the brand
- • precedent studies
- • site: core city
- • program
- • site development
- • point c

# abstract



“Brands are persuasive lifestyle packagers, powerfully focused on molding our ideas about what our identity should be.” (Klingmann, 2007, p. 2) Many companies use brand identity to persuade people to buy their product, but what if we used branding as a tool to persuade people to build community? Every day in the retail market we purchase items because of the relationship built between the consumer and the product. The community brand that will be created is .seed (Sustainable Environment for Emerging Detroit) that plants itself within a community. Through phases, .seed will work with the community by rebuilding an identity that the residents can take pride in and develop strong relationships. As each phase becomes successful, the more they will work to a more permanent solution. This approach will decide what it is that the community wants and will use. By creating a specific identity, or brand the idea is to create a rebirth of community throughout Detroit Neighborhoods. For this thesis, this experiment will start in Core City, Detroit. The “new” community would be treated as a product that would be marketed through strong graphic advertisement and strategy to a variety of social classes to create diversity rather than develop an unsuccessful mono culture. By branding Core City, it will persuade and

entice people to want to be a part of something they themselves can create. This thesis examines how to improve neighborhood development of within Core City, not to simply destroy existing burnt out houses or warehouses and replace with new structures but to build a stronger community by examining what it is that Core City needs and wants. Overall the design will be a Civic Project that includes program that is appropriate specifically for that neighborhood. All programming features will be implemented but would be experimental. When a program such as an art fair is tested and found successful, it could be plugged into the site permanently or plugged in somewhere else within the neighborhood or in neighboring neighborhoods and tried out. For Core City a flexible, mobile and inexpensive solution was created by the reuse of shipping containers to develop appropriate program. This thesis examines not only how you get from point A to point C, but also looking at what point B entails, meaning one cannot head directly for a final design result. It is important to look at what exactly will build community and it is not just a single structure. It is the behavior and relationships that need to be built in order to create a sense of pride to make this project successful. The program will work on a variety of different levels or layers that if

successful, would be systematic and be adaptable all over Detroit, and possibly other geographical urban areas. The main objective is to create a safe environment to families to live and grow, but also create a realistic thriving neighborhood. Looking at local case studies such as m1/dtw's 6 Salon branding strategy, and MOMA's P.S. 1. and P.F. 1 as case studies. As a whole, this project's purpose will attempt to create possible solutions to Detroit's dilapidated and suffering neighborhoods.



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# thesis

## Branding a Broken Icon

How does a city rebrand itself when such a negative image has already been developed? What exactly is the definition of Detroit? It really depends on who you ask. If you ask someone who is not from Detroit, they will describe a place ridden with crime, drugs and abandonment. On the other hand, a true Detroiter will paint a completely different picture. There is a strong sense of pride in a Detroiter's definition of the city despite its years of decay and corruption. Reflecting back onto the original question of how to rebrand Detroit as a revived city, it is important to examine how corporations market their products.

In Anna Klingsmann's book, *Brandscapes*, she states "Brands are persuasive lifestyle packagers, powerfully focused on molding our ideas about what our identity should be." (Klingmann) What if, instead of using brands and logo identity to entice the public and create profit, we use brand and identity be used to build a community? Through the exploration of what attracts the consumer and what makes a product sell, this thesis tries to answer the question of whether a successful thriving

community can be created around a brand identity.

When you turn on the television, radio or even drive around the neighborhood, advertising and marketing are a constant influence. These are the tools that every company pays a lot of attention, time, and money to, because it is not necessarily the product that sells; it is the look, feel, and emotion attached to it. The public audience for the most part, is not aware of the power of marketing and advertising. Every day in the retail market consumers purchase items because of the relationship built between the product and themselves.

Brands have woven themselves into society in such a way that it is almost hard to distinguish the difference between what a product is and who the manufacturer is (i.e. Kleenex versus tissue, Xerox versus copy, etc.). Companies have developed products that have become such a part of everyday life that without them, some would find it difficult to function (i.e. Blackberry). Society has become dependent on brands that by the time a child reaches two years of age, they can recognize over 200 brand names (Young). Scary? By the time they are three, they develop brand preferences and relationships. (Young) Needless to say, our culture has been tailored to be brand conscious.

Corporate identity has become part of a person's daily routine that they are no longer read, but recognized. Anna Klingmann illustrates this point in her analysis of the Absolut Vodka brand. (Klingmann) Even without the product itself, the vodka missing from the advertisement, the product is still familiar.

The Wal-Mart Corporation took an alternative approach to selling its Value Brand for a variety of food products sold in their stores. Where most companies spend money and time on a strong graphic marketing campaign in order to sell their products, Wal-Mart took the opposite approach and went with a plain and simple look. Their approach was, instead of spending money on packaging, which gets thrown away and becomes wasteful; why not focus on the quality. This way the customer no longer has to pay the increased price for a brand especially in hard economic times.

The inspiration for this thesis started at M1/dtw's 6 Salon in Royal Oak, Michigan. The graphic power of 6 Salon was designed to attract customers. The salon's image or identity is eye catching and builds trust with the customer even before they get in the chair. M1/dtw goes beyond the architecture and the physical appearance of the

salon. The firm designed literally everything from the tray that holds the stylist's blow dryer to all of the marketing material. In all of their work, the identity of who or what 6 Salon has become is never lost. That connection between the consumer and product is constantly being built even when the customer is on 6 salon's website looking up the phone number to make their next appointment.

While brands are meant to be eye catching and be the initial hook to gain new customers, it has been used for reasons other than corporate profit. Product (RED) is an example of branding working toward a cause. The idea is that a brand was created and sold through different vendors. The proceeds from those products are given to the cause. The consumer is aware of the cause and they choose to buy the red laptop or red Starbucks thermos, knowing they are contributing to the fight of AIDS. This is an important example of branding because it illustrates that once a brand communicates a certain purpose, consumers will buy it if they support that purpose.

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) played with the idea of experimentation when they opened Public Space 1 in Long Island City, New York. The original program was founded by Alanna Heiss in 1971

for the Institute for Art & Urban Resources which focused on organizing exhibitions in under utilized and abandoned spaces around New York City. It became an extension of MoMA but is a space designed to act as a laboratory for designers to experiment with different installations and program. One of the many exhibitions was Public Farm 1 by WORK Architecture and was an urban farm installation. Within the space, an intriguing form was constructed that served as the land for the garden. The space also served as a venue for large events, like a concert. The space was an experiment that was successful and it brought people from all over to experience the space.

## Point B

In order to make an attempt at “fixing” a community, one must realize what it is that needs to be “fixed”. A building alone will never solve a community’s problems on its own but it could be used to house programming as a tool for the process. Paul Weertz, a science teacher at the Catherine Ferguson Academy in Detroit, and very well known throughout Detroit’s Urban Farming Community, explains that architects

and designers tend to forget what it is they are trying to accomplish. If you think of the current state of a community as Point A, and the permanent solution being Point C, Point B is completely looked over and forgotten. Point B is the smaller steps that work to make sure that Point C is successful. Keeping Paul’s comments in mind, the approach of this project is the idea of experimentation meaning that nothing is meant to be permanent. Once Point A and B are acknowledged, only then can Point C be considered and designed. The community will ultimately decide what will be successful in their neighborhood. The goal of this thesis, having already acknowledged Point A, is to solely focus on Point B and for the community to realize Point C in the future and to provide flexible solutions for Point C.

As a way to gather information and to begin to acknowledge Point B, .seed [Sustainable Environment for Emerging Detroit] was developed. .seed’s purpose is to assist in rebuilding Detroit through community interaction. It plants itself within a neighborhood to help grow with new relationships and strengthen existing ones. Its mission is to help re-establish relationships by urging involvement through different levels of intervention. The overall goal is to create a thriving



community that takes pride in its social culture.

## **Detroit: Then & Now**

The comparison of early Detroit and today's Detroit is a drastically different landscape. Going back to its birth, Detroit developed along the Detroit River as a French trading post in the early 1700s. (Doxiadis 129) What originally developed from a trading post, quickly became one of the world's strongest industrial cities and with great industry, brought with it great population growth. In 1850, Detroit's population was 21,000 and by 1900 it had grown to 285,000. (Doxiadis 131). As a result many secondary urban centers developed around Detroit but they did not function as an "integrated urban system." (Doxiadis 131). Once the automobile industry came to Detroit, the population again rapidly increased. By 1910, the population grew to by 466,000. With that brought more commercial buildings and skyscrapers and the need for housing. (Doxiadis 133). Due to the growing demand for commercial development, higher income residents began to migrate out of the center of the city and low income people began to move in, increasing slum

areas. (Doxiadis 133) By 1920, the population more than doubled again, at 994,000 and again within ten years to be a staggering 1,569,000 people within Detroit. (Doxiadis 1935) The city's existing infrastructure could not continue to support this growth therefore the quality of the environment began to degrade. The slums began to spread and parking lots popped up anywhere there was a plot of land to accommodate the increase of personal automobiles coming into the city. The high income residents that moved away from the city's center at this point are retreating to the suburbs. (Doxiadis 135) By the 1930s the population increase slowed down so that by 1940, Detroit only grew to 1,623,000 people. (Doxiadis 143) In 2008, Detroit's population was recorded to be 912,062 people. Detroit went through extreme fluctuations. In its earlier years, Detroit was a bustling port that grew into a great industrial city but now it is a vast, empty ruin. Many factors lent themselves to the failure of this great American but the biggest reason is that Detroit allowed itself to become a monoculture built around manufacturing. (Doxiadis 148) In more recent times, the affect from manufacturing and economic weights of the automobile was seen with the most recent recession. The fall of the Big Three Manufactures (General Motors, Ford and Chrysler) has had

a snowball effect on not only Detroit, but the entire state of Michigan. As the economy spiraled downward, so did the sales of cars, trucks and SUVs. It brought with it massive layoffs of employees of not only the Big Three, but suppliers, and dealers. The future can learn from it will only lend to its revival. There are countless opportunities for new growth and the opportunity to bring back several trades and industry back into the city. The answers to what will make Detroit successful again are not yet clear, but the city offers a blank canvas for experimentation. For this thesis, a specific neighborhood needed to be chosen in order to become a test site. The neighborhood chosen is Core City, Detroit. It is the missing link in the redevelopment of Woodbridge and Corktown. Once this area is redeveloped and new life breathes, this belt of communities could instigate additional surrounding development and continue to grow throughout Detroit.

## **Core City, Detroit**

Core City is an intriguing Detroit Neighborhood. It does not have the historical quality of that of Woodbridge or the thriving

population of Corktown. The interesting thing about Core City is that it has survived. Barely. In recent years and the development of Core City Neighborhoods Organization, there has been a lot of redevelopment and energy. Unfortunately with the downward spiral of the economy from 2007 through 2010 the redevelopers seem to have stalled on any future development and Core City was once again alone and found itself simply trying to survive.

The neighborhood is bordered by Interstate 96, Warren Avenue, Grand River Avenue and Martin Luther King Boulevard. It is a large neighborhood held together by the Catherine Ferguson Academy (Alternative Detroit Public School for Pregnant teens and mothers), SalvationArmy's Harbor Light Campus, Detroit Fire Department Training Facility and several neighborhood churches. In 2008, the University of Detroit Mercy relocated the Dental School to Core City. The City of Detroit gave approval for it to be called the Corktown Campus, despite its location according to Laura Wright, head of Community Relations at UDM Corktown Campus.

In Detroit's early years, like most of Detroit, Core City was a successful community, filled with single family homes, duplexes and

carriage houses. The neighborhood was dense with commercial industry such as factories, wheat mills and film studios. Today there are only small reminders of what used to be. Some of the alley ways from the early 1900s still exist but only to be found overgrown with weeds and debris. Only a small percentage of these structures still exist today, but are quickly eroding as the new development from the last five years are also slowly being abandoned.

## **Intervention**

In order to start to address Point B in Core City, a series of theoretical interventions were developed to generate awareness and interaction within and outside of the community. (Jacobs) These interventions are custom designed for a specific neighborhood in order to develop an individual identity. In order to instigate awareness and interest in the community, .seed installs a series of interventions throughout the neighborhood. These interventions differ on ranges of scale. Smaller interventions could be in the form of a marketing package that could be given to the residents. It is meant to introduce the residents to .seed and

get them excited about their community. Medium interventions would directly affect the community and to create interaction. These could be Neighborhood Clean-Up Days, Festivals and Underground Nightlife. The idea is to get the main institutions to head the events to create a foundation and build upon those relationships. Larger interventions would affect the surrounding communities to create interest and awareness and draw people in. These would be large graphic billboards and signage and other larger scale events.

In order for the city to continue to move forward, that formula to success needs to be realized. To find that formula that is specific to each neighborhood, some experimentation needs to happen. .seed works through phasing its solutions into the community. These phases continue to repeat themselves, each time on a more substantial level as it becomes more and more successful. The first step is to acknowledge what already exists, who lives there, who works there, etc. Second is to communicate with the different entities to see what it is that is wanted and needed in the neighborhood. Third is to evaluate and analyze what has been learned about the community and design an approach. The fourth step is to act and initiate program to make a difference in the community. The

cycle is repeated, again on a more extensive level. This idea of phasing is to constantly evaluate what works in the community and to revisit past design decisions. If something is not working correctly, it is unplugged.

The intention of .seed is to act as a catalyst to get this community breathing again. Interaction within the community is scarce, but there is a desire. The intention of .seed is to instigate momentum within the community. Organized events are key to a successful permanent program in the future. Currently, the community, or lack of community is only contributing to the future failure of Core City.

## **Social Networking**

The world has been taken by storm by Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social networks. They have changed the way people communicate. About 10 to 15 years ago the cell phone was made available to the general public. Since then people have abandoned land lines and switched to other means of communication like texting or communicating via posting on their “wall”. There is less face to face conversation and companies are adapting to reaching their customers

through websites, text alerts or social networks.

For .seed, initially a Facebook Fan Page was developed in hopes of getting the concept out there and to see who would respond. Tied to the Facebook Page was a Twitter account, @sustaindetroit. Within three days there were 35 fans, while most were my friends, some were friends of friends and the power of social networking was seen.

While .seed’s initial goal is to promote awareness, the social networking aspect of this project is intended to get outside support. The organization will be that much stronger with a network of supporters all over the city, state and possibly the country.

The city of Hamtramck has developed a website forum that allows the residents to leave comments about what they like and dislike about the community. It provides an opportunity for them to provide suggestions and ideas of what they would like to see in their community. The immediate community needs a mean of communication, since it can be hard for many families to get access to the internet, there needs to be an alternative feedback system. A communication wall housed within an old façade of an industrial building was designed that is intended to act as that forum, but be located within Core City.

## The Experiment

The idea is that .seed is an experiment designed to find a successful solution to disconnected communities. It is not the intention of this thesis to design a permanent structure, it is meant to find the momentum and energy within the community to want that permanent structure.

In order to gain a better understanding and drive toward change in a neighborhood, or in this case Core City, the focus starts with smaller program ideas. Events such as neighborhood food drives or clothing collections can be started with support from the Salvation Army: Harbor Light Campus. These are simple ideas that can easily get the community to participate without being too intrusive. The Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative explored the idea of “Pop-Up” Events. These alternative events are only temporary but create movement within the community. In .seed’s case, all of the program would be considered a “Pop-Up” program. They would be tested and if successful could one day lead to a permanent program outside of .seed.

Since .seed finds itself only temporarily within a community, the program needed to be developed with the understanding of being a temporary experiment. The condition for the structure was something that could be mobile or something that could be moved if it were to fail. It also needed to have flexible space, since the program was always an experiment and possibly changing several times. Finally, it needed to be economical. The solution to the criteria is a shipping container. They are inexpensive, they are local and they are adaptable. There are an abundance of these containers because it simply costs too much money to send them back and reuse them as shipping containers. There are shipping yards with hundreds of sitting containers. Over recent years, these containers have found a second life serving as living spaces.

Going back to the test site for this thesis, Core City, there were several areas where program was needed. The community expressed needs for food, shelter, recycling and safe, healthy program that would promote Core City. From that feedback, the development of six .seed sponsored programs were developed. There is a simple produce stand for the Catherine Ferguson Academy and local residents to provide fresh produce to neighbors. There is a recycle station for collection of materials.

A small theatre that at night could transform into a lively night life spot for local musicians was designed. The containers can be adaptable to provide temporary housing for the girls at the school or perhaps a transition point from the shelter. Finally, there is the store front that would revive the Buchanan business district. These six programs along with endless other opportunities are meant to engage the community and offer them opportunities so that they will begin to take containers of their own and transform them into pottery studios, or bakeries or whatever it is they feel would be beneficial to their community. As with any interaction between .seed and the test site, if it does not work, the mobile unit can be taken out of the site for redesign and reevaluated for purpose.

As with the individual programs, the site is to be treated as experimental. Instead of developing a permanent master plan for all of Core City, the focus was kept to a virtually empty block at Buchanan and Poplar. The reasoning for this site is that it is bordered by the residential and commercial areas of the neighborhood. This would act as a test site for all of the programs, and if successful, they could be carried to other places throughout Core City or perhaps to other surrounding neighborhoods. The site as it exists today only has two single family

homes, a burnt out factory that only has two standing walls, and over grown alley ways. The intent is not to transform this site over a short period of time, but to allow it to develop as the individual programs develop. For instance, once the playground container is placed, its use begins to dictate what and how the surrounding area develops. Through observation, .seed takes note of how the children and their parents use the space, or where the parents sit and watches their children. Eventually as different areas of the site are activated, the site programs weave together creating a cohesive environment that leads to a more permanent environment designed by the community.

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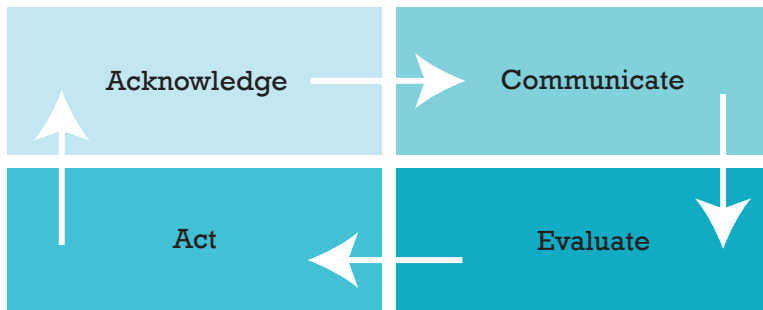
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# the brand

## .seed

sustainable environment for emerging detroit



Developing a brand that residents would begin to build a relationship was challenging. The criteria for the image or identity needed to be something familiar and personal rather than commercial.

Sustainable Environment for Emerging Detroit or .seed, was developed with the intention of engaging the community. It was meant to act as a tool for the community to begin to rebuild and grow strength. The brand .seed acts as an umbrella to suffering Detroit Neighborhoods. It will find itself within such neighborhoods, working along side its residents rebuilding a community and its identity and to encourage development.

.seed's phases allow the brand to constantly evaluate the community's progress through the four phases that it works in. By acknowledging who lives and works and what is already within the community. Second is to begin a line of communication within the community. One needs to immerse themselves with the residents in order to begin to understand their needs. Once there is a clear understanding to what the community needs and wants, an approach needs to be designed and then enacted. The most important aspect of .seed is the fourth step of the phasing, which is the evaluation stage. At this point .seed will



evaluate what is working and what is not working within the community. If any aspect of the programming is being rejected by the community it is removed without interrupting the existing fabric. This process is repeated over and over until the community feels they have reached a point where they no longer need .seed and can move on to Point C by themselves.

Since marketing itself is a very powerful tool, the development through .seed needed to be in the image. Something simple and local. All of the marketing materials for .seed had to be inexpensive, locally found or easily crafted. The first intervention is on a small scale that is intended to connect with individual residences. The .seed box would be left on a residents door step but be a means of providing information about .seed and upcoming neighborhood events. The brochure was designed to not only be an information tool with a calendar, but also a poster. The box would also contain contents for the resident to plant their own garden. Inside they will find a garden spade, different seeds and seed infused paper instructions.

A medium sized intervention would be those that begin to interact with the immediate community. Neighborhood events that



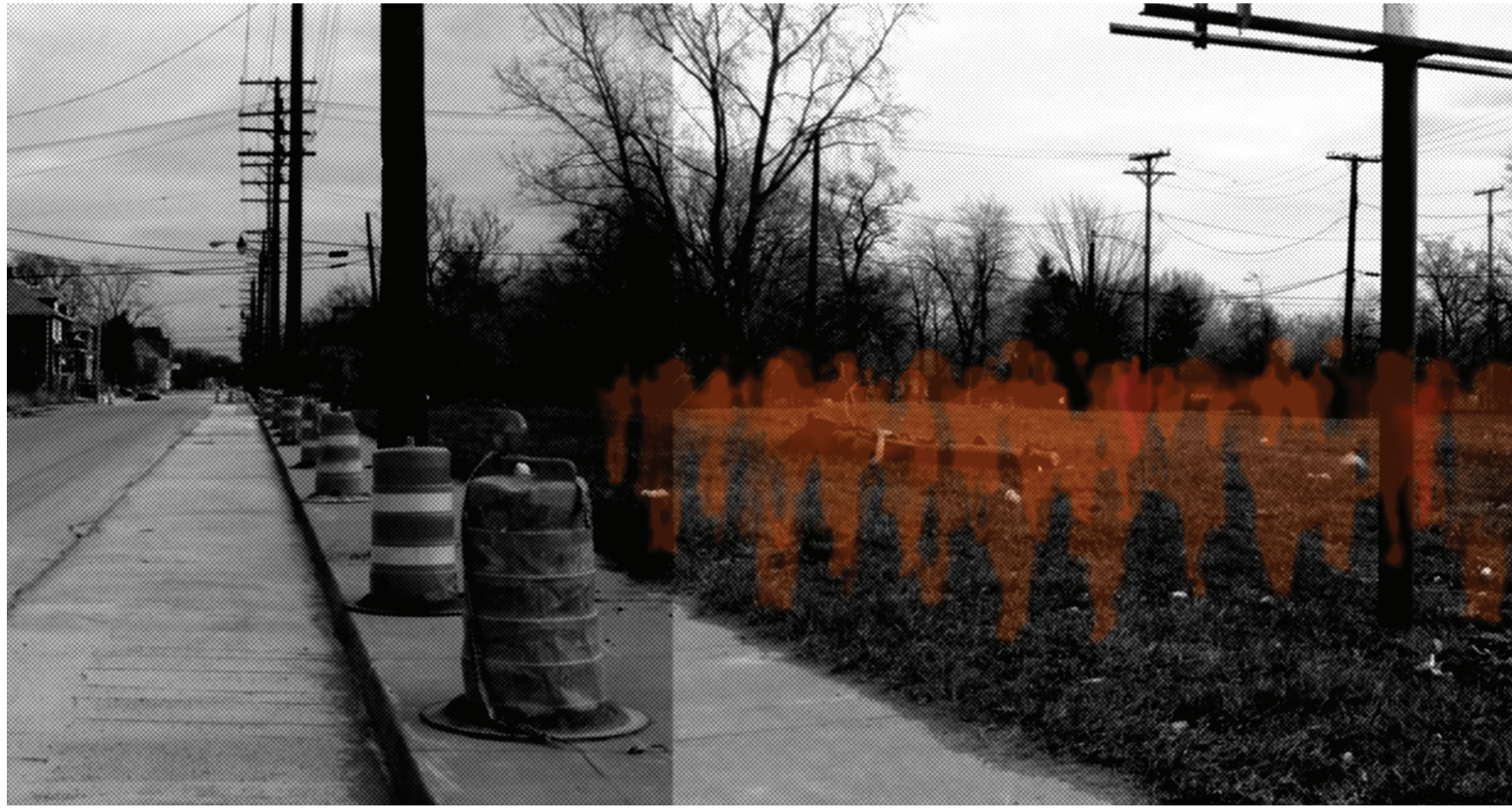
bring the community together could be an Annual Clean Up Day, or a Neighborhood Potluck or even underground nightlife found in abandoned warehouses throughout the community.

Larger interventions are intended to reach outside the community to surrounding neighborhoods to begin to attract attention and awareness. Large graphic billboards will attract those driving by or provide a way finding system for those looking to participate in neighborhood events.













- Initial Collage Study of how people can  
reactivate a space







- Graphic installation in contrast with a community event that attract awareness



- Graphic Billboard installation that provides signage for Core City





- Graphic slogan that builds identity for Core City and .seed







- Reuse of existing brick wall as graphic signage on the corner of Martin Luther King Blvd. and Grand River Ave

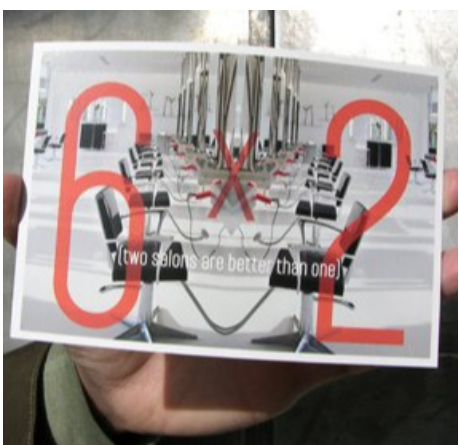
# precedents



The inspiration for this project started with M1/dtw's 6 Salon in Royal Oak. The graphic power of 6 Salon begins to build a relationship with the client before they walk through the door but as they are walking or driving down Washington Street. 6 Salon goes beyond the architecture and the physical appearance of the salon because the firm designed literally everything from the tray that holds the stylist's blow dryer to the marketing material. In all of their work, the identity of who or what 6 Salon is, is never lost. That connection between the consumer and product is constantly being built even when the customer is on 6 salon's website looking up the phone number to make their next appointment.

The brand's identity is built with color and font. Christian Unverzagt from M1/dtw, explained that when the firm begins any project that deals with branding they immediately find a font and color that begin to illustrate the client. Throughout the design, they refer back to the font and color that is the basis of any graphic decision. Specifically for 6 Salon, M1/dtw's decision to use a red background on the business card or the red blow dryer is just a subtle way of branding 6 Salon, but the stylish, sophisticated identity is carried throughout material.

## 6 salon: M1/dtw





Product (RED) is an example of branding working toward a cause. The idea is that a brand was created and sold through different vendors. The proceeds from those products are given to the cause, The Global Fund. The consumer is aware of the brand and cause and they choose to buy the red laptop or red Starbucks thermos, knowing they are contributing to the fight of AIDS.

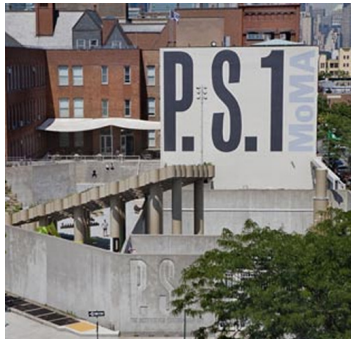
The products sold under the red label are no more expensive than the other products sold by the commercial vendor, but the consumer is aware that 50% of the profits of the sale are going to The Global Fund. The Global Fund uses 100% of the money to finance the fight of AIDS and create programs for women and children in Africa. Without the development of the Product (Red) brand, the ability to reach out to different groups of people would not be possible. Since 2006, over five million people have been helped by the Product (Red) program.

This movement has become very successful not only in the amount of money they have raised but the amount of awareness they have created. In many ways, the branding concept of the cause has become stylish, or at least a status quo. People now want to wear or use Product (Red).

## product (RED) campaign







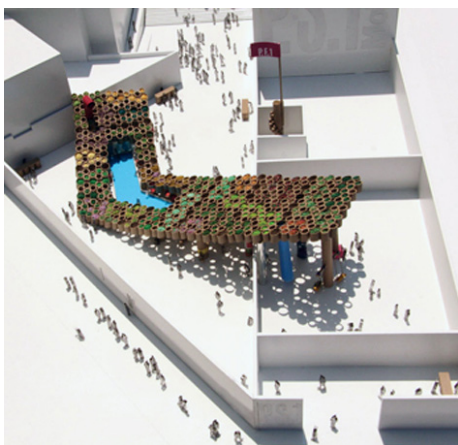
The Museum of Modern Art's Public Space 1 is a non-profit exhibition space for artist to build temporary installations. The space is known as a laboratory to experiment with different programs and design. PS1 was founded by Alanna Heiss in 1971 for the Institute for Art & Urban Resources which focuses on organizing exhibitions in under utilized and abandoned spaces across NYC but found a more permanent home in Long Island City.

One of the many exhibitions was Public Farm 1 by WORK Architecture and was an urban farm installation. Within the space, an intriguing form was constructed that served as the land for the garden. The space also served as a venue for large events, like a concert. The space was an experiment that was successful and it brought people from all over to experience the space.

The space provides the opportunity for emerging artists to exhibit their work, that would not be possible in an ordinary museum environment. With this space, they can create large scale installations and be able to experience the space along with the general public. They can actually build the experiment and observe how people react to and use the space.

# moMa's Public Space 1





# site: core city

The site chosen for this experiment is Core City, Detroit. It is a large neighborhood that at a point in time was a bustling community full of residents, manufacturing and other commercial infrastructure. Today, instead of streets lined with houses and people, left behind are empty lots, that resemble more of a rural atmosphere rather than an inner city Detroit neighborhood.

Core City is located on the west side of Detroit, bordered by I-96, Warren Avenue, Grand River Avenue and Martin Luther King Boulevard. Just east, on the other side of Grand River is the Historic Woodbridge Neighborhood, and south is the up and coming Corktown Neighborhood.

The neighborhood currently is home to the Catherine Ferguson Academy (an alternative education for pregnant teenagers and teen mothers), the Detroit Fire Department Training Facility, the Salvation Army's Harbor Light Campus, the University of Detroit Mercy's Dental School Corktown Campus, several area churches and a once very lively commercial strip along Buchanan Street.

Since 2005, the Core City Neighborhoods Organization in partnership with Phoenix Group, built about 300 new homes (both

single family and multi-family residences). There is currently a Master Plan developed by Phoenix Group with the intention of redeveloping the Buchanan Street Commercial Corridor back up along with two large parks that intersect the community. Unfortunately, due to the recent economic down turn, the project has been stalled.

The neighborhood offers opportunity. There is the opportunity for anything to happen in this neighborhood, and the residents need and want change. Looking back to what the community was in 1921, there is a stark contrast to what Core City is today, but instead of looking at that as a negative aspect, look at it as a blank canvas with endless possibilities.



- Core City, Detroit









- Catherine Ferguson Academy







- Core City, Detroit









- Core City, Detroit



- Newly built homes



- Newly built burnt out home





- Abandoned corner store on Buchanan St.



- Remnants of old brick paved street



- Empty Lot



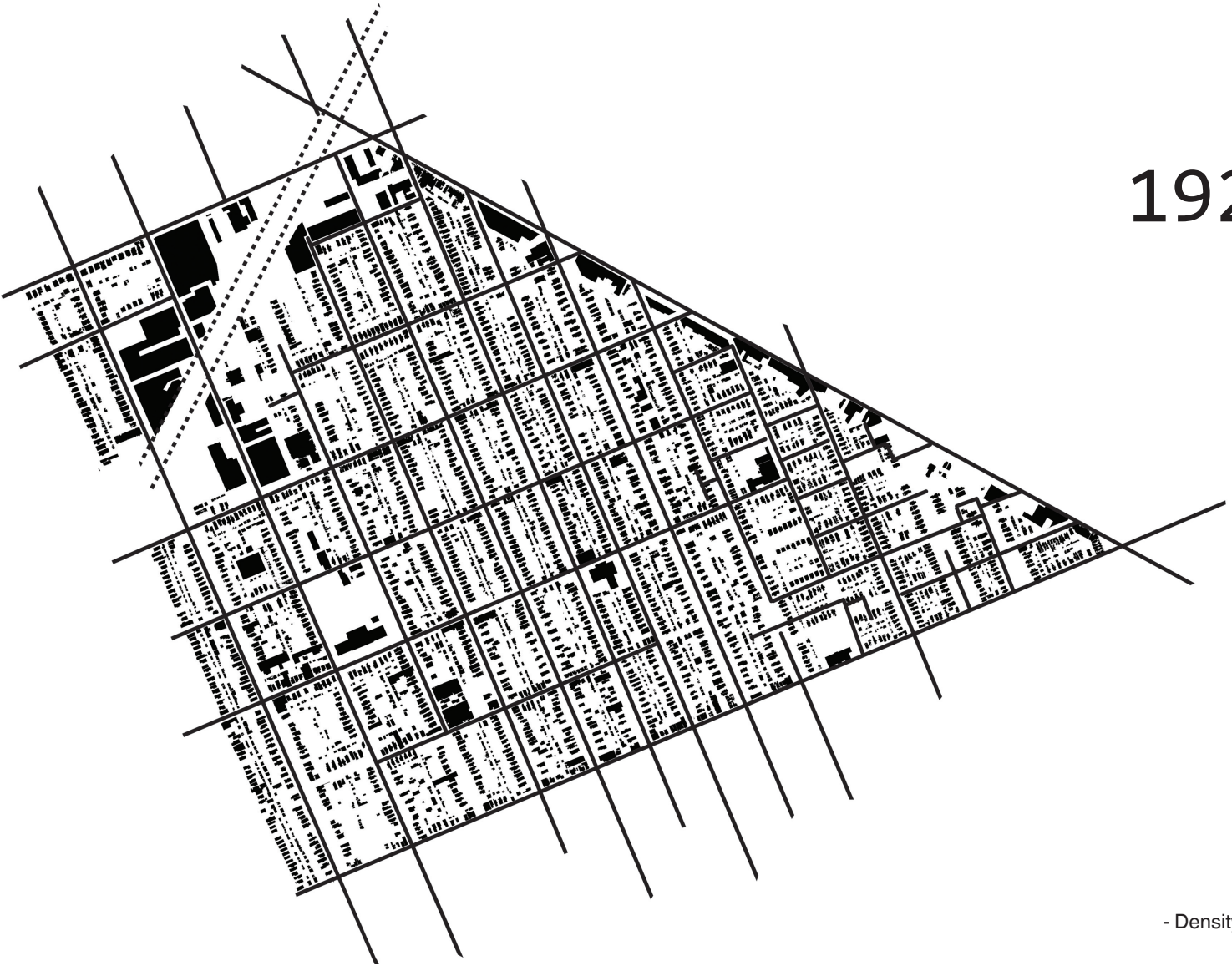
- Detroit Pheasant





- Older homes

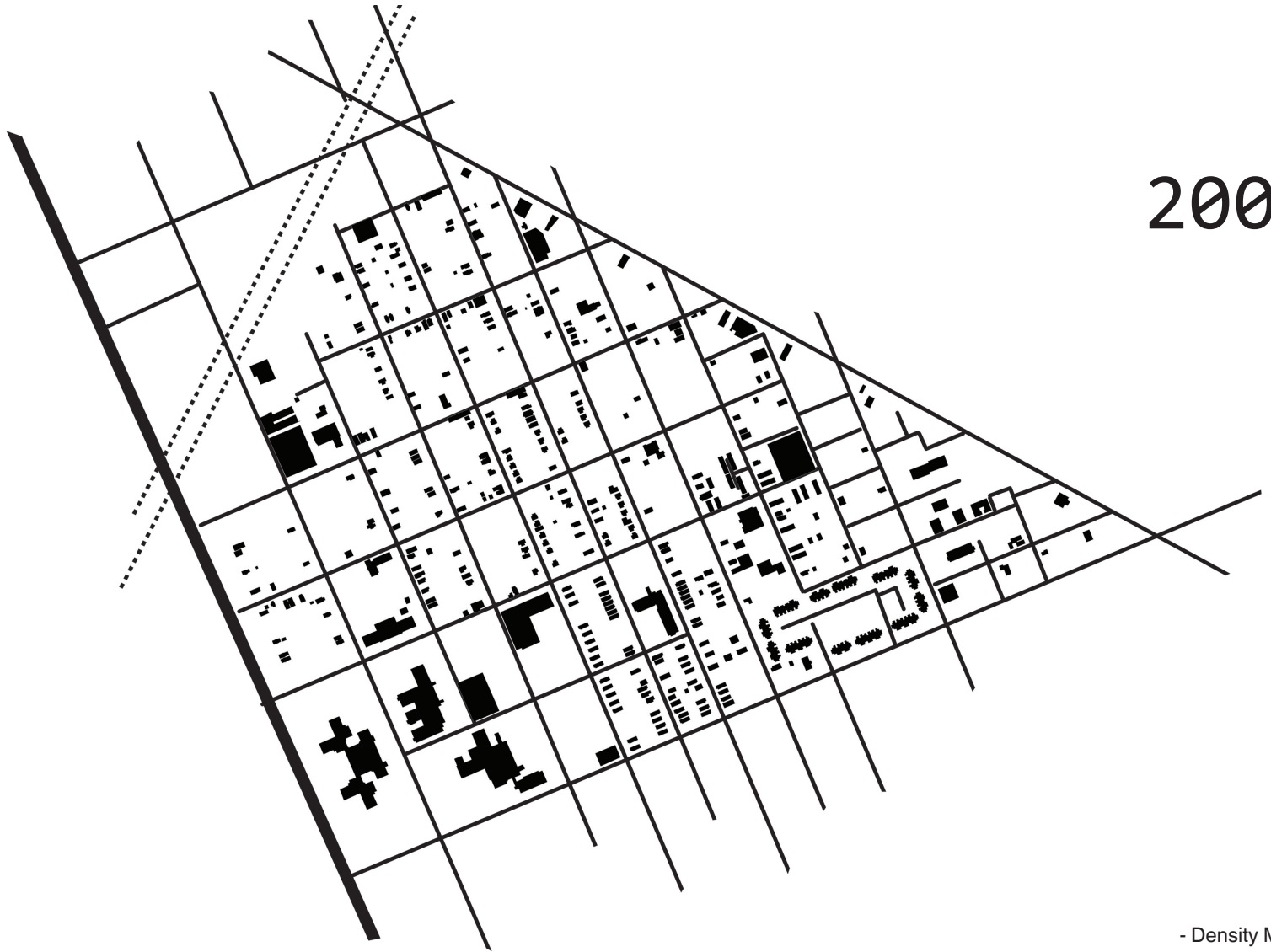
1921



- Density Map



2009



- Density Map

# program

Programming a project that is intentionally set up as an experiment is a bit of a challenge simply because it needs to be designed as temporary. The criteria for the program for the Core City community site calls for something mobile, flexible, and inexpensive. The answer to this is a shipping container.

The use of shipping containers as livable environments has gained popularity because of the initial cost of the structure. Many companies ship their products across the world, but once the shipment arrives the container is usually left in the port because it is more expensive to ship it back, rather than buy a new container for another shipment.

Since Detroit is a port city, there is an abundance of shipping containers that can be bought locally. Many of these containers sell anywhere from \$200 to \$2000 depending on whether they are new or used and the condition they are in.

The container itself is structurally rigid because it is designed to react to the many forces it is exposed to during transportation. According to Jones Partners Architects, who have developed the PRO/con Housing System, the structural loads are at minimum twice what is required by the International Building Code for residential design.

By using shipping containers, it offers flexibility. They can be cut away, and carved to create almost any type of space. They can be stacked or expanded when the program outgrows a single container.

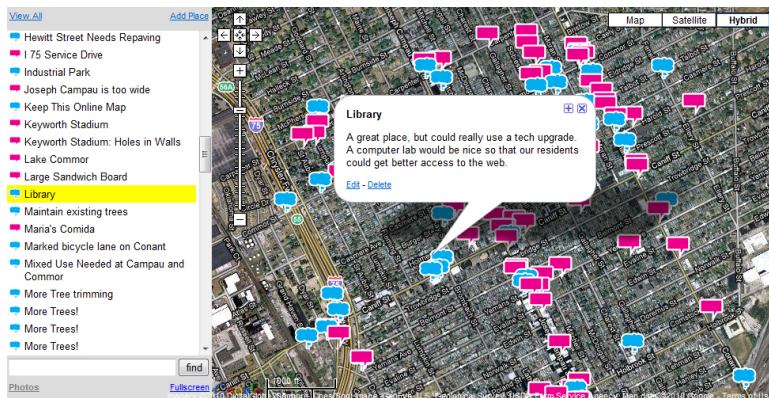
The development of the site will initially be started with .seed sponsored programs that once gain strength, will allow community-owned containers to develop throughout the site. As the site develops and grows, the seven .seed sponsored programs will develop together, relying on each other for strength. Instead of developing one program completely at a time, they will grow together.

The community containers can be whatever the community chooses, as long as it's healthy for Core City. If any program develops that becomes illegal, then it is removed. If it becomes abandoned and dangerous, an attempt by .seed is made to guide it back onto a healthy track. If any of these programs are rejected, because of the nature of the shipping container, it can be removed without interrupting the site.

The actual site plan is not necessarily a plan, but more of a guide for development for the .seed sponsored programs. The areas for which these are to be developed are in relation to the surrounding neighborhood. The main corridor that runs through the site was based off an existing

alley, but instead of an alley, its taking on a purpose of becoming a central corridor that connects the residential end of Core City with the Commercial corridor of Buchanan. This corridor becomes an outdoor market space that acts as a business incubator for future program. The playground is placed on the southwestern end of the site, because it is close to the Catherine Ferguson Academy and residential housing. The recycle center is placed in the northwestern corner off of Buchanan to facilitate traffic and easy access. The business district runs along the Buchanan face of the site, to rebuild that corridor. Finally the temporary dwellings are located on the eastern side of the site because there are already two existing homes on that side, along with several other homes across Humboldt St.

Eventually the site will transition into Point C. At that point, the community could choose to keep the containers and develop them further and in a more permanent state, or they could begin to eliminate them and replace them with permanent buildings, but at that point, the community will have the resources to develop whatever permanent program they feel they need and want.



Social media has become a vital tool in the way of communication. Networking websites like Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace all have changed the way society communicates. Now families can connect through Video Chat by using programs like Skype, or keep friends updated with status updates on Facebook. It has even found itself on mobile devices, so communication is always at your finger tips.

Businesses and organizations are beginning to take advantage of these tools because they are free and reach more people. Companies are providing special offers for those who follow them on Twitter or Facebook and even using these tools as a means of feedback. Heather Armstrong, a blogger used her Twitter account to voice her opinion about her broken Maytag Washer. Maytag quickly responded by providing her a replacement washer. In the case of General Motors, they are using their Facebook page as a way to connect with their customers and their complaints. Needless to say, social media is powerful.

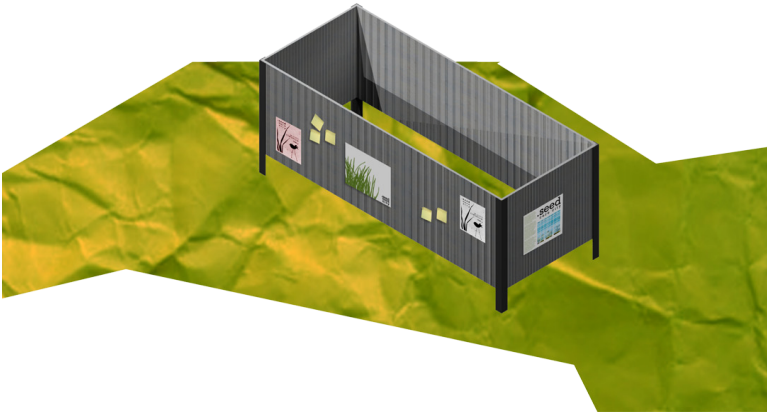
The City of Hamtramck offers its residents an online forum through the city's website. They can voice their opinion about what they like and dislike about the community.

# power of social media

## Discussions



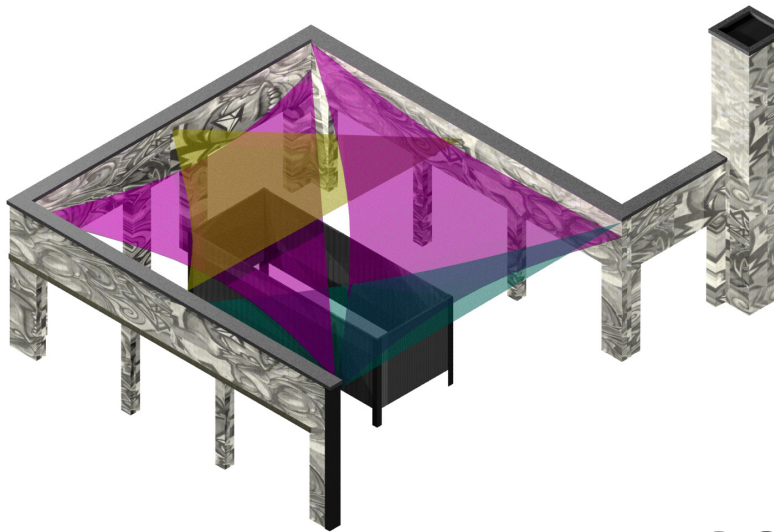




Core City may not be ready for an online forum due to the inability of its residents to gain internet access, but a physical forum located within the community site would greatly benefit the community to develop program.

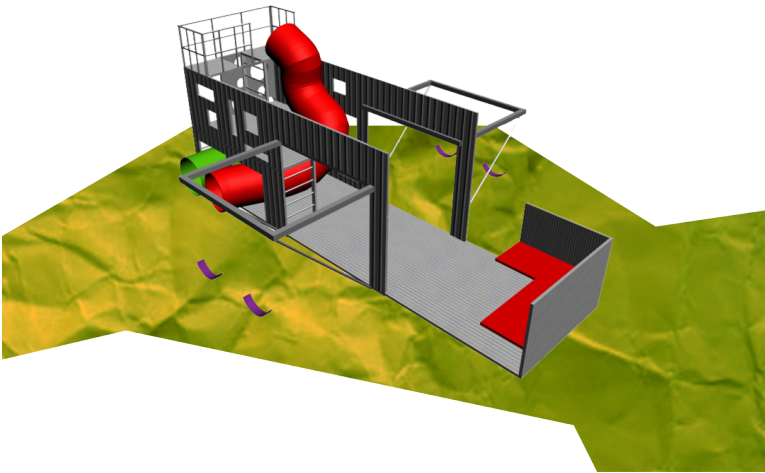
A Communication Wall is designed to be located within an existing “ruin” of a facade of an old commercial building from the past. The “ruin” is left because it is a reminder to what Core City was and the new development with be a constant reminder of new growth. The facade creates an opportunity for a Welcome Area to the site. It would provide information regarding community events, notices and the means of communication between the residents and .seed.

Having a central point for Core City to be able to organize and communicate is vital to the development. This could provide Core City Neighborhoods an opportunity to relocate themselves into Core City, or at least connect their offices to the neighborhood.



# communication wall

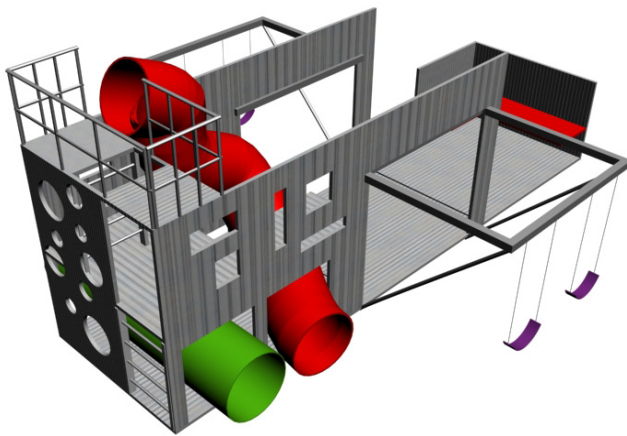




The neighborhood, as it stands now, does not provide safe places for children to play. The Catherine Ferguson Academy has a small playground, but it is not open to the public. There is an old rusted swing set on an empty lot along Buchanan, but it is close to the busy street. The neighborhood children would really benefit from a new playground located in a safe area of the neighborhood.

The playground is built to include swings, a slide, and other surface that children can climb and hide in. While children are playing, parents can supervise from the benches. Eventually, the site will develop around the play structure to provide barriers to help contain the playground away from the street and traffic.

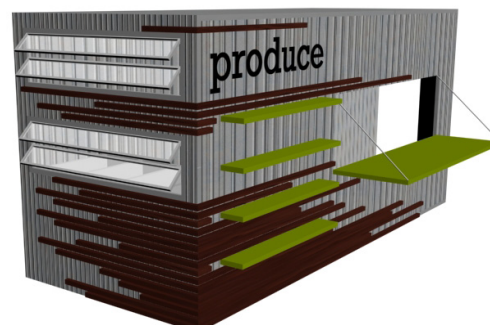
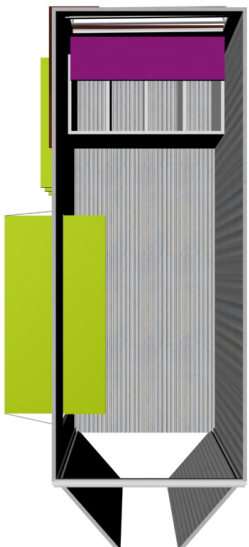
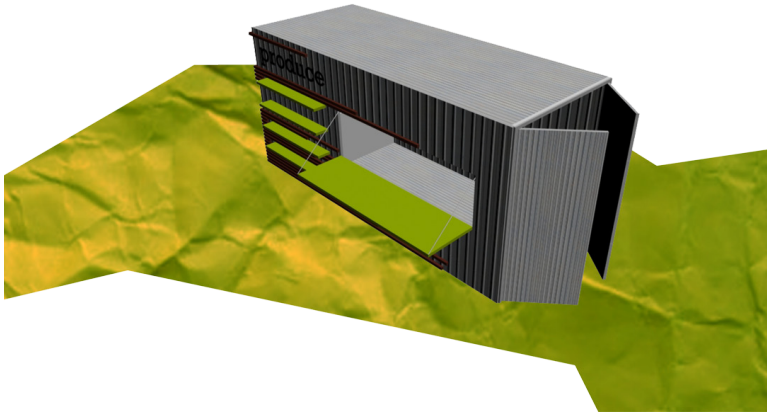
The opportunity to have a safe playground for children is more than an opportunity to have a playscape. It provides a safe environment for children to build social skills and to grow with other children. For children that are in broken or struggling homes, the space provides them a space to be a kid with other children.



# playground







The development of the community site is dependant on the initial success and acceptance of the Outdoor Market. Small market containers are designed to provide stands for the residents to run small businesses out of. The containers would act as a business incubator that if successful, in the future could relocate into a more permanent space off of Buchanan St.

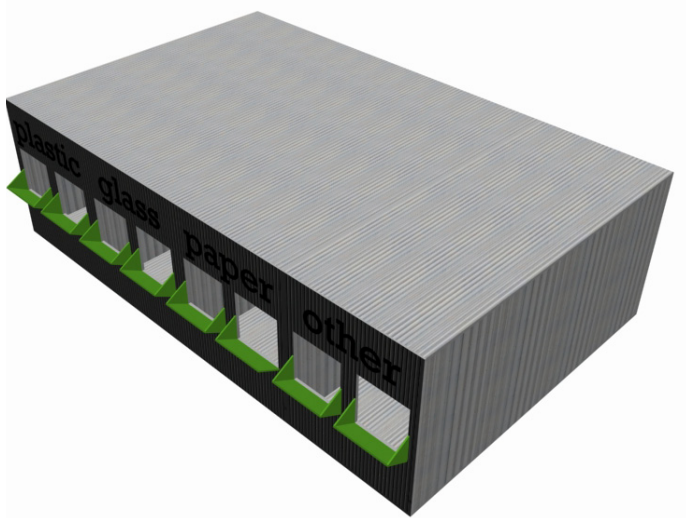
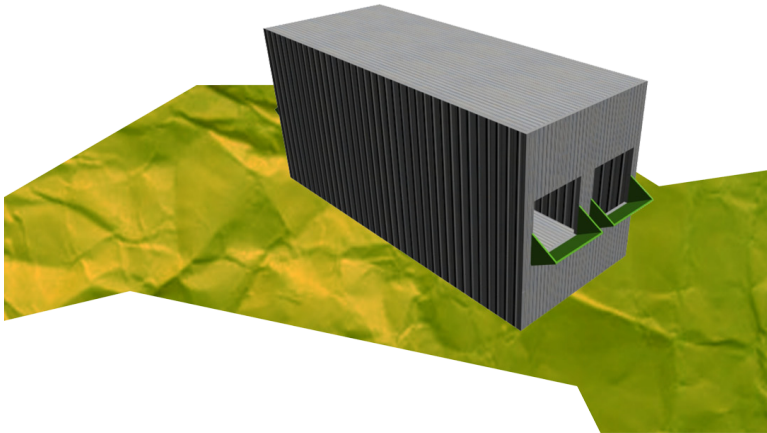
The Market Stand is simple, but the initial design is intended to provide an initial design that individuals from the community could use for their own market stands. Once a community member takes their own container, they can change it however they wish to facilitate their individual needs.

These containers can house produce stands, pottery studios, bake sales, jewelry stores or just about anything that can be housed in an individual container. If these stands become successful enough that they outgrow the individual container, the owner has the option of upgrading to a space in the Business District along Buchanan St.

# market stand







The City of Detroit does not offer curb side recycling programs, but many communities have taken it upon themselves to provide recycling options. Core City does not currently have a recycling program due to the lack of resources but have expressed a need for one.

The design of the recycling container is very simple but the strength of the design is intended to rely on the branding and provide a space for the residents to dispose of plastic, glass, paper and other material. The materials are at this point then able to be reused either within the community or at least able to be given to a larger recycling program.

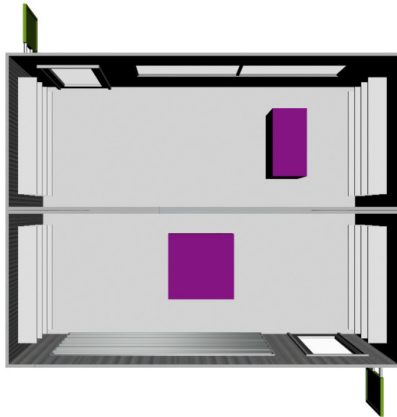
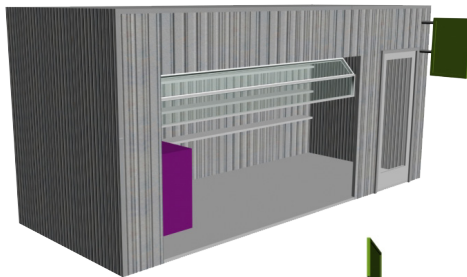
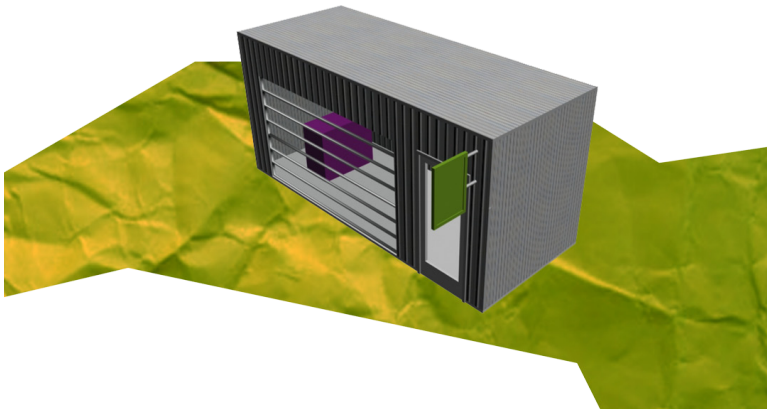
Having the opportunity of having a recycling program within the neighborhood offers the residents the ability to cut down on wastes. The Catherine Ferguson Academy is constantly reusing materials and repurposing them. Once the Recycle Station grows it can also provide recycling to neighboring communities that have not developed their own programs. It can help build relationships for those not only within the community but outside, which in turn strengthens Core City.

# recycle station









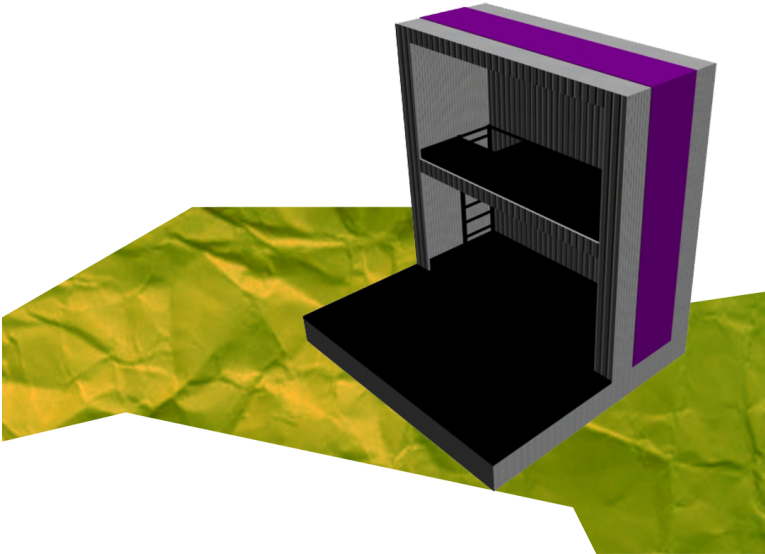
As discussed previously, the strength of this community is built by the initial reaction and success of the outdoor market space. This space acts as a business incubator to develop business opportunities. Those that survive and outgrow their market stand have the opportunity to move to a more permanent location off of Buchanan Street in effort to rebuild the commercial corridor that once was a strong economic center.

The business containers allow for the space to open up onto the sidewalk to allow build more interactive spaces onto the sidewalk. The containers provide the opportunity to expand if the business requires more space as it grows over time.

If successful, it will hopefully spur more development further along the street, which will create a stable economy within the community, as well as job opportunities. The intention of the development of these programs is more than just designing a store front, but designing a socially sustainable program.

# business front





When developing program designs with the shipping containers, it was important to evaluate the amount of fabrication and cost needed. A community theatre was a program idea that would be fairly simple to construct, but would be invaluable to the community.

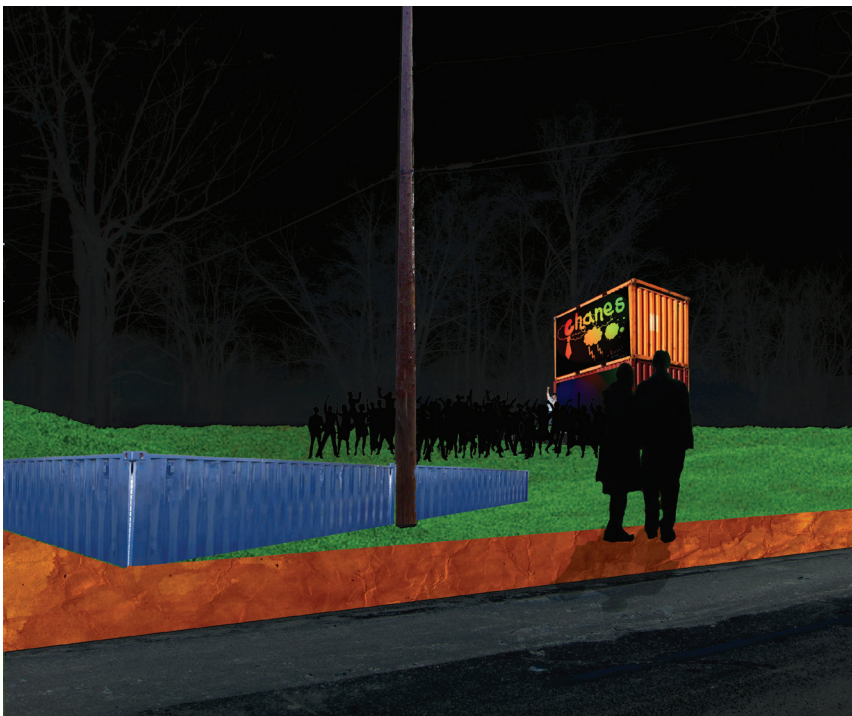
During the day it can serve as a children's theatre, but at night it could transform into a busy night life spot offering a public stage for local musicians.

The Catherine Ferguson Academy along with other area schools, would be able to use the stage for productions. It could serve as the space in which the community gathers for demonstrations and interactions.

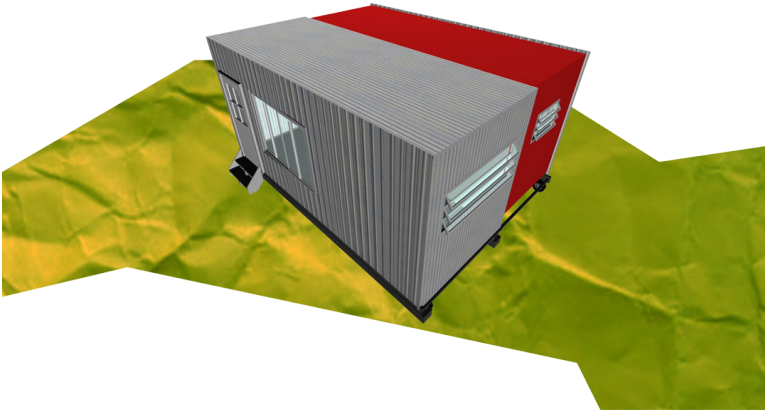
By bringing the arts into the community, children will have the opportunity to be exposed to different arts. These children could one day become involved with theatre, music, comedy, or other performing arts. By creating an opportunity for extra curricular activities, the community can work together to keep children off the streets.

# community theatre









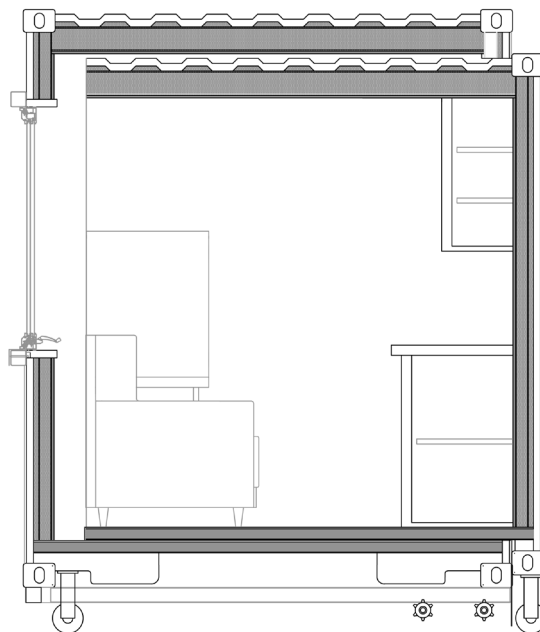
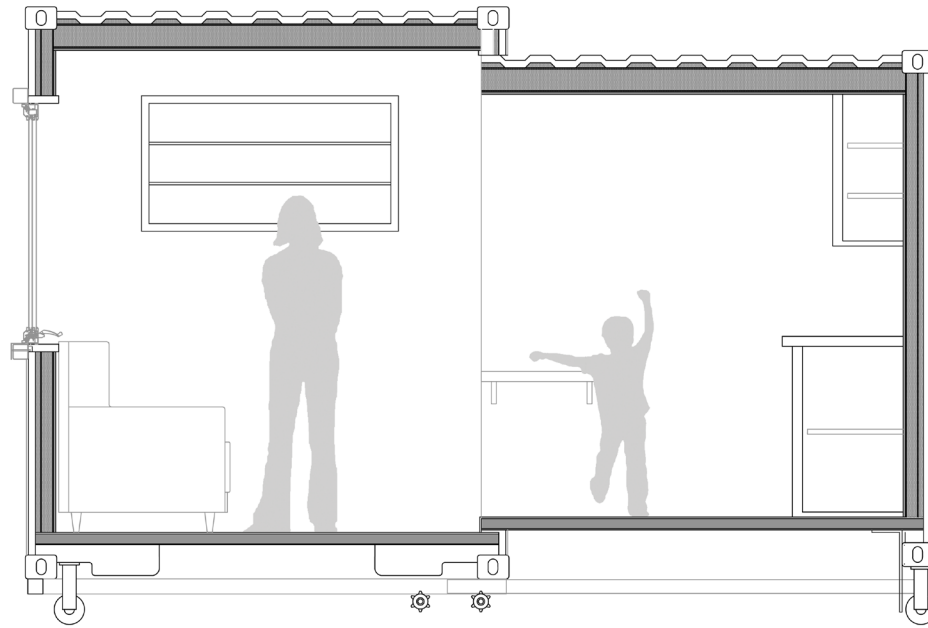
Since 2005, Core City Neighborhoods and the Phoenix Group has built almost 300 new homes that are both single family and multi-family residences. While that benefits many of its residences, there is still a need for homes for both the young mothers of the Catherine Ferguson Academy and the many homeless that find themselves at the Salvation Army Harbor Light Campus.

The development of Temporary Dwellings would be beneficial to the neighborhood to provide an opportunity as a transition home for those in need.

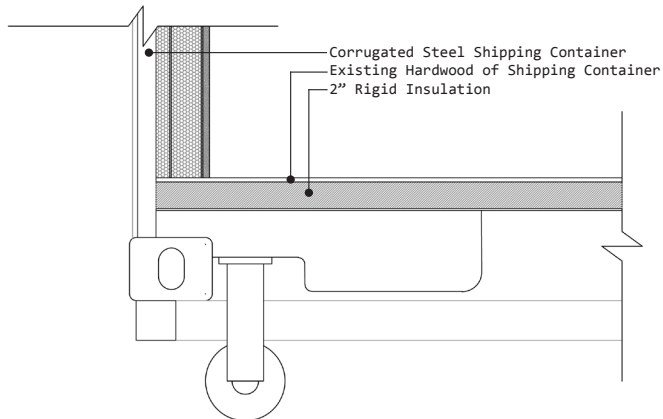
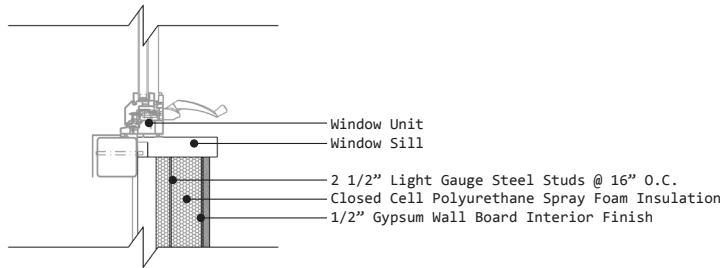
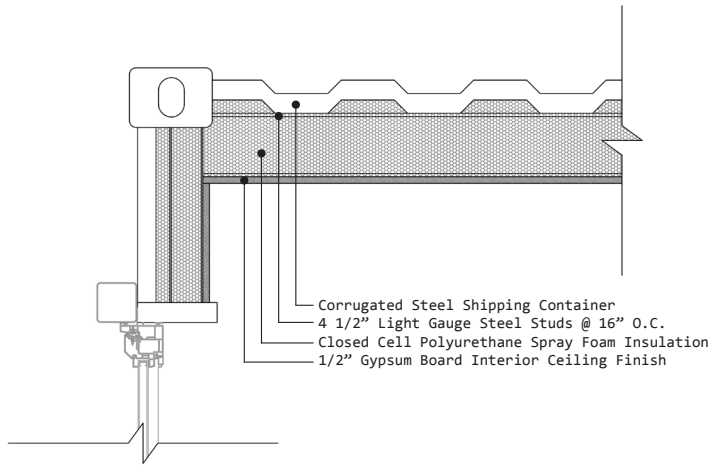
Since the Temporary Dwelling could be moved within its existence, it needed to be designed as a mobile environment. Based off of technology used in Recreational Vehicles, the unit expands and provides double the square footage of a standard 20'0" Shipping Container. The space was designed to allow it to collapse onto itself with moveable walls for transportation.

These homes offer those in need another chance at a new life and a fresh start. If the homes are successful, Point C for Core City could be permanent dormitories or more permanent homes.

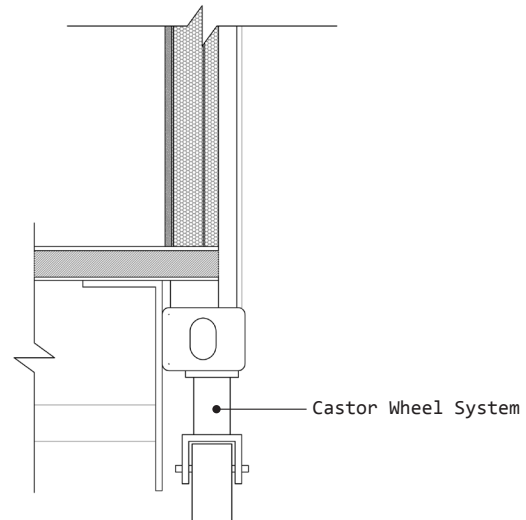
# temporary dwelling



**dwelling section**



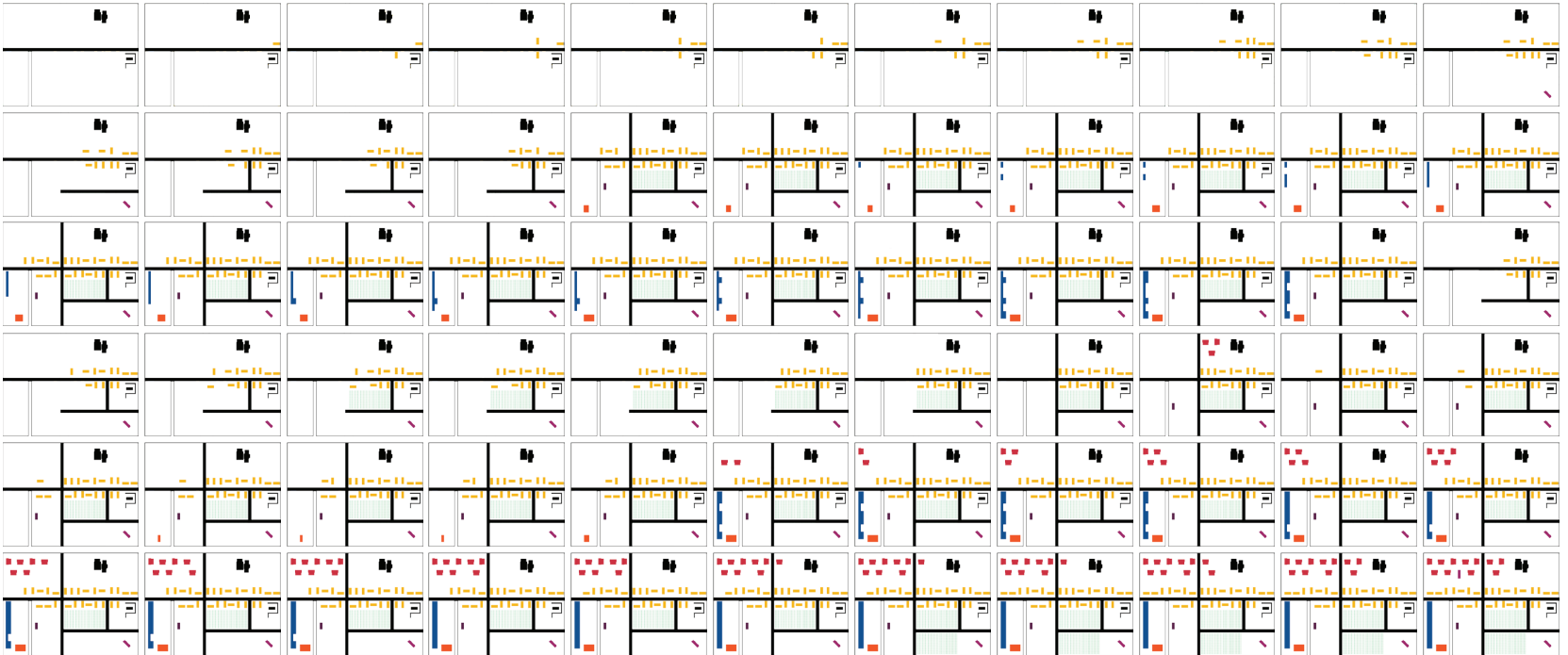
## wall detail







# site development



- Site development over a period of 15 to 20 years.



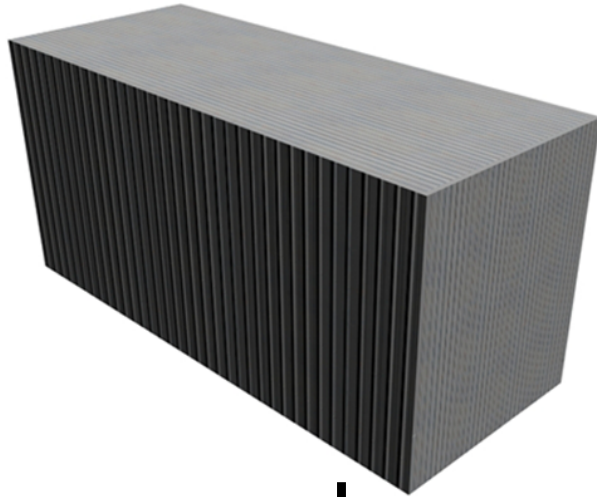
# Site Plan

50 ft  
20 m



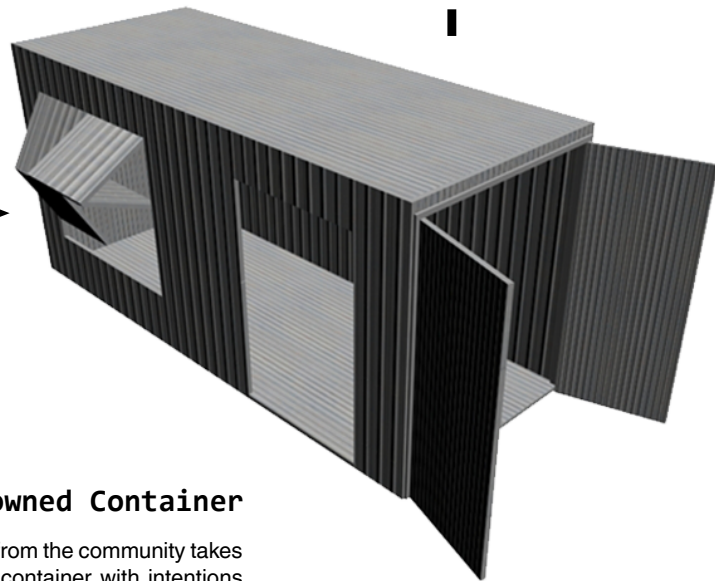
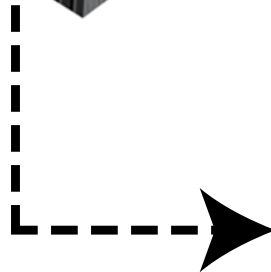
- 1. Communication Wall
- 2. Market Corridor
- 3. Playground
- 4. U-Pick Fields
- 5. Community Theatre
- 6. Recycle Center
- 7. Business District
- 8. Temporary Housing

# what if...?



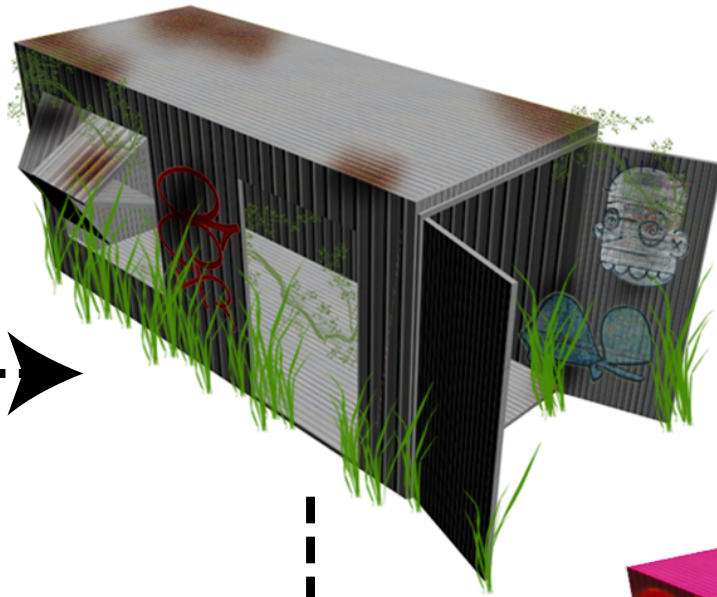
## Shipping Container

Empty containers are made available to the community to transform them into whatever they want as long as it is healthy for the community.



## Community-owned Container

A member from the community takes a shipping container with intentions to transform it into a pottery studio.



### **Abandoned Container**

After a few months, the pottery studio is never finished and it becomes an eye sore and becomes an unsafe place.



### **Revived Community-owned Container**

Rather than initially removing the failed shipping container, .seed guides it back by cleaning it up and outfits it with a new program that the community can use.



# point c

At some point it is the hope of .seed that eventually the community will be able to build their own Point C on their own. The energy, and enthusiasm that .seed helps build along with the community will hopefully become the catalyst for Point C. While it could take years to discover that point, .seed will be there to help guide the community, if they desire.

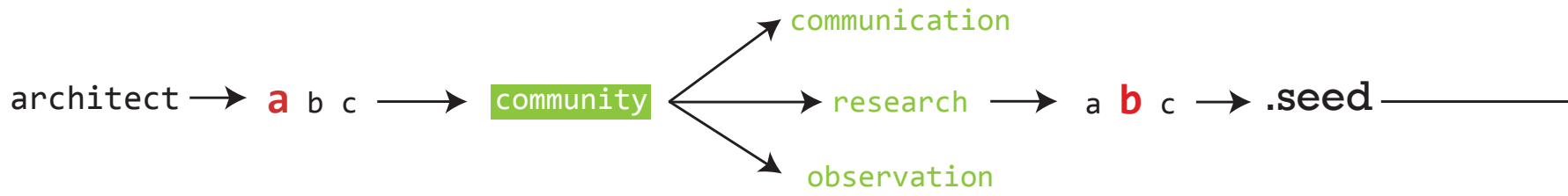
What if the community completely rejects .seed? If that is the case, then the beauty of what .seed is, an experiment, the organization will leave without changing anything, because that is what the community wants. Although, there is an opportunity in Detroit to try something new. In March 2010, Mayor Dave Bing, announced a radical new plan to begin to address the city's failures. One aspect of the plan was the idea of shrinking the city. This plan means that thousands of abandoned homes to be demolished and many families in dilapidated neighborhoods, relocated to thriving ones. In a February Detroit News article, Bing explains that he cannot support every neighborhood in Detroit because of the limited resources. Instead he wants to focus on those communities that are stable. While many residents oppose this idea, there are just as many, if not more that are welcoming a new

strategy to Detroit.

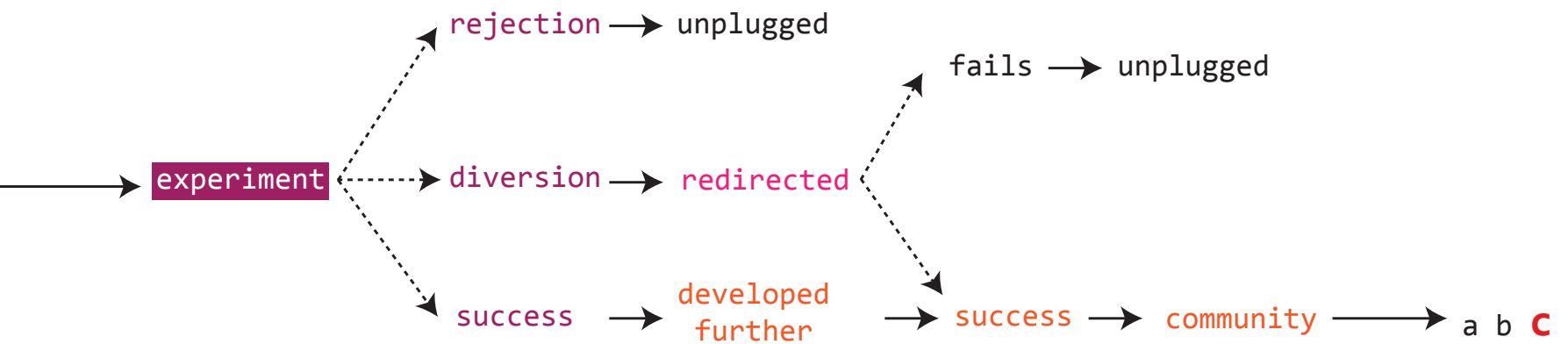
Right now, Detroit is in a transition point and slowing discovering what Point B means to the city and its future. This point in Detroit's future is pivotal to its success and the success of its residents.

The development of this thesis has only strengthened the idea of what Point B really is and how it is interlaced within a community's fabric. A designer's ability to recognize point B is an important step that cannot be overlooked and needs to become part of the developmental stage of design. This layer of design only can make a project stronger.

The recent economic fall, Detroit's status and social sustainability all play a part in how we think and design. It is a new era for architects and community developers and the only thing we can do is to adapt and move forward. Society cannot afford to be held back, but instead strives for growth, healthy growth.







- Thesis Diagram