Home + the Urban Condition
Home +
the
Urban Condition

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This body of work is dedicated to my parents, Chris and Robin, for teaching me the meaning and importance of the home and its context – Both in a physical, built sense, but also of the home as a support system. This support is reinforced through individuals who make the house feel so special... Like home. Thank you for all of your support.

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“For where else, if not home, can we let our imagination wander?”

- Witold Rybczynski
Home:

hom/
Noun

“the place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household.”

“a place where something flourishes, is most typically found, or from which it originates.”
The home is truly a very complex being. It serves as physical evidence of the advancements of time – and offers the opportunity to cultivate those who occupy it. In its simplest form, the house is a shelter. It provides a space in which its inhabitants feel safe and protected from the elements. This is a concept that even the earliest people understood – A fact that is supported through evidence discovered by archaeologists and historians. Prehistoric people were extremely resourceful beings, using every part of their game for a purpose in their lives. The home creates a second skin between the inhabitant and the world around him.

It is a familiar feat – To locate something or some place that makes you feel whole. A place that embodies all that you are, and all that you once were, and what you aim to become. It is in this place that I believe the individual is born. His energy and his actions captivate his being, bringing out his full potential. This place in which he evolves is the home. Each and every organism knows this sense of home, sometimes permanently in one place, and sometimes in multiple places. We find a sense of home in an assortment of places. Sometimes, not even in places, but in other people or things. This is the thought that drives my investigation.

A moment in time can alter the understanding of what home is or is not – for better or for worse. Part of what makes the physical home so fascinating is the variety in which it presents itself. No two people share exactly the same experience of home, even if they live among one another. Human beings’ intimate experience with their surroundings alters how they see the world, how they tackle their day-to-day tasks, and how they feel when returning from a hard day’s work to this apparent structure in which they reside, at least physically.
The mind has as much to do with our understanding of home as our earthly body. We can stand in a room of a place we have lived for many years and not feel at home. We can also arrive at a new destination and be overcome with feelings of comfort and ease, a love at first sight, if you will. This idea of comfort is one that is particularly relevant and intriguing when discussing home.

An initial study of comfort has exposed the following: The Latin root of the word “Comfort” = Comfortare, meaning to strengthen or console. The definition of “Comfort” as we know it, meaning “a state of physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint,” was not documented until the 18th century (Rybczynski 22). Comfort is what a person makes of it, and can be just as much a feeling as it is a place. Homes must meet a certain expectation of comfort by the individuals who inhabit them. What one may find comfortable may be quite disturbing to another. These inconsistencies can cause tension or harmony within the household. Our spaces speak to us, and we must listen. How does your home feel? How does it react to your body and your mind? How does it react to the environment in which surrounds it? Is your home a reflection of yourself?

In attempting to conduct a meaningful investigation in the field of architecture, three forces have guided me. The first is my interest and excitement for residential architecture. I believe that there is no end to the discoveries to be made about homes and how they operate. Various styles, histories, and understandings of the physical structures that shelter us fascinate me. The second force is that of the individual who inhabits the home. Each person has a unique and intimate experience with a sense of home, unlike anyone else’s.
The third force in my research is the idea of place, the geographical location in which the home and the lives of those who live in it take place. The location of a home changes so much about the experience of residing in it or visiting it. It changes the individual who experiences it as a space and as a feeling, and alters our perception of ourselves and of the world around us. This thesis seeks to explore a deeper understanding of the way we live and where our lives take place.
Boston Residences - Beacon Hill and Downtown. Figures 2.0 & 3.0
History:

hist(e)re/
noun

“the study of past events, particularly in human affairs.”

“the whole series of past events connected with someone or something.”
From the beginning of time, homes originated from the initial and primitive yearn for safety and protection. In no way were the first homes glamorous or personalized – They served the sole purpose of protecting man from the elements of the world around him. These structures provided a space in which he could escape, let his guard down, if only for a short while. Through this, the home was born. These ancient structures unknowingly provided the basis on what we would idealize into the modern house for centuries to come. Primitive huts set the standard for the first home. Trial and error, technological advances, and the need for comfort and privacy led us to more convenient and categorized spaces, like the ones we know today. There is a long history of houses throughout the world, all crucial to our understanding of the modern home.

Time has shown us that the needs of someone living in prehistoric times is greatly different from our needs today, and the homes that our children and grandchildren will live in, may very well be extremely different from our current understanding of it. Once the initial function of shelter is met, the home can become transformed from a basic human need into something far beyond that, an ideal of comfort and privacy. In studying the history of houses, there are shifts that occur as early as 4000 B.C. that demonstrate how humans transition the roles that the home has, and will, play. Some of these shifts include the ancient Iraqi people’s manipulation of spacial hierarchy, the development of upholstered furniture, the introduction of paned glass, all the way to building regulations and the ever-growing size of the newly constructed single family home.

Though all types of housing throughout the history of man are fascinating and influential to the modern home that we are most familiar, there are a few historical housing types in particular that I found noteworthy, and necessary to relaying my thoughts on this thesis. The following sequence will attempt to relay these changes, and show why they were so important to our current understanding of the home.
Prehistoric –
The earliest known structures were those of cavemen, constructed of mammoth skin and bones. Fitting for the times, these ancient beings made use of each and every part of their game – Eating the meat from the animals, and using their bones, skin and fur to make clothing, weapons and forms of shelter. The huts that they created were one room and generally very small, only used for sleeping. Cooking and other daily activities took place outside of the home.

8000 B.C. –
When the Ice age ended, people in the Middle East found successes in farming their lands. They cooked not only food, but also sun-dried bricks, in clay ovens. The invention of these sun dried bricks would generate a technique that would be used for thousands of years to come, granted, that we still use bricks today. The invention of mortar came about between 8 and 7000 B.C., and was used to hold bricks in place, as well as plaster walls and floors.

6500 B.C. –
Catal Huyuk is among the world’s first documented towns. Located in present day Turkey, this town was created with buildings that touched and connected to each other. Entrances to these structures were located atop the roofs through hatches. There were no windows or doors on Catal Huyuk homes, just a few holes in the roof to allow smoke to exit the rooms. This town is the first place that we hear about individuals sleeping somewhere other than the ground, with evidence that individuals slept on raised platforms above their earthy floors. The setup of Catal Huyuk is significant in demonstrating that safety was on the minds of the residents, and that they were able to make the most of the space they had, by living in close quarters among one another.
4000 B.C. –
Europeans begin finding success in farming. The individuals made a switch from living in tents made from animal parts and began to live in huts made from stone and daub with thatched roofs around this time. This is the first time we see natural stone being used as a building material.

3rd Century Iraq –
A hierarchy of spaces is in order and understood in the ancient civilization of Sumer, present day Iraq. Within this state, there were different classes of people, each inheriting a different level of importance within the society. The god, or protector, and the king, a representative of the god, were among the most elite of the system. The king lived in a tall structure, closest to the god. The structure was said to be two or three stories high with many large rooms. Below the king were the nobles and rich merchants. These individuals inhabited large two story homes surrounding a centralized courtyard. Anyone below the rich merchants was considered poor, and lived in a simple hut.

Minoan Palaces –
The vast majority of Minoans, who lived on the island of Crete, lived in simple stone huts composed of one or two rooms. However, perhaps the earliest form of luxurious living could be found in this region as well, in the Palace of Knossos. The palace featured the first documented indoor restrooms, and even a flushing toilet. The Palace featured a magnificent central courtyard and storage for grain and olive oil on the lower level of the home. The upper floors housed the living areas, equipped with light wells to allow cold and warm air into the structure. These spaces were also adorned with beautiful murals and bright colored walls and columns.
Ancient Persians –
Adding to the luxurious living that was taking place around 700 B.C., the Ancient Persians began to experiment with furniture inside of their homes. Wealthy Persians lived in large palaces equipped with upholstered furniture, such as beds, chairs, and couches, and had carpets and tapestries in many rooms of their homes. This is the first time any “comfortable” furniture was talked about in housing history, per my research.

Ancient Romans –
Typical Roman houses were arranged in blocks of flats, many racking up to five stories high. These structures were often poorly constructed and suffered taxing damages such as caved in roofs, cracked walls, and water infiltration. In addition to the significant height that was experimented with during this time, the Ancient Romans were also the first peoples to have used a form of indoor central heating techniques inside of their homes. While poor and middle class Romans used a form of charcoal burning in braziers to keep warm, rich Romans enjoyed a form of central heating called hypocaust. Hypocaust was a method of heating the under floor of the home with hot air, radiating warmth throughout the rooms.

Middle Ages –
In the early 12th century, peasants and middle class individuals resided in one or two bedroom stone or wooden huts. Inside of these huts, most day-to-day activities took place in the same room that the family or families slept in, including bathing, cooking, and doing chores. Though most residences up until this point were one or two room spaces, I feel that the medieval people really knew how to maximize the potential of their spaces, due to their solutions to not having tons of room inside of their homes. Multipurpose furniture, or pieces that served multiple purposes were common. Storage was necessary, specifically for when the room’s purpose shifted from one activity to the next. These Medieval people invented chests and wall-hung hooks to store items when they were not in use.
16th Century –
Life in the 16th century was far less dangerous than in previous decades, allowing the houses to be built less for defensive purposes but more with a sense of pride and personalization. Windows equipped with glass became not only something used by the wealthy, but a standard in most new construction. Chimneys and wooden floors were popular, but often not seen in the homes of peasants. Peasants continued to live in simplified two or three bedroom structures. Tile roofs were implemented into the designs of housing for the rich, often atop Tudor style residences.

18th Century –
The rise of neoclassical architecture frames this period for the rich and famous. However, only a small majority of the world got to dabble in the luxurious country homes of the era. While architects such as Robert Adam were creating new and sophisticated designs, most people during the 18th century continued to live somewhat modestly.

19th Century –
The most significant piece of information that I was able to find about the history of homes in the 19th century was that of building regulations. During the late 19th century, most towns had passed building regulations to protect their citizens and to organize the construction that was occurring. Some regulations included new homes being built a certain distance apart, rooms being of a certain size, and windows adhering to a set of regulations according to their location within the home.

20th Century –
The beginning of the 20th century featured most families living in spaces that began to contain more than two or three rooms. More specified purposes for these rooms were in place, and some families even had formal spaces that were only used for special occasions or set aside for
guests. By the 1950’s, almost all Western homes had at least one indoor restroom, and began to grow in size. More rooms for more people, essentially, but that was not always the case. Gas cookers became common, and in the 1960’s and 70’s, central heating became the norm. Double glazed windows made their debut in the 1980’s. During the mid and late 1900’s, a large push for land ownership occurred. People began to move out of cities and into suburbs. This can be credited to the invention of the highway system in the United States, as well as a switch in many large cities’ economic conditions.

Studying the history of houses shows us that many very basic aspects of our homes, that we may take for granted, were once very hard to come by. Houses were intended as a form of protection, not as an ideal of comfort. Privacy was unknown, since a room or rooms served multiple purposes in earlier times. Compartmentalized homes, like we know now, did not always exist. We are afforded the luxury to find our own space and to be messy within our homes, leaving our personal stamp on each space we inhabit.

While housing in the 21st century is happening right before our eyes, each person’s interpretations of it are vastly different. So now that we have discussed a brief history of houses, it is now time to emerge more deeply into the discussion at hand. Throughout the next section of this documentation, I will elaborate on specific conditions and how they have affected our current understanding of the home and the urban condition. I believe that all of the events that have led up to where we are right now have impacted and helped shape our current housing situations.
“Homeliness is not neatness. Clutter is an imprint of the inhabitant.”

– Witold Rybczynski
Region:

rejun/
noun

“an area or division, especially part of a country or the world having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries.”

“an area of activity or thought.”
There is only so much of the home as a physical object that one can study before they must examine the context in which the home lies. This leads me to a further level of investigation, the Regional Context Exploration. Where a home is built and exists in the world plays an enormous part in understanding it. The relationship between homes and the urban layout define the space and enhance the activities that happen in and around it. The lens I have chosen to study these ideas under is that of the city. I find cities fascinating. What makes cities different? How do cities feel? How do people live in their city? All of these questions create more questions, and more grounds for conversations about cities. We all know at least a little about one city or another, whether it be where we grew up or where we currently reside. No two cities are the same, and every city has a vibe of its own.
Vibe:

vib/
noun
(informal)

“emotional state or atmosphere of a place as communicated to and felt by others”
This term “vibe” is one I have grown quite fond of, and have used when describing my project many times. Something about its relaxed and informal nature, along with the sense of liveliness that it exhibits, makes it seem rather fitting for describing how something, in this case, the city, feels. A vibe is something we can catch, be it through music, a conversation with a friend, or a cruise down our favorite street on a sunny day with the windows down. A vibe is a feeling and an expression. We all have a vibe about us, something that draws and also distances us from other people. We tend to hang around those who put out similar vibes to us, and enjoy when we can “vibe” with others who share our interests and values.

Vibe is a term I am using for its simplistic and modern approach to feeling. I feel that cities produce and resonate many vibes, all depending on the time of day, activities happening, the neighborhood or district one may find themselves in. Each has a vibe of its own, and vibes are felt and experienced a little differently by each person who feels them. This is why vibes contain such a spark of interest to me, in relation to this project. The home relates to its urban context much like the way we relate to our homes, and then the urban context surrounding them – The vibe slightly different for us and other members of our family or residents in the city.
In order to gain a better understanding of different city vibes, I had to see more cities. Growing up in the suburbs of St. Louis for the large majority of my childhood, I was constantly among very familiar sights, sounds, smells, and people. I saw nothing wrong with where I was raised, and still do not fully consider anything to be “wrong” with what I know so well. Yet, after moving away from home, I was exposed to a whole new lifestyle that has since opened my eyes to the way others live. Coming to college in Detroit forced me to step outside of the comfort of my mass-produced, contractor-made home, in an upper middle class suburb of a Midwestern city, and explore. In Detroit, I was exposed to a variety of cultures, people, beliefs, and most importantly, urban conditions – Conditions in which I had never seen in person, or up close.

Though Detroit and St. Louis are only a few hundred miles apart, I noticed that my feelings and interactions in each place were very different. The vibes that I get from living in Detroit, and now suburb of Ferndale, differ vastly from any I have previously experienced. Even with two cities under my belt, this investigation of my thesis required a bit more branching out. Having never been to Europe, some may say I missed out on the opportunity to explore other cultures, and a world of different towns and urban conditions. While I do not disagree with this opinion, I feel that my investigation can only be done in relation to cities within the United States, to keep it authentic and meaningful. I cannot speak on places I have not been... It just seems wrong.

Since this is my chosen path of study, I visited Boston. Some say that Boston is as close to European cities as we can get here in the United States, and I must say that it did indeed
feel like a different country from the moment I arrived. Boston’s street grids were formed by travel paths of horses and carriages, so its roads are scarce and very unlike those of other towns. Very few cars were anywhere to be found in most sections of the city, something that was perhaps the most foreign to me, yet I thoroughly enjoyed. Boston’s vibe was somewhat magical, something new, exciting, and upbeat. The streets were full of people of all kinds. The historical and modern aspects of the town made it that much more inviting, and being able to walk from place to place in no time at all was delightful. I got good vibes from Boston. This is a town that was different from anywhere that I had visited, in the best ways.

Each district featured a new sense of energy and vibes. The quaintness and pleasantness of places like Back Bay, Beacon Hill and Boston Common enchanted me. The historical ruggedness of places like North End and Fenway captivated me – Transporting me to times and places I had never been, though all somehow feeling familiar. Boston was comfortable, a place that I wish more cities felt like. I think the most comforting part about it was the fact that very few places felt empty or unloved. In Detroit, we are surrounded by blight and sprawl. Being in a city so densely populated and vibrant was refreshing.

The way I lived while visiting Boston was an attempt to mimic the day of a native Bostonian. I woke up each morning with a rough idea of what I wanted to do, but did not have an exact plan to act upon. I wanted to see where the city would take me, which vibes would be recognized. I enjoyed many local cafes, bars, and hole-in-the-wall restaurants in attempt to pick up on the local flavor and cultures. I purchased items from
independent businesses, avoiding all big-name stores and chain restaurants. I rode on public transportation, the T, and liked it very much. I believe I was able to see all of the best parts of Boston during the time that I stayed there, and enjoyed the faster paced lifestyle that was associated with the city.

Seeing the different neighborhoods of the city gave me a better sense of how people live in Boston. The downtown, Financial District, and North End areas are scattered with apartments, high rises, businesses, office buildings, and eateries. People who lived in these areas most likely lived in a single unit among many others within a large building or brownstone. They parked bikes outside and shared their lives with those around them, in quite close quarters in some cases. I observed that those who most likely spent a bit more on their homes had their own front doors that led out to the street, and lived a bit further away from the city’s core. Homes in the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and Charlestown neighborhoods enjoyed a bit more space around them, often equipped with upscale shopping and dining within minutes. Boston Common seemed to be the ultimate luxury within the city. A beautiful, large public green space surrounded by homes and businesses made for an ideal place to take a phone call, spend a lunch break, or stay an entire afternoon.
"I have an affection for a great city. I believe in the neighborhood of man and enjoy the sweet security of the streets."
— Longfellow
Though the Common resides in the middle of the hustle and bustle of the city, it feels as if it marches to the beat of a different drum, so to speak. It is a slowed down version of what is going on around it, ranging from public transit crossroads, car, and pedestrian traffic. It has historical significance and radiates a sense of relaxation and beauty. The perfectly maintained buildings of Beacon Hill overlook this green patch of Boston, sporting their own beauty found within the brick and cobblestone streets, and manicured bushes along sidewalks. The folks who are fortunate enough (and wealthy enough) to call this area home seem to have the type of variety and sense of completeness that every neighborhood yearns for. Amenities close at hand and beautiful scenery all around... I would consider this a wonderful place to live. Boston influenced me very much, and is a place that I consider absolutely essential to my thesis research.

Another place that was absolutely necessary to see while studying American cities was New York City. Once again, I set out on a journey to a new city for the first time, unsure about what should be expected. New York is a very commercialized town, heavily advertised in fashion, art, sports, and cinematography. But, do those who interact with these mediums of New York actually know the city? I was one of these individuals, who had watched many movies filmed in the city, and knew of many famous people who called New York home, but I did not know the town on a deeper level than that. There were some places that I knew I must see in order to get the most authentic New York experience possible within the 5 days that I had in the city. These places were very tourist-oriented, but quite essential in understanding the city and its history.
Central Park, Rockefeller Center, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, and Times Square were at the top of this list. Other places that I spent time were in the Garment District, the Financial District, Brooklyn, Hell’s Kitchen, the Upper East Side, and Midtown, where my hotel, The Lexington, was located. The gridded street layout throughout the region made navigation very simple, even for someone visiting for the first time.

In each of these neighborhoods, there felt to be a different purpose and type of person that the shops and restaurants were to appeal to. Even the subway stations at these varied locations seemed to have a different vibe about them. However, the streets and terminals were filled with people of all walks of life, from business men and women, tourist, parents and small children, to homeless beggars, street performers and musicians alike. I feel as though New York truly encompases a variety of individuals and urban conditions that work together to create a harmonious patchwork within it, making it unlike many cities that house only a fraction of its population.

While many areas of the city were glamorous and beautiful, the corners that showed more grit and age really helped me form a sense of what New York City was beyond what I had seen or read about prior to my arrival. Visiting this city added to my understanding of the variety of conditions that exist in the areas outside of my realm. Though New York, and, more specifically, Boston, served as remarkable case studies for how other city’s urban fabrics connect, I could not help but be pulled back to Detroit, a place with perhaps limitless opportunity to infuse new energy.
All areas of Detroit may not possess the level of attractiveness or convenience that Boston or New York did, but Detroit has some vibes of its own. Our neighborhoods, which seem much more spread out than those of Boston, harness their own energy and sense of comfort to each person who visits. Being downtown Detroit is usually a short-term experience for most, but can be home as well. Tall high rises and condominuims line the car-infested streets of the Motor City. While some walk, many here will be reliant on their car until their dying day. We cannot help it – we live in the auto capital of the world. However, there is something unique about a place in which you can just pick yourself up and walk everywhere you need to go, not having to worry about parking tickets, filling the car up with gas, and most unfortunately, digging yourself out of the snow after a long, cold night of winter blessings.

The Augustus Woodward Plan, brought into place after the 1805 Detroit Fire destroyed the city, is a partial plan of the downtown area that breaks the grids (literally) of what make up Detroit and its Metro area. The radial layout that begins at Grand Circus Park anchors many of the most well-known and frequently travelled roads in the area. This downtown map is one of several street layouts that can be found in Detroit. The further out that one travels in the Metro area, the less detail you will find in the layout of streets within different cities and townships.

Detroit is in a unique situation with its transportation, being that this is the town in which the automobile was born and first mass-produced. All roads lead to Detroit, a once thriving and prosperous town of industry, wealth, and invention. Economical and social changes have since lessened the city’s prestige,
leaving many areas left abandoned, overgrown, and unsafe. The roads that once led to prosperity and a booming economic powerhouse unfortunately also took people further and further away from the city, resulting in a huge loss in population and creation of a vast sea of suburban context. This population loss has changed the way our city feels; the vibes that were once felt in places such as Downtown, New Center, and Dearborn have been muffled. It has taken many years and lots of money to revive many parts of our city – Midtown and Downtown are currently seeing new successes because of this. Is it possible that we can revive every neighborhood like we have in these? I am not sure.
“Detroit is big enough to matter in the world and small enough for you to matter in it.”

– Jeanette Pierce
Fordism:

/Ford-izm/
noun

“the system of mass production that was pioneered in the early 20th century by the Ford Motor Company.”

“the typical postwar mode of economic growth and its associated political and social order in advanced capitalism.”
When speaking about Detroit, I cannot accurately relay my feelings about the city without acknowledging just how hardworking and tough this town is. For centuries, people in Detroit have been contributing influential works in all fields, works that enhance the lives of people all over the world each day. Perhaps the most noted of these influences, the automobile, is ironically the subject of both Detroit’s rise and fall. Fordism, the system of mass production that was used by Henry Ford to run his car company, has been synonomously used in conversation when discussing Detroit’s economic status over the years. The influx of automobiles in the city drove people away from Detroit, quite literally. While we look at Detroit with pride for being the town in which brought this convinience into our lives, it must also not be forgotten that these inventions slowly led to the demise of our cherished city.

It has been said that even the darkest day has only 24 hours, and this expression is true, also, of Detroit’s ruin. Hundreds of miles of vacant land and unoccupied buildings and homes litter Detroit’s landscape. While these massive plots often serve as a reminder of the city’s demise, they must also be seen through a lens of opportunity and repurpose. Detroit has become a hub for designers, artists, film makers, culinary extraordinaires, and creative minds alike. It is people such as these, such as us, who have the ability to take matters into their own hands and improve the world around them, regardless of its current state. Detroit is, in many ways, a blank slate. This idea excites many, but is not always easily changable. A bending of the rules is in order to maximize our city’s economic and built potential.
Lean Urbanism:

/ lEn/ erbenizem/
noun
(informal)

“an urban planning strategy that focuses on incremental, ongoing improvements to communities”
Pink Zone:

/piNGk/ zOn/
noun
(informal)

“an approach to zoning ordinances that allows for a less strenuous process in carrying out development and revitalization to zones in which the appropriate criteria is met”
Detroit overall lacks the sense of density and spark that is felt in places such as New York City and Boston, but certainly contains corridor conditions and neighborhoods that house this spirit. After experiencing the successful marriage of commercial, residential, and programmed green spaces that cities such as New York and Boston so consistently accommodate, I began to wonder what could make these conditions possible in a place such as Detroit. The first concept that peaked my interest was that of the Project for Lean Urbanism. Lean Urbanism is a movement that makes small-scale community building, business startups, and ongoing improvements to communities possible by providing more attainable opportunities for development.

A key component of the Lean Urbanism initiative in Detroit, called Pink Zoning, is a less strenuous approach to the processes involved in carrying out urban development and revitalization to particular Detroit corridors. Oftentimes, developments fail to reach their initial completion or maximum potential due to rigid zoning ordinances and inefficient systems. Working together, these movements allow said plans to evolve.

A neighborhood that is located at the corner of the M10 (John C. Lodge) Freeway and I-94 (Edsel Ford) Freeway near Midtown, Detroit, Michigan called Woodbridge contains a corridor that I see as an ideal opportunity to implement these approaches. The specific site that I have developed, in order to demonstrate what is possible when these principles are combined, is located between Trumbull and Lincoln Streets, bordered by Selden to the north, and Brainard to the south. The majority of this block is currently zoned R3, low density residential. The site is occupied only by the Trumbull Market on the north end of the block and four existing single-family homes along Lincoln Street.
Site Context Diagram

Yellow: Single-Family Residential
Orange: Multi-Family Residential / Retirement Facilities
Green: Programmed Green Space (Scripps Park)
Purple: Industrial / Commercial
Live-Work Housing:

/ˈliv werk/
adjective

“denoting or relating to property that combines residential living space with commercial or manufacturing space”

“A form of housing where residents may or may not live above their businesses, allowing commercial activity to stabilize a neighborhood and create jobs and economic opportunities.”
One possible way to bring together the merging of the urban conditions that make other U.S. cities so successful, which is currently not possible in the R3 zone of this site, is that of the Live-Work housing condition. Live-Work housing traditionally consists of rowhouses with residential units on the upper floors, and commercial spaces at the street level. Live-Work allows for economic growth and stabilization of its surrounding context by creating new jobs and living quarters within an area. Through study of this housing typology, combined with the ideals of Lean Urbanism and Pink Zoning, I have planned to diversify the housing options in Woodbridge, while simultaneously creating new maker spaces and opportunities for business.

The historic neighborhood of primarily Victorian homes in which we are dealing, Woodbridge, was added to the National Register of Historic places in 1980, with many of its structures dating back to the late 1800’s. Though Detroit has seen a large wave of revitalization from real estate developers and investors, Woodbridge has managed to stay out of the limelight for quite some time and maintain much of its original character and charm. The preservation efforts are largely enacted by the Citizen’s District Council, which manages to stabilize and preserve many of Woodbridge’s original homes.

Woodbridge has played a vital role in Detroit’s history throughout the years. Once home to big-name Detroiter such as David Stott, Ty Cobb, James E. Scripps, and William Woodbridge, the neighborhood was seen as an upscale residential district during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. When the automotive industry was in its heyday, the need for housing within the city of Detroit skyrocketed. In the land surrounding Woodbridge’s lavish single-family homes, apartment buildings were constructed to house factory workers and their families. During WWII, many homeowners rented out rooms in their homes or divided their homes into apartment units for rent to defense industry workers. Post-War, many affluent homeowners left the neighborhood for the suburbs. Today, Woodbridge is a center of revitalization and new opportunity for young and old.
WELCOME TO WOODBRIDGE

BARNABAS YOUTH CENTER
Some initial observations that I made note of when first visiting the site, with my project in mind, have continued to play a vital role in the development of my thesis. Woodbridge is a beautiful neighborhood whose streets are lined with large, old trees. Its homes are positioned snugly among one another, mostly clad in wood or vinyl siding, and some are painted in bright colors. Almost all homes have front porches and dormer windows. The homes are close to the street and sidewalk, most between 12 and 16 feet away from said pavements. The cars belonging to the residents and their guests are parked on the streets underneath the large, beautiful trees. All of these observations reminded me to pay close attention to the relationship between the building and the streetscape, as well as to the historical background information when approaching a new project.

**Existing Site Conditions**
In addition to analyzing the built and existing physical infrastructure of the block, I developed a SWOT diagram to make me aware of what was working and what was not working so well on this site. SWOT diagrams identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats within a chosen area. The Woodbridge site includes both positive and negative aspects, but I do believe that the positives outweigh the negatives, in terms of the development at hand. In studying precedents of other Live-Work communities in the country, I was able to more firmly grasp the concepts that make them so successful, both architecturally and overall. Two precedents that I took most influence were The Oaks at Battle Ground Village in Battle Ground, Washington, and Irongate of Birmingham in our neighboring Birmingham, Michigan.

**STRENGTHS:**
- PROXIMITY TO MIDTOWN,
- WELL-KEPT RESIDENCES,
- FEW VACANT LOTS

**WEAKNESSES:**
- NEIGHBORHOOD LACKS ACCESS TO ALL NEEDED GOODS AND SERVICES,
- LACK IN DIVERSE HOUSING TYPES

**OPPORTUNITIES:**
- ENCOURAGE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES + ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH NEW DEVELOPMENTS

**THREATS:**
- ZONING RESTRICTIONS,
- HEAVY VEHICULAR TRAFFIC, LITTLE GREEN SPACE FOR PUBLIC USE

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*Battle Ground, Washington*

The Oaks at Battle Ground Village

*live/work affordable housing project*

*Figures 29.0 & 30.0*

*Birmingham, Michigan*

Irongate of Birmingham

custom luxury live/work development
The site within Woodbridge spoke to me because it was one of the only few large areas of vacant land that is located within the neighborhood’s limits. It is also positioned in a very provocative spot between a solely residential district to its north and a heavy industrial and commercial strip to its south, along Grand River Avenue. I consider this site to be a quite ideal place to designing a Live-Work scenario, given that Woodbridge currently lacks a substantial diversity in housing types. While simultaneously implementing programmed green spaces, and the concepts of Pink Zoning and Lean Urbanism, I believe that this site can add to the rich, established urban fabric of the existing neighborhood and its surrounding context, creating a new and exciting feel throughout. The image below depicts a massing-style layout of how each element of my proposed design is represented on the site.
To demonstrate the way I see these principles working for this site, I developed a framework site plan and Live-Work housing proposal for Woodbridge that challenges the current zoning. I have implemented three different types of buildings into my scheme to help convey the overall feel of what I found so successful in the neighborhoods of other cities. The buildings are planned for each program respectively – The retail and maker space, to allow startup businesses and national chains to take root within Woodbridge, The one-story housing unit, featuring a one-car garage, and the live-work townhouse. Besides the built spaces of the proposal, the addition of planned public green spaces, urban farms, community gathering spaces, and a complete street along Trumbull could help this block start to experience a surge in growth, both economically and in its population, in line with the ideals of Lean Urbanism.
ONE STORY HOUSING UNIT

700 SQUARE FEET
(3/16" = 1' SCALE)

SHOWN: ONE BEDROOM,
1.5 BATHROOMS - ADA

RETAIL UNIT

18,515 SQUARE FEET
(3/16" = 1' SCALE)

CAN BE OCCUPIED BY ONE
TENANT OR SUBDIVIDED

POSITION OF THIS UNIT
VARIES THROUGHOUT SITE

LIVE- WORK STYLE TOWNHOUSE

RETAIL / MAKER SPACE:
280 SQUARE FEET
(3/16" = 1' SCALE)

TOWNHOME:
1,100 SQUARE FEET
(3/16" = 1' SCALE)

SHOWN: THREE BEDROOM,
2.5 BATHROOMS
Perspective Elevation of Live-Work Housing Units, Retail Space, + Complete Street along Trumbull

Perspective Elevation of One-Story Housing Units along site’s repurposed alleyway
Top: Site Section cut from Trumbull to Lincoln
Left: Perspective of commercial corner condition at Trumbull and Selden
Right: Perspective views of Pavillion space and community garden
Conclusion

Though I did take time to design architecture on this site, I believe that the possible success of these ideas can be seen most simply through the framework of urban planning. Detroit is a very unique and invigorating place for development at this time, a place that could greatly be transformed through the upgrading, or “lessening of the red tape” that exists in its current zoning ordinances. Paying attention to the principles of Lean Urbanism and Pink Zoning, while keeping in mind what makes a place start to feel inhabitable and comfortable to those who call it home, was the ultimate goal of my thesis.

A home is anywhere and anything that eludes comfort, privacy, and individuality. Detroit is home to all different types of people, people who have all found this sense of comfort within their current condition, and the conditions that they know have potential to flourish in their city. By infusing aspects of areas that experience a greater population density and variation of housing typologies, I believe that block by block, neighborhood-by-neighborhood, Detroit could begin to take on the feel of the cozy corners of Boston, or the bustling streets of many other major cities around the US.
Figure 1.0: Marvin Shaouni. “In Search of Detroit’s Most Beautiful Blocks.” Model D. N.p., 10 Nov. 2015. Web.


Figure 3.0: Image captured by Cori Hinterser.

Figure 4.0: Urban Realm. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Aug. 2016.


Figure 15.0: Han, Ali. Find House Plans. Watchesser, n.d. Web. 24


Figure 18.0: Image captured by Cori Hinterser.

Figure 19.0: Image captured by Cori Hinterser.

Figure 20.0: Image captured by Cori Hinterser.

Figure 21.0: Image captured by Cori Hinterser.

Figure 22.0: Image captured by Cori Hinterser.

Figure 23.0: Image captured by Cori Hinterser.

Figure 24.0: Image captured by Cori Hinterser.


Figure 26.0: Sercombe, Charles. “Housing Values Still on the Decline, According to County Study.” Hamtramck, MI. The Review - Hamtramck, n.d. Web. 7 Nov. 2016.

Figure 27.0: Image captured by Cori Hinterser.


Figure 30.0: Battle Ground Village, Battle Ground, WA. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Mar. 2017.

* All architectural drawings, maps, & renderings of the proposed project were created by Cori Hinterser.
Bibliography
