Oxboro Library
The Public Library in an Increasingly Digital Society

A Thesis
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

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Advisor

August, 2013

Acknowledgements

Thanks to everyone that helped me in this process.

My Family
For always reminding me I could do it.

My friends
For providing inspiration.

My Professors
For the knowledge, experience, and support throughout the entire process.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family.

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My thesis project is most simply defined as the completion of a new design for

Oxboro Library, a small public library located in Bloomington, MN. The potential of the

public library as a design project lies in my personal interest in this community entity.

As both a physical place and a public institution, the library has played valuable and

varied roles throughout my life. In my childhood, the library was a babysitter, storyteller

and drawing teacher, while simultaneously providing a place to socialize with friends or

explore the imagined landscapes inspired by the seemingly endless supply of stories on

the shelves. As a student, the library served as a reference collection of facts and

knowledge, a study hall to work and socialize with classmates, and also a portal to outer

space, both factual and fictional. As an adult, the library still contains alternate worlds

within its walls, yet it remains grounded in reality through its civic role as a community

meeting and voting location.

If the personal value of the intellectual and social opportunities offered by the

public library holds the potential for a project, then its genesis lies in the realization that

the value of this community institution is declining. In the case of Oxboro Library, my

waning personal use was a reflection of the larger community I lived in. Throughout

high school and college my need for information increased, while my use of the library

dramatically decreased. I still read for leisure, but increasingly borrowed fewer books

and spent less time reading in my public library. It no longer held any value to me as a

social meeting space. My use of the library steadily declined throughout the 90's and

into the 2000's. A decline in use was also true of the broader community and in 2001 the

OXBORO LIBRARY: THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN AN INCREASINGLY DIGITAL SOCIETY
Project Brief

Hennepin County Library System began analysis for renovation of the Oxboro Library.[1]

How can the public library lose its value while continuing to provide the same services to

the same community? The answer, in part, lies in the fact that the library has been a

relatively static entity offering the same services, in the same way, to a rapidly changing

society with rapidly changing wants and needs. In the case of the Oxboro Library, except

for the addition of a few computer/internet workstations, it was virtually unchanged from

the early 1980's thru 2003. I also believe the architecture of Oxboro Library reinforced

this static nature. Not only does the existing building do little to provide unique,

memorable spaces for the user, but it also consists of a single, large space flexible only in

its ability to house various arrangements of interior furnishings. Oxboro Library is

unable to respond to the changing social/intellectual needs of its users because it cannot

contain the increased social demands of its users while simultaneously fulfilling its role

as a quiet place of intellectual exploration and contemplation. These observations of the

current library are what define and solidify my position in this project. In my design for a

new Oxboro Library, architecture will create a physical place that houses the current

social and intellectual demands of its users with memorable spaces flexible enough to

respond to our ever changing, and increasingly digital, society.

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[1] My discussion with the head librarian at Oxboro Library resulted in a comprehensive overview of the
design and renovation, completed in 2004. From Pearl Hunt-McCain, *Personal Interview*, Jan. 2005.

The new design for Oxboro Library was developed through research beginning with an analysis of the traditional elements of the public library that continue to hold value in our modern society. The following definition for library[2], found in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, states very simply the library's value in traditional terms:

> li·brary 1 a : a place in which literary, musical, artistic, or reference
> materials (as books, manuscripts, recordings, or films) are kept for
> use but not for sale

The notion of housing and providing access to information is clearly an important issue. The definition above is limited and lacks examples of modern forms of information. It is clear that, like the existing Oxboro Library, this definition has not evolved with our increasingly digital society. As a result, research of the needs of our modern society, informed in part by the shortcomings of the above definition, was undertaken to identify potential elements that would add value to the library. Primary among these was technology and access to digital information. Related to this are social needs that accompany our increasingly digital society, which must also be housed by the library to accommodate social media, gaming, and shared technological learning experiences like the "maker" movement. Architecturally, the library's ability to maintain value depends on both the building's flexibility to adapt to new programmatic demands and the presence of memorable places through which the community is anchored to the place as it becomes a storage and access point of communal memories.

Ultimately, research for this design focused on the following five issues:

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[2] "Library," Def.1a, *Merriam-Webster Online (*Merriam-Webster, n.d.), Web, 22 Aug. 2013.

information storage, access to digital media, increased social functions, programmatic

flexibility, and creating memorable spaces. These issues were researched through

various methods and influenced the final design on various scales from site and

programmatic decisions all the way down to building details and material choices.

The first two research issues, information storage and access to digital media,

highlight the contrast between the traditional and the new. The issues are similar in

function, but very different in their effect on the design. The library will still serve its

traditional role as a repository of information and quiet place for intellectual pursuits.

However, the format of the information we require is constantly evolving. At present, this

includes online formats and in the future may take on digital formats yet unimagined.

Whatever the format the accessed information takes, this programmatic element of access

to information is essential to the success of the public library. Therefore, consideration of

the increasingly digital nature of our society including the resulting methods of storage,

access, and sharing of information is critical to the success of the public library. These

two issues influenced the design on a programmatic level by informing internal

relationships and spatial demands[3], as well as furnishings and detailing on a smaller

scale.

Next, for the library to maintain its value to the community it serves, it must

accommodate the social demands of its users.[4] These social demands stem from multiple

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[3] William J. Mitchell, *City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), p. 48-49.
[4] Stephen Carr, Mark Francis, Leanne G. Rivlin and Andrew M. Stone., *Public Space* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 19.

sources and are vital to the library's role as a community entity. The inclusion of new technologies, as mentioned above, brings with it the need to accommodate the social functions associated with the new ways we use technology. The library must address the social aspect of our developing technologies and the way we use them to share information. Equally important are the needs of the community for social and civic meeting spaces of all kinds. Many types of public places were studied both for how they could inform programmatic elements of the library, as well as the way the building physically relates to the community. These social demands were researched in multiple methods from literary and precedent study, to community observation and library user interviews. The results informed the design in various aspects including building form and site placement by drawing from the way the community relates and uses other public building types. On a smaller scale, community needs informed programmatic functions by introducing new elements, even material choices throughout the project.

Another issue researched as part of the design process was the flexibility of a design to accommodate change, ensuring the ability to adapt to changing societal needs. In this thesis, the notion of flexibility was researched through observation of Oxboro and other local public libraries. The existing library is inflexible and unable to handle more social programmatic demands without negatively impacting more solitary, research oriented elements. Precedent studies were also used to explore ideas of flexibility in library programming.

Finally, the library itself, the physical building, can hold value by being memorable.

This could be done in a number of ways, one of which is to have a unique building that stands out in the community. Another, maybe more powerful method, is to view the building as a repository for the experiences and memories of the user. These memories are tied to the actual place through sensory input, while utilizing the services it provides. This localization of memories is described in the following quote by Gaston Bachelard:

> Of course, thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed, and if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar and a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated. [5]

While this quote refers to the building in the form of the house, it also applies to the library. My childhood memories of specific stories that I read while sitting in the Baseball Glove chair at the library are one example of this.[6] This notion of memorability will be applied to the final design by incorporating unique, memorable spaces that will anchor the memories of the library users to the building.

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[5] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 8.
[6] Carr, et al., *Public Space*, p. 20.

The building site I have chosen for this project is in the city of Bloomington,

Minnesota. Bloomington, founded in 1858, is a suburb of Minneapolis and Saint Paul

located just south of these major cities on Interstate 35W. By population, it is one of the

largest cities in the state currently having over 85,000 residents.[7]

Figure 1: Regional Map. State of Minnesota
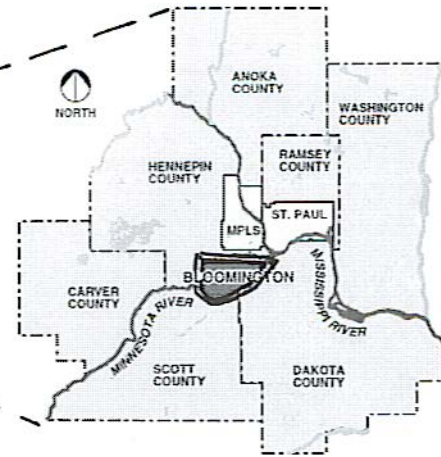highlighted for site location reference.

Figure 2: Metropolitan area Map.
City of Bloomington highlighted.

Specifically, the site is located in the north-east side of the city on the corner of

Portland Avenue and 88th Street S, (see figure on following Page) and is currently

occupied by the current Oxboro Library, a small branch library for the Hennepin County

Library System. This building opened in 1975, and has undergone no significant

improvements since.[8] It is one of two branch libraries in Bloomington, and serves a large

residential area of the city including a number of public and private schools.

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[7] "About Bloomington," *Bloomington MN Government Site* (City of Bloomington, n.d.), Web, August 15, 2013.
[8] Lucy Y. Her, "Oxboro Library Closes for Renovation," *Star Tribune*, Saturday, November 3, 2003.
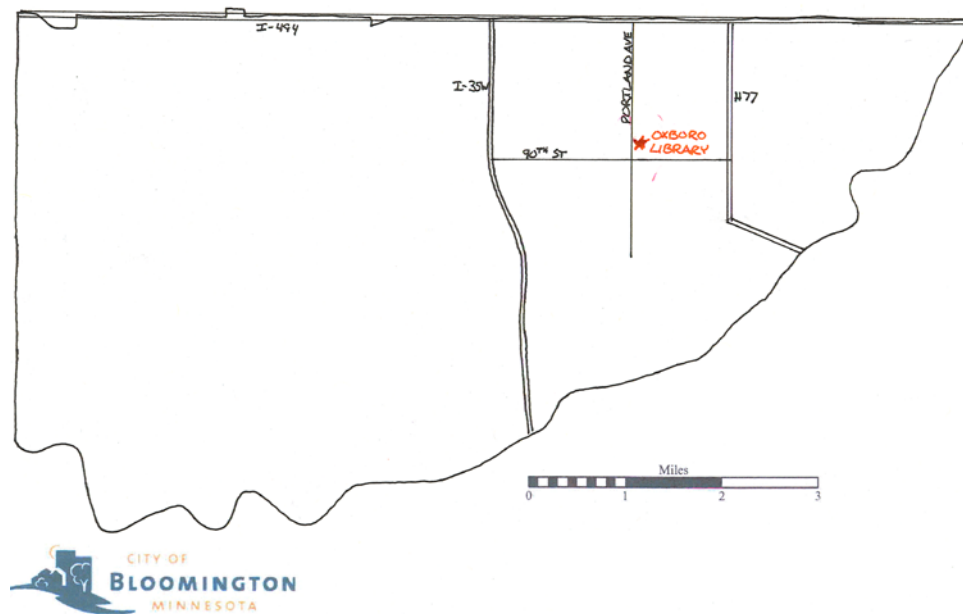
Figure 3: City Of Bloomington Map. Project site indicated by star.

The original Oxboro Public Library was very successful and is still used by the

community. Although its value has declined due to the limited response to the changing

needs of the community, Oxboro Library is still utilized by local residents. This is due,

in large part, to factors related to the site of the library including awareness within the

community, proximity to schools, residents within walking distance, and available

transportation to the site.[9] It was these very same factors which informed the decision to

maintain the same site for this project and the design of a new Oxboro Library.

Awareness of the library within the community can be important to the Library's

success. This notion is directly connected to the research issue of increasing the

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[9] Christine Koontz, "The Location of Your Library Building," *Library Buildings in a Changing Environment*, ed. Marie-Francoise Bisbrouck (Munchen, Saur: IFLA Publications, 2001), p. 141-153.

memorability of the library. Although this does include the types of activities that take

place inside the library, it more directly relates to the building's site through the physical

presence in and recognition by the community as a whole. The location of the site on

Portland Avenue, one of the busiest streets in the area, has great potential for the library

to make a physical impression on the large number of people that pass down this busy

city street.

Another site variable that can contribute to the success of a library is the

proximity to schools and educational institutions. The site for this project is located

across the street from a middle school with eight hundred students, and a large

elementary school. Also within walking distance are two private church schools whose

students utilize the existing library. Within a short driving distance, are other institutions

including a senior high school, two additional elementary schools, and a community

college.

Also, the number of residents living within walking distance can have a positive

effect on library usage. Oxboro library is located in a primarily residential area of

Bloomington. With the exception of the few schools within walking distance and a small

amount of green space, the site is surrounded entirely by residential property. With

walking distance generally considered to be a half mile, the surrounding neighborhood is

primarily single family homes with some apartment and medium density housing.

Finally, the availability of multiple types of transportation to the site can increase

the potential for success. Here again, the site for Oxboro Library is ideally located with

respect to this influencing factor. It is located on both the metro bus line and the city bus line. Oxboro is within ten minutes of driving for most Bloomington residents, as well as many of the residents of the city of Richfield. As mentioned earlier, it is also within walking and biking distance of many schools in the city.

In addition to the previously mentioned site factors that the existing library already benefits from, this location also has the potential to benefit from green space both on and adjacent to the site. On the west end of the lot is a tranquil lawn shaded by large oaks and maples perfect for sitting under and reading a book. In this case, these qualities could be brought into the building providing a similar experience year round with an indoor green space. Also, adjacent to the east end of the site is a green corridor that runs nearly the length of the city from north to south. Originally, this was held open for the power lines that run along its length with open grass fields underneath. In recent years, these fields have undergone two significant changes. First, the neighboring residents have encroached on this corridor by expanding gardens past their lots into this underutilized space. Second, the city has recently developed small prairie and garden areas providing varied walking and recreation areas. Both changes, brought about at least in part by community demand, are utilized in the design for a new Oxboro Library.

Precedent studies were important to the development of this project. The decline of

the library, either through neglect or through inability to adapt to our changing society,

was apparent in the late 1990's. In the early 2000's, numerous projects were undertaken

to either renovate or replace aging and outdated libraries. Whether large or small in

scale, the question of how the library adapts to the changing needs of the community was

an unavoidable consideration. This was certainly the case with the 2004 renovation of

the existing Oxboro Library. Manifested primarily in the addition of computer work

stations, Oxboro's response did little to address the community's needs resulting in little

more than a renovation of interior finishes and furnishings. It seemed that the smaller

projects, whether due to budget or other limitations, went no further than this in trying to

fulfill the new demands of changing technologies. A much wider range of approaches to

the question of what the library should become was seen in the development of large,

metropolitan library projects. Two examples of this are the new Minneapolis Central

Library designed by Cesar Pelli & Associates, and the Seattle Public Library designed by

Rem Koolhaas. Both projects explored varied solutions to address the new technologies

and social demands of our increasingly digital society. The following pages give a brief

overview of these two unique projects as well as insight into how they informed the

design for a new Oxboro Library.

Minneapolis Central Library - 2006[10]
Cesar Pelli - Cesar Pelli & Associates
& Architectural Alliance

Figure 4: Exterior Rendering Nicollet Mall.

> The new library will be a dynamic, resource-rich, downtown destination,
> an essential community gathering place that inspires learning and
> interaction. – Cesar Pelli[11]

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[10] "Minneapolis Central Library: Spec Sheet," *ArchitecturalRecord.com* (McGraw Hill Financial, 2013), Web, August 21, 2013.
[11] Cesar Pelli & Associates and Architectural Alliance, "Minneapolis Central Library: Schematic Design," *hclib.org*, (Hennepin County Libraries, Oct. 1, 2002), Web-PDF, Oct. 15, 2003, p. 2.

The new Central Library by Cesar Pelli opened in 2006 and was built at the north end of Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis. Constructed on the site of the previous central library building that dated back to 1961,[12] this is one example of society's demand for increased library services and the library's need to evolve to meet those demands. As indicated in the quotation on the previous page, an effort was made to make the library an asset to the city, and ensure its value to Minneapolis residents. The study of Minneapolis Central Library informed this thesis through its exploration and implementation of strategies related to increasing social demands and memorability.

The new building program features many key spaces that respond to this focus on community needs. The following are programmatic improvements and additions to the previous library that were considered critical in the design phases of the new project:

- <u>More books, computers, seating</u>
- <u>More open shelves for browsing</u>
- **Children's Library** - a place for learning, literacy, imagination and discovery
- **Teen Central** - designed by teens, for teens
- Technology training room
- <u>New immigrant center</u>
- **Community resources** - meeting rooms, auditorium, gallery
- **A cafe and bookstore**
- **Library Hall** - a grand civic space

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[12] Cesar Pelli & Associates and Architectural Alliance, "Minneapolis Central Library: Schematic Design," *hclib.org*, (Hennepin County Libraries, Oct. 1, 2002), Web-PDF, Oct. 15, 2003, p. 6.

Interestingly, this list of important programmatic elements does not depart from traditional programming for small public libraries[13] by presenting us with any new, radically different spaces. Instead, we are presented with a list of traditional programmatic spaces that were given new levels of prioritization based on community needs. Information is still housed by the library for use.(underlined in list on previous page) The end product was a design that utilized these traditional elements of the library, but through emphasis of the social and community spaces, (bold in list on previous page) resulted in the creation of a library that is dramatically different than its predecessor.

Also informed by the study of the Minneapolis Central Library was the notion of utilizing memorable spaces to increase and maintain value. In this case, Library Hall, the central gallery space is at once a memorable interior space and a unique exterior icon. Obviously a focal point of the design, this entry and exhibit space was vital in the making of this place. This realization led to the multipurpose space that not only provides entrance from two major streets, but also provides orientation, connection, and social interaction to the interior environment of the building. The central Library has memorable spaces on many scales with examples including the piano room, art gallery, children's learning areas, and individual reading spaces many of which are enriched by the play of light through the translucent exterior skin.

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[13] Rolf Myller, *The Design of the Small Public Library* (New York, NY: R.R. Bowker Company, 1966), p. 45-73.

Seattle Public Library - 2004[14]
Rem Koolhaas – OMA
& LMN Architects

Figure 5: Exterior Photo of Seattle Central Library.

> Our ambition is to redefine / reinvent the Library as an institution no
> longer exclusively dedicated to the book, but as an information store,
> where all media - new and old - are presented under a regime of new
> equalities….Technology is not a threat, but it enables the realization of
> ancient ambitions - totality, completeness, dissemination, accessibility. In
> any case, the anticipation of a looming conflict between the real and the
> virtual is moot at the moment where the two can be made to coincide,
> become each other's mirror image. The virtual can become the distributed
> presence of the new Seattle Public Library that users find confirmed in its
> actual site in the city. - Rem Koolhaas[15]

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[14] "Seattle Central Library: Spec Sheet," *ArchitecturalRecord.com* (McGraw Hill Financial, 2013), Web,
August 21, 2013.
[15] OMA and LMN, "Seattle Public Library:Proposal," *spl.org*, (Seattle Public Libraries, Dec. 1999), Web,
Aug.21, 2013, p. 8.

The Seattle Public Library by Rem Koolhaas opened in 2004 and was built on the same site as the previous incarnation of the downtown's library.[16] The quotation on the previous page clearly states Koolhaas' attitude towards the library and its role in an increasingly digital society. The study of Seattle Public Library informed this thesis through its exploration and implementation of strategies related to increasing social demands and incorporation of emerging technologies.

The idea that the library is the place where one can access all media types at the same time is, for Koolhaas, a powerful notion. In this ideology, all formats of information are needed and interconnected. It has little to do with which type is more important, but rather that they are all needed and appropriately housed in the library. If this is accomplished, the information will be accessible in its different forms, at the same time that it comprises a complete and unified collection. The layout and relationships of programmatic spaces within the library were heavily influenced by the housing and accessing of information. The following components were the key programmatic spaces:

- **Public Forum**
- **Entrance, Information and Borrowers' Services**
- General Information Services and Periodicals
- **Children's Center**
- **Young Adults Center**
- **Technology Learning and Support Center**
- Main Non-Fiction Collection
- Government Publications & Law

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[16]"About Central Library," *spl.org*, (Seattle Public Libraries, 2013), Web, Aug. 21, 2013.

Again, we find a list of traditional programmatic elements of the library, yet they have been influenced by our modern technologies and interpreted into a new, more dynamic notion of the library. In the Seattle Library, components such as the public forum, the children's center, and the young adult's center were greatly informed by social considerations. (bold in list on previous page) Technology was a defining factor for other programmatic components such as operations and technology learning and support center. (underlined in list on previous page) The Public Forum is an example of the influence of both social issues and the presence of digital media and technology. This area is viewed as one of the most important areas in the library, and like in the Minneapolis Library, is designed to create an important, valued destination within the city.

The building program of the design for a new Oxboro Library had many potential

starting points. Taking a cue from precedent studies, this project began with the program

for the existing library and moved forward from there to create a new library that more

effectively meets the community's needs. The following is a list of the programmatic

spaces of the existing Oxboro Library:

Young Adults Area	**Adult Reading Area**
Auditorium	**Meeting Room**
Books/Stacks	**Parking**
Children	**Periodicals**
Circulation Desk	**Reference Area**
Entry/Information Area	**Restrooms**
Reading Room	**Staff Room**
Individual Study Rooms	**Work Room**

In its application, the above program as manifested in the current Oxboro Library treats

all spaces equally with respect to nearly all design aspects. Only spatial requirements are

different, but even this characteristic fulfills only the minimum amount needed to contain

the space. While all the above elements are needed and utilized by patrons, some are in

higher demand than others. Unfortunately, the uniformity to the existing spaces within

the library limits the ability to address the varied demands of its users.

The first step in the evolution of the existing program towards a new, more

responsive library was to reexamine the existing program with respect to community

demand. This newly prioritized list of spaces informed primarily the spatial allocation

given to each element, but also the development of memorability and innovation. The

next step in the development of the new design was to consider the demands of the

community for more social spaces. This had multiple effects on the new program. First,

some of the existing programmatic spaces, such as the Entry/Information Area, were

expanded and re-imagined with more varied uses. Second, to meet community needs,

spaces were included in the new program that were not in the existing library. The final

phase of program development was to consider new technologies and access to evolving

forms of information. The result was the following annotated building program.

Community Level:

The Community Level of the new Oxboro Library would house a variety of spaces
providing residents with a destination for fulfilling a number of social needs. This design
would provide the community with services it does not currently have within walking
distance including a coffee shop, technology classroom, and community garden.
Residents could reserve or rent spaces for use in social and business gatherings. One
must also pass through this level to access the library services.

(For Community Level Floor Plan, see page 21)

> **1. Entry Vestibule**
>
> **2. Community Commons-** As the main entrance to the library, this space is a
> neighborhood destination also providing an indoor plaza –like green space.
> Suitable for small gatherings or individual enjoyment, the public can access the
> internet or obtain civic information, gather before community events, or just get
> out of the snow and read a book under a tree.
>
> **3. Restrooms**

4. Group Study Terrace- This extension of the study area in the library stacks projects into the community commons allowing for interaction between the library and community spaces.

5. Coffee Shop- Open during library hours, coffee, refreshments, and light snacks would be available for library users, commuters, teachers, and neighborhood residents. This would be the only coffee shop for most of the residents within walking distance.

6. Bookstore- Selling new and used books, this space could be run to fund the library or as a private business.

7. Community Garden- This green space takes its cue from the public green corridor running past the east end of the lot. The public has already conscripted pieces of the corridor running along Park Avenue for gardens. This space would be an extension of the that green corridor and the community garden plots would provide a space for those without the opportunity to utilize other public spaces. It would also serve as a light court and buffer from the noise of the parking lot neighboring activities.

8. Galaxy Youth Center- A gathering place for local youth, this space would house computers and other enriching activities. It would be utilized by students from neighboring schools to socialize after school and in the summer.

9. Technology Classroom- Space with 14 computers for community education.

10. Conference Room

11. Gallery- A show space for art from students and local artists.

12. Gallery Courtyard

13. Gathering Area

14. Community Hall- A small auditorium and meeting space available for public meetings and gatherings.
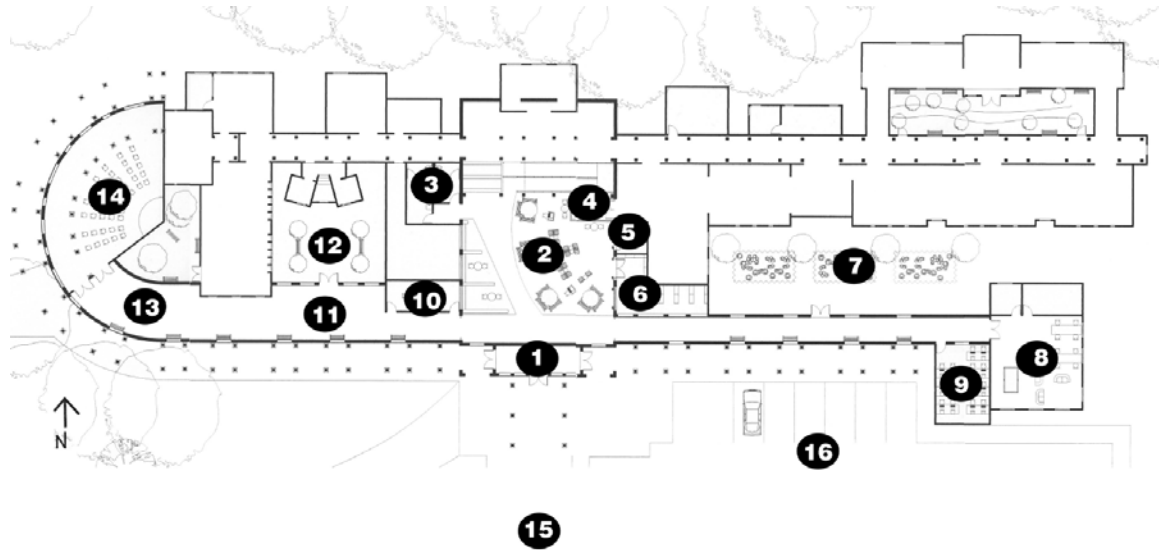
15. Community Patio

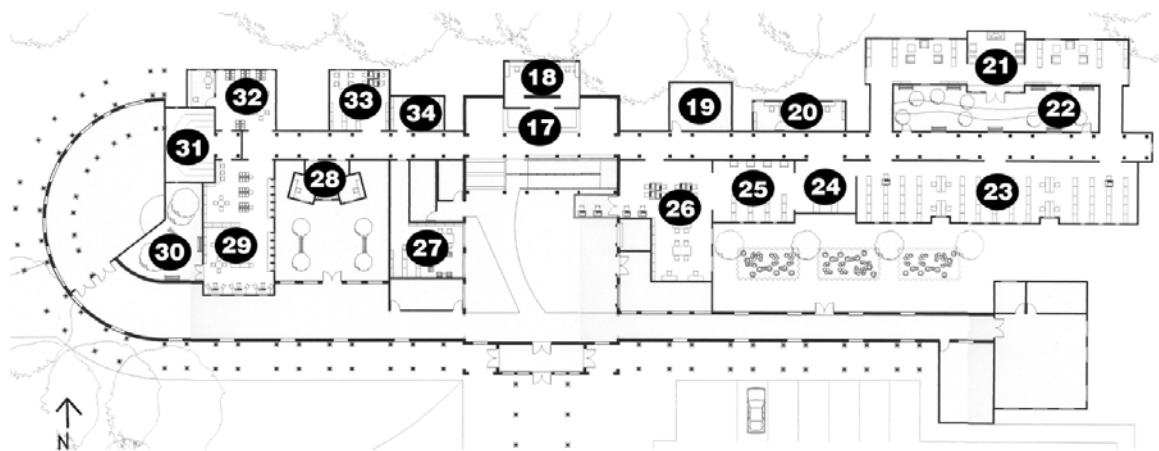Figure 6: Floor Plan: Community Level. Programmatic spaces numbered for reference.

Figure 7: Floor Plan: Library Level . Programmatic spaces numbered for reference.

Library Level:

The Library Level of the new Oxboro Library would house the functions required of a small public library. The design focuses on providing access to information in both physical and digital formats, places for individual and group study. This included the incorporation of various types of computer workstations into the programattic spaces below as appropriate. The library program also provides unique and memorable spaces for reading and socializing. (For Library Level Floor Plan, see page 21)

17. **Circulation Desk-** This desk is staffed by librarians and provides check-out and informataional services. Self check-out of library materials is also available at kiosks next to the Circulation Desk.

18. **Administrative Workroom**

19. **Meeting Room**

20. **Individual Study-** This small study room is located on the north side of the building and is isolated from distracting activities in the library.

21. **Adult Reading-** This area was a heavily utilized area in the existing library by seniors as a resource for newspapers and periodicals. Due to this demand, the area was expanded providing ample, casual seating including a fireside area to fight the Minnesota cold.

22. **Nature Court-** With a running stream bisecting this small court located off the adult reading area, this provides a unique and memorable environment for relaxation, reading and study.

23. Stacks

24. Help Desk

25. Reference Area

26. Group Study- Located adjacent to the stacks, this study area provides tables of various sizes, computer workstations, and a connection to the Community Commons.

27. World Language Area- This growing piece of the library program is expected to expand with increases in various ethnic populations in and around Bloomington. This area needs to be able to adapt to changing ethnic populations in order to provide needed information and services. Computer workstations used for language learning are an important part of this area. It is also less formal and therefore visually connected to the social activities in the Community Commons.

28 Reading Nooks- These unique spaces have a view of the Gallery Courtyard and provide individual reading spaces on the children's side of the library.

29. Children's Area- Scaled down for children, this area provides resources for reading, learning and exploring. It is well lit and has access to its own small courtyard.

30. Children's Courtyard

31. Story Time Amphitheater- A three-tired amphitheater for storytelling, puppet shows and individual reading. It is another memorable space within the children's area.

32. Pre-Teen Area

33. Young Adult

34. Offices

The design process for a new Oxboro Library was initiated by a desire to reestablish the small public library as a valuable community entity. The response to this was to utilize architecture to create a physical place that houses the current social and intellectual demands of its users with memorable spaces flexible enough to respond to our ever changing, and increasingly digital society. The design process was informed by research into issues that would help the library build and maintain value in the community as our society changes. Finally, the design for a new Oxboro Library was created and refined through an iterative process driven by various "thesis maps" used to define the decision making. Referred to as T-maps, these design tools were a focus of the thesis curriculum set forth by the college faculty and were developed to help explore design issues and drive the overall design process.

On the following page is a combination of the various thesis maps used to explore the design issues of this project into a comprehensive T-map. The cyclical design process is described on three levels as one travels clockwise around the map. First, the outer layer defining quadrants, is the most general level of the map which is divided into developmental and evaluative phases that each progress through a series of ideological and pragmatic considerations. The second level of the T-map, following the dashed arrows, charts the progression of the design on a programmatic level. The third level of the T-map is mapped in bold gray and black arrows and drives the most detailed level of consideration in the design process including internal or external influences indicated by their position relative to the oval representing the design process
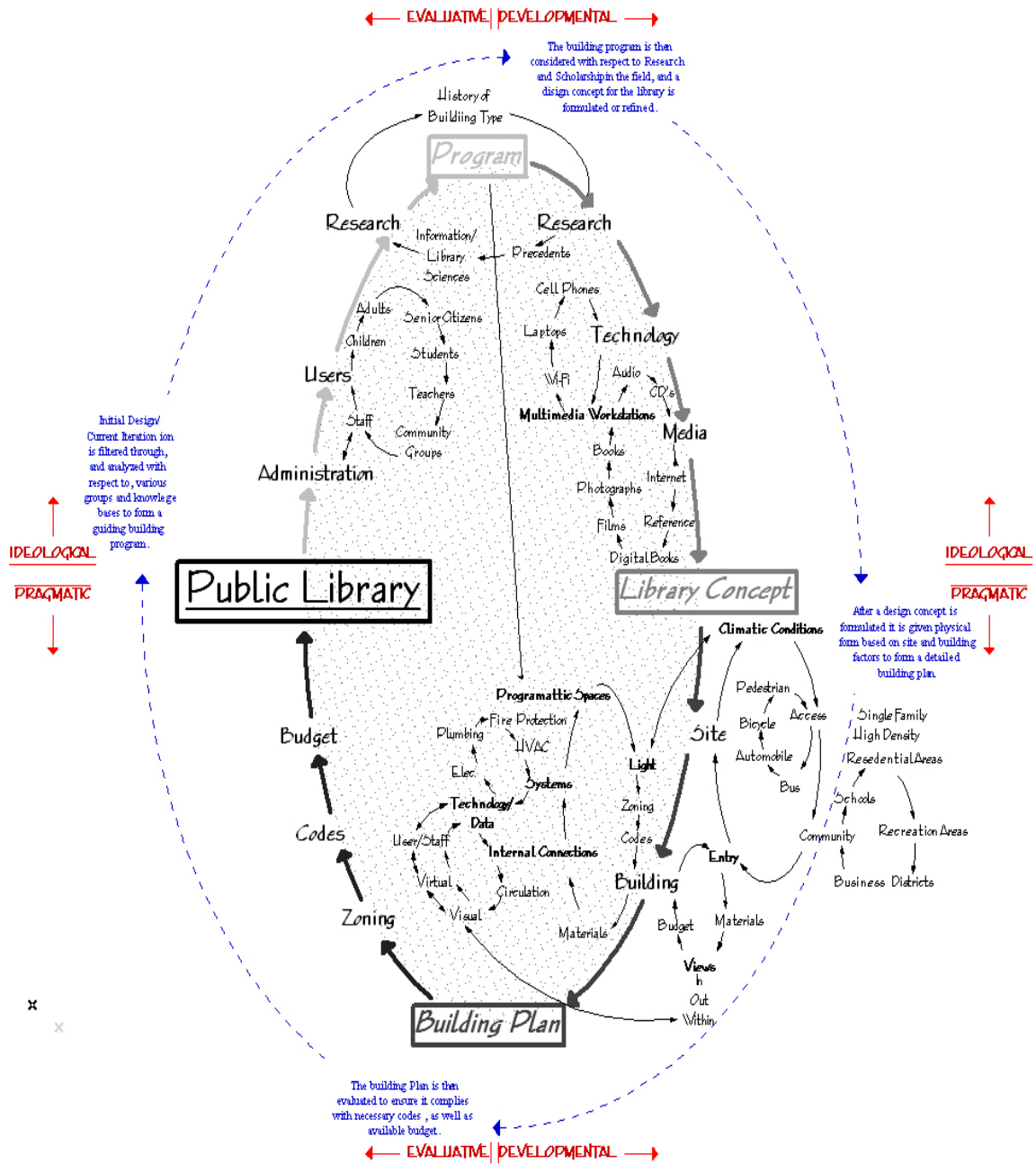
Figure 8: T-Map developed during Pre-Thesis. A cyclical process used to guide the design of the project.

Creating and maintaining value to the community is the overarching goal of the design for a new Oxboro Library. It is therefore necessary for the new library to engage the community if it is be a valued entity within the Bloomington community. There are a number of design elements, guided by the five primary research issues, which were developed over the course of this thesis project.

The physical presence of the library is perhaps one of the most immediate ways that the library can engage the community. With its site along the heavily traveled Portland Avenue, there exists great potential for taking advantage of the opportunity to make a memorable impression as being a part of the community. If designed right, even those who have not used the library yet or only pass by infrequently will remember it and perceive it as a vital piece of the community. Due to its community function, interest and vitality of possible uses, and the likelihood for it to house large groups, the Community Hall was chosen as a space that could visually and ideologically engage the community. The Community Hall is a multi-use space to house performances, community meetings, and other large group activities. The final design for Oxboro Library situated this space directly adjacent to Portland Avenue to capitalize on its visual presence. The intention to create a memorable form employed learning two sources. Architecturally speaking, the surrounding community has little in the way of unique or iconic architecture, but this doesn't mean that it is void of memorable elements.   Some of the most used, and in some cases most remembered places in Bloomington, are some of the small strip malls. The memorability associated with some of these places is derived simply from unique signs

identifying the shopping complex. These signs are often remembered by people who are

not residents of the immediate area. In the design for the new Oxboro Library, the

Community Hall has the chance to be a memorable element in the community, or in other

words, a sign. Taken to the next level, this will not be a literal sign, but will be a unique

structure that advertises the library as a vital community element by advertising the

activities that take place inside. The glowing, transparent structure pictured below, the

Paper Church in Kobe, Japan was designed by Shigeru Ban. These same characteristics

are embodied in the Community Hall of the New Oxboro Library.

Figure 9: Photos of strip mall signs.
Recognizable landmarks in the Bloomington.
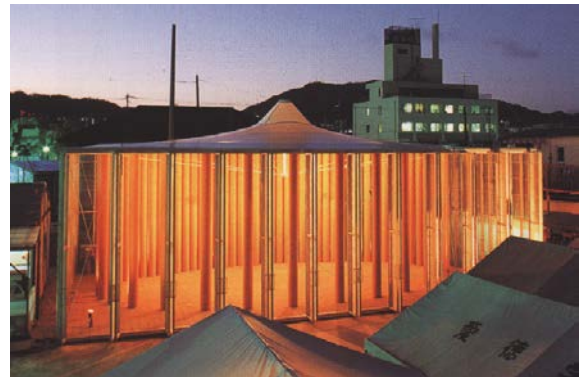
Figure 10: Paper Church by Shigeru Ban.
 Located in Kobe, Japan.

Figure 11: Sketch of the Community Hall. View from Portland Avenue.
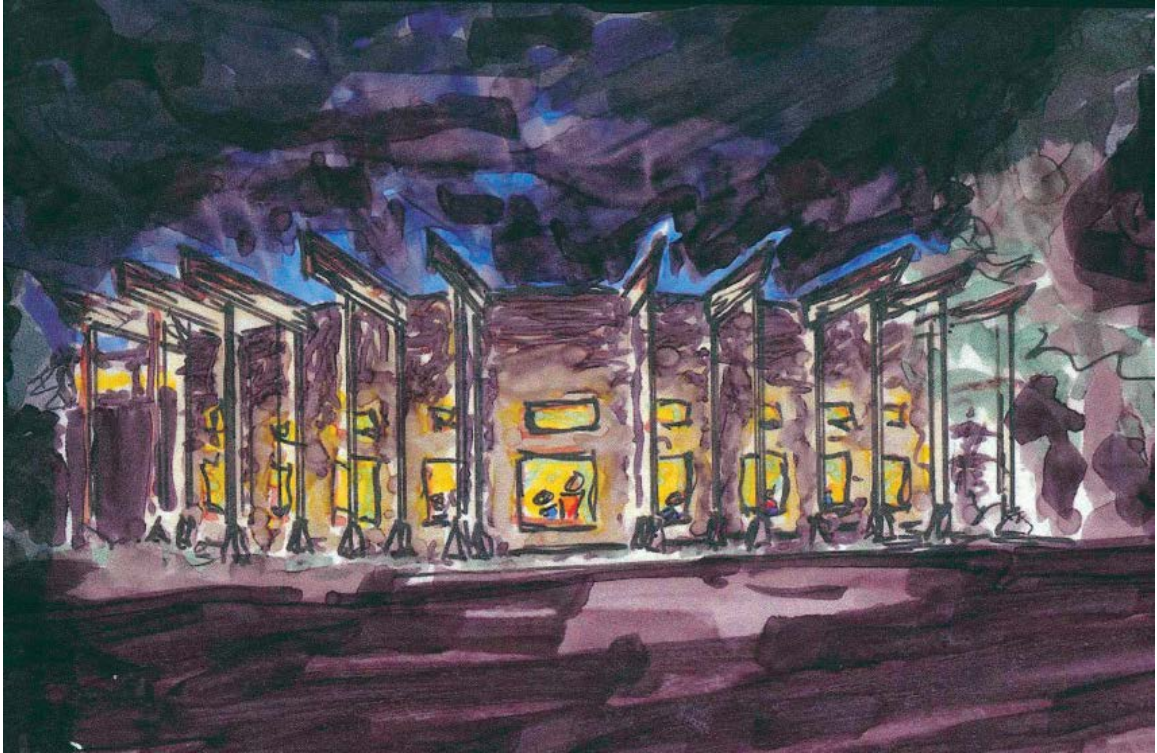
Figure 12: Rendering of the Community Hall. View from Portland Avenue.

Utilizing similar transparency to offer the energy of the place and the activities taking place inside as the advertisement for the Library, this lighted beacon making its presence known on Portland Avenue will cement the library's presence in the memory of the passersby.

Another aspect of the new Oxboro Library that was developed to bolster

community use and, in turn, cement its value is the Community Commons space. The

intent was to give members of the community more incentive to visit and utilize the

library by making it a multi-use destination offering services that fulfill evolving social

demands. The Community Commons area was developed by combining service

functions from the library with social and retail elements from the community. With

elements such as a coffee shop, book store, and plaza like gathering space. It also houses

access to information in the form of civic information such as tax forms and other

government literature as well as internet workstations allowing access to online

information such as public transportation schedules. One consideration was the effect

this potential energetic gathering space could have on adjacent library spaces. Placement

of the Community Commons area within the overall building changed as the building

evolved through multiple schemes.
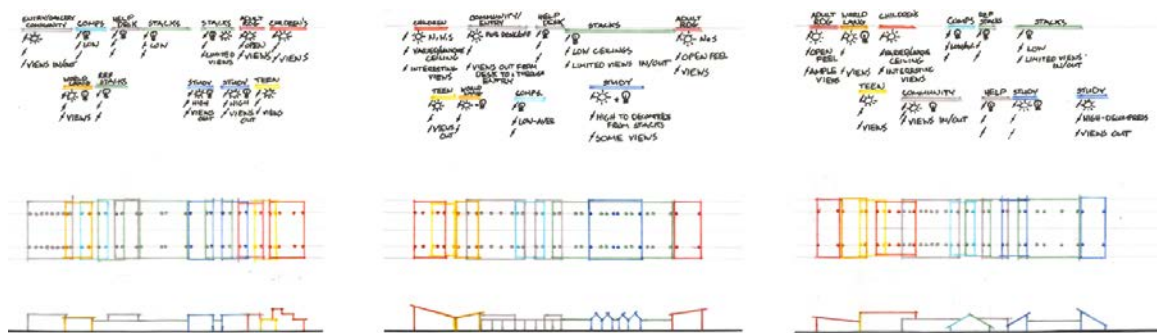
Figure 13: Diagrammatic layout study. Exploration of layout of programmatic elements exploring
adjacencies, physical qualities, compression/overlap of spaces, and building massing in the design.

Also represented in the diagrams on the previous page is the basic massing of the building, required sensory qualities of the program spaces, and how these characteristics affect the adjacencies of programmatic elements.

The final design for the new Oxboro Library has the Community Commons occupying a central location in the strip mall like building layout. Serving as the entry to this library and community destination, one must enter the building by walking along its front façade, thereby getting drawn in by glimpses of the activities within. Once inside, one experiences the Community Commons as an indoor greenspace for gathering, socializing, and even shopping. It is there to serve library patrons, commuters utilizing public transportation, and citizens attending community functions in the building.

Figure 14: Rendering of the Community Commons.

This potentially noisy, energetic space is adjacent to programmatic elements of the library that do not demand quiet and calm. The checkout desk, world language area, and group study areas of the library are all adjacent to this space. Where appropriate, connections are made into the library spaces to maintain connection to the greater community. The world language area, which is often a social group learning environment, is connected to the community commons by openings in the wall allowing visual and verbal interaction between the spaces. On the other side of the community commons, the bookstore and coffee shop provide a physical buffer to the study and stack spaces behind. However, the group study area does extend out into this public area with a raised patio housing a small gathering area. There is limited visual connection between the two spaces and one could "step out" of the study area through glass doors to interact with people in the community commons. This combination of social elements with information access, and even connection to the internal spaces of the library, make the community commons not only an entry to the library, but also a community destination.

The Final Design Presentation (below) is organized to allow the presentation to flow as one would read a book, from left to right and top to bottom. The left column of boards represents the precedents ranging from architectural examples to community elements that informed the final design. The main boards grouped in rows representing different types of information. The top row represents the library program through sketches and a collage of programmatic elements. The second row represents the design through architectural drawings and sketches. The third row contains diagrams related to the effect of the community and site on the design. The fourth row gives site context through photos, a site plan and 3d rendering. On the following pages are enlarged views of the final presentation boards.
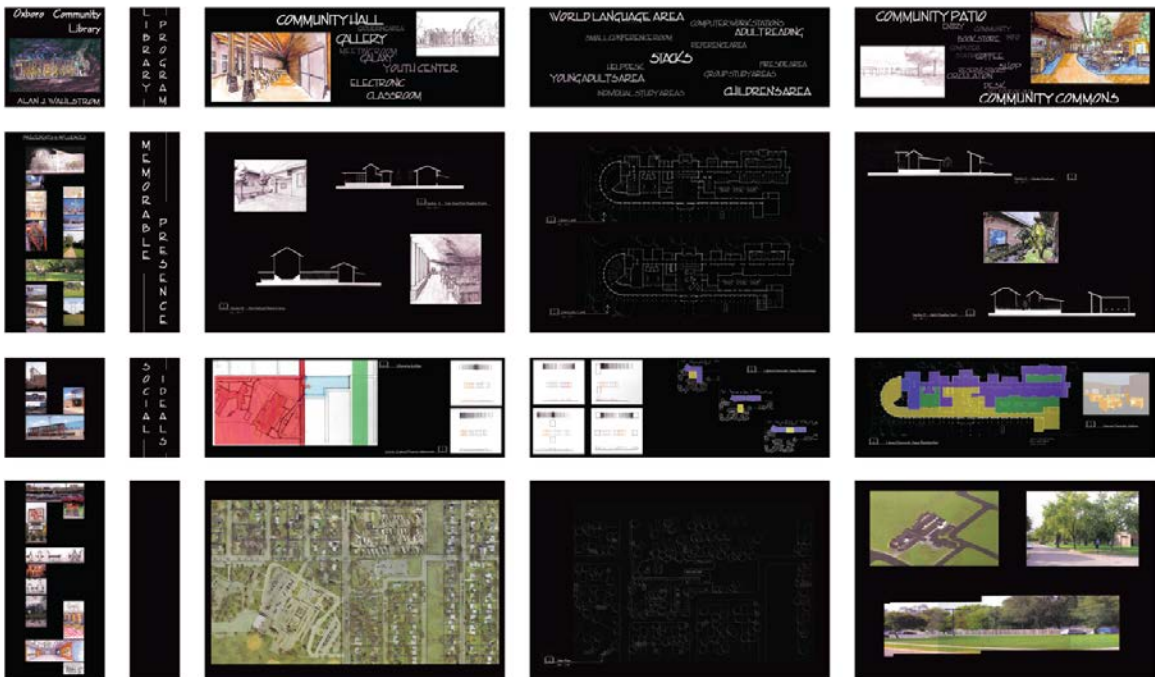
Figure 15: Final design presentation. (full) Entire presentation represented to show overall layout and design/idea matrix.
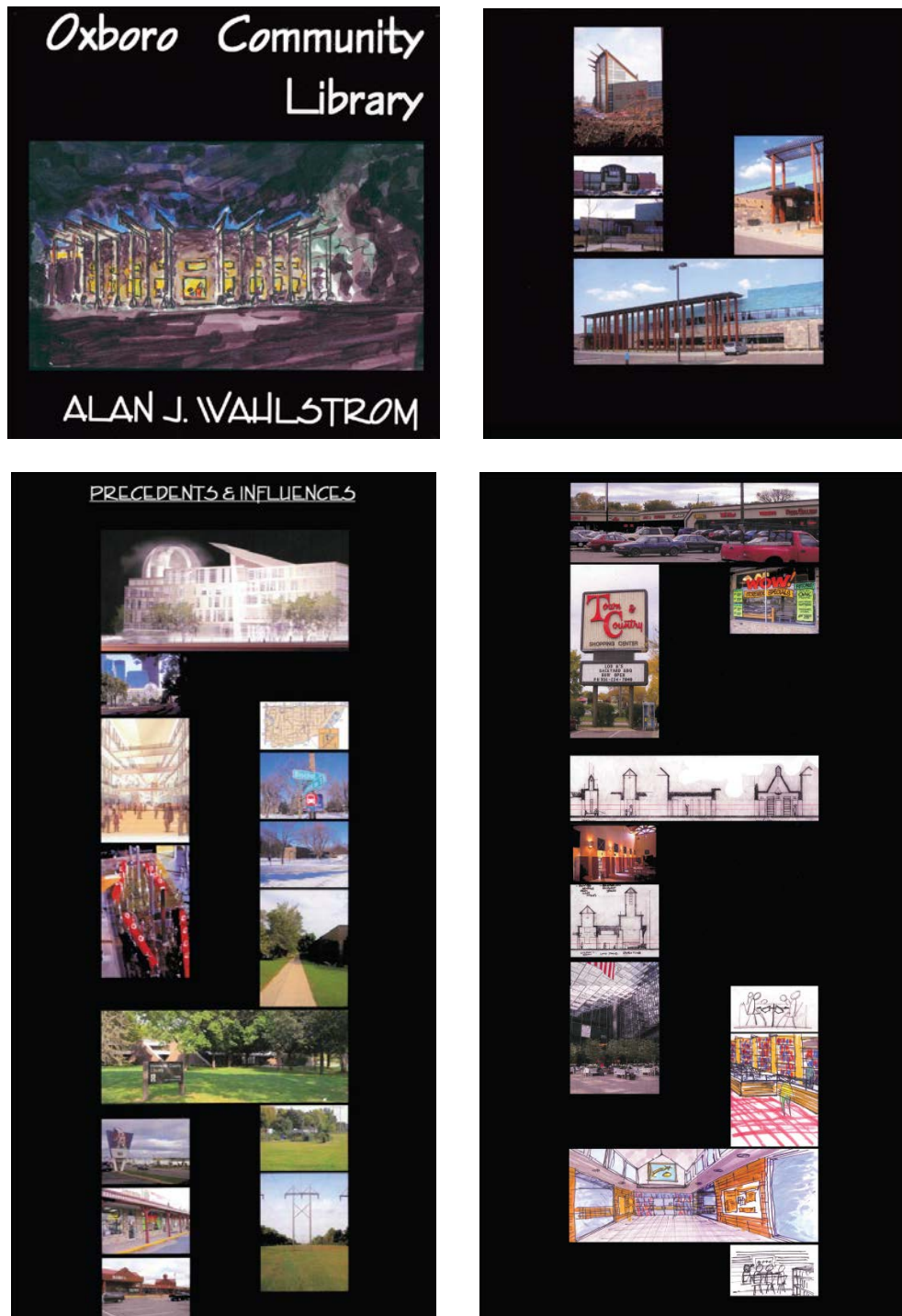
Figure 16: Final presentation boards. *Top Left-* Title Board. *Remaining Boards-* Various

precedent images that informed the final design.

Figure 17: Final presentation board. The focus is on community scale with sketches of the Community Hall and a list of program spaces for the Community Level.
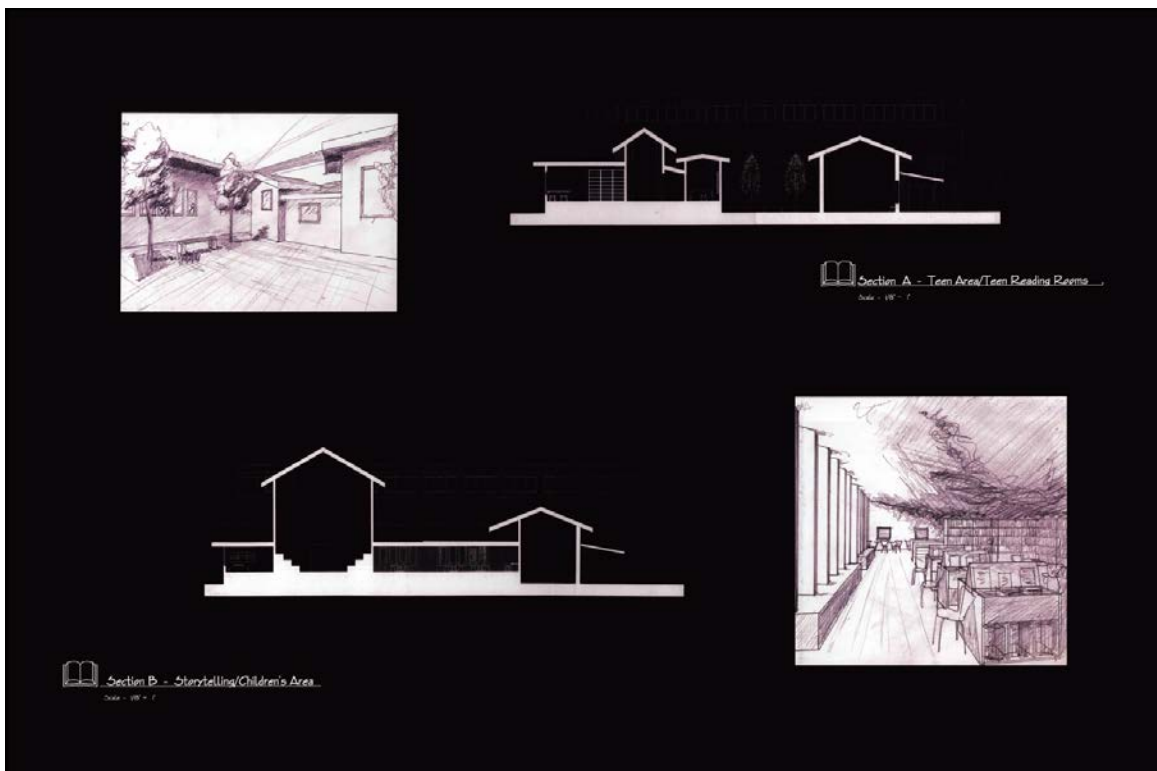
Figure 18: Final presentation board. Representations of the west wing of the library with sketches of the Children's Area, Gallery Court, as well as building sections through those spaces.

Figure 19: Final presentation board. Elements at a building scale with a list of program spaces for the Library Level.
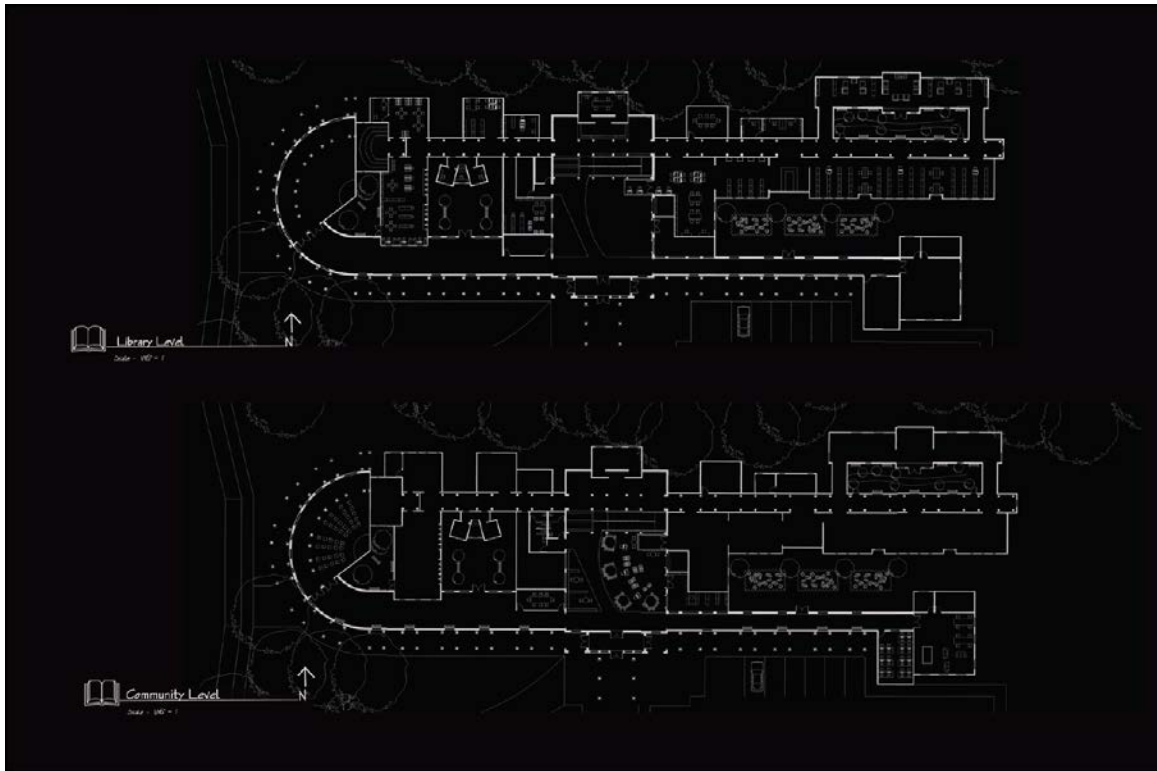
Figure 20: Final presentation board. Floor plans for both the Library & Community Levels.

Figure 21: Final presentation board. Elements affecting users on individual scale that facilitate social interaction. Sketches of the Community Patio, Community Commons and a list of social oriented program spaces.
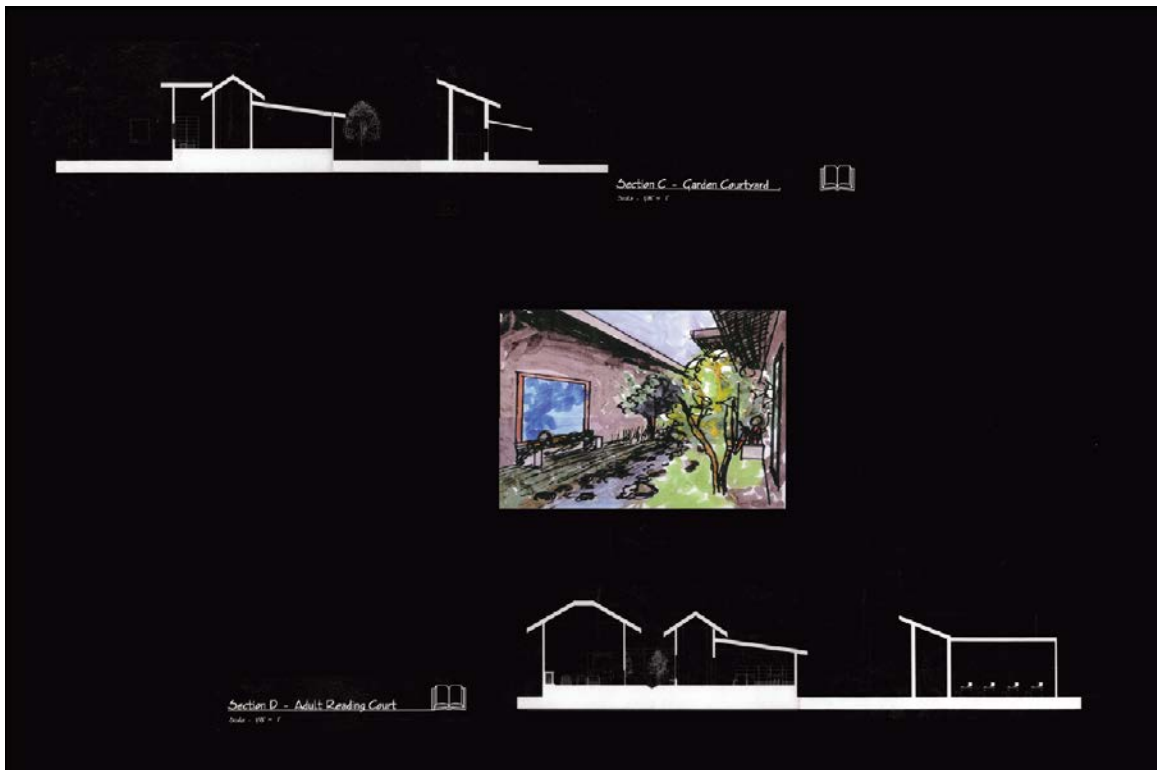
Figure 22: Final presentation board. Courtyard spaces within the east wing of the library. A sketch of the Nature Courtyard, as well as building sections through that courtyard, the Community Garden and the east wing of the library.
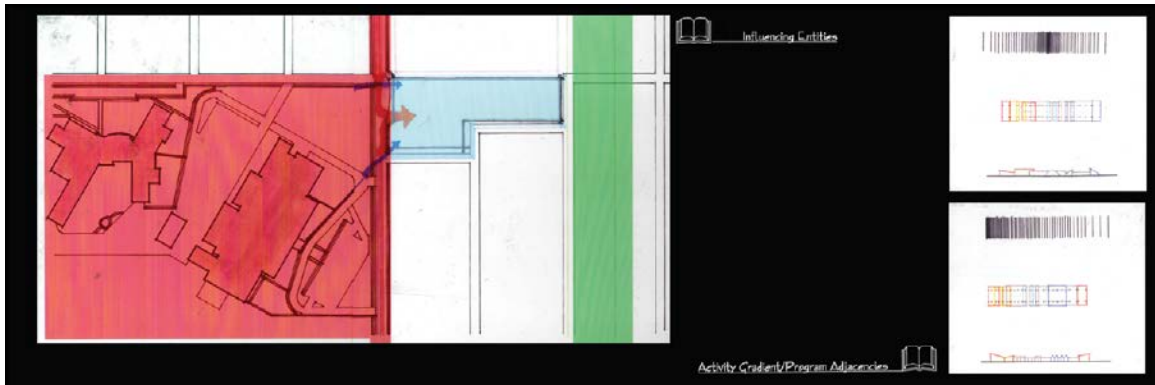
Figure 23: Final presentation board. Community and site influences on the design.

Figure 24: Final presentation board. Arial image of the site and surrounding area.
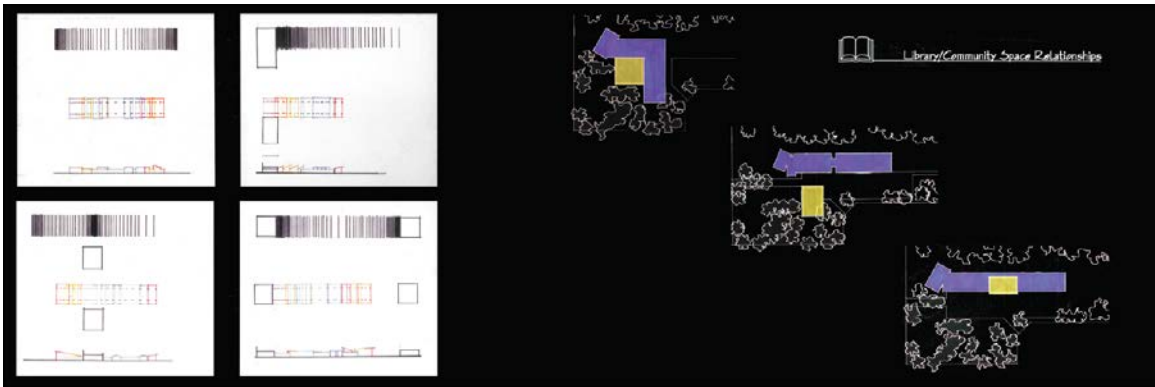
Figure 25: Final presentation board. Diagrams focusing on the relationship of programmatic spaces and the influence of the Community Hall on the design.
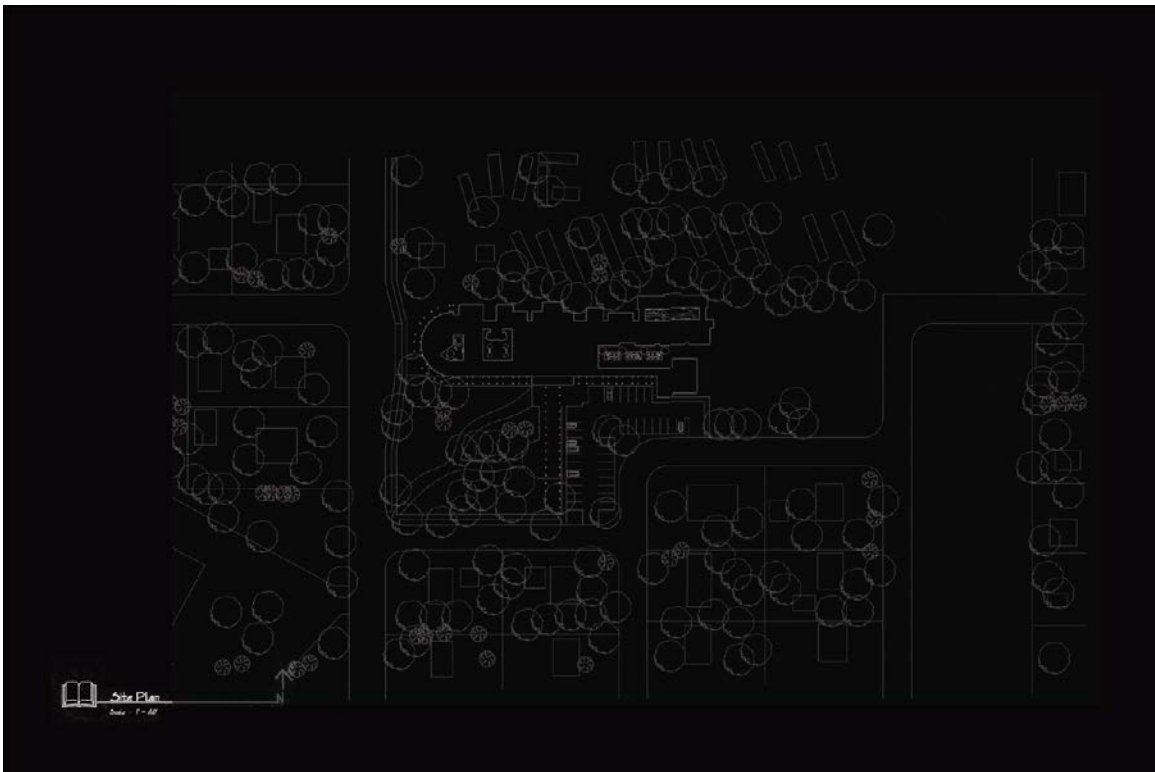

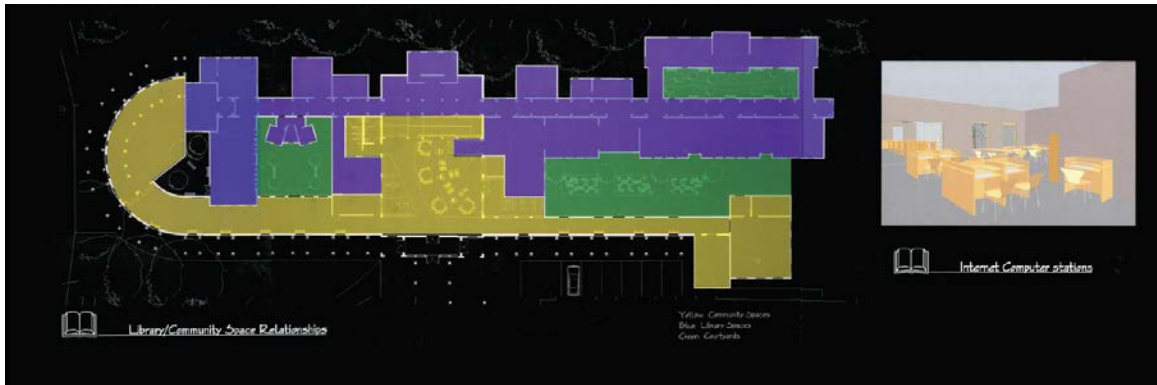Figure 26: Final presentation board. Site plan.

Figure 27: Final presentation board. Diagram of the relationship between community and library spaces. Also a 3d rendering of tabletop computer work stations promoting social interaction and connectedness without losing privacy.
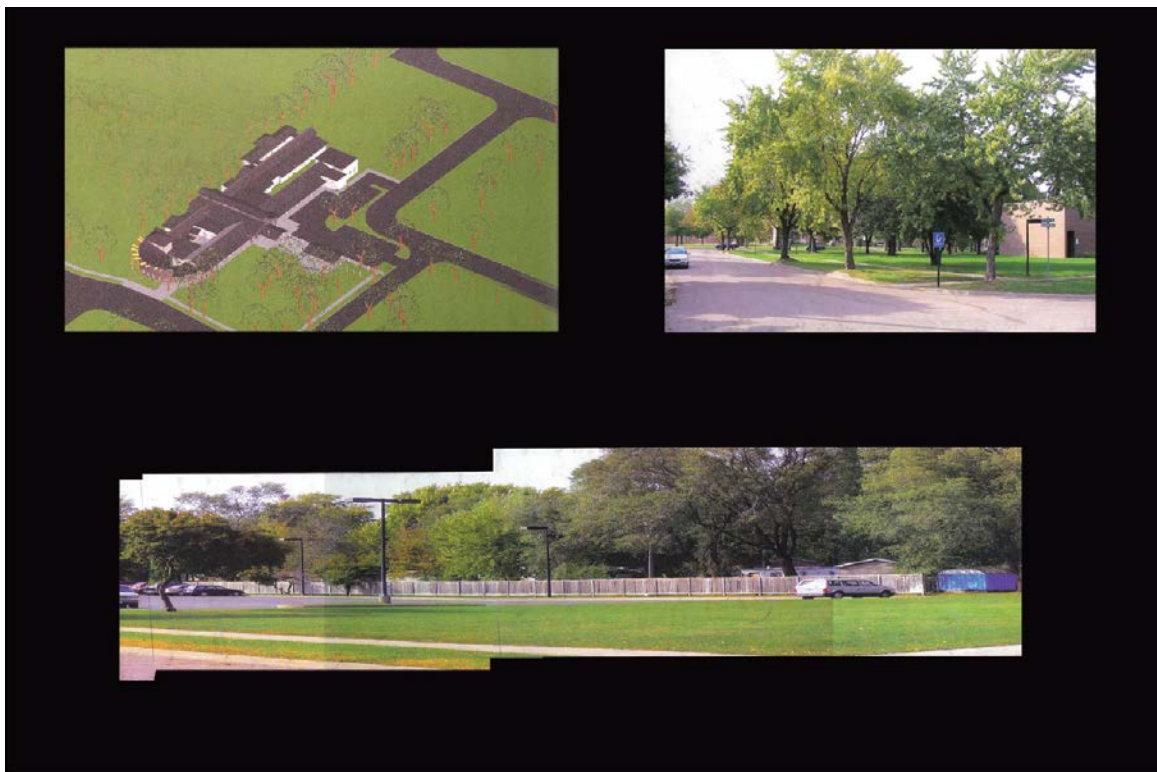

Figure 28: Final presentation board. Site context through photos and 3d rendering.

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