

THE EXCHANGE



WHERE LIVES, IDEAS, AND CULTURES COME TOGETHER



GWU'S 2009 REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMPETITION

TEAM ADAMS
ROUND 1 SUBMISSION

02/22/2009



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Background: A Community Divided

Poised in the northeastern section of Washington DC on a commanding site that rises from the Capitol Mall, bounded by well known and heavily traveled thoroughfares, strategically located next to Gallaudet University, a world-renowned school for the deaf, and adjacent to the Metro Red line, the Florida Market should be a crown jewel in the urban environment of the nation's capital. A visual inspection of this site, which is the focus of the 2009 Edition of the George Washington University REIDO competition sponsored by the development firm of Edens & Avant, instead reveals a parcel that is bounded on three sides by the heavy edges of New York Avenue, Florida Avenue and unused railroad tracks. It is home to retail stores and a wholesale market which is run out of dilapidated warehouses that reek with trucks that clank during the early hours of the morning. Even its closest neighbor, Gallaudet University, has turned its back on the property, walling it off with an iron fence, maintenance facilities and a parking deck.

Despite its forlorn appearance and evident under-utilization, a large number of stakeholders have taken an interest in the redevelopment potential of the Florida Market site. For example, New Town Development proposes a high-density mixed use project heavily weighted towards office buildings and luxury condominiums. New Town's proposal involves the demolition of the entire Market area, which would eliminate the character that the neighborhood would like to preserve.

Gallaudet University and the occupants of the Florida Market support a more limited mixed use approach. Gallaudet University would like the development to include the preservation of historic buildings, to continue to host the Florida Market, and to provide housing for its students, faculty and alumni.

Different components of the regulatory structure have divergent views with the The Mayor's Office and the District of Columbia Council (specifically, Mr. Harry Thomas, who represents the



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interests of his Ward 5 constituents) supporting the New Town proposal and the District of Columbia Office of Planning seeming to favor the less intense Gallaudet/Florida Market plan. Area residents, who are predominantly low income minorities, see the site's potential for employment and educational opportunities and for improved access to public transportation. Removing slums and blight which will in turn reduce crime.

The lack of common ground in the development proposals has led to a great deal of public disagreement and interactions among the various groups have been spoiled by accusations of political favoritism and corruption. These disagreements, along with the crippled economy, have completely halted any new development.



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Vision: The Exchange

After a careful study of the area's current projects, demographics, commercial and proprietary data, and the physical and architectural qualities of the site, we would like to offer a different view. We are proposing The Exchange, a project where lives, cultures, and ideas can cross. The Exchange is a sustainable, limited mixed-use site that preserves the historic value of the Florida Avenue Market while satisfying the needs of current and future residents and neighbors.

As you will see in the following proposal, The Exchange satisfies the desires of all of the major stakeholders. In addition, it incorporates a series of initiatives designed to take advantage of existing programs that support sustainable living, meets affordable goals, and is linked directly to the American Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act. We have chosen a limited mixed-use design rather than a high density design based on area studies including the Florida Avenue Market Study that was prepared for the Office of Planning which emphasizes the nature of the Florida Market as being secondary and not competing with developments currently in the pipeline.

And now, welcome to The Exchange....



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Integrating Gallaudet University, the Florida Avenue Market businesses, and the area's residents is difficult, but without a doubt beneficial for all parties. First, the University will no longer be isolated. In fact, Gallaudet will assimilate easily with the Deafspace-friendly criteria outlined in the case brief. The Exchange offers Gallaudet students and faculty, as well as area residents, a unique place to shop, dine, and socialize. Constructing residential units and a hotel provide the much needed pedestrian traffic that will reduce the abandoned and neglected look and feel of the area which will aid in the reduction of crime. The offices will provide employment opportunities for nearby residents and internships opportunities for Gallaudet Students. In addition to increased pedestrian traffic, the area businesses also now have an opportunity to become involved in programs and activities associated with the University.

There is no question that the site as it stands today is separated from the City. Its location suggests the potential to be a gateway to the city and a landmark to be admired by a passenger riding in a car on New York Avenue or riding a train into Union Station. However, this vision misses the site's potential to serve as a melting pot of different cultures, communities, students, and gourmets from the entire DC region, where unanticipated diverse encounters will take place and ideas exchanged. The Exchange encourages connectivity from the area south of Florida Avenue by introducing traffic calming measures and community oriented retail usages along the edge of the site. These design features are a cost effective way of making pedestrian and bicycle access from the Metro, bus, and the new Metropolitan Branch bicycle trail safer and more alluring. Placement of a bicycle station in the Southwestern corner of the site as part of the new "SmartBike DC" program will not only draw outsiders to the area, but also increase the current residents' access to the different areas of the District since over 30% of current area households within a 1 mile radius do not have vehicles. The location of the new Farmer's Market, with its distinctive dome, also helps to draw traffic onto the site. The height of this landmark makes it a visible presence from NoMA and provides an orienting feature, giving the neighborhood a psychological center. (See View 1 and 2)



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The essence of the The Exchange can best be captured pictorially by the view from the Metro to the market area (**See View 2**). The domed Farmer's Market building dominates the entry and signals the intended purpose and history of the market. The open and green areas in front of the Farmer's Market building guide visitors to the Exchange and encourage further exploration. By isolating the access to the wholesale area of the market to a single entrance along New York Avenue, we eliminate the unsightly, smelly, and dangerous but necessary industrial aspects of commerce from the rest of the site without destroying the market's unique character and purpose. Moreover, the industrial loading docks are capped by solar panels which will be located on the roof of the new and existing wholesale structures and used to power a certain portion of the site. Other remaining structures can be retrofitted with green roofs to decrease the impervious coverage of the site, therefore reducing runoff. The industrial buildings will be fronted on the eastern side (facing 4th Street NE) by retail establishments that cater to wholesaler's needs, relocating existing restaurants and stores.

Equally compelling is the invitation the site offers to the Gallaudet University community. The design of the southeastern portion that connects directly to the University references the historic section of Gallaudet's campus. This smooth and familiar transition will lure students and faculty to explore deeper into The Exchange. The retail establishments along 6th Street will cater toward the Laptops and Latte crowd, such as coffee shops and a bookstore. The corner of 6th Street and Florida Avenue has been reserved for a new Gallaudet University "Innovation Lab."

The renovation of the historic market buildings of the 1920's defines the plan along 5th Street. Maintaining these buildings preserves the historic character of the neighborhood. Mixed use development that is contextual in scale with the surrounding neighborhood slopes up in scale to larger scale development on the northern side of the site, a maximum of about 5 or 6 stories, providing a series of tiers that maximize the views to the Capitol and the Mall.



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Strategic Considerations

The Exchange is distinct from NoMA, having a personality of its own that draws diverse people to gather and explore the area. The site offers NoMA residents and offices attractive retail stores that are visited frequently, such as grocery stores. The streets will be lined with trees as well as a median to make the site more pedestrian friendly. The smooth layering of different types of retail avoids abrupt transitions and cognitive dissonance.

Gallaudet University

The Gallaudet University community will have a place close to campus which will provide entertainment and housing options for those students desiring to experience the wonders of urban living. The Hotel component will provide guest quarters for University visitors. The retail areas closest to the University will have restaurants and stores geared toward the younger adult. As seen in the data provided by ESRI, the area is underserved in the Coffee House and Trendsetter categories. These types of retail stores will attract not only students from Gallaudet but also local residents.

Other Stakeholders

Other users will range from local epicureans, who enjoy diverse ethnic cuisine, to newcomers to the area who will be attracted by the retail stores and diversity. The retail markets will give locals and tourists an opportunity to congregate and spend a day shopping in the center while also having the option to sample the local specialty foods. The traffic on New York Avenue provides a great deal of exposure to attract new guests and the visibility of the dome on the farmer's market building will entice commuters to visit before and after work. The wholesale section will allow commerce and industry to coexist by rerouting the truck paths to make the area more pedestrian friendly.



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Residential Attractions

The addition of foliage and new greenery will give the site a much more welcoming feel. The convenience of the Metro will allow residents ease of traveling to the market without having to deal with the pains of driving. The new multifamily component will provide an option for commuters who work in the downtown area to have a close and convenient place to call home. With the build up of NOMA, potential residents who have become priced out of the market will have an option to still live close to their neighborhood by taking advantage of either the market priced units or the new affordable units the site will provide.

Affordable Housing

Several lots on The Exchange are dedicated to affordable housing. Moreover, the disbursement of affordable housing throughout the site will unify the community, and promote heterogeneity, which is at the heart of The Exchange. Segregation of affordable housing has traditionally alienated those living within its confines from the surrounding areas, adding to the social problems of the Ward 5 community.

External Funding

Several sources for outside funding have been identified that could alleviate the financial burden of all parties involved in the development. The inclusion of affordable housing, bicycle paths, and green energy sources in the project could help position the City to be eligible for these incentives. The Washington D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) provides assistance for development projects that support affordable housing. The DHCD also offers a low-income housing tax credit program that provides assistance for new developments that provide housing that is affordable to low- and middle-income people at 60%



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or less of area median income.

Green Initiatives

The Exchange calls for the installation of solar panels along the roofs of the industrial buildings planned for the west end of the site. Specifically, the American Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act includes \$3.2 billion in aid for states and local governments in the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program. This funding is made available to projects that demonstrate their ability to reduce total energy use and implement renewable energy resources in communities. Further, Washington DC has allocated \$1.5 million towards pedestrian and bicycle improvements. Conveniently, the Florida Avenue Market site is located on a segment of the D.C. Pedestrian Master Plan.

Environmental Concerns

Since development began on this site in 1918, there have been several commercial businesses on the property including warehouses, storage facilities, distribution centers, and gas stations. In 2006, a study was conducted and found that there is extensive petroleum contamination in the soil lying under the Florida Avenue Market area. In an effort to create a pedestrian-friendly green space to be used by all the community's stakeholders, this development proposal includes plans for complete soil remediation on the site. Funding can be obtained in the form of no- or low-interest loans by the EPA's Clean Water State Revolving Fund. These loans can be used to fund the cleanup effort and can be paid back to the State over a period of as much as twenty years.



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Conclusion

	Gallaudet University	Florida Market Businesses	NoMA*	Office of Planning	New Town Development	Mayor's Office	DC Council	The Exchange
Preservation of the wholesale market	X	X	X	X				X
Mixed Use Development	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	High Density	High Density	High Density	Limited
Preserve historic buildings	X	X	X	X				X
Pedestrian Environment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Housing	X							X
Offices					X	X	X	X
University friendly retail	X							X

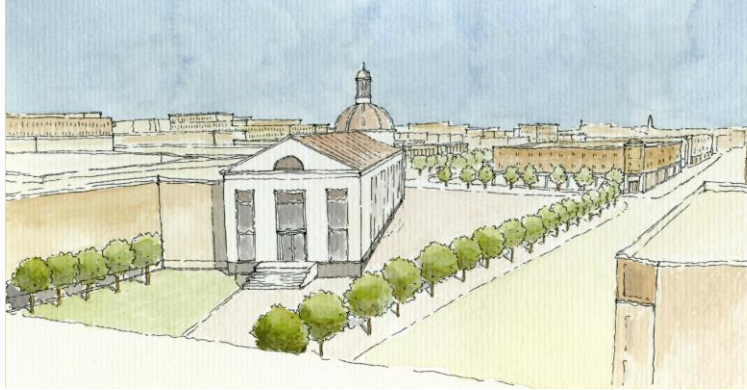
Given the divergence in existing proposed development, our proposal is heavily focused on designing a site that is aesthetically pleasing, preserves the historic characteristics of the exciting market and derives the most benefit for the eventual end users, The Florida Market businesses, Gallaudet University and the current area residents. The plan appeals to this broad array of people by efficiently using the existing space, by providing a diverse collection of entertainment and leisure activities, and by making transitions smooth and inviting. The new development will not only act as a transitional gateway to merge the NoMA district with Ward 5, but also take on a life of its own. The Exchange acts as a unifying place for different cultures and as a catalyst to promote economic growth and prosperity in the area. Below are images comparing The Exchange vision to the current state of the development site.



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View of the site from the Metro stop



Street Comparison

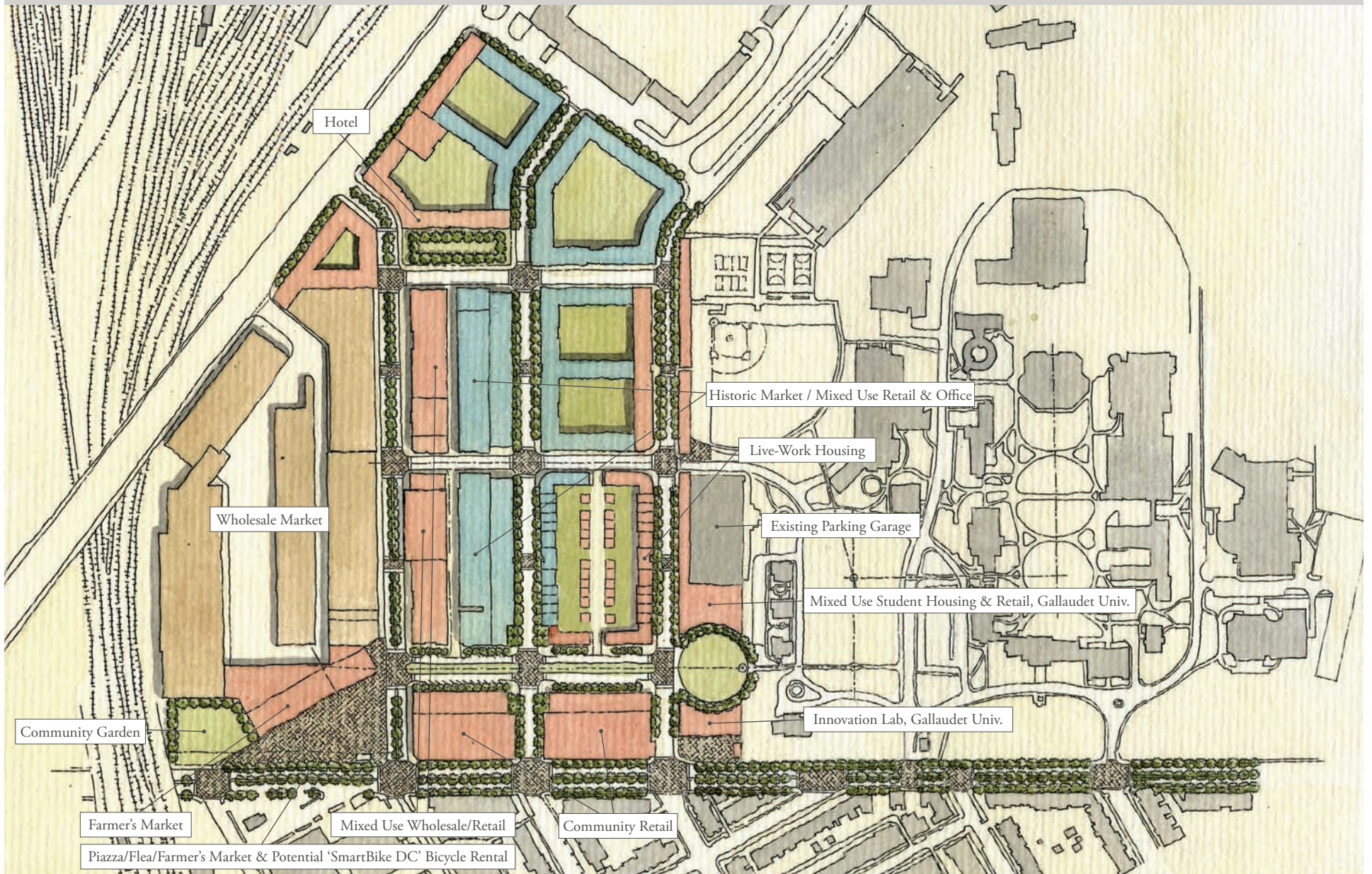


Dome Comparison

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SITE PLAN

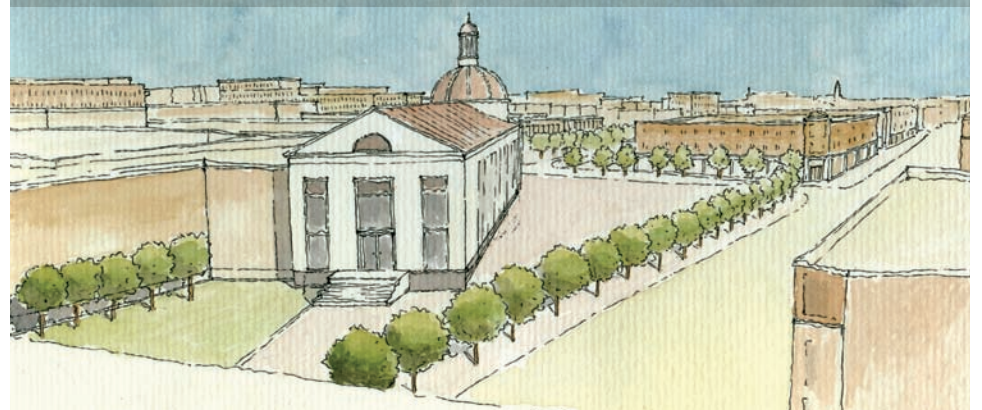


VIEW 1



The perspective shows the conversational nature of our new dome in relationship with the dome of the Capitol and the Washington Monument in the background. It also shows the character of the new street and street trees, and the maintained character of the existing market buildings, which are shown on the right side of the street.

VIEW 2



This view is taken from the Metro "Red Line" as one passes over the bridge past the site. It illustrates how the new market and piazza draw the visitor onto the site, and the inviting way in which the streets have been reconfigured to make a place. The buildings slope across the site allows many views back towards the DC Mall. The Wholesale market buildings are maintained in the left foreground.

VIEW 3



The view above shows the character of the old market integrated into the new street, and the development of new street trees and street sections – generating a pedestrian friendly environment.

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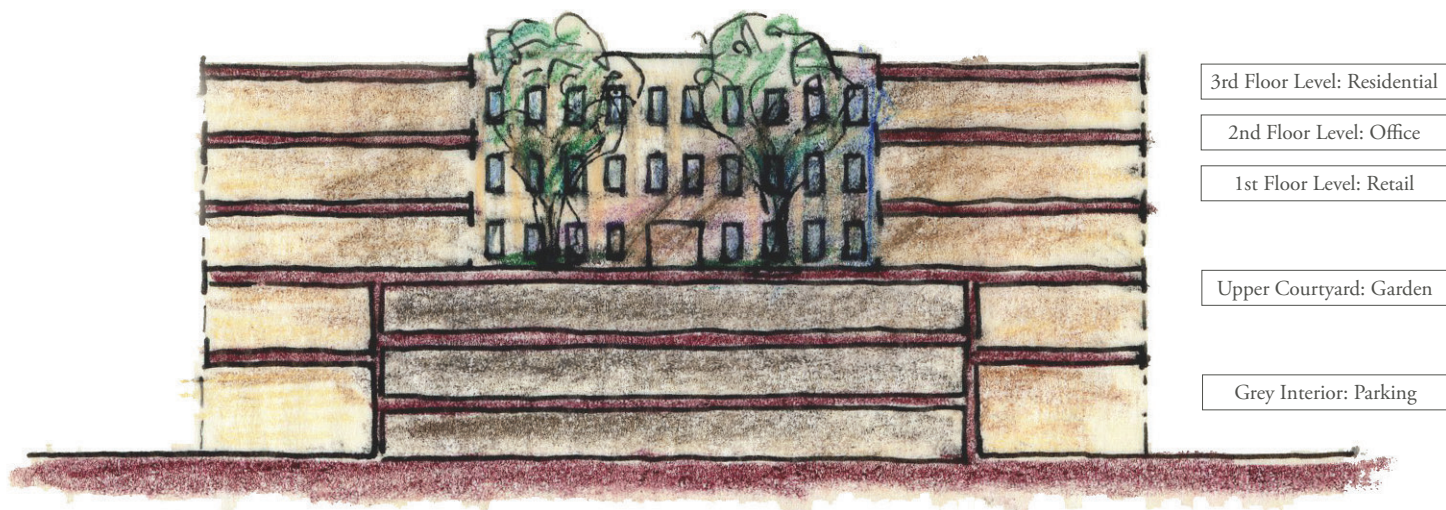
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ACCESS DIAGRAM



- Porous edge to community across Florida Avenue is encouraged by the use of traffic calming devices, tree planting, and retail structures, making comfortable transition out of what today is a dangerous edge
- Placing the main piazza in the southwest corner of the site encourages arrival to the site from bike trail and Metro-rail
- Access to Wholesale Market Area is segregated from other use access

BUILDING SECTION



- parking in core of building serves the entire structure
- court has many possible purposes – gathering space, garden space, etc., with the incorporation of a green roof