ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:	INTERSECTIONS: REVISITING BALTIMORE COUNTY'S ROSENWALD SCHOOLS
	Wanjiru Elizabeth Duncan, Master of Architecture and Master of Historic Preservation, 2025
Thesis Directed By:	Professor Daniel Curry, School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation

The historic architecture and intangible heritage of many Rosenwald Schools in historically African American communities, are at risk of disappearing due to several factors, including demolition by neglect, new-development gentrification, and community displacement. It is important to preserve and share the history, architecture, and culture of these communities for future generations. These communities have been historically underrepresented, and while change in a community over time is expected, the path forward must include both the preservation of its heritage and addressing the needs of the present community to best serve those who live there. Potential built environment solutions to address this issue include the adaptive reuse of or an addition to an extant Rosenwald School building and its surrounding site to create spaces for the conveyance and celebration of the history and culture of these communities, using the historic Halethorpe Colored School as a model.

INTERSECTIONS: REVISITING BALTIMORE COUNTY'S ROSENWALD SCHOOLS

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Architecture and
Master of Historic
Preservation
2025

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Dedication

To my family, friends, cohort and mentors. Your support, patience, presence and encouragement helped bring this project to fruition. It has been indispensable.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my committee members, including Professors Curry and Jenkins and Doctors Kern and Burke. Your feedback was invaluable. Many thanks to Mr. Vincent Johnson of the Baltimore County Landmarks Preservation Commission, Mrs. Ethel Collic, and Mr. Ed Collic.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Public education in the United States has evolved over the centuries. By the mid-nineteenth century, jurisdictions nationwide began to institute compulsory education laws.[1] Compared to today's educational system, early iterations were often small in scale, supported by their surrounding communities, and segregated. African American children in the United States have long faced unequal learning conditions, especially in rural areas. In the antebellum era, it was illegal in many slaveholding states to educate enslaved African Americans.[2] During the period between the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement, African American students often had unsatisfactory learning environments, with fewer resources and poorer facilities than White students.[3] Though the educational facilities for African American students faced severe obstacles in their mission to provide quality education for their students, these schools were important and meaningful places for their communities. Heritage, history, culture, and the built environment are part of the complex web of characteristics that compose place and community.

Architecture has a symbiotic relationship with the communities it creates. Architecture can shape and facilitate certain cultural practices and the way that people live. Conversely, the preferences, needs, circumstances, and context of a given

[1] Gina L. Diorio, "History of Public Education in the U.S," EBSCO, 2023, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/history-public-education-us.
[2] Christopher M. Span, "Learning in Spite of Opposition: African Americans and Their History of Educational Exclusion in Antebellum America," *Counterpoints* 131 (2005): 26–53.
[3] Teri Dorsey Rising, "The Pride of a Community-The Halethorpe Colored School," *History Trails* 51, no. 1 (2023).

community often shapes the style and characteristics of a given architectural work. Historic preservation includes the intersection between architecture, history, and heritage. Through the preservation and interpretation of historic buildings, structures, and landscapes, the history of countless communities is reflected in a tangible way. While the built environment can often reflect its builders' solution to the needs of a community, it can also reflect difficult circumstances. Communities that are experiencing economic distress and disinvestment may have buildings and structures fall into disrepair as well as a lack of new development opportunities. Shrinking cities often find themselves with a surplus of abandoned properties. Uneven development can lead to cities and towns that have neighborhoods that economically flourish and others that flounder.

Sites and structures that have historical significance to African American and other minority communities are often underrepresented in historic districts, on state historic registers and on the National Register of Historic Places. Two percent of the sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places as of 2022 are connected to the heritage of African Americans.[4] Those sites and structures that are listed on state and local registers are not necessarily safe from demolition; a perusal of state historic resource databases can show historic properties that have previously been surveyed but are no longer extant, further stressing the need to recognize and preserve remaining historic resources in African American communities. Other risk factors for

[4] Diane Regas, "Conserving Black History Sites Should Be a Priority for Us All," Trust for Public Land, February 15, 2022, https://www.tpl.org/blog/black-history-culture-site-preservation.

these communities and their historic resources include gentrification, new developments, and demolition by neglect.

Due to gentrification, minorities or low-income families may face the risk of displacement from their established communities. Demolition by neglect is a phenomenon by which buildings decay over time due to a lack of maintenance.[5] This can occur if an owner of a property does not have the resources or interest to maintain it. Underrepresentation and the various risk factors, it is critical that these significant sites are preserved for the enjoyment and enrichment of the community.

Just as other types of historic and cultural resources are at risk of demolition and decay, historic school buildings that served African American communities before the Civil Rights Movements are also at risk. Rosenwald Schools, public schools for African Americans that were built across fifteen southern states due to a partnership between the Tuskegee Institute and the Rosenwald Fund, were placed on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 11 Most Endangered List in 2002.[6]

Considering these factors together raises a question: How can extant historic school buildings, including former Rosenwald Schools, which once served thousands of rural African American communities across the south, commemorate their heritage and respond to the needs of and changes in their surrounding communities?

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[5] Preservation Sacramento, "DEMOLITION BY NEGLECT," Preservation Sacramento, accessed May 21, 2025, http://www.preservationsacramento.org/demolition-by-neglect.

[6] African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and National Trust for Historic Preservation, "Rosenwald Schools," National Trust for Historic Preservation, December 2, 2024, https://savingplaces.org/places/rosenwald-schools.

There are several possible built environment responses to this question. An existing historic African American school building could be revitalized with adaptive reuse techniques. This response could lead to the preservation of a significant historic resource, the creation of a public gathering space with educational opportunities that serve some of the needs of the community, and the solidification of local history and culture. Another potential built environment response could be an addition to an existing structure with historic significance to create exhibits or educational spaces, as well as opportunities for other uses such as retail, recreation, or gathering.

Chapter 2: Education, Preservation, and Architecture

Introduction

Through the research process, several themes have emerged that are applicable to the culture, architecture, and heritage of African American and other minority or underrepresented neighborhoods. Topics such as the implications of suburban development techniques, preservation and architectural technology, preservation and planning strategies, building typologies, cultural and preservation concerns, adaptive reuse, and gentrification, and the educational experiences provided by Rosenwald Schools are all relevant to the built environment of many historic African American communities.

Suburban Development

After the urban renewal programs and rapid suburbanization of the 1950s and 1960s, a sizable number of immigrants, people of color, and low-income families no longer live in cities; many now live in suburban areas.[7] Though suburbs were initially designed to be exclusionary spaces, with policies such as restrictive deed covenants, redlining, and discriminatory mortgage lending practices, some suburbs have now become multi-ethnic enclaves.[8] While de jure segregation is

[7] Bernadette Hanlon, "Cases of a 'Not so New' Suburban Reality in the United States," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 90, no. 2 (April 2, 2024): 384–87, https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2024.2311031.
[8] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 1st ed. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017).; Bernadette Hanlon, "Cases of a 'Not so New' Suburban Reality in the United States," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 90, no. 2 (April 2, 2024): 384–87, https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2024.2311031.

greatly diminished from its heyday, there are many challenges and stressors for these communities.

Some of these stressors are discussed in "Out of the Urban Shadows: Uneven Development and Spatial Politics in Immigrant Suburbs", where Dr. Willow Lung-Amam reviews how many of the suburbs that immigrants are moving to are afflicted by disinvestment, uneven development, de facto segregation, affordable housing deficits, and insufficient public transportation. Disinvestment, uneven development, affordable housing deficits, and insufficient public transportation are issues that have also persisted for metropolitan areas.[9]

Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is a significant architectural technique that can apply to historic structures. This method can balance a relationship between the cultural heritage of a community and current needs.

"Creative Ideation and Adaptive Reuse: A Solution to Sustainable Urban Heritage Conservation" by H. Hasnain and F. Mohseni provides an analysis of the types of adaptive reuse techniques, as well as showing that in the face of changing settlement patterns in metropolitan areas, as city-center historic properties are abandoned, adaptive reuse is a better strategy than outright demolition.[10] Hasnain and

[9] Willow S. Lung–Amam, "Out of the Urban Shadows: Uneven Development and Spatial Politics in Immigrant Suburbs," *City & Community* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 2020): 303–9, https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12494.
[10] H. Hasnain and F. Mohseni, "Creative Ideation and Adaptive Reuse: A Solution to Sustainable Urban Heritage Conservation," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 126, no. 1 (March 2018): 012075, https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/126/1/012075.

Mohseni stress that the significance of a historic building is just as important as the structural and functional aspects of the adaptation process. The authors identified three established categories of adaptive reuse: typological, technical, and strategic reuse and argued for the inclusion of a creative ideation category. Typological adaptations emphasize the original typology of a building and prefer modifications that are complementary.[11] Technical adaptation focuses on the correction of insulation, fire resistance, thermal efficiency, and structure of historic buildings, as these improvements tend to be economically beneficial.[12] Strategic adaptation incorporates new and old building uses, structural and mechanical upgrades, and new additions to the existing building. The creative ideation category would combine all three and include a holistic investigation of the building's significance and impact.[13]

Antonia Gravagnuolo, Serena Micheletti and Martina Bosone show how members of a community can be interested in the preservation of their city's cultural and architectural heritage. Gravagnuolo, Micheletti and Bosone studied the Rufoli neighborhood in Salerno, Italy. Rufoli is known for its production of clay, terracotta, and brick, as well as artisan crafts.[14] The neighborhood is rich with heritage sites such as churches and abandoned furnaces, and the author's surveys with residents of Rufoli and from other parts of Salerno suggest that the adaptive reuse of these

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Antonia Gravagnuolo, Serena Micheletti, and Martina Bosone. "A Participatory Approach for 'Circular' Adaptive Reuse of Cultural Heritage. Building a Heritage Community in Salerno, Italy." *Sustainability* 13, no. 9 (2021): 4812-. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13094812.

heritage sites would be favorable. Though Rufoli's heritage sites are in Italy, they can serve as an example of community engagement and interest in the preservation of heritage sites.

The Keese Barn project is unique in that it was a part of a Clemson University graduate studio led by the author, Professor Jori Erdman. The graduate students worked closely with community members to document and understand the history of Pendleton, South Carolina and the significance of Keese Barn.[15] Keese Barn was an important business and social gathering space during the Jim Crow era. When the studio took on the project, Keese Barn was no longer structurally sound and was already scheduled for demolition. The studio proposed to disassemble and salvage the building materials, as well as designing a monument and gathering space called "The Hundreds" to commemorate the memory of the original Keese Barn.[16] The Keese Barn project serves as an inspiration for how to commemorate the memory of historically and culturally significant sites in African American communities that may not be in the best physical shape.

Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation Considerations

There are several important considerations with the preservation and commemoration of the history and architecture of minority communities. Deciding what should be preserved, how it should be preserved, and the context and needs of the communities is important and influences what are the best approaches.

[15] Jori Erdman, "Studio South: Recycling an African American Landmark," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 59, no. 4 (2006): 19–25.
[16] Ibid.

The article "Who Owns Chinatown: Neighbourhood Preservation and Change in Boston and Philadelphia" illustrates several of these concerns. While Acolin and Vitiello's focus on the Chinatowns of Philadelphia and Boston, where the context differs from African American neighborhoods, there are many similarities and valuable lessons.[17] Acolin and Vitiello discuss the various factors surrounding the status and survival of Chinatowns across the country; Chinatowns in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and St. Louis, which have disappeared, serve as examples of what can happen when many of the original residents are pushed out of their neighborhoods. Like African American neighborhoods, Chinatowns have faced urban renewal efforts in the 20th century and ongoing gentrification and revitalization efforts.[18]

Additionally, the impact of changes in population and land use is a common factor as well, such as the population shift away from downtowns and into the suburbs. In Los Angeles, more Asian residents live in the suburban Chinatowns than in the city.[19] In Philadelphia and Boston, the population changes come from the movement of the original immigrant and descendant communities to suburban neighborhoods, though Philadelphia's Chinatown has new populations of international students and immigrants.[20]

In these neighborhoods, there is a robust conversation and debates on the preservation of these enclaves, with the proliferation of community development and advocacy

[17] Arthur Acolin and Domenic Vitiello, "Who Owns Chinatown: Neighbourhood Preservation and Change in Boston and Philadelphia.," *Urban Studies* 55, no. 8 (June 2018): 1690–1710, https://doi-org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/10.1177/0042098017699366.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

groups. In Boston and Philadelphia, community organizing dates back to the urban renewal projects of the 1960s. Tenements and other housing types were demolished en masse and replaced with highways, shopping centers, and parking lots.

In response, residents formed community development corporations (the Asian Community Development Corporation in Boston and the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, respectively) to provide affordable housing and preserve the character of their neighborhoods, as well as other community groups like the Chinese Progressive Association (Boston) and Asian Americans United (Philadelphia).[21] These community development corporations (CDCs) utilized techniques such as streetscape improvements, events, marketing, and promoting businesses as a way to support the character and culture of their neighborhoods. [22]

While all of these groups wish to mitigate gentrification and preserve Chinatown, individual development projects attracted a variety of opinions on how to deal with gentrification. In Philadelphia, a proposal for an elevated park in an industrial area drew opposition from the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (for potentially exacerbating affordable housing shortages and lack of inclusion in the planning process) and support from the Asian Americans United group for providing more public space.[23] Considering preservation efforts in Chinatowns illustrates that there are several common concerns in different types of minority neighborhoods, such as gentrification, changes in demographics and land use, and varying ideas about appropriate preservation techniques.

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

In Amber Wiley's article, "The Dunbar High School Dilemma: Architecture, Power, and African American Cultural Heritage," the circumstances surrounding the case of the historic Dunbar High School serve as another example of differing community opinions on historic preservation efforts.

Paul Laurence Dunbar High School is a historic high school located in the Truxton Circle and LeDroit Park neighborhoods of DC that dates to 1870, when it was known as The Preparatory High School for Colored Youth (and later, the M Street School).[24]

It was not until 1916 that Dunbar secured their second permanent school building, which held great historical and cultural significance for the neighborhood and alumni.[25] The significance of Dunbar High School has been inextricably linked to the circumstances which created it: segregation, its status as one of the first city-funded public high schools for African Americans in the country, and the Progressive era.

In its early years, Dunbar accepted black students from around the country and fostered a reputation for excellent academics, highly educated teachers and numerous notable alumni (including Benjamin O. Davis, Charles Drew, and many others). The school was an early success, though desegregation, home rule, the 1968 riots, and urban renewal severely impacted the school. By the 1970s, Dunbar's 1916 building was in poor shape, and many felt that it no longer served all the needs of the

[24] Amber N. Wiley, "The Dunbar High School Dilemma: Architecture, Power, and African American Cultural Heritage," *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 20, no. 1 (2013): 95–128, https://doi.org/10.5749/buildland.20.1.0095.
[25] Ibid.

student body.[26] Several proposals were created, including one that called for the construction of a new building and repurposing of the original. Eventually, the African American-owned firm Bryant & Bryant won the commission for the new high school. Their design was an ambitious, multi-story open plan design that reflected the change in educational design thinking.[27]

The debate over the original building was long and contentious, dating back to the late 1960s. Local historic preservation organizations and alumni wanted to preserve the building in some form, while administrators and local residents were in favor of demolition. Part of the debate was rooted in long-held perceptions of Dunbar's association with colorism and classism. Pre-integration era Dunbar was perceived to have catered nearly exclusively to upper-class African American families, and several of those alumni moved on to powerful and high-paying careers (including positions in Washington, D.C. city government) by the 1970s.[28] Ultimately, the Bryant & Bryant proposal won and the 1916 building was demolished, with the new building was constructed near the original site. The 1977 building was demolished and replaced with a new building in 2013, but the debate surrounding the 1916 building and its successor demonstrate the potential concerns that can arise with historic resources in African American communities.

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

Building Typologies

There are several different building typologies for public and civic buildings, and an examination of the design of community centers, a potential solution for the thesis question, has provided several insights. In Ecem Sarıçayır's article "Architect of Nothingness: Frank van Klingeren's Open Architecture," the examination of two community centers designed by Frank van Klingeren, reveals the architect's opinions on open architecture and its manifestation in his designs. Of interest are De Meerpaal and Het Karregat, located in the Netherlands.

Open architecture is defined as architecture that welcomes residents and other members of the community to the design process.[29] van Klingeren believed in collaboration between members of the public, design professionals, planners, and more. With design, he believed in the concept of an unfinished building, which he considered to be a building with flexible spaces for the inhabitants. In his designs for De Meerpal, van Klingeren created large and open interior spaces using of steel and glass and emphasized adaptable space.[30] van Klingeren's designs for Het Karregat were even more ambitious, with large, multi-functional spaces that have no interior walls.[31] While van Klingeren's open architecture designs aimed to bring the community together through openness of space, De Meerpal and Het Karregat were criticized by people who used the space, who found the amount of noise in the space to be nearly unbearable. In the end, Het Karregat was renovated. A key takeaway

[29] Ecem Sarıçayır, "Architect of Nothingness: Frank van Klingeren's Open Architecture," *FOOTPRINT* 16, no. 2 (2022): 145–56, https://doi.org/10.7480/footprint.16.2.6078.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

from this article is that while openness in spaces can foster communal atmospheres, there may be an upper limit on exactly how open it can be.

Education

Rosenwald Schools

The establishment of public schools has long fallen to local jurisdictions in the United States. However, many jurisdictions nationwide were uninterested in providing educational opportunities for African American students; those that did exist were often poorly funded and of worse quality than schools for White Americans.[32] A notable effort to provide education for African American students in the United States during the Jim Crow era was the Rosenwald Fund. The Rosenwald Fund was a philanthropic organization that began ca.1912 by Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck & Co., who partnered with Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute and activist to provide funding for various educational endeavors, including the training of teachers and establishment of schools.[33]

Initially, the Julius Rosenwald Fund provided half of the construction costs; after 1914, communities needed to raise the bulk of the costs and the Fund would supplement the rest.[34] Tuskegee and the Rosenwald Fund provided program guides and floor plan, and had staff that would manage the construction projects to ensure that the schools were well built. Tuskegee's team of architects was led by Robert

[32] Teri Dorsey Rising, "The Pride of a Community-The Halethorpe Colored School," *History Trails* 51, no. 1 (2023).
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

Robinson Taylor, the first accredited African American architect.[35] From the 1920s onward, the designs were updated by the Rosenwald Foundation Office in Nashville, led by Samuel L. Smith.[36] There were a variety of school configuration types, ranging from two-teacher plans to seven-teacher floor plans.

Though the Rosenwald Fund drew to a close in the 1930s, these schools had a major impact on thousands of African American communities across the South. Approximately 5,357 of these schools were built, serving one-third of rural black children in the region.[37] Most of these schools became obsolete after the Civil Rights Movement; approximately 10-12% of these school buildings are extant, and the surviving former Rosenwald School buildings have been converted to serve a myriad of functions.[38]

[35] Witold Rybczynski, "Remembering the Rosenwald Schools," Architect Magazine, September 16, 2015, https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/culture/remembering-the-rosenwald-schools_o.
[36] Andrew Feiler, "The Architecture of Rosenwald Schools," Architect Magazine, March 31, 2021, https://www.architectmagazine.com/aia-architect/aiaadvocacy/the-architecture-of-rosenwald-schools_o.
[37] Witold Rybczynski, "Remembering the Rosenwald Schools," Architect Magazine, September 16, 2015, https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/culture/remembering-the-rosenwald-schools_o.; African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and National Trust for Historic Preservation, "Rosenwald Schools," National Trust for Historic Preservation, December 2, 2024, https://savingplaces.org/places/rosenwald-schools.
[38] African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and National Trust for Historic Preservation, "Rosenwald Schools," National Trust for Historic Preservation, December 2, 2024, https://savingplaces.org/places/rosenwald-schools.

Chapter 3: Research Strategies

Introduction

For this thesis, a variety of research approaches may ensure the best outcome and resolution of the thesis question. When considering the question of the best practices and solutions to preserve the architecture, culture, and history of African American communities, it is important to fully research as many relevant avenues as possible. Gaining an adequate understanding of architectural and historic preservation methods, technologies, and techniques that can be best utilized is essential, as well as having an exhaustive knowledge of the history and current condition of a potential site and its surrounding context. Once this base of knowledge has been established, an effective design solution can be devised.

The research methods that will be employed are the critical discourse analysis technique, which is a subset of qualitative research methods. This approach will likely require a level of interdisciplinary work and research. Critical discourse analysis is one that assumes that all cultural production reflects the qualities and character of its context.[39]

The context of an area can provides hints and insights into the past development of an area, the probability of success of a project, and what the best practices may be for a given area. The architecture of a given area is influenced by several factors, from the architects, contractors, and other involved design

[39] Ray Lucas, "Defining your research methodology" in *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King, 2016), 36-41, http://proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=e025xna&AN=1234834&site=ehost-live&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_36

professionals to the local planning boards who issue permits, the financial institutions (donors, clients, etc.), state and federal governmental agencies, community stakeholders, the fabric of the surrounding neighborhoods, the climate, and countless other elements. These elements coalesce in the final design of any project, though the level of impact may vary for each contributing factor. Analyzing which elements have contributed to the cultural productions of the past (the existing architecture of a specific African American community, in this case) will inform future cultural productions.

Interdisciplinary research ties into this as well, as understanding the context of a community's architectural character requires one to delve into other fields, some of which may be more closely related to architecture than others. Historical research will be necessary in order to understand the circumstances that have led to the contemporary condition, historic preservation will be needed to examine relevant techniques for cultural and architectural preservation, urban planning and development may be needed to understand some of the planning policies and zoning that have affected an area, sociology could provide some insights, architectural history can provide a lens with which to consider architecture and the impacts of class, gender, social conditions, and more.[40]

[40] Ray Lucas, "Architectural Histories," in *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King, 2016), 125–130, http://proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=e025xna&AN=1234834&site=ehost-live&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_125

So far, a degree of critical discourse analysis has been performed through the literature review. As an example, some of the sources discuss concepts such as the process and consequences of suburbanization and applying that framework to a given community can reveal the impact that suburbanization has had on the architectural styles present in an area. With the continuation of the thesis project, the critical discourse analysis will be more expansive, detailed, with a granular focus on the selected site and its surrounding communities. Interdisciplinary research has been utilized to curate the literature review, with the consultation of sources from the fields of history, sociology, architecture, historic preservation, and urban planning.

Moving forward, it is likely that there will be a need for continued interdisciplinary research, some of which may possibly need to be sourced from primary sources. Once the site selection is finalized, methods such as field studies, site analysis, historical research, and on-site interviews may need to be consulted to help craft the most effective design solution.

Precedent Analysis

Initial Ten Precedents

Precedent analysis is another research technique that has been employed so far. Initially, ten potential precedents were selected: the Champollion Museum in Figeac, France (fig. 1), the Okana Centre for Change in Okana, Kisumu, Kenya (fig. 2), the Villager's Home in Wanghu, Zhejiang, China, the DoMa Gallery in Baltimore County, Maryland (fig. 3), 802 Ninth Avenue in New York City, Säynätsalo Town Hall in Säynätsalo, Finland, 500 Park Tower in New York City, the National

Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., the Neues Museum in Berlin, Germany, and the Barcelona Pavilion in Barcelona. These precedents were selected for a variety of reasons; some of these buildings' design techniques could be applied to this thesis, others represent compelling potential building typologies, and more. Collectively, they represent a variety of architectural scales and styles.



Figure 1. Façade of Champollion Museum in Figeac, France as of April 2008. (Source: Thierry46, Wikimedia Commons)



Figure 2. Aerial view of the Okana Centre for Change Pavilions. (Source: Dezeen)



Figure 3. Perspective of the DoMa Gallery in Baltimore County. (Source: W Architecture)

Final Five Precedents

After further consideration, these ten precedents were reduced to a final five precedents. The selected precedents were the Okana Centre for Change, Villager's Home (fig. 4), Säynätsalo Town Hall, National Museum for African American History and Culture (fig. 5), and Neues Museum (fig. 6), which were analyzed through diagramming, and the Villager's Home was reverse engineered to create a program proposal.



Figure 4. Elevation of Villager's Home in Wanghu, China. (Source: Dezeen)



Figure 5. Perspective of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. (Source: Architectural Record)



Figure 6. Elevation of Neues Museum. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Conclusion

Next Steps

Overall, a combination of research methods will be employed to craft the most effective design solution for the thesis. Critical discourse analysis, qualitative research, and interdisciplinary research into fields such as history, urban planning, and sociology will fully explore the context of the selected community and draw connections between the community and architecture. This exploration will then inform the next steps of the thesis.

Chapter 4: Precedent Studies

Introduction

Precedent analysis is critical to the development of this thesis and to inform the eventual development of a design solution that will celebrate and preserve the history and culture of the selected African American community. Initially, ten precedents were chosen to represent a variety of building techniques, adaptive reuse methodologies, a range of locations and architectural styles, historic and contemporary architecture, and a short list of typologies.

Initial Precedents

As mentioned previously, the ten initial precedent studies were the Champollion Museum (Figeac, France), the Okana Centre for Change (Okana, Kisumu, Kenya), the Villager's Home (Wanghu, Zhejiang, China), the DoMa Gallery (Baltimore County, Maryland), 802 Ninth Avenue (New York City), Säynätsalo Town Hall (Säynätsalo, Finland), 500 Park Tower (New York City), the National Museum of African American History and Culture (Washington, D.C.), the Neues Museum (Berlin, Germany), and the Barcelona Pavilion (Barcelona, Spain). These initial ten precedents represent a variety of typologies, including multi-story residential, museums, community centers, and galleries.

Final Precedent Selections

With the further development of the thesis narrative, these ten precedents were narrowed to five: the Okana Centre for Change, Villager's Home, Säynätsalo Town

Hall, National Museum of African American History and Culture, and Neues Museum. This decision was made to analyze the specific community center and museum typologies while still considering a diverse range of building techniques, adaptive reuse methodologies, locations, and architectural styles.

Rationale

The Okana Centre for Change

The Okana Centre for Change was selected to study the design of a community center in a rural community and to examine how symbolism and site context were incorporated into the design. Completed in 2018, the Okana Centre was designed and constructed by Delft University of Technology students Laura K. Straehle and Ellen Rouwendal in collaboration with the Sustainable Initiatives NGO in Kenya, Delft professors, and other design professionals.[41] The symbolism of this project was driven by the designers' interpretation of the acacia tree, which is a popular meeting place for residents, into an architectural roofscape principle that can be applied elsewhere. In the Okana Centre, the roofscape echoes the abstracted shape of the acacia tree's canopy.[42] Additionally, this project used bamboo, which is a locally available material in Okana, and is also tailored to its tropical climate.[43] For this thesis, abstracting an important and distinct symbol into a roofscape or other architectural element has high potential.

[41] Laura K. Straehle and Ellen Rouwendal, "Manifesto," Pavilions For Okana, accessed November 1, 2024, https://www.pavilions-for-okana.org/manifesto.
[42] Laura K. Straehle and Ellen Rouwendal, "Idea & Concept," Pavilions For Okana, accessed November 1, 2024, https://www.pavilions-for-okana.org/idea-concept.
[43] Laura K. Straehle and Ellen Rouwendal, "architecture," Pavilions For Okana, accessed October 4, 2024, https://www.pavilions-for-okana.org/architecture.

Villager's Home

Villager's Home is a visitor center that was selected for its unique incorporation of the historic rammed earth walls and flexible program. Villager's Home, which is located in Wanghu, Zhejiang, was built in 2023 and designed by The Architectural Design and Research Institute of Zhejiang University (UAD). Wanghu is a village that has substantial agricultural heritage; the historic rammed earth houses were used for mushroom cultivation.[44] The site of the Villager's Home has remnants of the walls, and UAD incorporated them into the design of the new building; openings in the new concrete structure correspond to openings in the rammed earth walls. Additionally, the new structure's gabled form echoes the traditional vernacular architecture.[45] This precedent presents the opportunity to analyze the multi-functional program of a visitor center and techniques for incorporating the existing historic fabric of a building into a new design.

Säynätsalo Town Hall

Säynätsalo Town Hall was chosen for its dynamic use of topography, creation of hierarchy, historic character, and diversity of spaces. Completed in 1949 and designed by Alvar Aalto, Säynätsalo was inspired by the Venetian Court and Tower model and the Karelian architecture style (a region that was once in eastern Finland, and is now within Russian territory), with a central courtyard and a towering 17m-

[44] Jon Astbury, "UAD Completes Concrete Visitor Centre to 'Preserve Collective Culture' of Chinese Village," Dezeen, September 9, 2024, https://www.dezeen.com/2024/09/09/uad-villagers-home-visitor-centre-china/.
[45] Ibid.

high council chamber.[46] The access stair to the courtyard is grassy and references Finland's topography. The building has a diverse program, with retail space, a library, office, the courtyard, and the council hall. The building's references to vernacular and historic architectural styles, symbolism, and program are relevant to the thesis narrative.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture

The National Museum of African American History and Culture was chosen for its commemoration of African American art, history, and culture, as well as its symbolic design, proximity to potential sites, and building typology, all of which have relevance to the thesis narrative of celebrating and raising awareness of African American culture and history. Designed by David Adjaye, Philip Freelon, and J. Max Bond Jr., and completed in 2016, the building's facade (or, the corona) is inspired both by the "three-tiered crowns" seen in Yoruba art and ironwork designs created by enslaved African Americans in the southern states.[47] The circulation and exhibit design of this museum is also notable and may inform the solutions proposed by this thesis. The circulation of the history exhibits begins several floors below ground and winds upward again, in tune with the temporal progression of the exhibits. The circulation of these spaces is very structured and deliberate and can serve as a

[46] Pragya Shukla, "Saynatsalo Town Hall by Alvar Aalto: Collaboration in Architecture," RTF: Rethinking The Future, October 14, 2020, https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/rtf-design-inspiration/a1849-saynatsalo-town-hall-by-alvar-aalto-collaboration-in-architecture/; Jaime J. Ferrer Forés, "Tradition in Nordic Architecture," *Arquitectonics: Mind, Land & Society* 24 (October 2012): 63–72.

[47] National Museum of African American History & Culture and Smithsonian Institution, "The Building," National Museum of African American History and Culture, accessed November 2, 2024, https://nmaahc.si.edu/about/building.

precedent for a design solution that includes exhibit spaces. The corona references the Yoruba artwork, and its lattice structure filters the amount of light that can enter the upper floors of the museum. While this feature is specific to the context of the museum, design choices that can affect elements such as lighting are important to consider as well.

Neues Museum

Neues Museum was selected as a precedent because of its historic character, adaptive reuse strategy, and museum typology. Neues Museum was commissioned by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia in the mid-19th century and designed by architect Friedrich August Stüler.[48] Neues is a part of the Museum Island in Berlin, Germany, and first operated from its opening in 1855 to the outbreak of WWII in 1939. The museum was originally centered around the Greek and Egyptian Courtyards and showcased a wide variety of art. Of all of the museums on Museum Island, Neues received the most artillery damage, and did not reopen after the war.[49] The museum was vacant and decaying for approximately fifty years, when efforts to preserve the museum grew. Two competitions were held in the 1990s, and David Chipperfield Architects (in collaboration with Julian Harrap) were selected to design the modifications of the museum.[50] The renovations were completed in 2009. Their design is notable for several reasons; the architects took a conservation-based approach to the redesign and retained the essence of the original design without merely reproducing it. By taking this approach, David Chipperfield Architects

[48] Francoise Bollack, *Old Buildings, New Forms: New Directions in Architectural Transformations* (The Monacelli Press, 2013).
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

emulate aspects of the original design without entirely erasing the impact of WWII and its implications. Their interventions serve as a powerful precedent because it shows that adaptive reuse projects (or any that involve historic architecture) can pay homage to the original designs and intentions, especially when the historic structure may no longer be structurally sound.

Documentation and Analysis

Okana Centre for Change

Architect(s)/Designer(s): Ellen Rouwendal and Laura Straehle

Okana, Kisumu, Kenya

2016



Figure 7. Aerial Perspective of the Okana Centre. (Source: Dezeen)



Figure 8. Pavilion Interior. (Source: Dezeen)

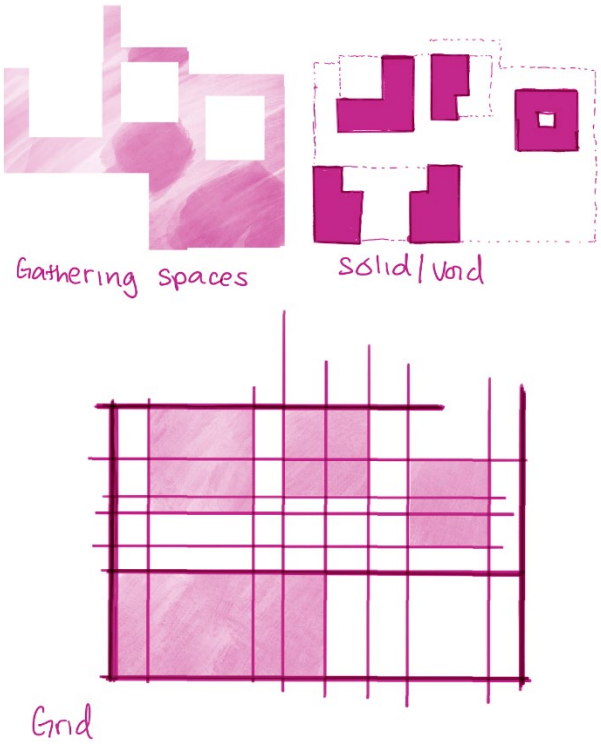


Figure 9. Plan analysis illustration. (Source: Author's work)

This precedent analysis exercise for the Okana Centre has provided many important takeaways. For Okana, there is an ample balance between indoor and outdoor spaces, and a transparency and ease of circulation between each pavilion and the courtyard. Each multipurpose pavilion is orthogonal in plan, but irregularly placed on the site, creating a main horizontal artery through the courtyard and narrow alleys.

The intersecting walls and sections reveal the abstracted acacia tree design. For the thesis narrative, creating transparency between spaces and ample outdoor programming are promising possibilities.

Villager's Home

Architect(s)/Designer(s): UAD

Wanghu, Zhejiang, China

2023



Figure 10. Aerial View of Villager's Home. (Source: Dezeen)



Figure 11. Perspective of Villager's Home showing historic walls. (Source: Dezeen)

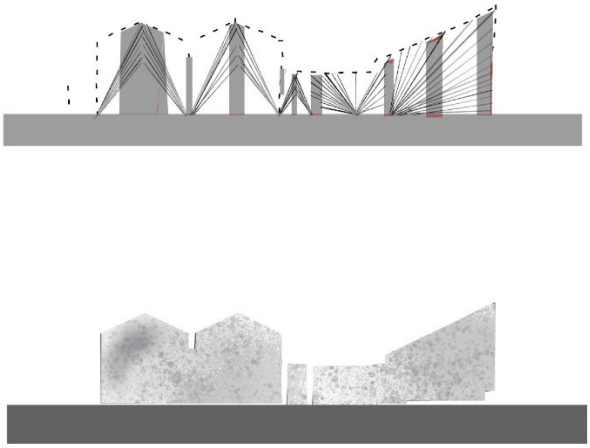


Figure 12. Void and Space Section Diagram of Villager's Home. (Source: Author's work)

This precedent provided many lessons that can be applied to the thesis and are consistent with the thesis narrative. Villager's Home is well equipped with a variety and number of gathering spaces, connected by a corridor that allows for easy movement between these spaces. This building uses large window openings in strategic places and along the corridors to bring the essence of the historic rammed earth walls into the new visitor center. This strategy can inform a solution for a selected site and the incorporation of historic architecture. Additionally, the generous heights of the various gathering spaces (in contrast to the tearoom, which is more compressed) serve to create spaces that feel more welcoming and open.

Säynätsalo Town Hall

Architect(s)/Designer(s): Alvar Aalto

Säynätsalo, Finland

1949



Figure 13. Town Hall Courtyard. (Source: Visit Jyväskylä)

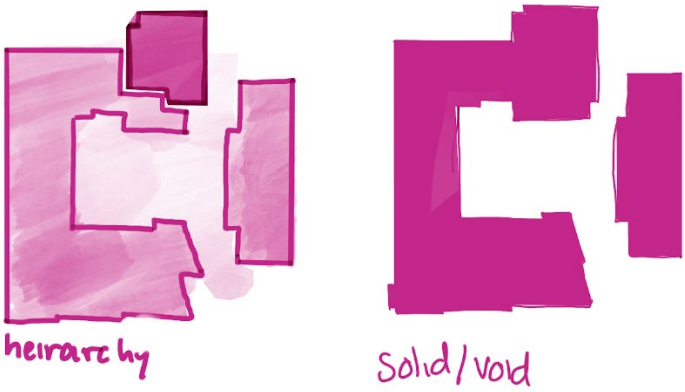


Figure 14. Solid/void and Hierarchy plan diagrams of Säynätsalo Town Hall. (Source: Author's work)

Säynätsalo Town Hall has many lessons that can be applied to the thesis narrative. The Modernist building's use of topography, materials, and form work to create a dynamic space for the community. The use of brick and wood for the building references the timber forests of the surrounding area, the form of the tower and office blocks slope towards the central courtyard.

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Architect(s)/Designer(s): Freelon Adjaye Bond/SmithGroup (Philip Freelon of The Freelon Group, David Adjaye of Adjaye Associates, and J. Max Bond Jr. of Davis Brody Bond)

Washington, D.C.

2016

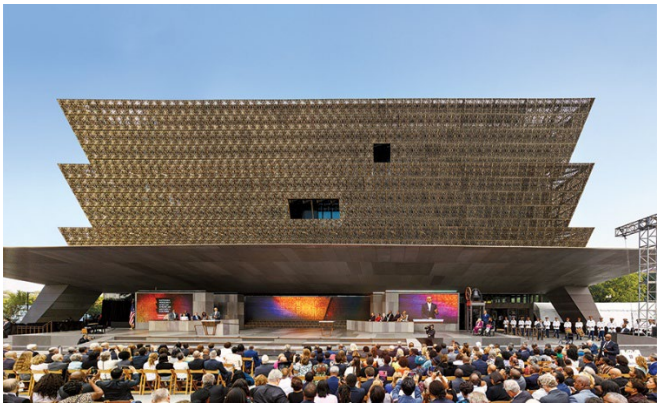


Figure 15. Elevation of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. (Source: Architectural Record)

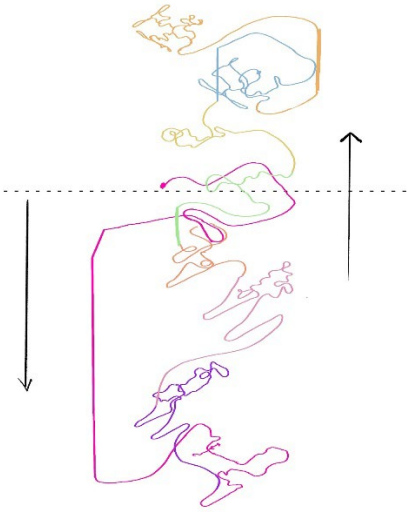


Figure 16. Axonometric circulation diagram from museum entrance to galleries. (Source: Author's work)

The National Museum of African American History and Culture has many elements that can be incorporated into the thesis narrative. The use of the ironwork corona filters light into the exhibit areas and conveys the symbolism of the design

simultaneously. The height of the spaces in the below-grade history galleries create a sense of procession up through the building. The lower ceiling heights within some of the gallery spaces correlates to the story of the museum.

Neues Museum

Architect(s)/Designer(s): Friedrich August Stüler, David Chipperfield Architects

Berlin, Germany

1855, 2009



Figure 17. Neues Museum Colonnade. (Source: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)

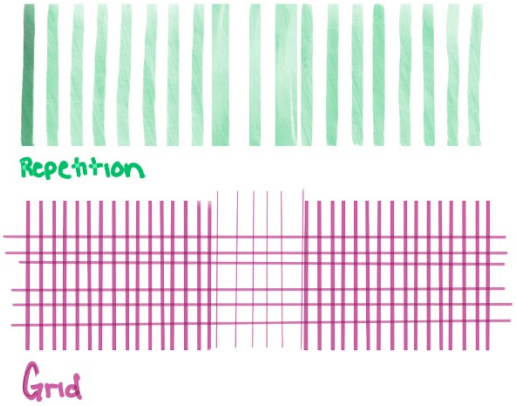


Figure 18. Neues Museum Façade analysis diagram. (Source: Author's work)

Neues Museum is a notable precedent for its approach to preservation and adaptive reuse, with its complementary interventions, ample courtyards, and open circulation, all of which are design methods that can be incorporated into the thesis narrative and design solution

Conclusion

When considering all five of the precedents studied, there are many techniques and design choices that can be synthesized into the thesis. Open circulation, creative use of ceiling heights and circulation paths, courtyards, symbolic elements conveyed through facades and rooflines, use of the site condition, and references to historic and cultural events and heritage in design are all things that can be applied to the history and architecture of African American communities.

Chapter 5: Program

Program Abstract

After consideration of the thesis question and abstract, a community and civic program with exhibit and community spaces is the best approach to executing my question. To preserve, celebrate, and raise awareness of African American history, heritage, and historic architecture, a publicly accessible venue is necessary. Additionally, many suburban and urban communities have limited amounts of green spaces, making the inclusion of outdoor programming desirable.

A communal program that has a good number of flexible spaces is critical. Spaces for education and exhibits can help convey the history and culture of the site and its surrounding contexts and create opportunities for collaborative learning activities. Flexible spaces can allow for gatherings of various sizes and accommodate a variety of community events. It would also provide the users with a sense of control over the use of the space. Additionally, gathering spaces are important for fostering connections between inhabitants. Reflection spaces are important as well, as they provide the opportunity to recover and reflect upon the information that one might learn in an exhibit. Outdoor spaces can take the form of courtyards, amphitheaters, gardens, and other types of gathering spaces. While they may not be inhabitable at all times of the year depending on the climate, they provide an opportunity for intimate gathering, quiet reflection, boisterous and free movement, and a connection to nature. Spaces for reflection, gathering, learning, and activity are the core of this thesis

solution. These areas would be supported by working spaces such as offices, restrooms, storage, mechanical rooms, and more.

Zones to Concept Program

Earlier in the thesis process, a number of programmatic zones were proposed: sprawl, outdoor, huddle, flex, and learning zones. These zones translated into gathering spaces, courtyards and similar outdoor spaces, small meeting spaces, and flexible spaces. Ideally, many of these zones would be flexible and without rigid separation, as some of these functions could overlap. The conceptual program is less nebulous. Conference and gathering rooms of varying sizes to maximize flexibility, courtyards for outdoor gathering and leisure, offices and small meeting rooms for support functions and ensuring a variety of programming, gallery and exhibition spaces that could support rotating displays and material.

Having a variety of spaces in the program can help cater to a wide range of individuals and organizations in the community. Large gathering spaces are suitable for community organizations or events; smaller gathering spaces could be good for activities. Outdoor spaces can provide leisure and activity spaces for children and teens. Exhibit spaces can have fixed displays with content that can be rotated out; this would allow for a curator to feature multiple stories and histories over time, as well as possibly increasing engagement. These spaces can also have visual and audio content, planned or self-directed activities to encourage engagement. These exhibit spaces can be designed to better fit the context of the material as well, as was done with the

National Museum of African American History and Culture, whose history galleries incorporate aspects of African American history, such as the chronological and spatial arrangement of the exhibit from the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the 20th century.

The ideas presented in "Architect of Nothingness: Frank van Klingeren's Open Architecture," discussed the importance of flexibility and balance in community centers and civic buildings. Frank van Klingeren's community centers emphasized this by having as few walls as possible but also demonstrated the need for balance; community members expressed disappointment with the noise levels in the spaces even though they did provide opportunities for multifunctionality.[51] Balancing flexibility of space with a number of semi-private or smaller gathering spaces could avoid this issue and cater to a flexibility of needs. This would also give the users of the space more control over the condition of the spaces. Smaller rooms can ensure privacy (when needed) and control the amount of noise, while also allowing for large open spaces.

The Keese Barn case study also informed the programmatic approach. While the Keese Barn was historically home to key businesses during the Jim Crow era and many members of the African American community in Pendleton, South Carolina gathered there, the studio's solution involved the creation of a monument and built space, which they named "The Hundreds".[52] The Hundreds created a space to

[51] Ecem Sarıçayır, "Architect of Nothingness: Frank van Klingeren's Open Architecture," *FOOTPRINT* 16, no. 2 (2022): 145–56, https://doi.org/10.7480/footprint.16.2.6078.
[52] Jori Erdman, "Studio South: Recycling an African American Landmark," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 59, no. 4 (2006): 19–25.

celebrate the memory of Keese Barn and incorporated what could have been salvaged from the historic site. While the disassembly of a historic building may not necessarily be aligned with the thesis solution, the strategy of creating spaces that foster reflection and commemoration of historically significant spaces is critical in the development of the thesis program and fulfilling the thesis question.

Program Diagrams and Documentation



Figure 19. Proposed spaces diagram, proportional to each other. (Source: Author's work)

Precedent Reverse Engineering

For the reverse engineering process, the program and floor plans of the Villager's Home were analyzed for the proportions, size, number, and types of spaces. Villager's Home has a few types of spaces and has a decent-sized area. The spaces in this visitor center are a functional hall, activity room, reception hall (near the main entrance), office, tearoom, and courtyard, with additional spaces for storage and other functions. These spaces were categorized as gathering spaces,

flexible/activity spaces, ceremonial space, outdoor/courtyard space, office, and service/storage space. This was to consolidate these spaces into a few discrete categories of spaces that have similar functions.



Program	Sq. Ft. {approx)	#
Ceremonial	60.52	1
Gathering	644.13	2
Office	96.67	1
Flex	226.04	1
courtyard [ext].	134.55	1
Service	171.51	8

Figure 20. Reverse Engineering Diagram. (Source: Author's work)

Villager's Home was selected for reverse engineering for its' approach to its historic context, incorporation of the ruins of the rammed earth walls and homage to the traditional vernacular architectural style, as well as the efficient use of space types. The visitor center has three types of gathering spaces: the activity hall, reception hall, and functional hall, in addition to the more ceremonial tearoom. These rooms represent gatherings at a variety of scales; a few people can comfortably occupy the tearoom simultaneously, while the reception hall could accommodate dozens. This range of occupancy illustrates a focus on fostering community and gathering, which is very much aligned with the thesis question.

Chapter 6: Site Selection

Site Selection Abstract

To best suit the aims of the thesis question, several criteria were developed to ensure that the final site best suits its aims. For preserving, celebrating and making the architecture, history, and cultural heritage of African American communities more accessible, it is important for the selected site to be accessible to the public, have historic significance or proximity to historically significant sites and structures, include green spaces, and be responsive to the current needs of the community.

Each prospective site will be researched and measured against the chosen criteria to decide which location will best facilitate the design solution and thesis goals.Potential sites are all located in Baltimore County, Maryland, each are close to historically African American neighborhoods, and many are close to former historic schools for African American children.

Site Selection Criteria

Initial Site Selection Criteria

Initially, a large list of potential criteria was developed, and it included:

- Location
- Scale
- Historic Context
- Demographics
- Building Age

- Typology
- Community Context

Location is a broad term with many meanings, and in this case, encapsulates different elements of place. From the start, the scope of potential locations was restricted to Maryland, and upon further consideration was narrowed to locations within the Baltimore County and Baltimore City area. After this contraction, the criteria of location concerned the scale of location; urban, suburban, and rural scales.

Scale refers to the physical size of the site. While the final area of the design solution has not yet been finalized, a site that could comfortably accommodate a building of at least 10,000 square feet would be ideal.

Historic Context concerns the general history of the area and how it shaped its development, as well as the history of the African American community in that specific region. Topics of interest include economic factors such as the development of a railroad line, the impact of redlining and urban renewal (for example, the development of a major highway nearby and if it displaced existing residents), the development of the African American community and how much of it remains in the present, and more.

Demographics refers to whether a potential area had a historic African American community, and its current status. This is an important consideration that can generate several questions such as:

- Did a potential area once have a significant African American population that later diminished, and what were the factors that caused this, and what has happened to the historic places that were important to the African American population at one time?
- If a potential area still has a significant African American population, how much of the historic fabric of the area remains, and what are some of the things that are important to the community?
- If an area had a small African American population that later ballooned, what were the factors that caused this?

These questions demonstrate that demographics tie into some of the other criteria, namely the historic context and community context.

Building Age is more specific and refers to the age of any existing buildings located on a potential site. This criterion generates questions like:

- Are the existing buildings old enough to be considered historic (fifty years or older is a common metric)
- Are there any former historic school buildings on site?
- Is there an opportunity to utilize adaptive reuse techniques?
- Would the condition of the building be a consideration in the design solution phase of the thesis?
- Have the existing buildings or its neighbors been recognized on a local, state, or federal level (Maryland Inventory of Historic Places, National Register of Historic Places, etc.)

Typology covers what the site has or is currently being used for, as well as any existing structures located onsite. Parks, shopping malls, small businesses, grocery stores, schools, churches, and other site and building typologies would each have their own influence on design decisions.

Community Context deals with what is currently happening in the area; if the area is primarily residential or commercial, what the potential site is currently being used for, if there are any building typologies or services absent from the area, and more.

Final Site Selection Criteria

This initial list of site selection criteria was reduced to six criteria: historic significance, demographics, environmental condition, current and future development (a renaming of the community context category), accessibility, and size. Generally, many of the criteria were consolidated and renamed. Historic significance encompasses historic context, typology, and building age, all of which are informed by location. Current and future development is a rephrasing of community context, with the inclusion of awareness of future plans that may influence the immediate area of the site.

Environmental condition is a new criterion, and it refers to the amount of green space on and near the selected site. This category considers how many parks

and other publicly accessible green spaces are nearby, as well as how much vegetation is present on the site itself.

Preliminary Site Selection

Historic significance was a major influence on the search for suitable locations. In the preliminary site selection process, several historic African American communities in the Baltimore area were located. The first two sites are near the Church Lane African American Survey District, and the third is within the Foote's Hill African American Survey District.

The Church Lane African American Survey District is located in Randallstown, Maryland, and encompasses the area of Church Lane, Allenswood Road, Scotts Level Road, and Old Court Road.

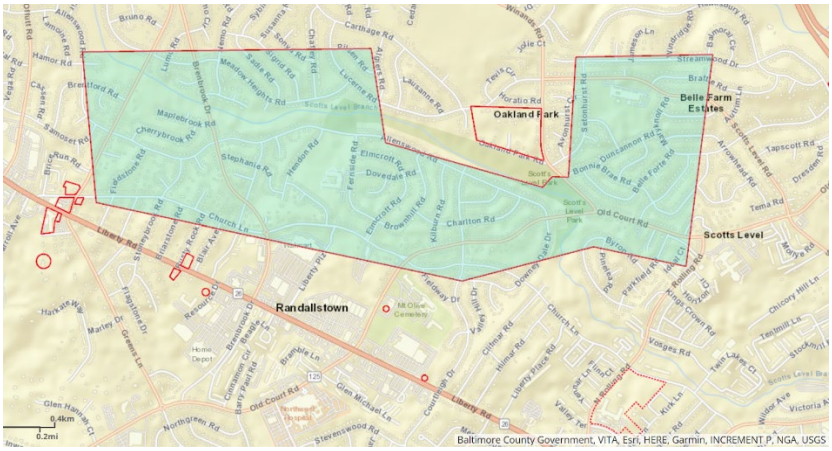


Figure 21. Map of the Church Lane African American Survey District. (Source: Maryland Historical Trust)

The Church Lane African American Survey District has several historic homes, the earliest of which date back to the early twentieth century.[53] However, African American communities in the Randallstown area have existed since the antebellum era. In the early 20th century, African American businessmen constructed several buildings in the area and operated places such as the Hideaway-Bar and the Good Hope Lodge, which were important gathering places for the community.[54] Additionally, local churches like Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal have deep ties to the history of the area.

Foote's Hill African American Survey District is located in northern Baltimore County, near the town of Cockeysville. Foote's Hill, which was named after the Foote family, dates back to the 1870s.[55] The historic community centered around the Bazil African Methodist Episcopal Church, which was built by formerly enslaved African Americans and also served as the school for local children.[56]

Union Bethel A.M.E. Church, Randallstown, Maryland

[53] Kristie Baynard, "Church Lane African American Survey District" (Maryland: E.H.T Traceries, Maryland Historical Trust, November 1, 2002), https://apps.mht.maryland.gov/Medusa/PDF/BaltimoreCounty/BA-3048.pdf.
[54] Louis K. Diggs, "History of the African American Communities of Church Lane, Winands Road, and Oakland Park Road in Randallstown, Maryland," in *Surviving in America: Histories of 7 Black Communities in Baltimore County, Maryland: Oakland Park Road, Relay, Oella, Halethorpe, Granite, Church Lane, Winands Road*, 1st ed. (Baltimore, Maryland: Uptown Press, 2002), chap. 1.
[55] Kristie Baynard and Jana Riggle, "Foote's Hill African American Survey District" (Maryland: E.H.T Traceries, Maryland Historical Trust, March 11, 2003), https://apps.mht.maryland.gov/Medusa/PDF/BaltimoreCounty/BA-3092.pdf.
[56] Ibid.



Figure 22. View of Old Union Bethel A.M.E Church Building, facing north. (Source: Google)

Union Bethel A.M.E. Church was first located at 8502 Liberty Road, Randallstown, Maryland, south of the St. Thomas Cemetery. Many African Americans in the area attended this church and the St. Thomas Lodge, which provided education to African American students in the area from 1885 to the mid-twentieth century.[57] The current building dates back to the 1960s, the third iteration of the Union Bethel A.M.E. Church building. In the 1990s, the congregation relocated to 8615 Church Lane. [58] Currently, the old church is used for martial arts programming.

When considering the characteristics of the site, elements that stood out were the historic significance of the church; while the current building only dates back to 1967, the original church building and the St. Thomas Lodge was once located here.

[57] Louis K. Diggs, "History of the African American Communities of Church Lane, Winands Road, and Oakland Park Road in Randallstown, Maryland," in *Surviving in America: Histories of 7 Black Communities in Baltimore County, Maryland: Oakland Park Road, Relay, Oella, Halethorpe, Granite, Church Lane, Winands Road*, 1st ed. (Baltimore, Maryland: Uptown Press, 2002), chap. 1.
[58] Ibid.

Its proximity to the main road is another positive. One of the drawbacks is the size of the site; the cemetery occupies most of the site.

Choate House, Randallstown, Maryland



Figure 23. Choate House in October 2023. (Source: Author's work)

Choate House was located at 9600 Liberty Road and was one of the oldest extant houses in the community.[59] Built in 1810, the house was once a tavern and farm, and its former owners had connections to the development of Liberty Road. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989, Choate House was an example of Federal and Italianate style architecture. Choate House was demolished in March 2025.[60]

Choate House was an interesting option for a design solution. One of the positives of this location is the size of the property, which allows for many

[59] Choate House was demolished in March 2025, during this thesis project.; Rona Kobell, "Choate House Was a National Historic Landmark. A Baltimore County Developer Bulldozed It.," *The Baltimore Banner*, April 2, 2025, https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/article/choate-house-was-a-national-historic-landmark-a-baltimore-county-developer-bulldozed-it-ZZHOH4B3YJA5PLCAPKGWDQRNKE/.

[60] V.J. Trescott, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Choate House," May 26, 1989.

possibilities for a design, as well as its proximity to two main roads, Liberty Road and Owings Mills Boulevard, as well as several residential neighborhoods. There are some drawbacks to this site, however, namely that there is not a strong connection to the historic African American communities in Randallstown, and it is distant from the Church Lane and Win-Oak communities. With the recent demolition of the historic building itself, the remaining tangible historic fabric is diminished further.

Bazil A.M.E. Church, Cockeysville, Maryland



Figure 24. Bazil A.M.E. Church in Cockeysville. (Source: Google)

Bazil African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E) Church is located at 320 Sherwood Rd, Cockeysville, MD, and is appealing due to its historic significance. The original church, which doubled as a school building, is still extant on the site, which is heavily wooded. One of the drawbacks of the location is the rural character of the area and small size of the church site.

Site Selection

After the preliminary round of site selection, it became apparent that there may be other sites that could better fit the goals and aspirations of the thesis question. Four more sites were considered.

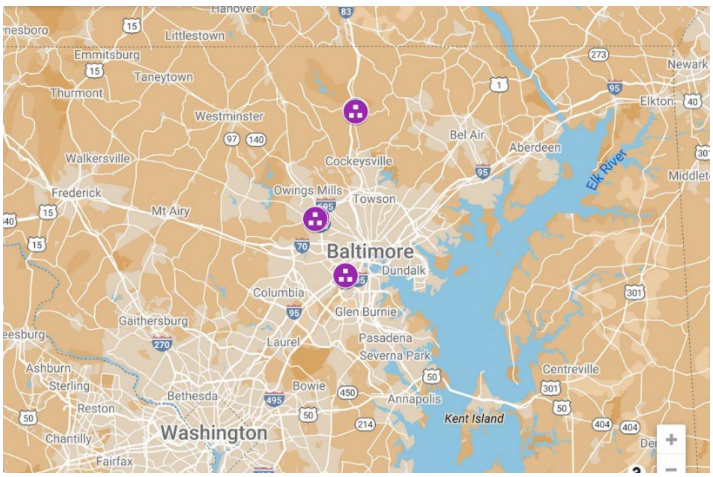


Figure 25. Map Diagram of Final Three Sites. (Source: Google)

Shoppers, Randallstown, Maryland and Scotts Level Branch, Randallstown, Maryland



Figure 26. View of the Shopping Center from the south in April 2023. (Source: Google)

The former Shoppers grocery store and Ollie's Bargain Outlet is located at 8212 Liberty Road. This building is currently unoccupied and is surrounded by a vast stretch of parking lot, a bank, and a fast-food restaurant near the lot. The site is very

close to the main road and is about one mile south of the Church Lane African American Survey District.



Figure 27. Photograph of Scotts Level Branch Lot on November 29, 2024. (Source: Author's work)

The second site, an empty lot bisected by the Scotts Level Branch is located near 8240 Church Lane, at 39°21'35.7"N 76°45'33.4"W. This lot is well wooded and close to a good number of residential neighborhoods, as well as the Scotts Level Elementary School. The Scotts Level Branch of the site is half a mile from the Church Lane African American Survey District.



Figure 28. Figure Ground diagram, not to scale: existing buildings in red, prospective sites in purple. The Scotts Level Branch site is to the north. (Source: Author's work)

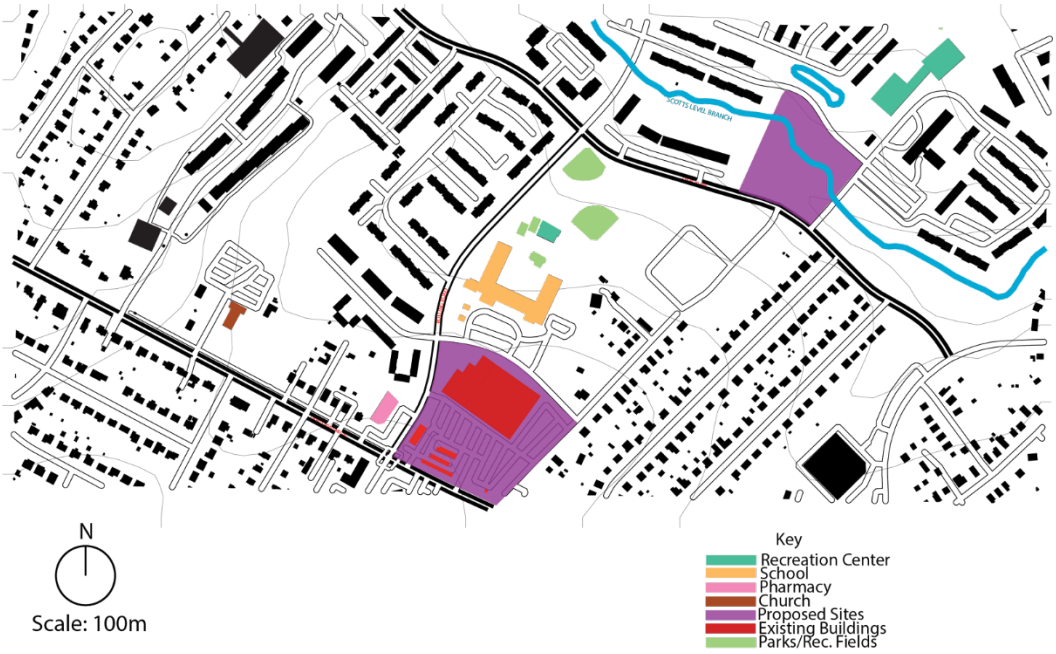


Figure 29. Figure ground showing the neighborhood resources. (Source: Author's work)



Figure 30. Historic resources near the Randallstown sites. (Source: Author's work)

St. Luke’s Church and Big Falls African American Survey District, Monkton, Maryland



Figure 31. St. Luke’s Church in Monkton. Source: LoopNet



Figure 32. Perspective of Prospective Monkton Site. Source: (Author's work)

The Big Falls African American Historic Survey District is located in Monkton, Maryland, and St. Luke's United Methodist Cemetery is one of the historic sites important to the historic African American community. Historically, the Big Falls area was home to farmers, and many community members gathered at the church, as well as organizations such as the Knights of Pythian Lodge. Adjacent to the church is the former Hereford School, which once served African American children in the area. The selected site is adjacent to the former school site and south of the church, at 39°35'03.2"N 76°39'19.7"W and near 16724 Hereford Road. One positive of the site is the abundance of historic properties.

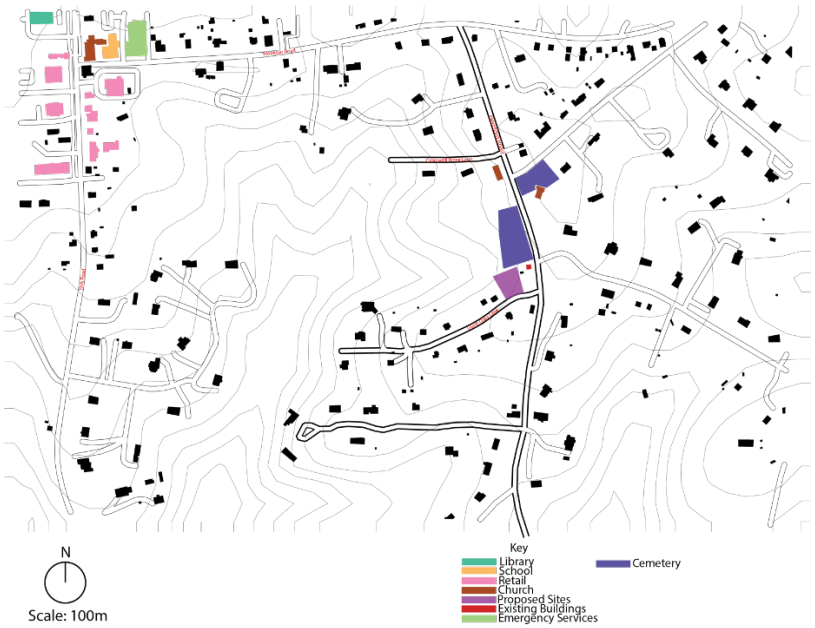


Figure 33: Figure Ground diagram of the area surrounding the prospective site on Hereford Road. (Source: Author's work)

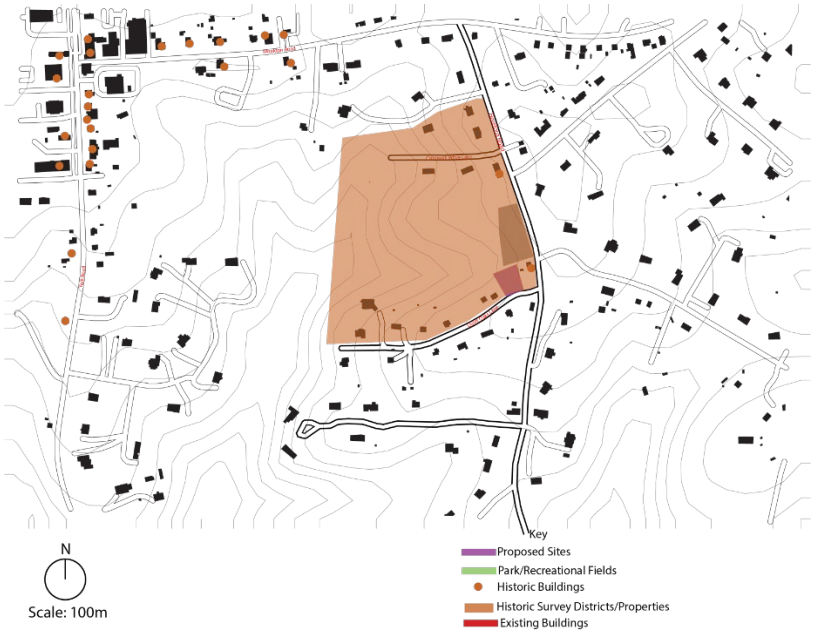


Figure 34: Figure Ground diagram of the historic districts surrounding the prospective site on Hereford Road. (Source: Author's work)

Halethorpe Community Center, Halethorpe, Maryland

Halethorpe Community Center is located at 1900 Northeast Avenue, Halethorpe, Maryland. The community center is a historic building that served as the second school building for African American students in the area and is very close to the Halethorpe African American survey district, which mostly encompasses the buildings along Northeast Avenue. The proposed site is adjacent to the community center to the north, located at 39°14'22.7"N 76°40'52.1"W. Some of the benefits of the site include its historic significance, proximity to two main roads (Washington Boulevard and Northeast Avenue), and a good amount of green space nearby. The greater Halethorpe community is surrounded by a few major highways, including I-895, I-695, and I-95, as well as a railroad line.



Figure 35. Figure Ground diagram of the prospective site on Northeast Avenue.

(Source: Author's work)

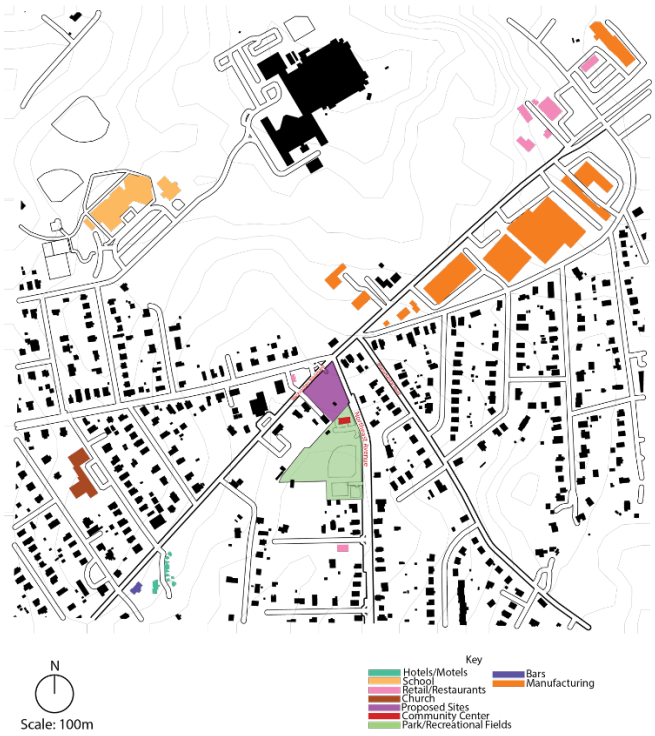


Figure 36. Figure Ground diagram of nearby amenities. (Source: Author's work)

Final Site

Diagramming and research of the site provided critical insights into the final four sites that were considered and allowed for the ranking of these sites with a matrix against the six site criteria.

Final Site Matrix

Matrix

Site Candidates:
1. Halethorpe Community Center, Halethorpe, MD
2. Former Shoppers shopping Center, Randallstown, MD
3. Scotts Level Branch, Randallstown, MD
4. St. Luke's Church/Big Falls African American Historic Survey District, Monkton, MD

Site Criteria:
1. historic significance/context
2. demographics
3. environmental condition
4. current and future planned developments
5. accessibility
6. Size

	historic significance	demographics	environmental condition	current and future planned developments	accessibility	size
Halethorpe Community Center	5	4	3	5	3	3
Former Shoppers Shopping Center	2	5	3	4	5	2
Scotts Level Branch	3	5	4	1	4	3
St. Luke's Church/Big Falls African American Historic Survey District	5	1	4	1	1	3

Figure 37. Final Site Matrix.

Historic Context

With further research, the rich historic significance of the Halethorpe Community Center was revealed. The Halethorpe Community Center was once a Rosenwald School in the heart of East Halethorpe. East Halethorpe is a historically African American community within the community of Halethorpe. Many of the houses in East Halethorpe were built by the Patapsco Savings and Real Estate Company of Anne Arundel County Inc., which was run by local African American residents and businessmen, including James T. Harris and James A. Williams, who purchased the land and constructed many of houses themselves.[61] After the

[61] Louis K. Diggs, "History of the African American Community in Halethorpe, Maryland," in *Surviving in America : Histories of 7 Black Communities in Baltimore County, Maryland : Oakland Park Road, Relay, Oella, Halethorpe, Granite, Church Lane, Winands Road*, 1st ed. (Baltimore, Maryland: Uptown Press, 2002), 100–128.

establishment of East Halethorpe, African Americans in Halethorpe lived along Northeast Avenue, Monumental Road, and Washington Street.[62] In the early 20th century, residents recall their being 10-15 African American families in this area.[63] African Americans in East Halethorpe lived in a very rural area in the early 20th century despite the proximity of the railroads. Some former residents recalled traveling to Baltimore City (approximately 1.5 miles east) to go to church, shop, and seek entertainment.[64]

Fundraising for the construction of the Halethorpe Colored School began in 1921. Community members donated the land and raised $800 for the construction of the school. The Rosenwald Fund contributed approximately $700, and Baltimore County contributed approximately $13,000 for construction.[65] This was one of the first wave of Rosenwald Schools built with brick, and the oldest extant one in Baltimore County.[66] This was the second school for African American children in the community; the first, which dated back to the 1890s, was a one-room school

[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Louis K. Diggs, "History of the African American Community in Halethorpe, Maryland," in *Surviving in America : Histories of 7 Black Communities in Baltimore County, Maryland : Oakland Park Road, Relay, Oella, Halethorpe, Granite, Church Lane, Winands Road*, 1st ed. (Baltimore, Maryland: Uptown Press, 2002), 100–128.; Teri Dorsey Rising, "Halethorpe Colored School and Setting (Lot 64 Plat of East Halethorpe)," Baltimore County Historic Properties Nomination Form (Towson, Maryland: Baltimore County Department of Planning, August 28, 2019), Schools: Halethorpe Colored, Historical Society of Baltimore County; Teri Dorsey Rising, "The Pride of a Community-The Halethorpe Colored School," *History Trails* 51, no. 1 (2023).
[66] Ibid.

building.[67] The school was built by local residents, including Joseph A. Williams Sr., who owned a construction business and was a part of the Businessmen's League.[68]

Rationale

After ranking the sites against the criteria, the Halethorpe Community Center and Former Shoppers Shopping Center ranked the highest, with 23 and 21 points, respectively. The Halethorpe Community Center site did the best, as it has stronger historic significance, an extant Rosenwald School, a good current context, decent accessibility, and size.

[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

Chapter 7: Conceptual Testing of Thesis

Introduction

After consideration of the final four sites and the Site Matrix ranking process, three conceptual schemes were developed to test the thesis idea on the site of the Halethorpe Community Center. Conceptual testing was conducted through the creation of sketches, diagrams, scaled drawings, and digital modeling. Additionally, the testing process was informed by visits to the site, research into the history of the site and surrounding area, previous precedent studies, research into upcoming developments in the community of Halethorpe, Maryland.

Site Analysis

Preparation for Site Visit

After the Halethorpe Community Center site was selected at the conclusion of the matrix ranking process, further research was conducted to obtain more information on the site, including the environmental conditions, boundaries, and additional aerial imagery of the site and surrounding areas. The Baltimore County My Neighborhood-Property application was utilized to obtain much of this information. Through this process, the bounds of the site were confirmed, as well as those of adjoining properties.

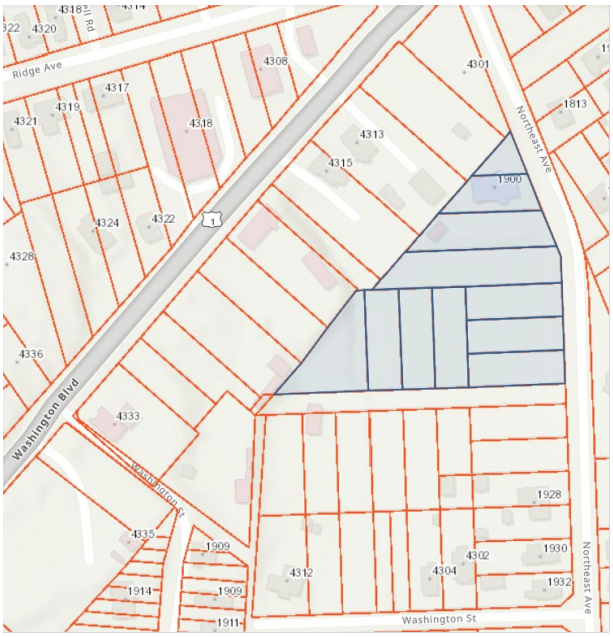


Figure 38. Boundaries of 1900 Northeast Avenue. (Source: Baltimore County My Neighborhood- Property. Baltimore County OIT/GIS, Esri)



Figure 39: Aerial imagery of the site. (Source: Baltimore County My Neighborhood-Property. Baltimore County OIT/GIS, Esri.)

Through this process, information about the topography, watershed, soils, nearby railroads, and other information was discovered, as well as ongoing developments in the area. One of the major pending developments in the area is the redevelopment of the former Sisters of the Good Shepherd property at 4100 Maple Avenue, which is also known as the Southern Crossroads project. Southern Crossroads is planning to build 196 townhomes, as well as a convenience store, gas station, and dog park. [69]

This development has been controversial with Halethorpe residents; in 2021, local residents and the Halethorpe Improvement Association submitted letters during development plan hearings expressing concerns about stormwater management issues with the Maple Avenue site, potential overcrowding of schools, and increased traffic. Residents have reported issues with runoff from the Maple Avenue site in the past.[70] In 2022, a judge approved the project, with testimony from the environmental protection department concerning potential flooding and stormwater management practices that would be instituted at the new development.[71]

[69] Cameron Goodnight, "Halethorpe Residents Frustrated with Process on Controversial Maple Ave. Town Home Project; next Hearing Set for Sept. 23," The Baltimore Sun, September 10, 2021, https://www.baltimoresun.com/2021/09/08/halethorpe-residents-frustrated-with-process-on-controversial-maple-ave-town-home-project-next-hearing-set-for-sept-23/.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Cameron Goodnight, "Baltimore County Judge Approves Maple Avenue Development in Halethorpe after Contentious Series of Hearings," Baltimore Sun, February 7, 2022, https://www.baltimoresun.com/2022/02/07/baltimore-county-judge-approves-maple-avenue-development-in-halethorpe-after-contentious-series-of-hearings/.

Site Visit #1

The first visit to the site was conducted on November 29, 2024. During this visit, the exterior of the community center was examined (figs. 40, 41, 42), as were the baseball field basketball courts, and pavilion spaces. An unexpected discovery was the existence of a stream and bridge on the western portion of the site, which separates the second pavilion area and the baseball field (fig. 43).



Figure 40. South elevation of the Halethorpe Community Center on November 29, 2024. (Source: Author's work)



Figure 41. North elevation of the Halethorpe Community Center on November 29, 2024. (Source: Author's work)



Figure 42: Commemorative Plaque for the Halethorpe Colored School. Source: (Author's work)


Figure 43: Bridge across the stream on November 29, 2024. (Source: Author's work)

Visiting the community center site provided a good number of insights. The stream and bridge inspired ideas of specialized outdoor programming on that area of the site, as well as a potential location for a built solution. The next part of the site visit involved the investigation of adjacent properties. One potential design solution that was discussed before the site visit was the possibility of an expansion beyond the existing community center site. Two additional properties were visited: a vacant

triangular lot at 4301 Washington Boulevard, which is due north of the community center (Fig. 44), and the vacant property between 4302 and 4210 Ridge Avenue, which is across the street from 4301 Washington Boulevard (Figure 45).



Figure 44. 4301 Washington Boulevard lot, facing south towards the community center. November 29, 2024. (Source: Author's work)



Figure 45. View towards 4302 and 4310 Ridge Avenue, facing north across Washington Boulevard. November 29, 2024. (Source: Author's work)

After briefly examining the additional locations on Washington Avenue and Ridge Avenue, a short driving tour was conducted in the immediate vicinity (figs. 46, 47, 48). The streets surrounding 1900 Northeast Avenue appear to be primarily residential, with the exception of Washington Boulevard. Many of the homes, including those that are within the historic Halethorpe African American survey district, appear to be between one and two-and-a-half stories tall. Some of the manufacturing and commercial buildings are not far from the community center.



Figure 46. Residence near Community Center on November 29, 2024. (Source: Author’s work)



Figure 47. Residence on Northeast Avenue on November 29, 2024. (Source: Author's work)



Figure 48. Commercial buildings visible from Halethorpe Avenue on November 29, 2024. (Source: Author's work)

Takeaways

Overall, the site visit was very fruitful and informed the development of the initial design schemes. Firsthand observations of the site have nurtured the idea of expanding the site beyond the boundaries of the community center, namely across Washington Boulevard. Additionally, this site visit has sparked the idea of creating a scheme that is a composite of several interrelated elements and structures. Future visits to the site to study the circulation of the community center itself will provide additional insight into the development of a design that is compatible and fully responsive to the site conditions and context.

Additional Site Visits

Additional site visits were conducted on January 29, 2025, February 19, 2025, and May 20, 2025, where the interior of the community center building was examined for additional insights. The community center is made of one large room flanked by a

closet, kitchen, and two bathrooms, with five grouped windows providing a majority of the natural lighting, as seen in figs. 49, 50, and 51.



Figure 49. Interior of the Halethorpe Community Center, facing the south wall, on May 20, 2025. (Source: Author's work)



Figure 50. Interior of the Halethorpe Community Center, facing the east wall, on May 20, 2025. (Source: Author's work)



Figure 51. East Elevation of the Halethorpe Community Center on May 20, 2025.

(Source: Author's work)

Initial Design Schemes

Scheme 1

Before the first site visit, conceptual schemes were largely oriented around design interventions on the site itself. Before this, a general list of design principles was developed. These principles are closely related to the criteria developed for the matrix process and include:

- Creating flexible communal spaces
- Designs that are responsive to the context of the site
- Designs that are complementary to the site context and its history, and are minimally destructive to existing historic structures
- Create outdoor programming and gathering spaces as a complement to indoor gathering spaces.

Initial explorations proposed to expand the boundaries of the existing community center site to adapt the vacant 4301 Washington Boulevard lot and portions of the

adjacent property, which currently has a shed located on it, and to either relocate the baseball field to the western area of the site to allow the construction of a new structure (fig. 52), or proposed the construction of a new structure on the western section of the site (fig. 53).

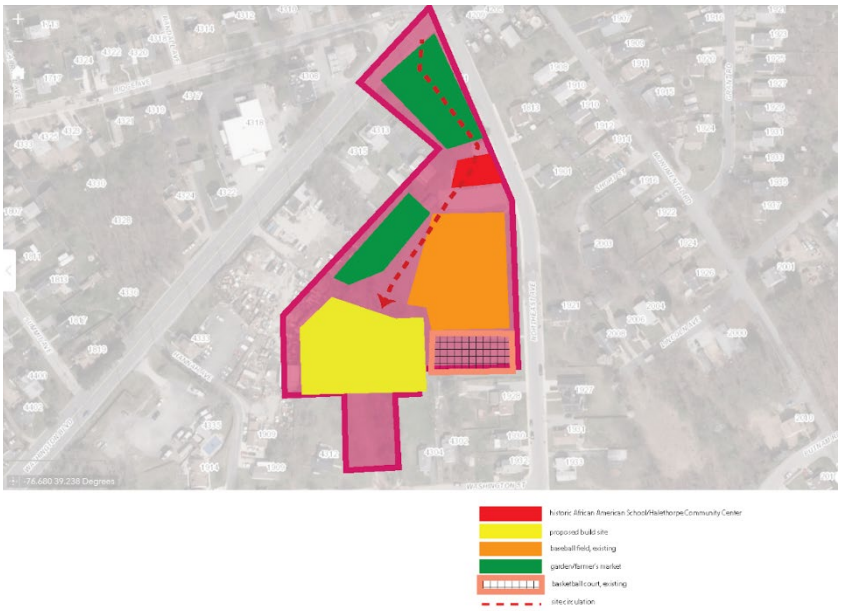


Figure 52. Scheme 1 Diagram. (Source: Author's work)

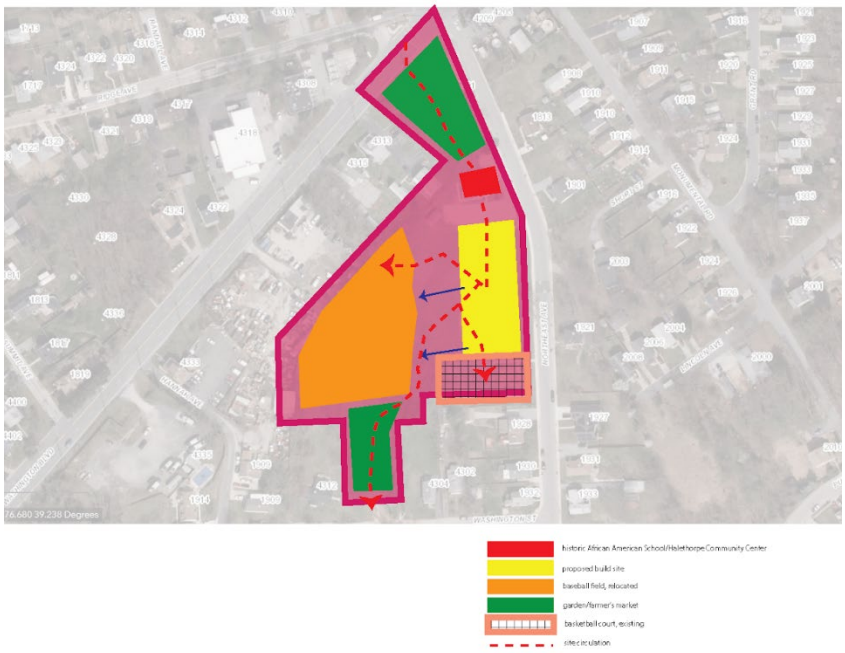


Figure 53. Initial scheme with proposal to relocate the baseball field to the western portion of the site. (Source: Author's work)

Both pre-site visit schematic explorations called for the inclusion of outdoor gathering spaces (shaded in green), and for the inclusion of the community center as a part of a north-to-south circulation across the site, however, fig. 52 focuses on a more minimally invasive solution than fig. 53 does.

After the site visit, the discovery of the stream, which cuts through the western region of the site led to an adjustment in design approach. The first proper scheme calls for a more ambitious expansion of the site and the creation of a bidirectional circulation through the site, especially after consideration of the topography of the surrounding area (figs. 54, 55).

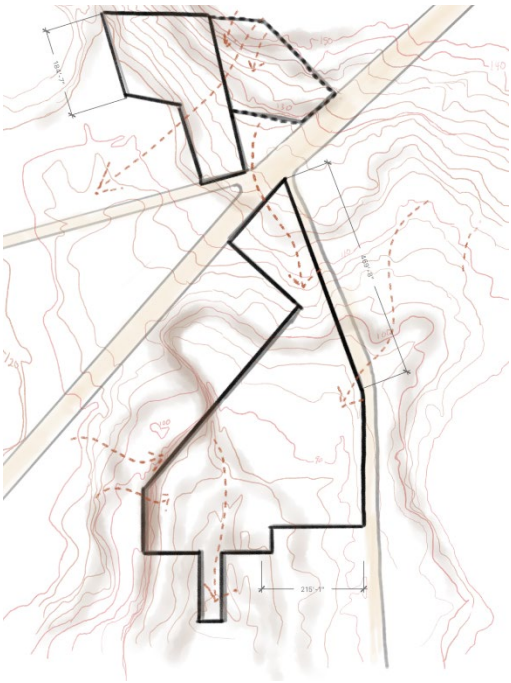


Figure 54. Topographic diagram showing proposed site boundaries, not to scale.

(Source: Author's work)

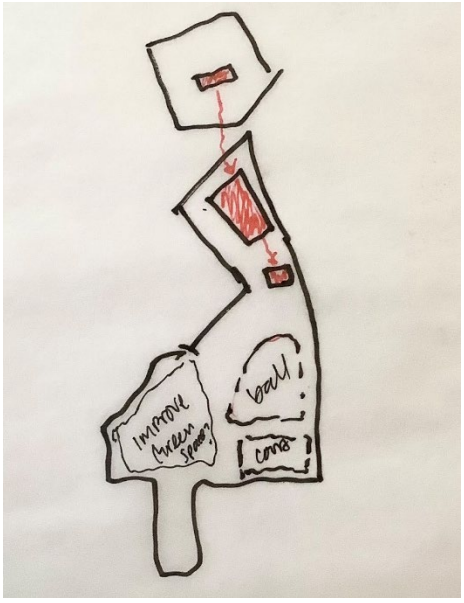


Figure 55. Scheme 1 sketch. (Source: Author's work)



Figure 56. Scheme 1 parti sketch. (Source: Author's work)

Through these explorations, a parti for this scheme was developed (figs. 55, 56). This parti represents the two options present on site for visitors. If a visitor arrives to the site through the existing entrance, they can experience the historic structure and its communal offerings first and then move down site to visit the southern intervention for educational programs and exhibits. If a visitor arrives at the design intervention on the north side of Ridge Avenue, they can experience the programs and exhibits there and travel down site through a deliberate procession across Ridge Avenue and Washington Boulevard, and onward to the community center and additional programs at the southern structure.

Scheme 2

The second scheme created is similar to the first and continues to promote the idea of two circulatory options for visitors. However, this idea proposes the relocation of the baseball field to the Ridge Avenue area (figs. 57, 58). This presents the

opportunity for additional recreational space near the pending Maple Avenue development and Halethorpe Elementary school, which is not far from this location. The parti of this scheme aims to facilitate a clear procession from the proposed Ridge Avenue baseball field to the Washington Boulevard green space, through the Halethorpe Community Center, and ending at the new structure, which would replace the existing baseball field, to represent a union between the functions of new and historic structures. New outdoor gathering spaces on the western portion of the site and the existing basketball court would supplement the new structure.

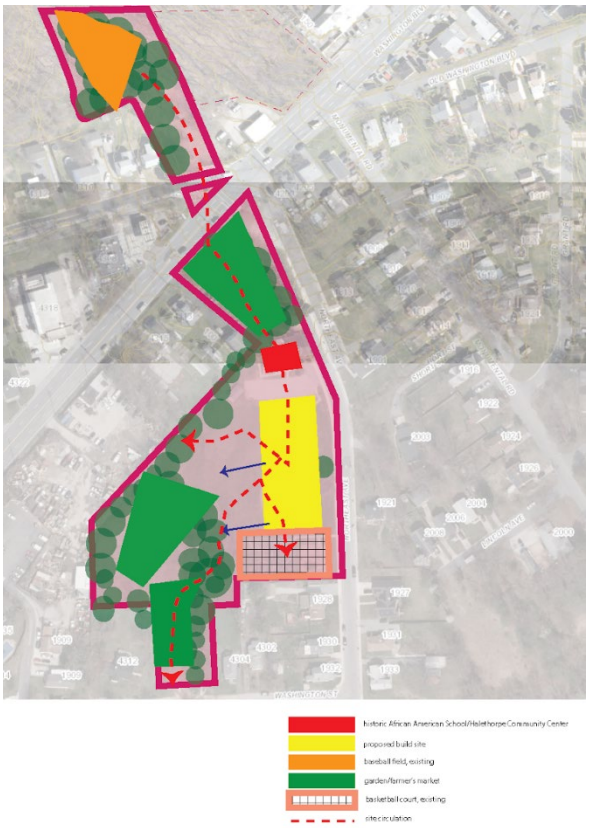


Figure 57. Scheme 2 sketch. (Source: Author's work)

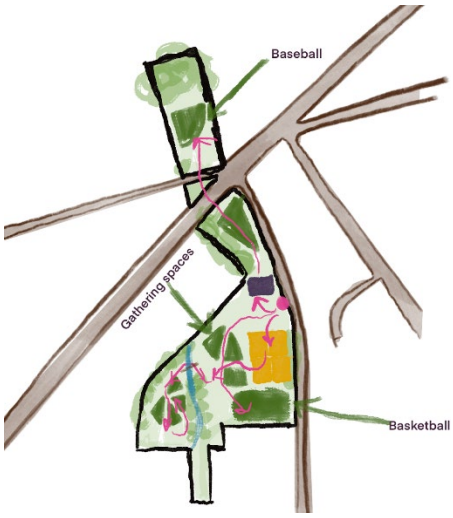


Figure 58. Scheme 2 parti sketch. (Source: Author's work)

Scheme 3

The third scheme has a parti that aims to create spaces for the education and collection of exhibits geared towards African American history in Halethorpe through a collection of smaller scale spaces. Three cultural hubs will be created (including the existing historic school building, though that will remain true to its historic appearance) on the 1900 Northeast Avenue site (fig. 59). The collection of these hubs on the original 1900 Northeast Avenue site strengthens the tie to the nearby historic Halethorpe African American Survey district, where many African Americans in Halethorpe lived in the early 20th century.

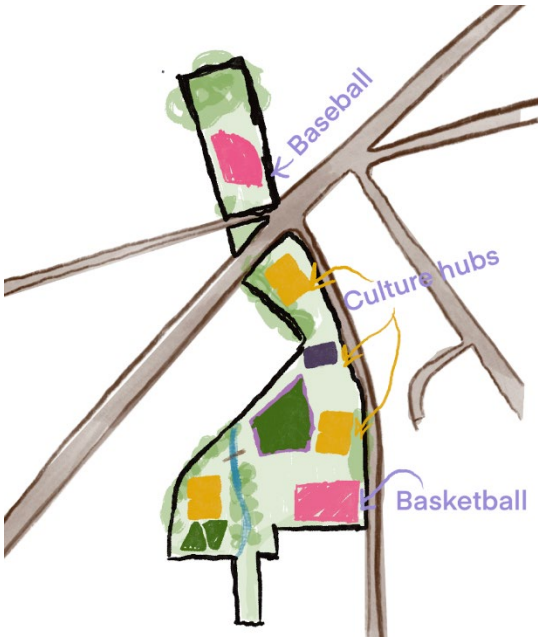


Figure 59. Scheme 3 parti sketch. (Source: Author's work)

Conclusion

As a result of the site visit, diagrams, and sketching exercises, the next phase of the thesis may most likely go in the direction of Scheme 3, where a cluster of structures located on the 1900 Northeast Avenue site create opportunities for the celebration and appreciation of the history of African Americans in Halethorpe and the Halethorpe Colored School with additional opportunities for recreation and gathering on the Ridge Avenue site. This direction will allow for an easier incorporation of the lessons learned from the precedent study process and a more readable execution of the design principles and thesis topic.

Chapter 8: Thesis Design Solution and Conclusion

Introduction

Upon consideration of the conceptual testing schemes, several significant changes were made to the site parti, site boundaries, massing, and arrangement. The site boundaries were modified to exclude the area north of the vacant 4301 Washington Boulevard lot and to include portions of the lot where 4325 Washington Boulevard is situated. The thesis design solution stays largely within the boundaries of the existing site, partially restores the historic Halethorpe School to an approximation of what it looked like during its time as a school and introduces three new buildings to the site that aim to address the current needs of the surrounding community in Halethorpe by enhancing the services currently offered onsite.

Site Plan

Existing Condition and Proposed Changes

Currently, the site, which is owned and operated by the Baltimore County Government, has one enclosed structure onsite, the historic Halethorpe Colored School, which is used to host meetings of the Halethorpe Civic League, private events, and various exercise classes. North of the school building are two handicap parking spaces. Directly south of the historic school building is a small parking lot with at least ten standard parking spaces. On the southernmost section of the site, there are outdoor basketball courts and a playground. Between the parking lot and the playground, there is a baseball field. Additionally, there are two outdoor pavilions onsite, one near the west side of the historic building, and another that is west of the

stream that bisects the Halethorpe Community Center site and is only accessible by crossing a narrow footbridge (fig. 60).



Figure 60. View of the footbridge and pavilions on May 20, 2025. (Source: Author's work)

As mentioned previously, the thesis design solution includes the addition of three new buildings to the site, as well as two parking lots and an outdoor amphitheater (fig. 61). The new museum and community buildings will replace the current baseball field, south of the existing parking lot, which will be replaced by a garden. The museum will be oriented on a north-south axis along the lines of the historic school building, while the community center will be oriented on an east-west axis. The outdoor basketball courts and playgrounds would be relocated to the western half of the site. The recreation center will be located on the far western section of the site, perpendicular to Washington Boulevard.



Figure 61. Site Plan of proposed changes to the site (Source: Author's work)

Several outdoor recreational spaces have been created through this design's spatial arrangement, which is inspired by the intersecting lines of the site's parti and juxtapose rigid paths with expansive swathes of green space. The new outdoor spaces include the Square, the Open Play area, and the Pavilions. The Square serves as a

large outdoor gathering space to facilitate different levels of outdoor recreation and gathering, ranging from picnics to family reunions or other large outdoor events. This space is created and defined by the edge condition of the museum and community center buildings, and its intersecting pathways are derived from the site parti (figs. 62, 63).

The Open Play area is located directly north of the outdoor basketball courts and playground and serves as a buffer between the structured court and playground spaces and the outdoor amphitheater space to its east. The Pavilions provide additional structured outdoor spaces and are a medium between the expansive green spaces of the Square and the Playing Fields and the indoor gathering spaces of the community center and museum.

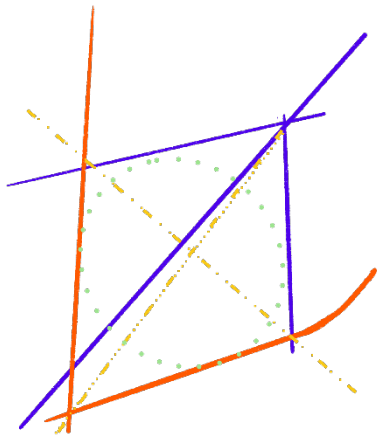


Figure 62: Site Parti diagram. (Source: Author's work)

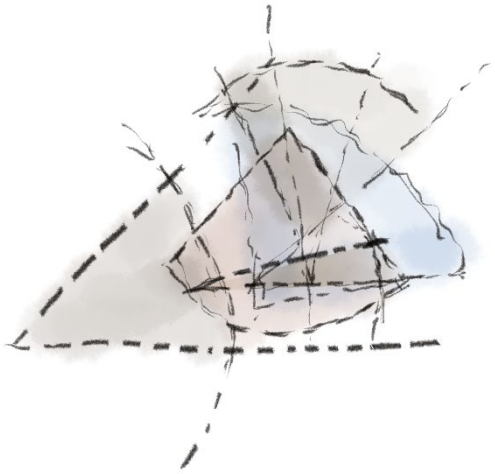


Figure 63: Diagram of parti applied to site. (Source: Author's work)

Halethorpe Colored School

As mentioned previously, the proposed changes to the site include the addition of three new buildings to the site, in addition to the partial restoration of the historic school building, similar to the restoration of the Ridgeley Rosenwald School in Capitol Heights, Maryland (fig. 64). The Halethorpe Colored School was originally built as a variation of the Rosenwald School Plan 20-A.[72] Plan 20-A was intended for two-room schools oriented on a north-south axis and included two classrooms separated by a movable partition (fig. 65). The classrooms were flanked by cloak rooms and vestibules and included an industrial room and a porch. The industrial rooms protrude from the southern elevation on Plan 20-A and were intended to be spaces to teach students vocational skills. The Halethorpe Colored School does not

[72] Teri Dorsey Rising, "Halethorpe Colored School and Setting (Lot 64 Plat of East Halethorpe)," Baltimore County Historic Properties Nomination Form (Towson, Maryland: Baltimore County Department of Planning, August 28, 2019), Schools: Halethorpe Colored, Historical Society of Baltimore County.

have a protruding industrial room, but it has two porches, one shading each of the two original entrances to the school building.



Figure 64. Ridgeley Rosenwald School on April 19, 2025. (Source: Author's work)

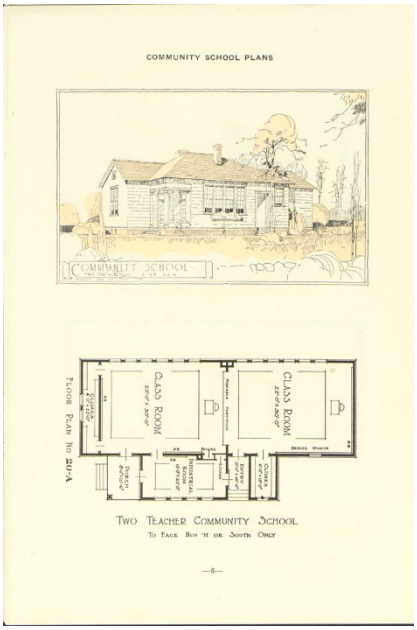


Figure 65. Floor Plan 20-A. (Source: HistorySouth.org)

The restoration of this school building would entail the installation of an appropriate and historically accurate movable partition to recreate the original two-room condition, as well as the placement of period-appropriate classroom furniture and blackboards in the eastern classroom. This would require the removal of the closet in the southeast corner of the building (fig. 49). The western classroom would be reconfigured to showcase displays with photographs, artifacts, and informational panels akin to a museum exhibit. The 1968 addition to the western elevation would be left largely as it is, though the current kitchen would be converted to a storage room (fig. 66).

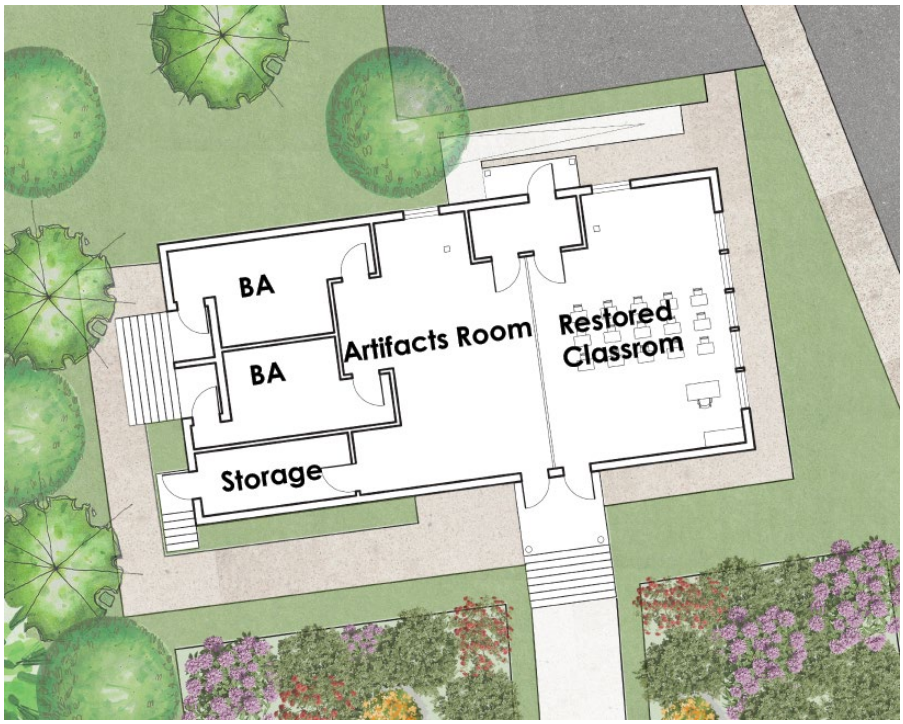


Figure 66. Floor Plan of proposed changes to the historic school building (Source: Author's work)

The decision to maintain the 1968 addition and to utilize the second classroom as a flexible showcase area is driven by several factors. The restored classroom

proposal speaks to the first period of significance of the school, while the retention of the 1968 addition speaks to the third phase of the building's history, when it was first operated as a community center. The use of the western classroom as a flexible showcase area is driven by an interview with Mrs. Ethel Collic, an alumnus of the Halethorpe Colored School, who recalled the western classroom as being used as a resting area for ailing students.[73] Converting the western classroom into a flexible showcase area pays homage to the changing configuration of the classrooms during the Halethorpe Colored School era.

The exterior of the school building would remain relatively unchanged in order to maintain its integrity. An examination of the southern facade revealed a filled in door to the left of the existing door (fig. 67). Additionally, historic photographs of the school building reveal that the northern entrance door had a multi-light transom and sidelights (fig. 68). The design solution calls for a restoration of this door assembly.

[73] Ethel Collic, Ed Collic, and Vincent Johnson, Interview with Mrs. Ethel Collic, alumnus of the Halethorpe Colored School, Mr. Ed Collic, and Mr. Vincent Johnson, interview by Wanjiru Duncan, February 19, 2025.

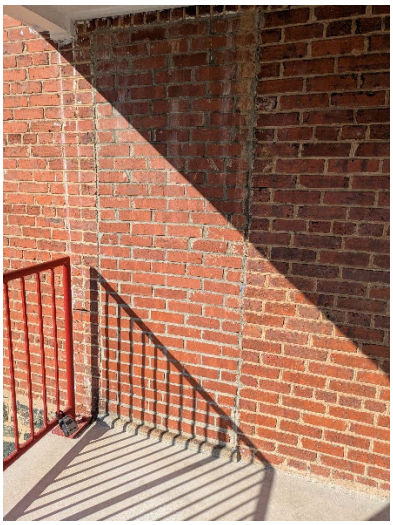


Figure 67. Bricked in door on the south façade of the school building on January 29, 2025. (Source: Author's work)

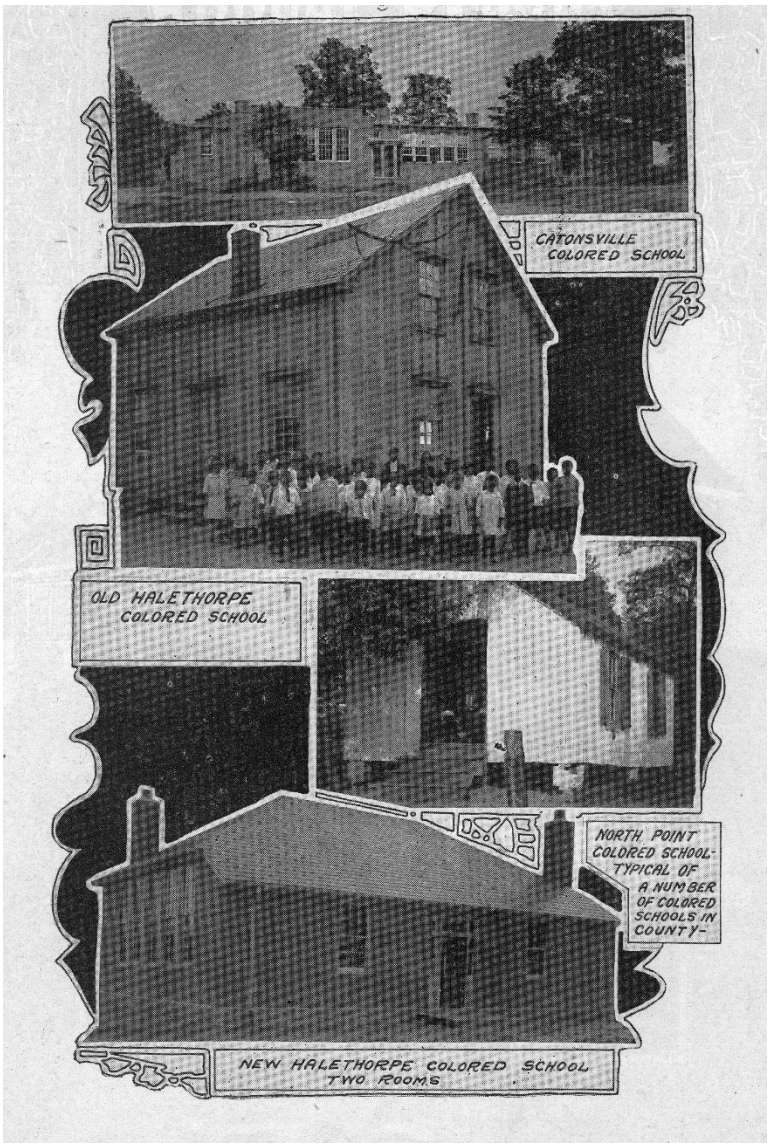


Figure 68. Baltimore County's historic schools for African American children. The Halethorpe Colored School is on the bottom. (Source: Baltimore County Public Schools)

Museum

Design

The primary facade of the museum building, which is two stories tall, faces east towards Northeast Avenue. The overall design and materiality echoes the first school for African American children in Halethorpe (figs. 68, 69). The museum's primary facade has a regular five-bay system with large window openings. The center bay contains the primary entrance on the first floor, which has a glass sliding door flanked by two sidelights and a transom, akin to the Halethorpe Colored School's original front door assembly. On the second floor, the central bay has three sections of glazing that are separated by mullions, echoing the structure of the first floor openings. The four flanking bays are nearly identical, with wide swathes of glass subdivided by mullions and muntins, and a three-foot wide band of spandrels between the first and second floor windows (fig. 70).

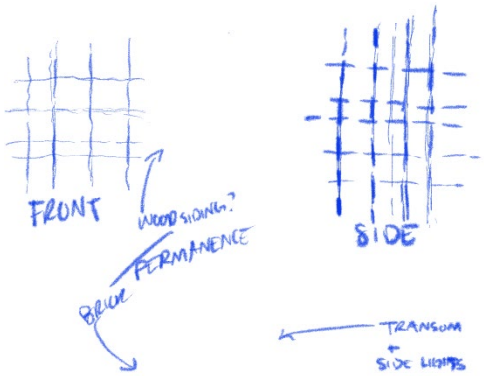


Figure 69. Grid diagram of Halethorpe historic school facades. (Source: Author's work)



Figure 70. Museum Elevation (Source: Author's work)

The facade material is made of white wooden board and batten cladding, recalling the material likely used on the first Halethorpe School. The north and south facades of the museum each have two window openings similar to those seen on the primary facade, which illuminate the two primary exhibit spaces and the office space. The rear facade has only one window opening on the second floor, and there are two exits on the first floor of this elevation.

Plan and Circulation

The plan of the museum building creates two bars representative of the two programmatic zones (figs. 71, 72). The west side of the building is primarily dedicated to service and support functions, including bathrooms, storage, mechanical rooms, and means of egress. The larger zone on the east side of the building is dedicated to gathering, educational, and working spaces. The plan was inspired by Rosenwald School Plan 20-A for schools oriented on a north to south axis (fig. 65). On the first floor, the south exhibit is a double-height space dedicated to the display of and discussion of Halethorpe's history, especially the history of the African American community of East Halethorpe. The northern exhibit space is intended to engage with the broader history of African Americans in Maryland. On the second floor, this zone is dedicated to office space and a large conference room for museum staff (fig. 72).



Figure 71. Museum and Community Center Ground Floor Plan, not to scale. (Source: Author's work)



Figure 72. Museum and Community Center Second Floor Plan, not to scale. (Source: Author's work)

Section

In section, the correlation between the subject matter and spatial arrangement is revealed. The south exhibit, which focuses exclusively on the history of East Halethorpe and its African American community, has a nine-foot ceiling. The north exhibit, which focuses on a larger scale of history, has a soaring twenty-foot ceiling, reflecting a sweeping increase in scale (fig. 73).

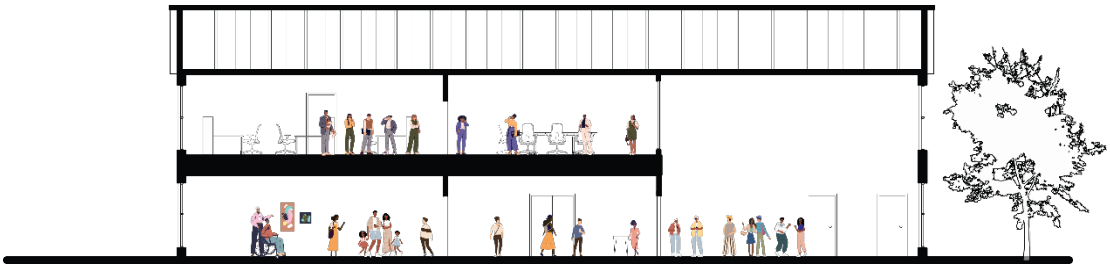


Figure 73. Museum section, not to scale. (Source: Author's work)

The structure of the museum building is supported by light wood beams and columns, with a concrete foundation. In the service zone, the columns are spaced in twenty-foot intervals. Shear walls provide lateral stability, and the roof is a side gable roof with a moderate pitch, and the roof and the wide spans of the exhibit spaces are supported by triangular trusses.

Community Center

Design

The community center building, which is a two-story L-shaped building with a cross-gable roof, has a design which recalls the new Halethorpe Colored School, which it shares an axis with on the site. The primary facade of the community center calls to the character defining traits of the Rosenwald School, as well as those of other vernacular buildings in the surrounding community. The primary facade of the building is the north facade, which has seven equally spaced bays (fig. 74). The four bays on the east side of the building each have sliding door openings to facilitate easy movement between the large gathering space, lobby, and the Square.



Figure 74. Community Center North Elevation, not to scale. (Source: Author's work)

This transparency works to create a connection between indoor and outdoor spaces. Additionally, these large openings span both floors, bringing in as much light to the primary gathering space as possible. Rosenwald Schools were designed with the intention of maximizing daylight, as many of the rural communities in which they were built did not have equitable access to electric lighting and other key amenities. The material of the building is brick, a reference to the common usage of brick in the surrounding community, as well as the significance of the use of brick on the Halethorpe Colored School building, which was one of the first wave of Rosenwald Schools to employ brick. Brick was used for the construction of these schools to convey a sense of permanence.

Plan and Circulation

The spatial arrangement and circulation of the community center building is similar to that of the museum building. The ell of the building on both floors is largely reserved for service and small-scale gathering functions such as the office, rotating art exhibit, reference library, conference rooms, and group study (figs. 71, 72) while the eastern side of the building is occupied by the double-height great hall,

which has a stage and considerable space for movable furniture. This facilitates large community gatherings like those currently held in the historic school building, which include wakes, commemorative events, and more. The circulation of the community center building moves from a open, spacious circulation through the lobby and great hall, to a more rigid and structured circulation in the service ell.

Section

Sectionally, the fluidity and permeability of the indoor and outdoor spaces is paramount to the visitor experience of the community center building. The double-height great hall, which has numerous openings into the Square, works to create a sequence of spaces to reinforce the idea of gathering and togetherness (fig. 75).

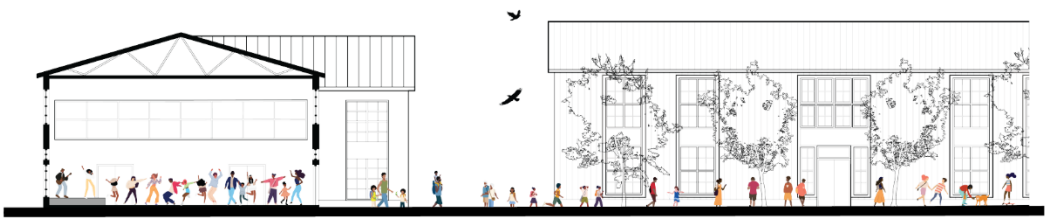


Figure 75. Section through Community Center Great Hall, not to scale. (Source: Author's work)

Recreation Center

Design

The recreation center is located adjacent to Washington Boulevard, on the westernmost portion of the site. The design of this structure incorporates some character defining elements from the surrounding vernacular architecture but does not seek to serve as an analog to either of Halethorpe's historic colored schools. The

intersecting site parti was first applied to the design of the primary facade, which later evolved to incorporate a defined rhythm of equally spaced bays (fig. 76).

Key design elements such as generous amounts of lighting, the use of brick, and the use of a shed roof call back to the vernacular architecture of the surrounding areas, while the curving metal roof and irregular building form are a departure from it. The intersection of the curved metal-clad roof, which is supported by bowstring trusses, with the shed roof, replicate forms of the parti and help visualize the idea of intersecting areas, and ideas. (figs. 76, 77).



Figure 76. Recreation Center North Elevation, not to scale. (Source: Author's work)

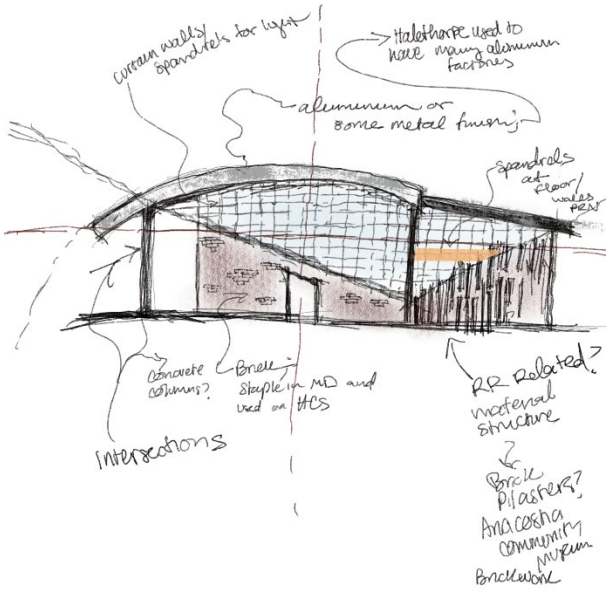


Figure 77. Early Recreation Center North Elevation parti diagram, not to scale. (Source: Author's work)

Plan and Circulation

While the recreation center's design departs from the ideas of the community center and museum buildings, principles of spatial arrangement from those buildings are applied here as well. The two spatial 'bars' in the recreation center are the indoor basketball court on the east side of the building and the series of service rooms and multipurpose exercise rooms on the west side of the building (figs. 78, 79).

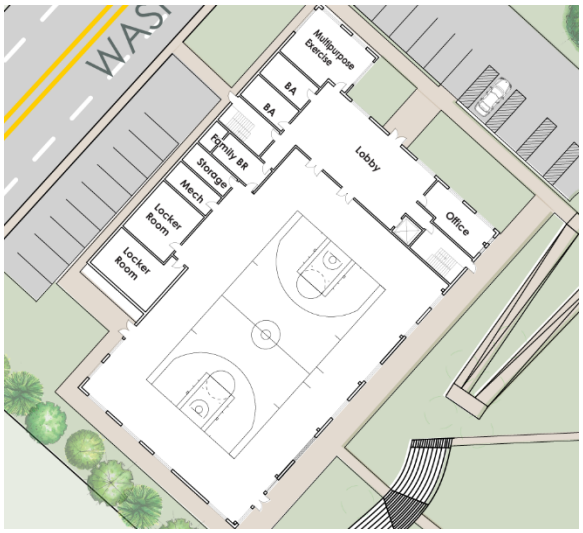


Figure 78. Recreation Center Ground Floor Plan, not to scale. (Source: Author's work)

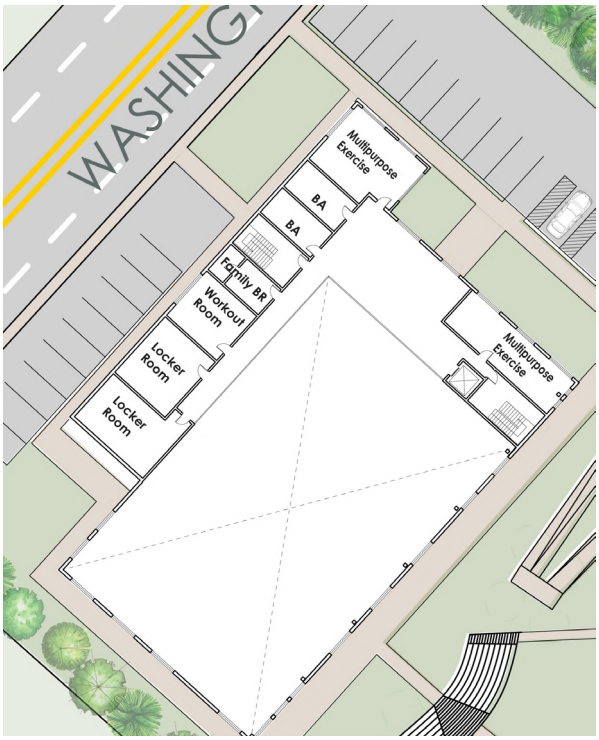


Figure 79. Recreation Center Second Floor Plan, not to scale. (Source: Author's work)

Section

With the double-height basketball court, lightness and scale is emphasized in the recreation center building. These features, along with large expanses of windows, create a connection between the indoor court and the outdoor spaces (fig.80).

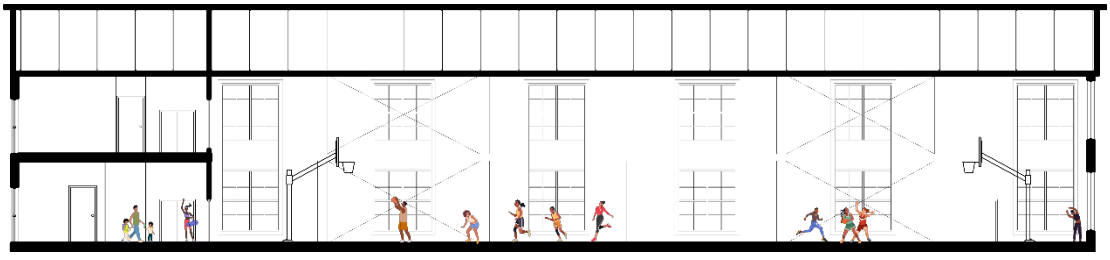


Figure 80. Section through Recreation Center, not to scale. (Source: Author's work)

Conclusion

Through the exploration of the design solution, a model for an expansion of the Halethorpe Community Center site has been developed that responds to the character defining elements of the historic Halethorpe Colored School, Rosenwald Schools, and other examples of vernacular architecture in the historically African American community of East Halethorpe. Through renovation and addition of new buildings, the existing uses of the site, which include community meetings and other public gatherings, are expanded to accommodate the area's growing population, as well as raising awareness of the Halethorpe Colored School's significance to the community and its origin as a Rosenwald School. This may be a model of expansion and addition that could be applied to other extant Rosenwald Schools across the country.

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