



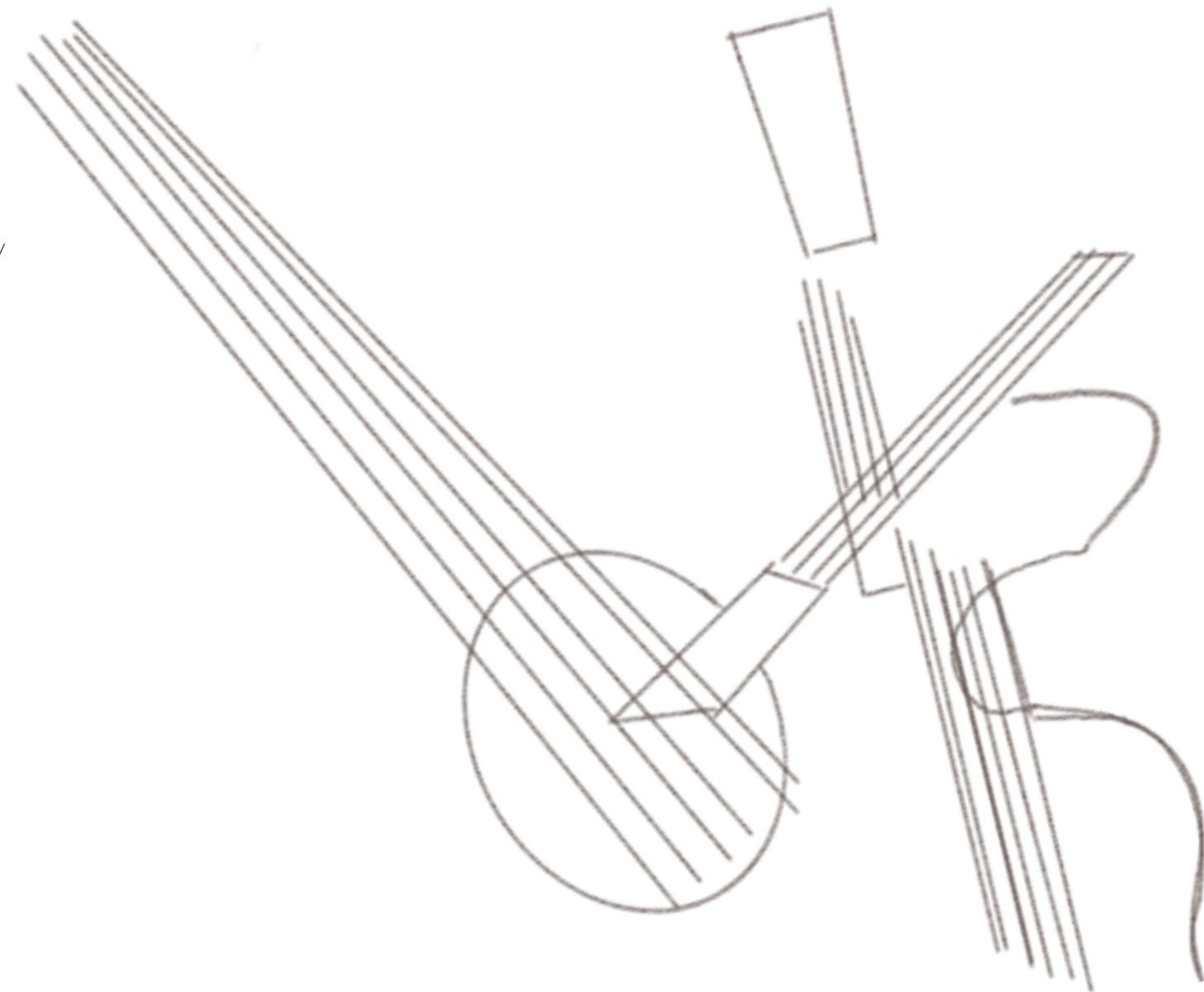
# Tightening Strings

Jeweliana Romero

# Tightening Strings Project

## Project Brief:

Nevada's public school system is ranked 5th to last in education. There are many reasons why Nevada has gotten this ranking, but what I am looking at specifically is the design of schools and how the learning environment can affect education. Many schools are designed the same way as prison. They are heavily secured with metal gates and little windows. Schools are being built by those who build civic buildings, hospitals, and prisons. It raises the question why? Shouldn't schools be a place of exploration and inspiration? The schools in Las Vegas, NV are predominantly outdoor schools since the climate is pretty warm throughout the year. This could potentially be an amazing opportunity for a mix of indoor and outdoor learning experiences, but the schools particularly in the lower income neighborhoods are being designed poorly and unkempt. The middle school I went to for example, was very sad looking. The exterior had these large metal gates and when you walked through them you were met by a separate cement building with no windows. It was just a door that led to a windowless room. I am proposing a learning environment that is enhanced by being both indoor and outdoor. Where there is little separation between these spaces and creativity is being encouraged in the space. Specifically looking at the middle school I went to, J.D. Smith and the neighborhood that surrounds it. This area is predominantly Lantinx with little that speaks to the culture or the arts. This is an opportunity to engage a space that is more than just a school, but a place of community.

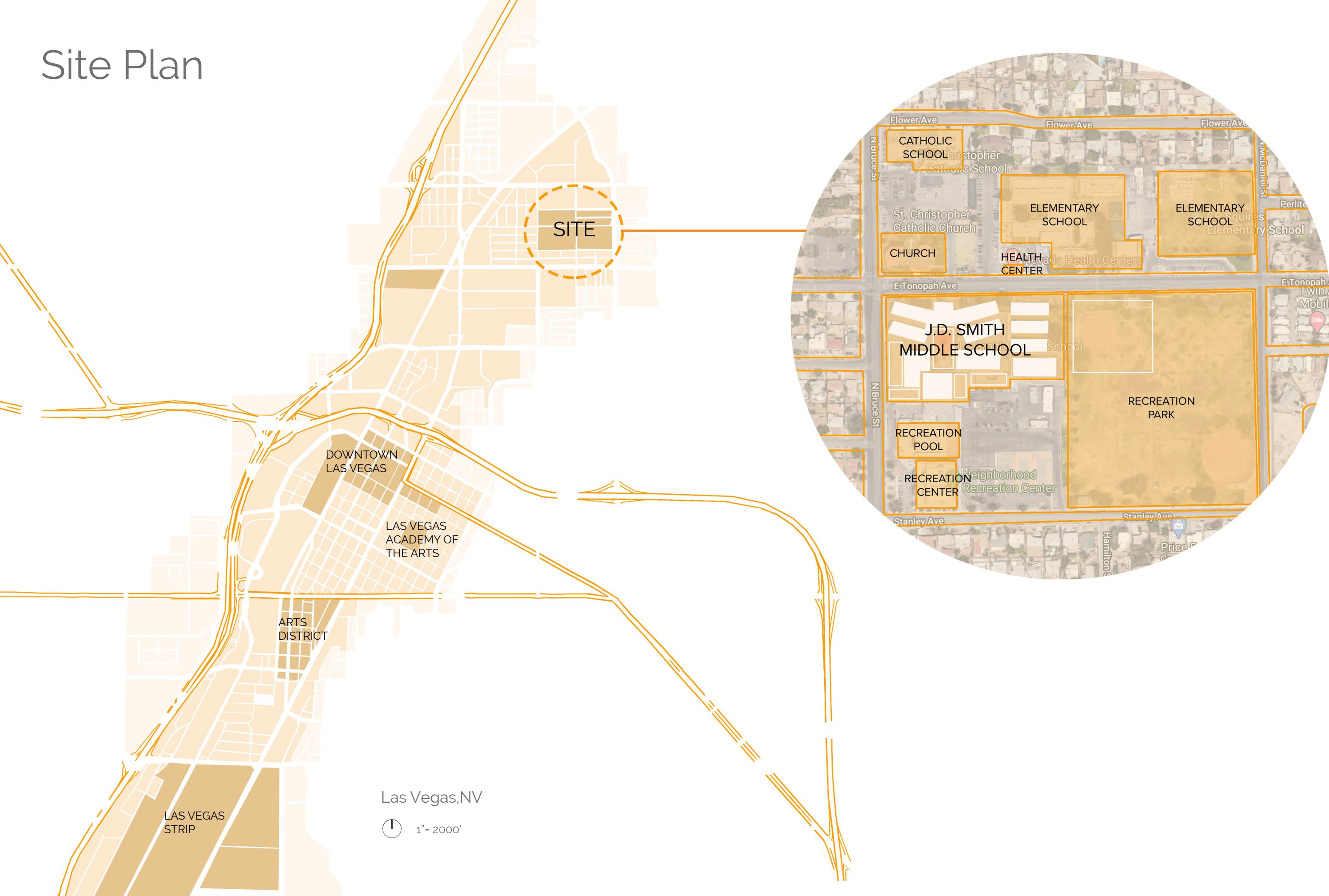


## Narrative

Tightening Strings is a project that focuses on the entwined strings of multiple connections between a space and a community. This project is about designing a school that is specific to the neighborhood. This is a center with a main courtyard for collaboration between the students and the community. Focusing on the importance of mariachi music and art within the city and surrounding area and using that as an opportunity to design a space that is stringed together by those art forms.



# Site Plan



WHAT THE  
COMMUNITY  
IS LIKE.



HOW THE  
COMMUNITY  
IS BEING  
TREATED.



# THOUGHTS FROM THE COMMUNITY

Former Students describe the mood of the school and what they liked and disliked.

“My experience with the space in middle school was pretty bleak. The place felt very beige and muted. The school looked and felt a lot like a prison with no windows and terrible lighting. I did enjoy the courtyard... more communal spaces ”

**-Efrain**

“First thing I noticed was how aged and small it always looked. I felt anxious because of how low the ceilings were. As for my favorite place was the courtyard area. I disliked the cafeteria. It always felt cramped almost felt like a prison with the glass and metal bars on the windows ”

**-Rosa**

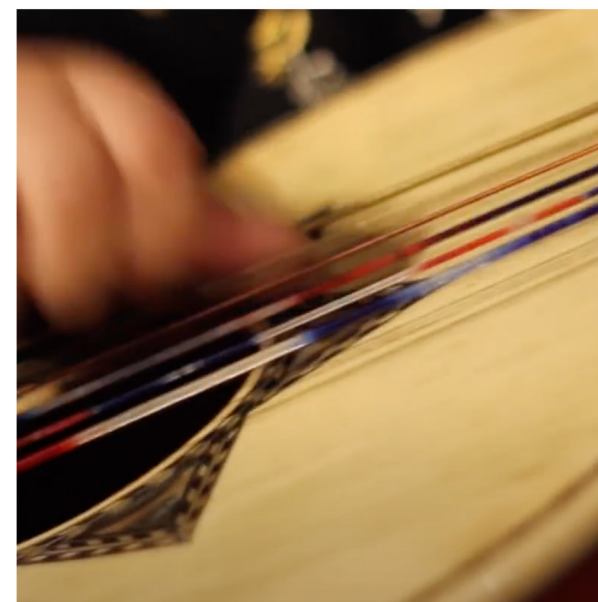
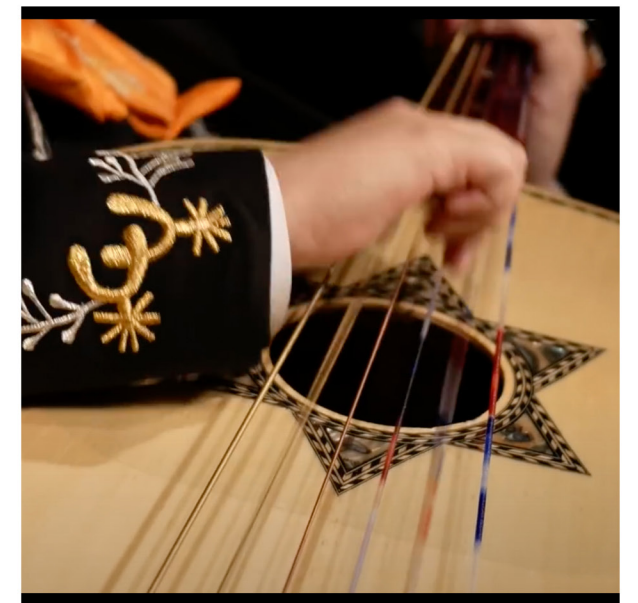
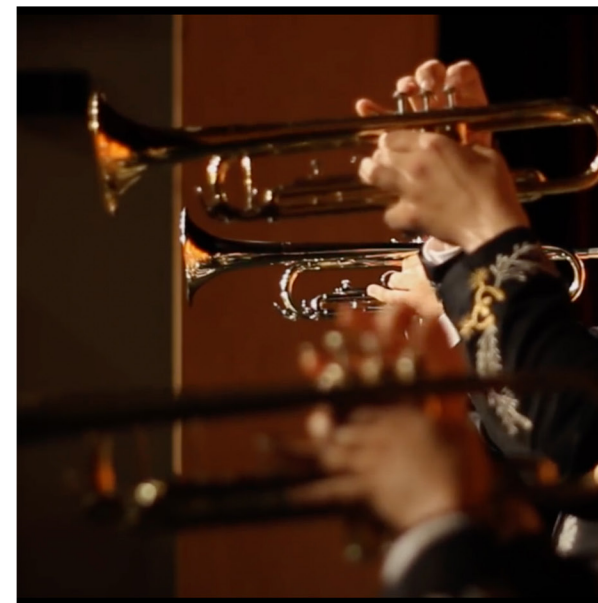
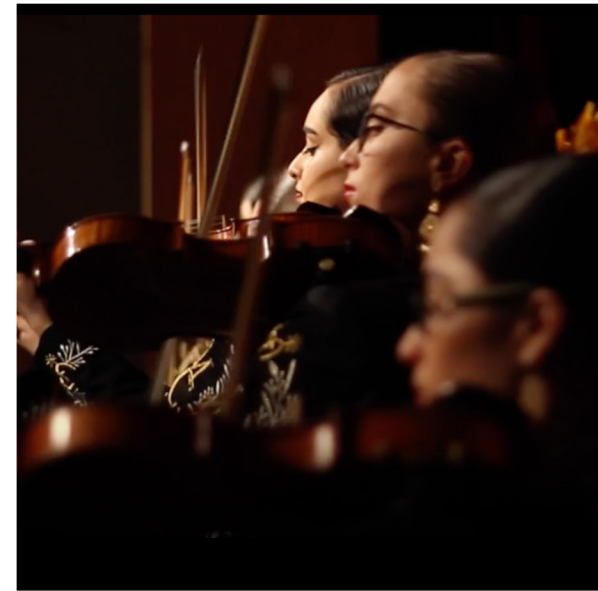


# INFLUENCE OF MARIACHI

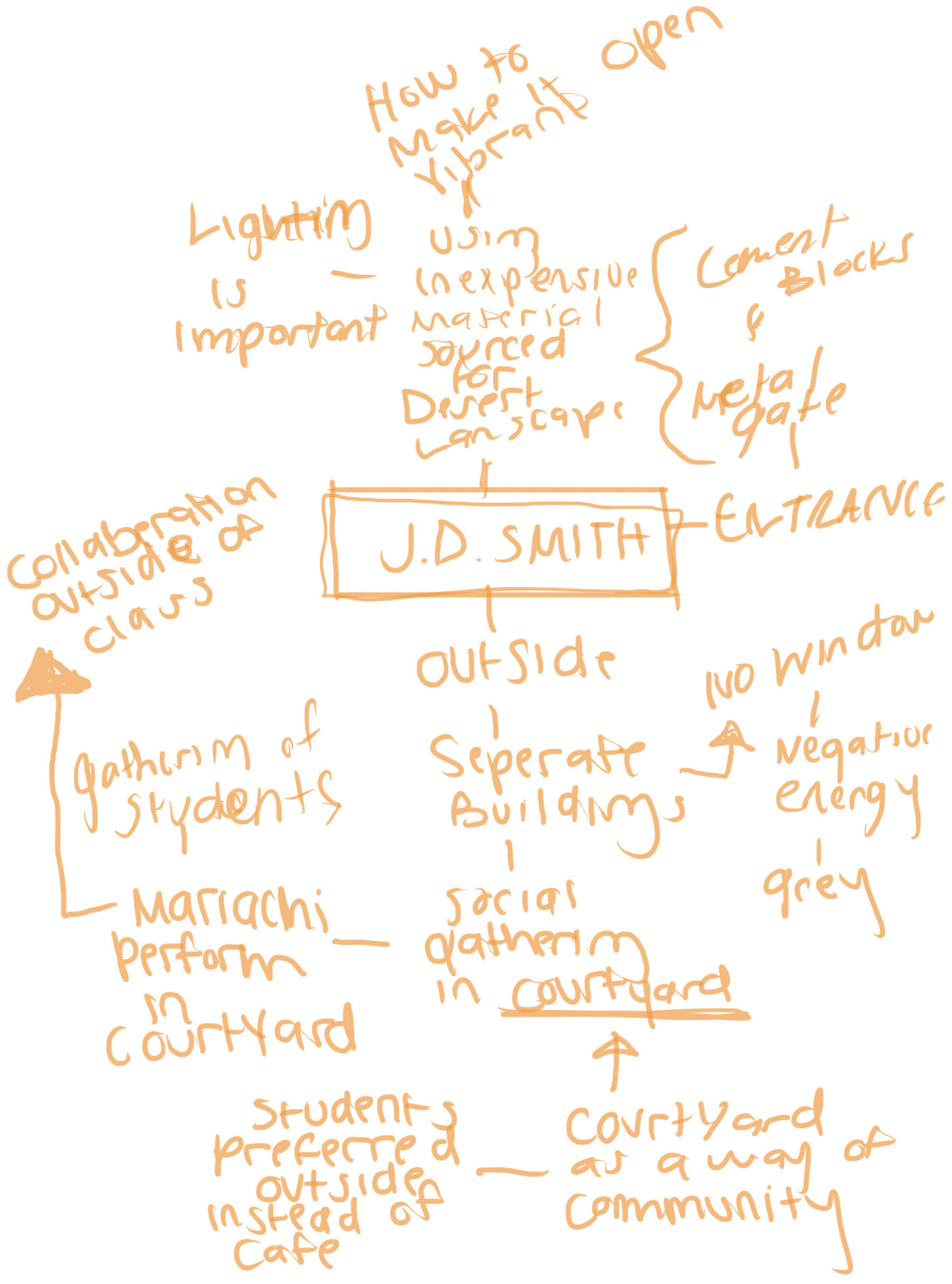
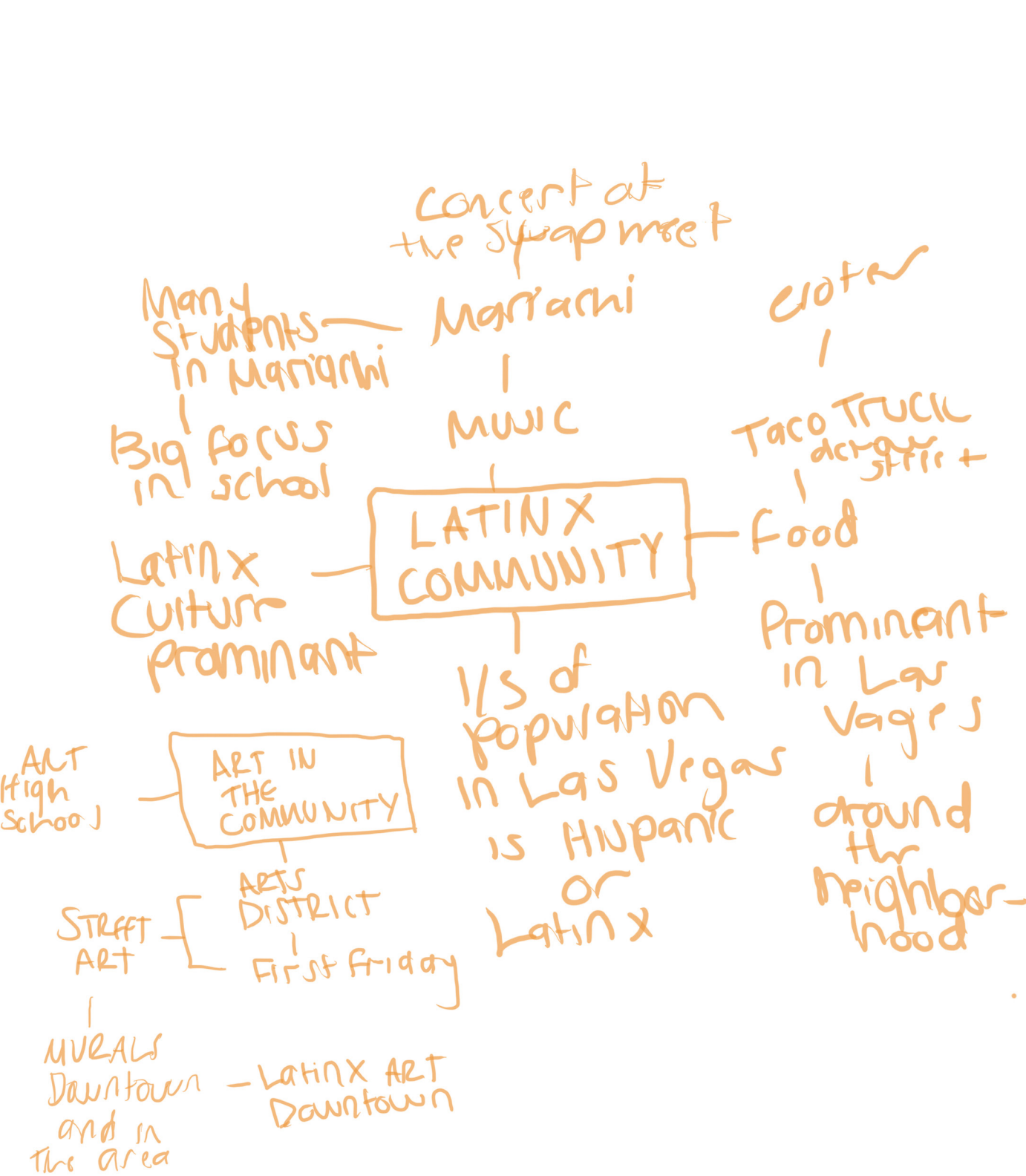
Mariachi Music is a tradition that originated from Mexico and has heavily influenced the elective programs in the Las Vegas schools. It starting at Monico Middle School in 2002. Now there are 26 school Mariachi programs in Clark County and 5,800 Mariachi students. Las Vegas has the most student enrolled in Mariachi then any other city in the U.S.

“ I remember going to parties in my neighborhood and there would always be students from the mariachi program performing at them ”

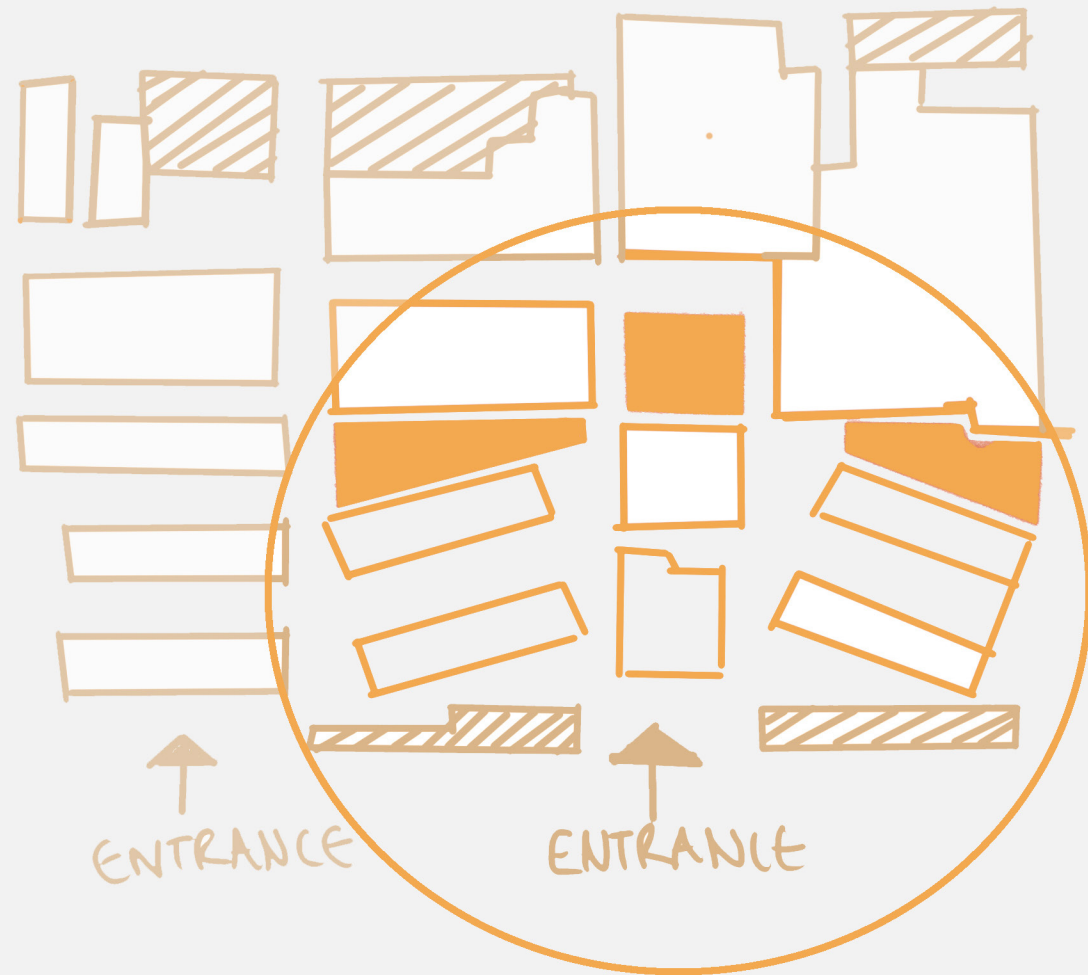
**-Jeweliana**



# Mind Map



# Area of Focus within the School



J.D. Smith Middle School is one example of many in Las Vegas and around the U.S. of a school environment being disconnected from the community and the surrounding environmental context. From my research I am looking at exploring the front entrance, the Courtyard, and the classrooms around the area. Prosper connection between the 3 spaces.

Concepts:

Connect the context of the community to the school

- Latinx
- Mariachi
- Art

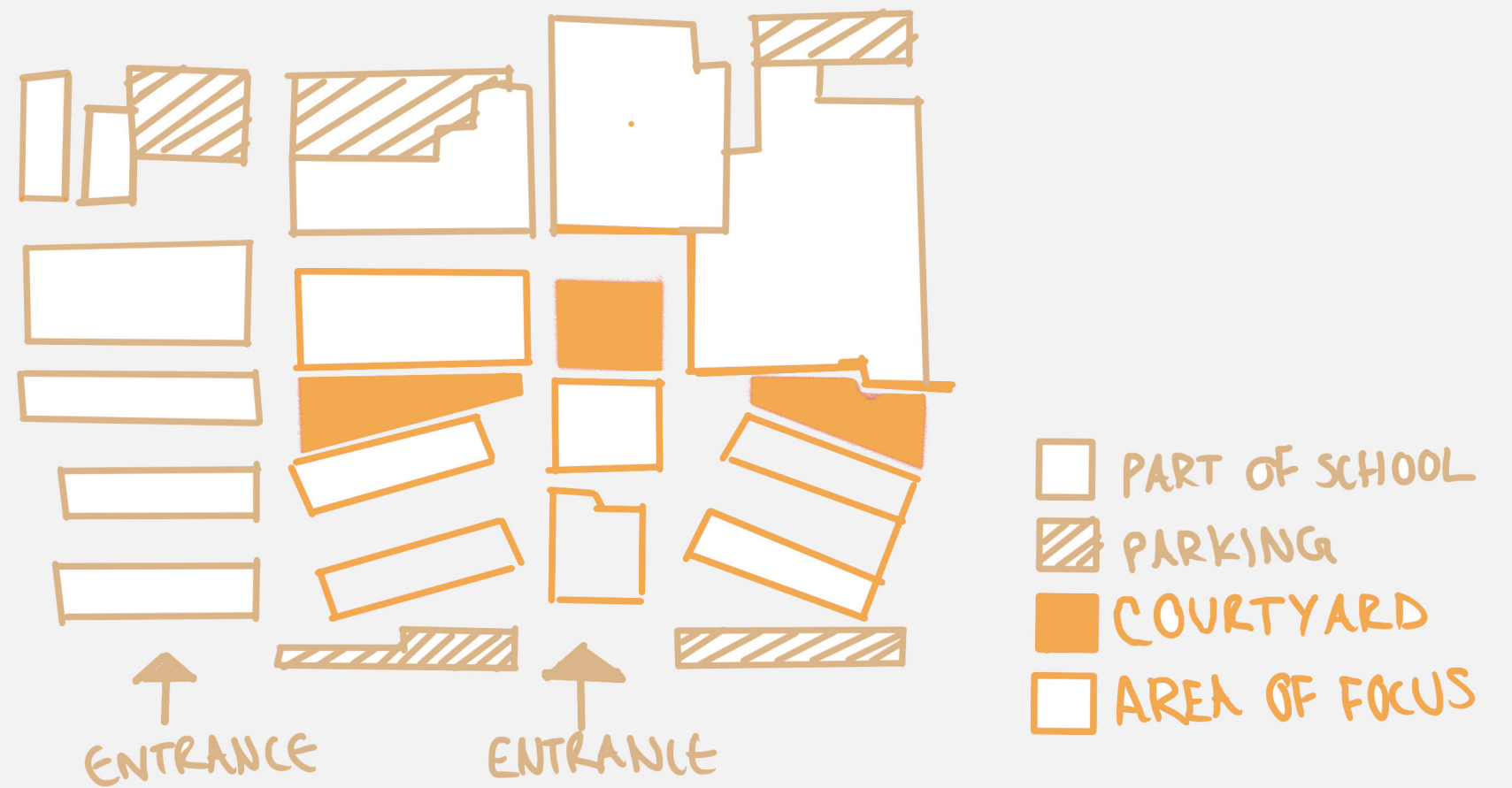
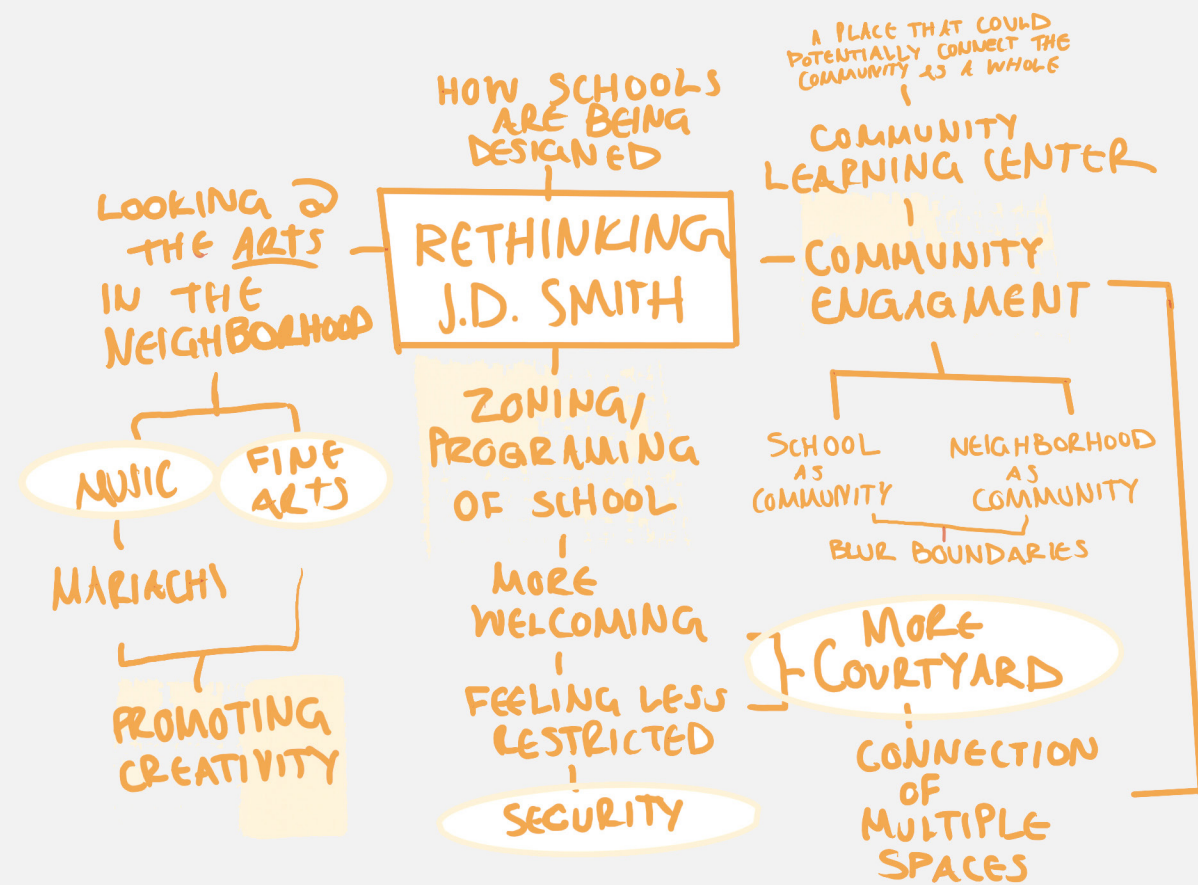
Looking at the landscape for materiality

- Desert
- Very Dry, Hot

Significance of the courtyard as a symbol of community

Transparency of space through programing and lighting

# Programming



# Bubble Diagram

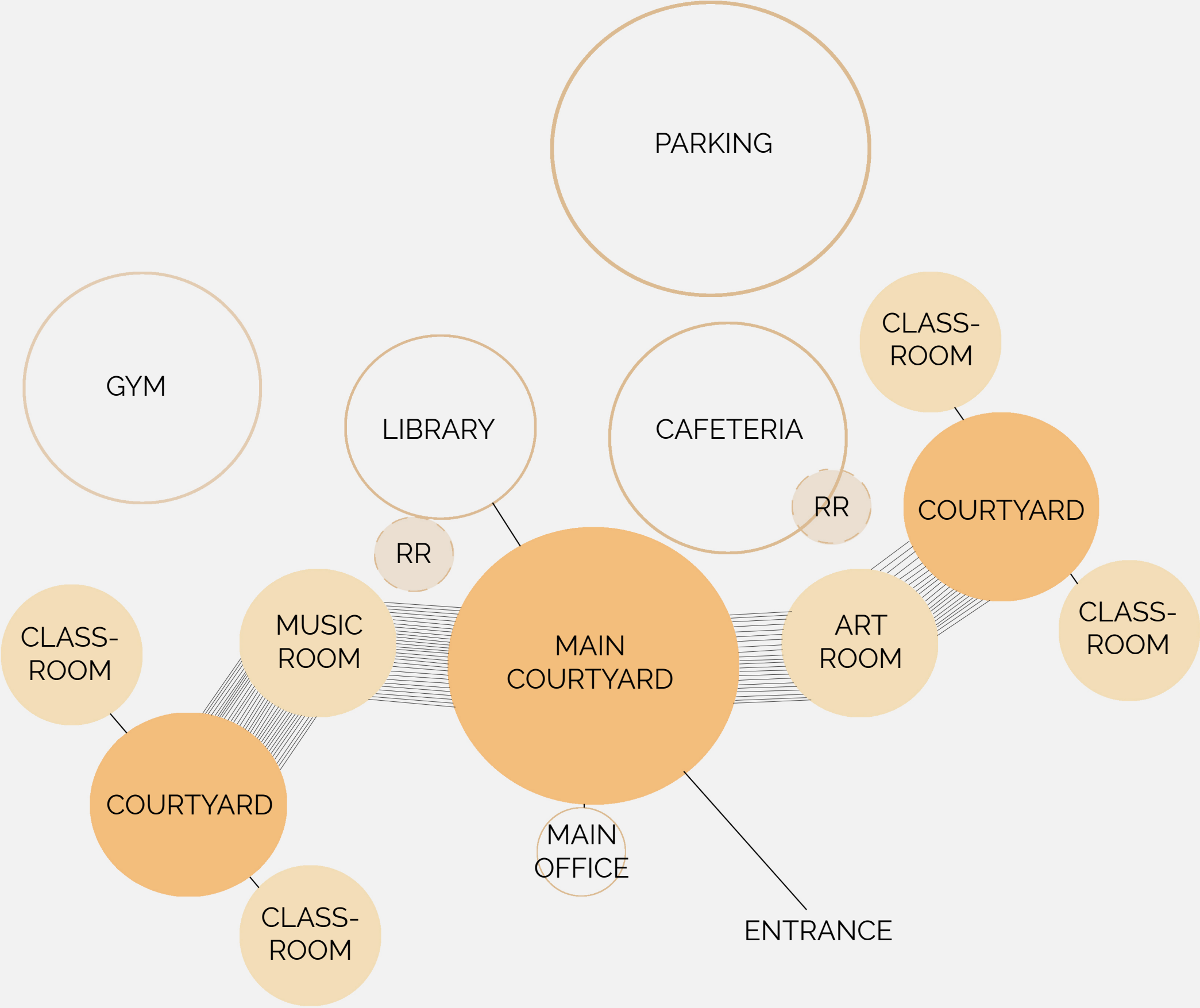
- Entrance (2,400 sqft)
- Main Courtyard (3,500 sqft)
- Courtyard 1 (2,200 sqft)
- Courtyard 2 (2,200 sqft)
- Music Classroom (1,100 sqft)
- Art Classroom (1,100 sqft)
- Education Buildings
- 2 Restrooms
- Main Office
- Cafeteria
- Library
- Parking

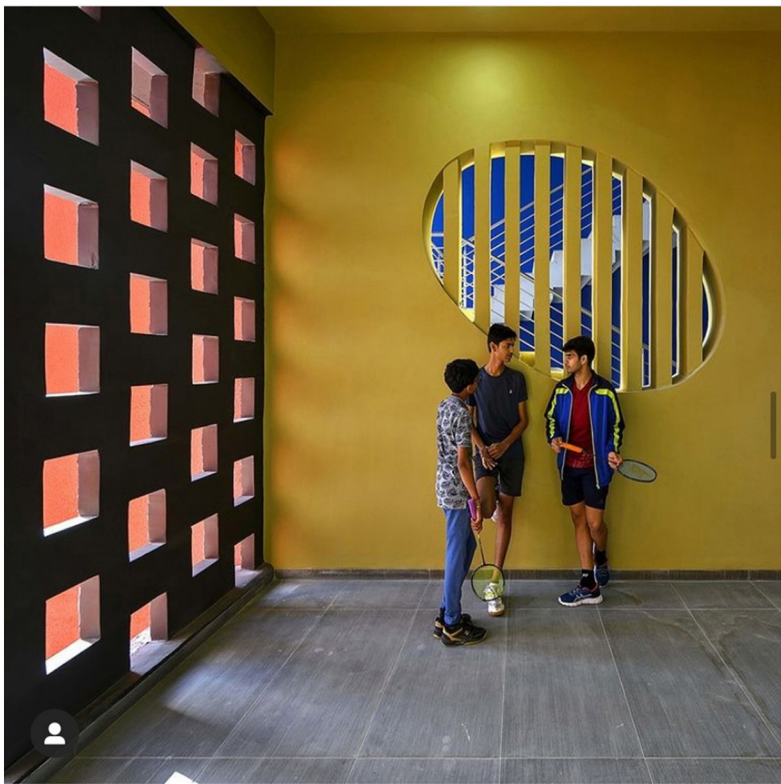
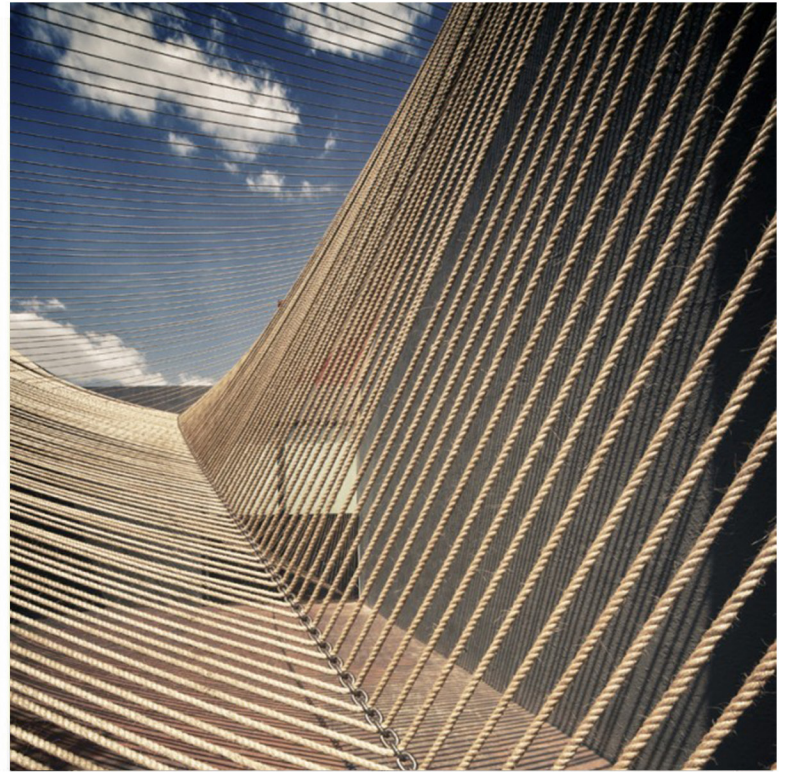
Part of School

Main Focus

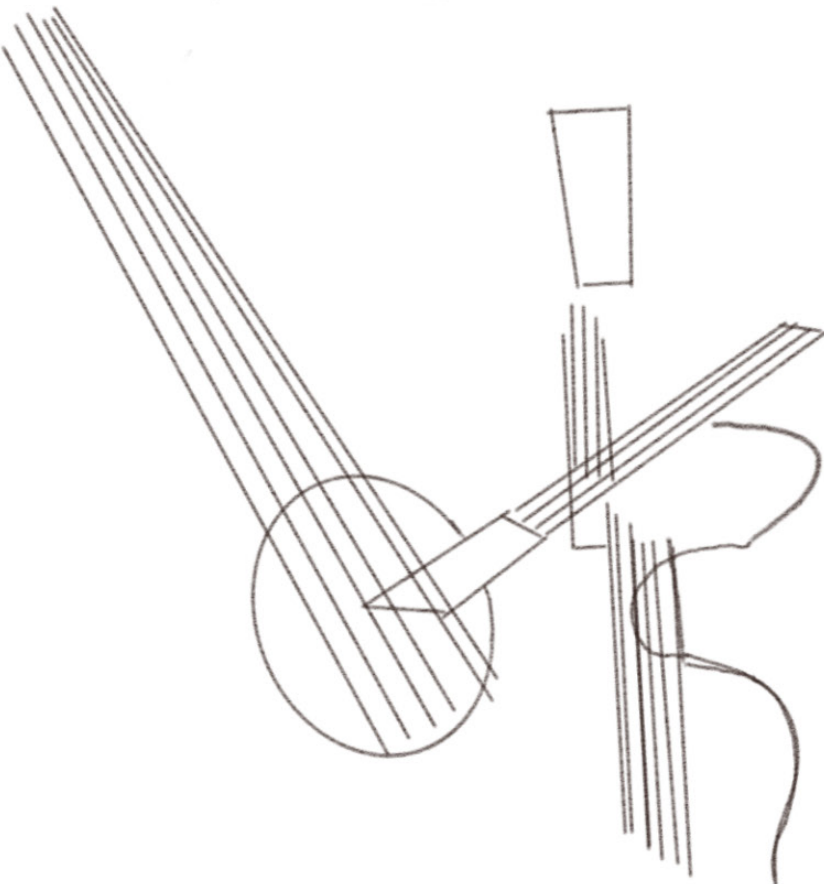
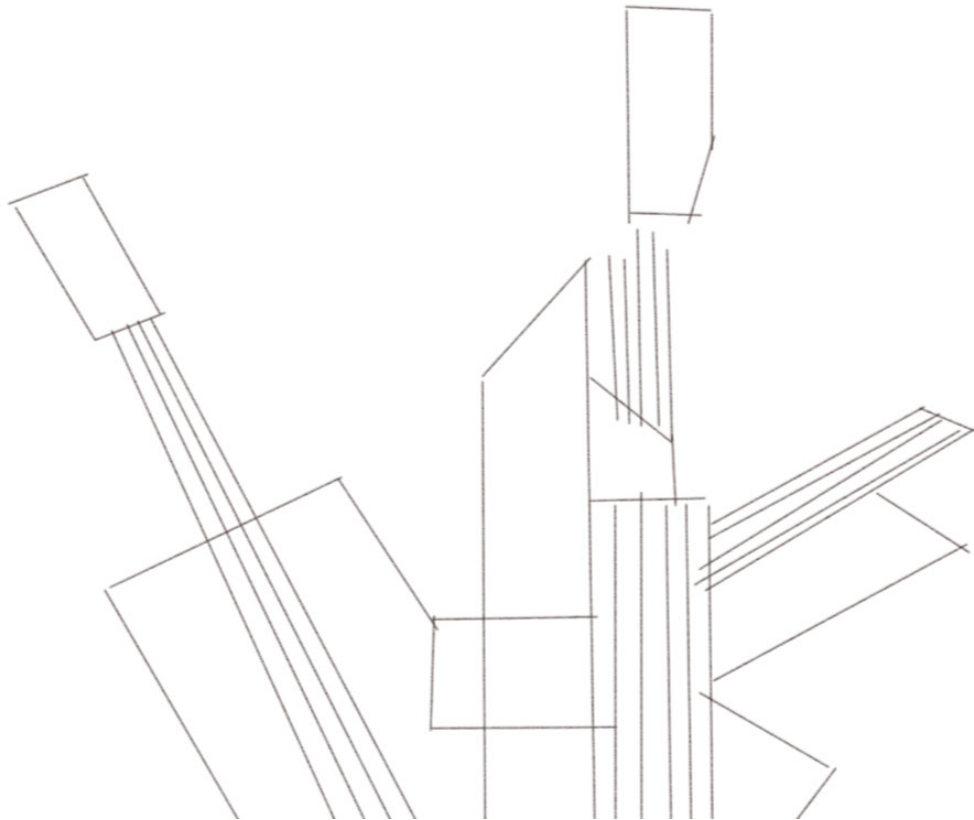
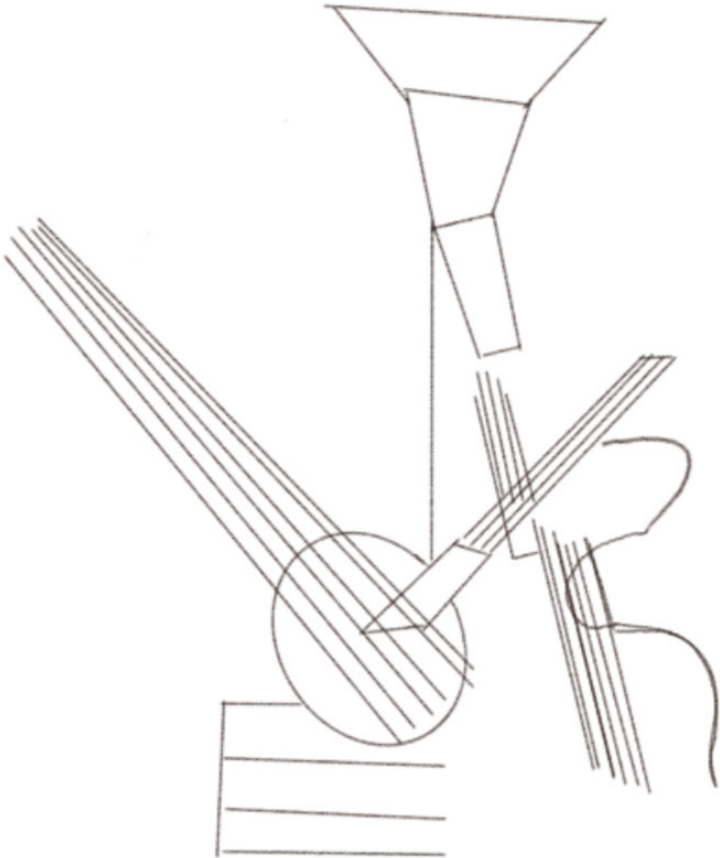
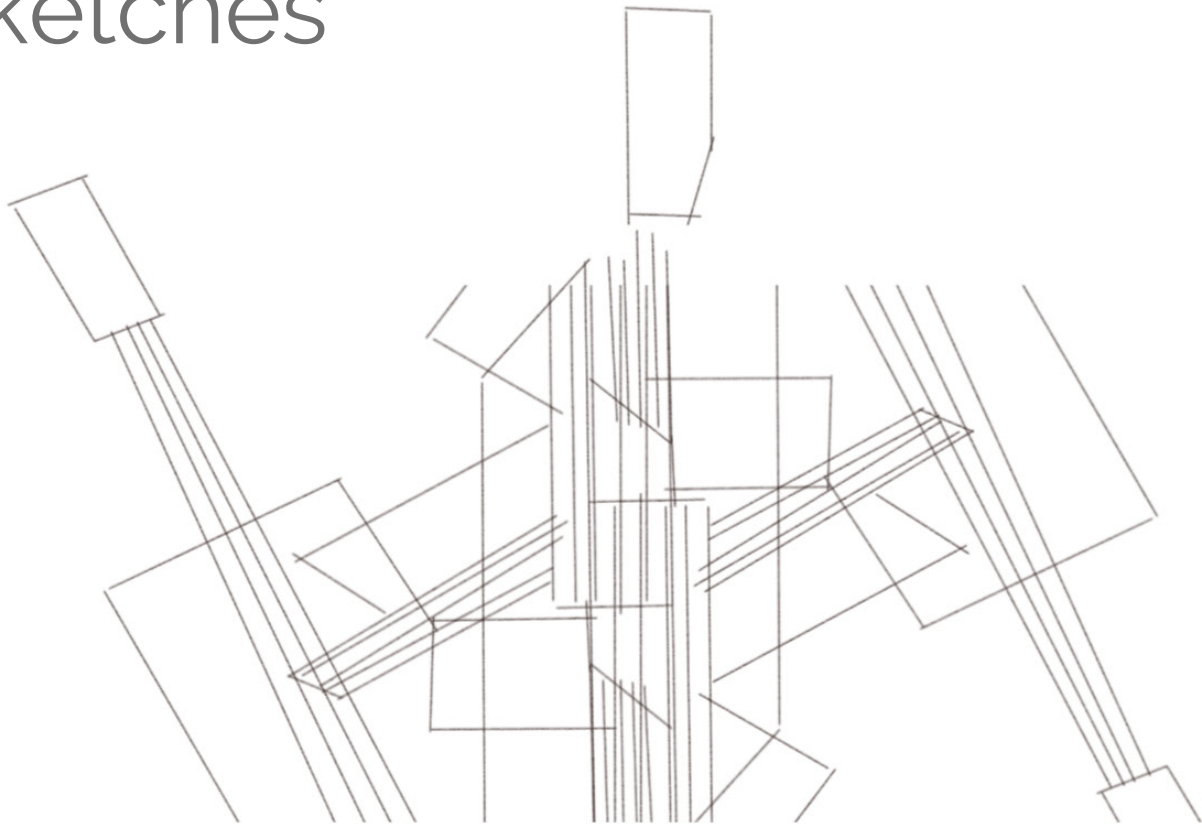
Classrooms with some focus

Restrooms

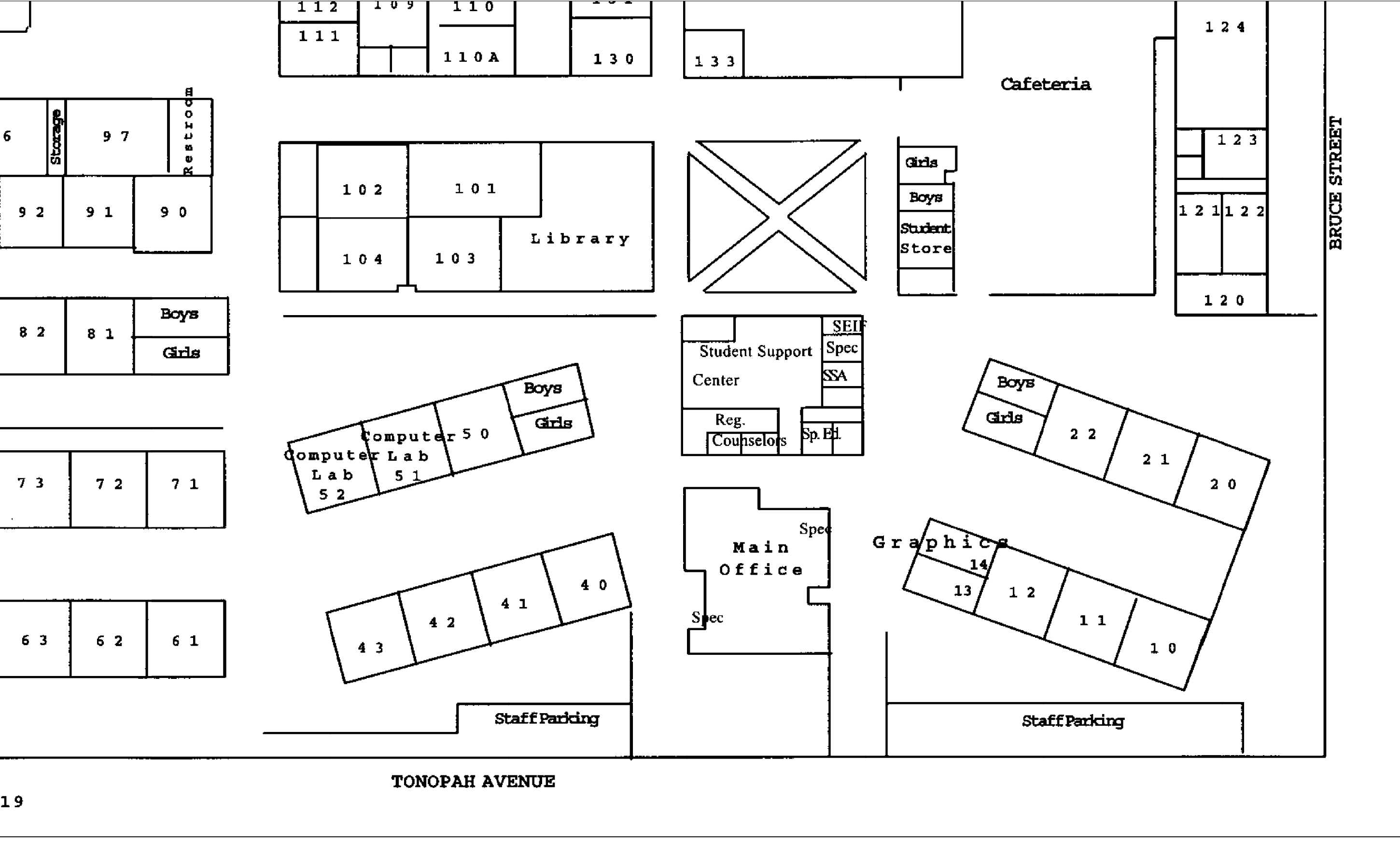




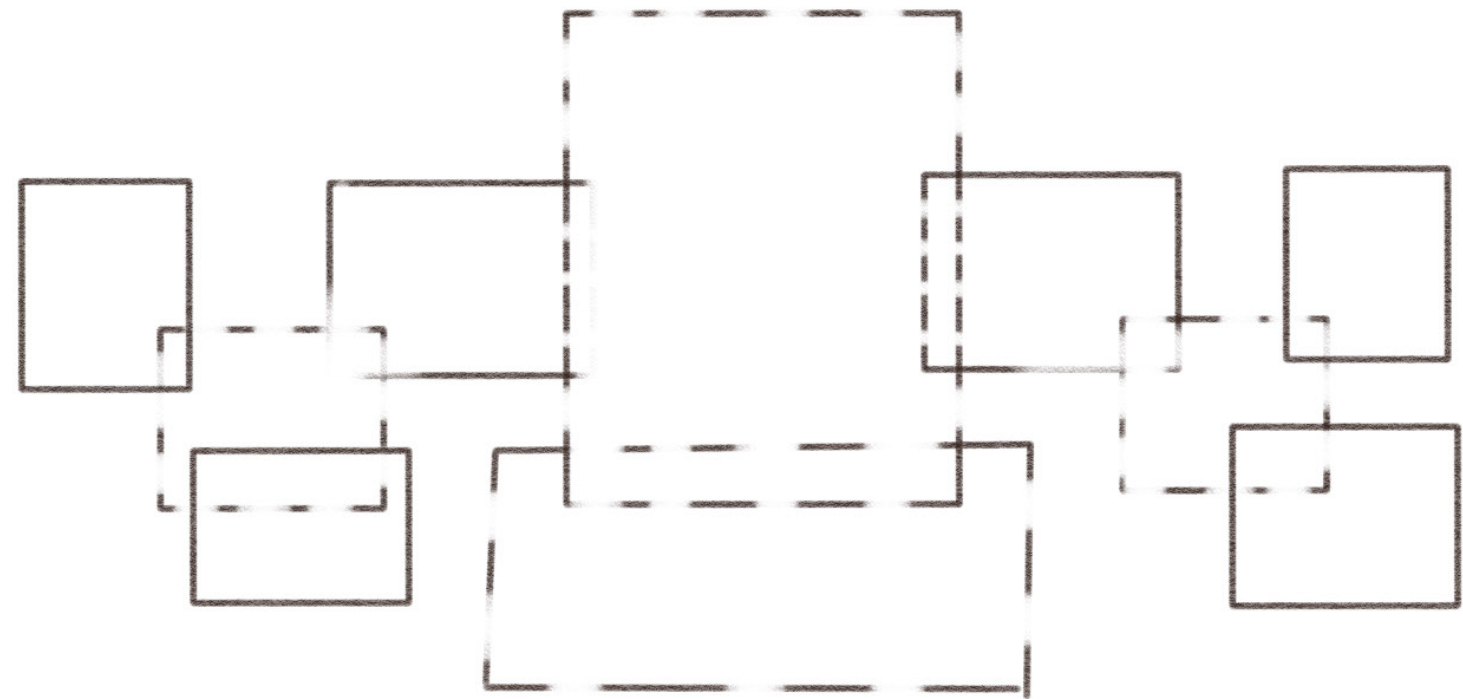
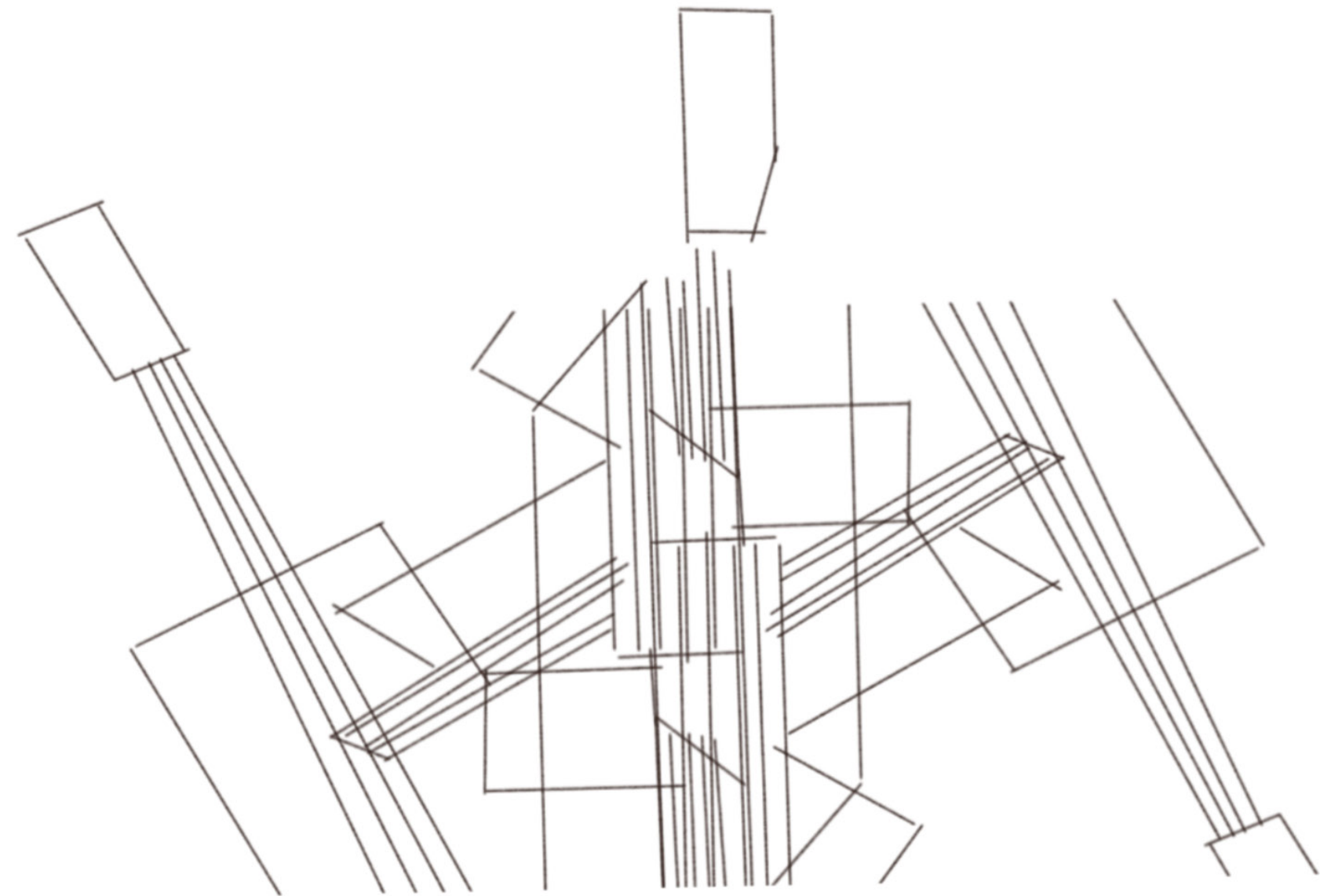
# Concept Sketches



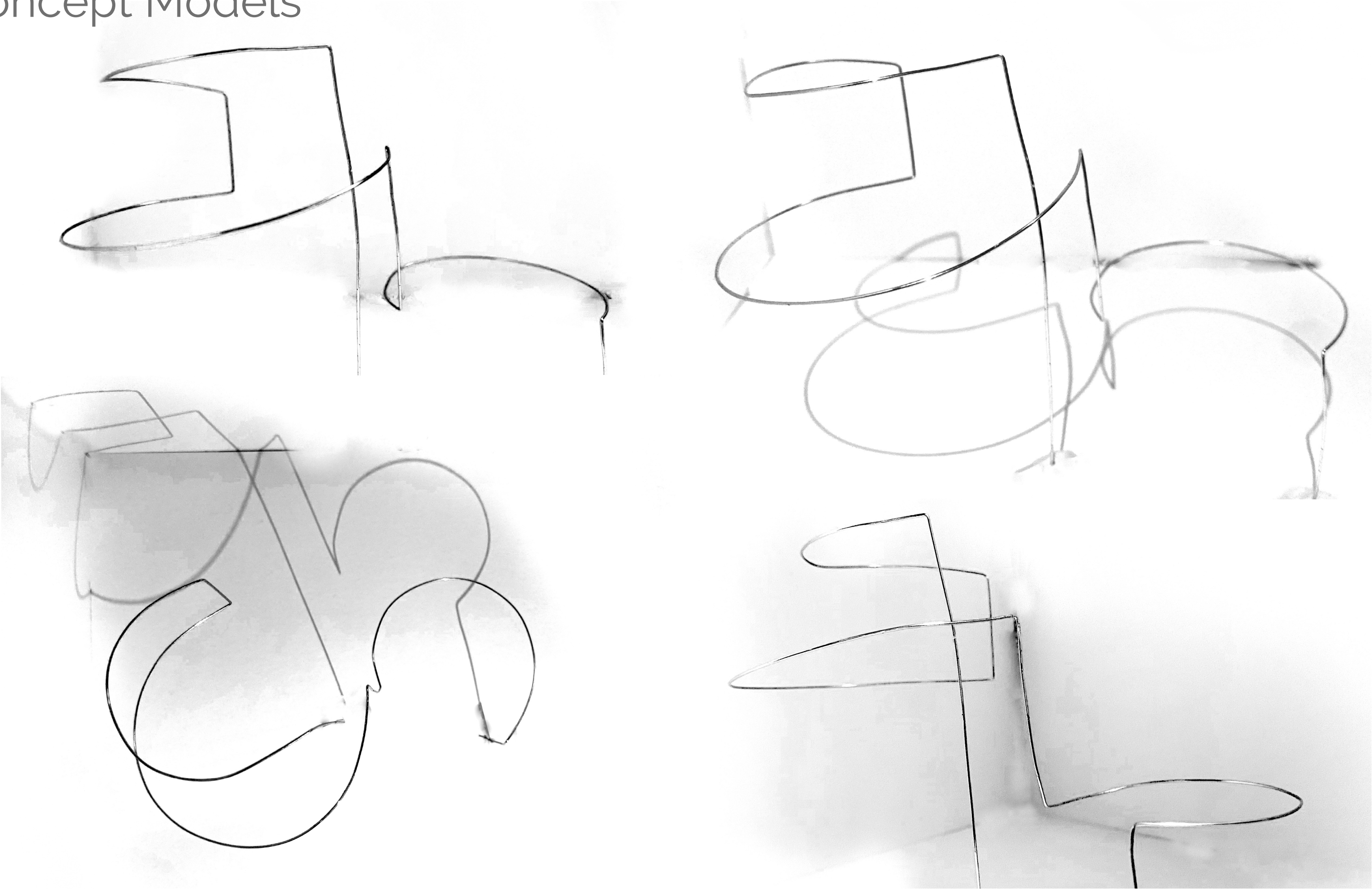
# Existing Site



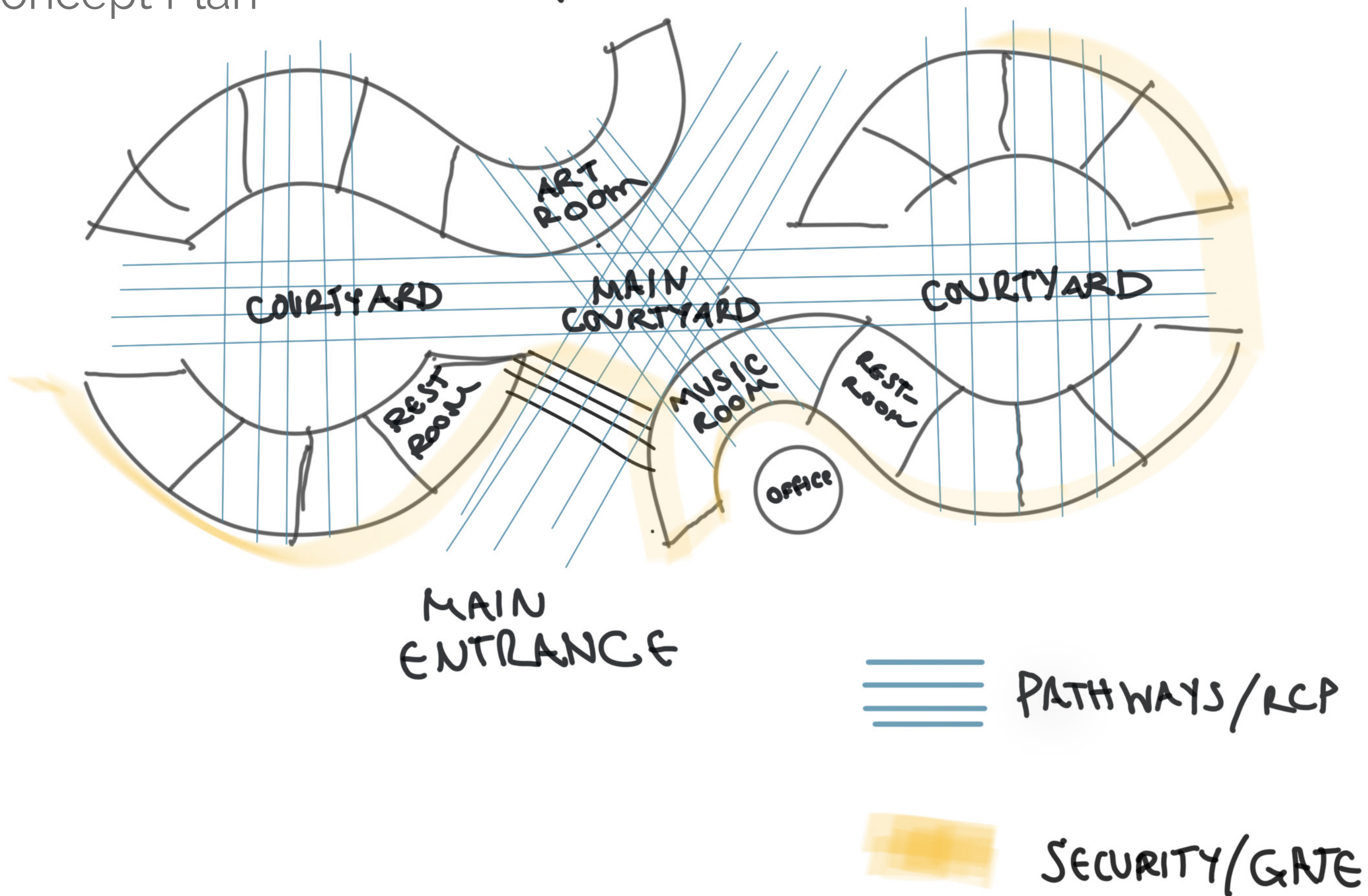
# Concept Sketches



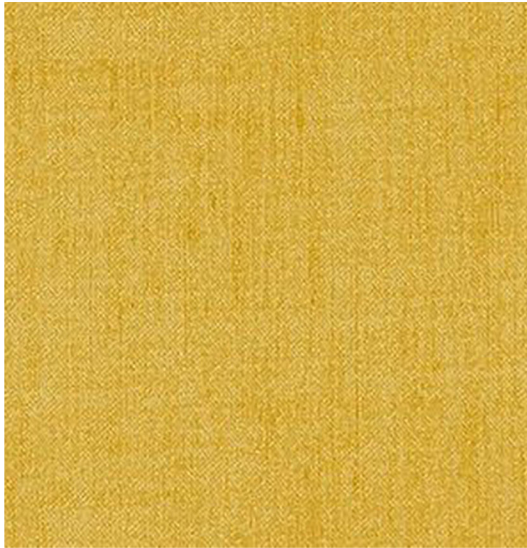
Concept Models



Concept Plan



# Material Consideration



## Wax Coated Cotton Fabric

None toxic

Does not contain toxic plastic like PVC or VOC



## Terrazzo Plastic

Recycled plastic

Most plastic can only be recycled once or twice so terrazzo is an interesting way of recycling a plastic into something that will last for a longer period of time

Does not contain any VOC

## Terrazzo Concrete

Durable

Holds temperature for a hot climate

No plastic

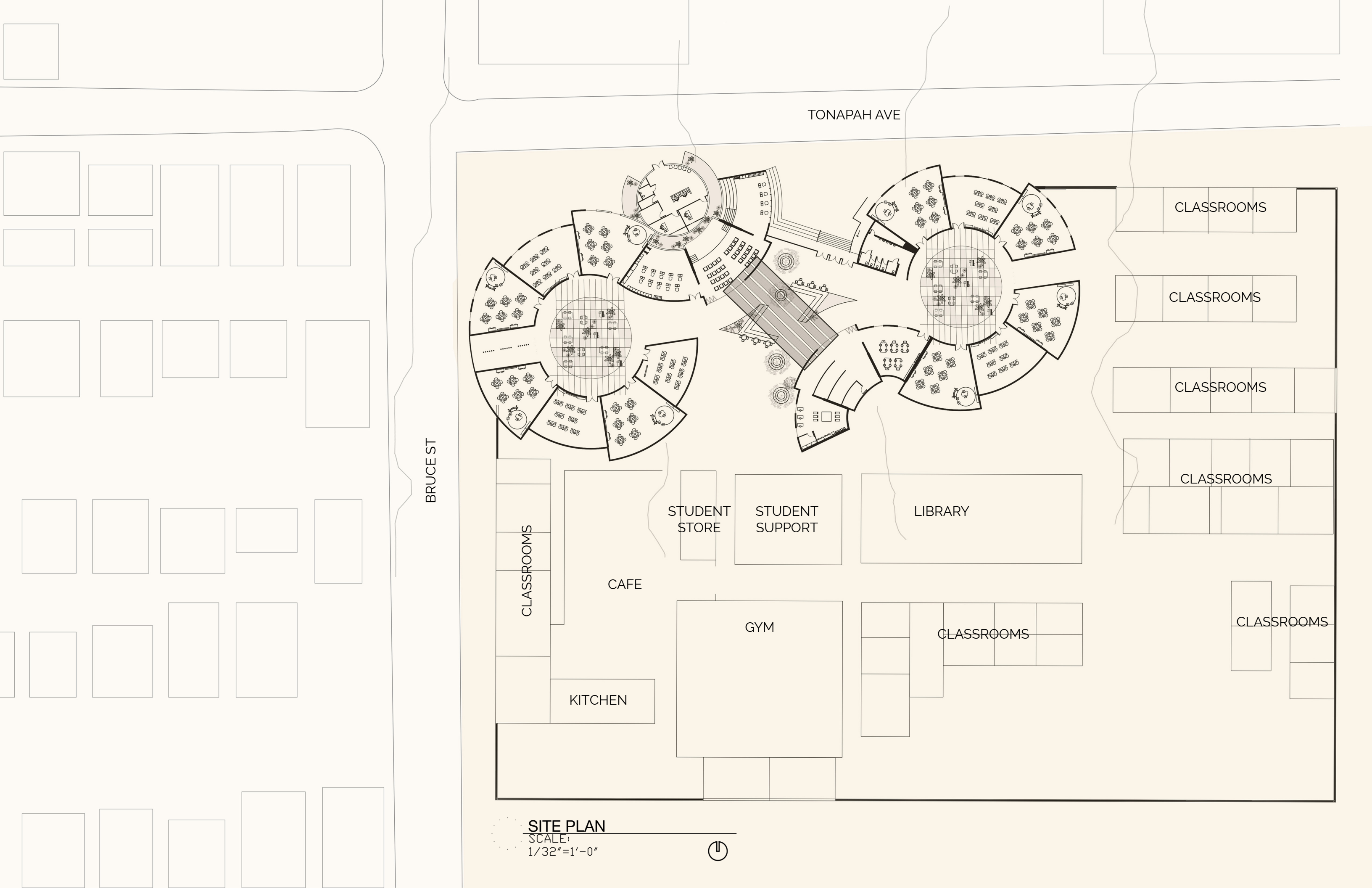


## Terracotta

Reusable material that does not fade

Made of clay no toxic particles

Provides good thermal heating



TONAPAH AVE

BRUCE ST

CLASSROOMS

CLASSROOMS

CLASSROOMS

CLASSROOMS

CLASSROOMS

STUDENT  
STORE

STUDENT  
SUPPORT

LIBRARY

CAFE

GYM

KITCHEN

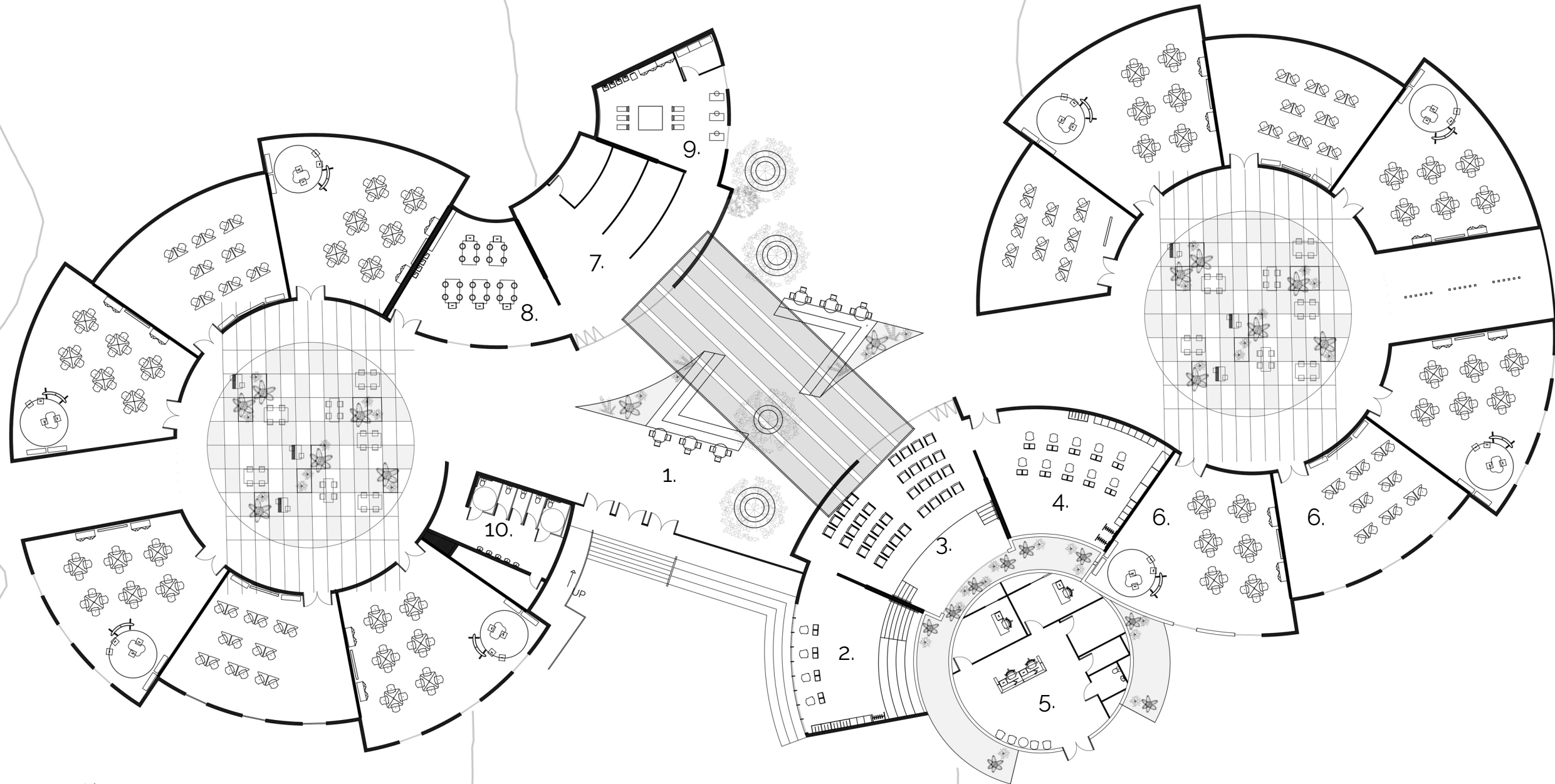
CLASSROOMS

CLASSROOMS

SITE PLAN

SCALE:  
1/32"=1'-0"





GROUND PLAN W/ CANOPY

SCALE:

1/16"=1'-0"



1. CENTRAL COURTYARD

2. MUSIC PRACTICE

3. MUSIC PERFORMANCE

4. MUSIC INSTRUMENTS

5. MAIN OFFICE

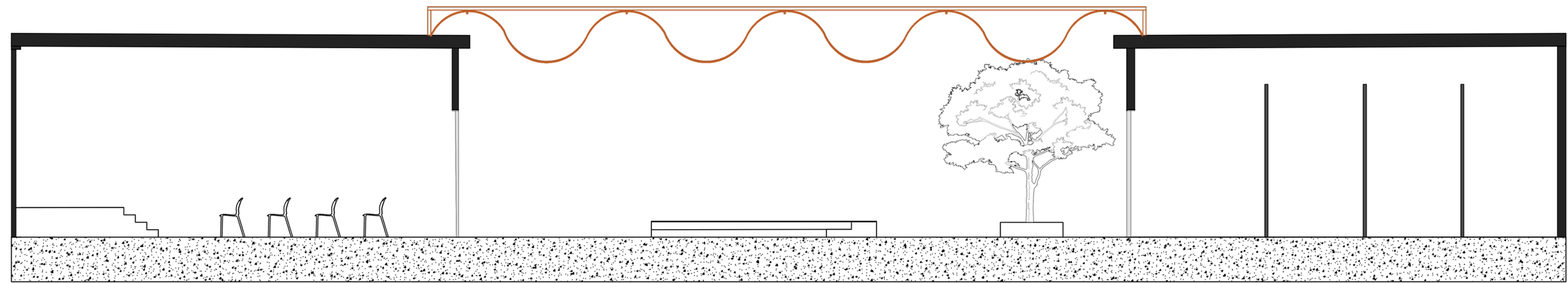
6. CLASSROOMS

7. ART GALLERY

8. ART CLASSROOM

9. ART MATERIALS/ CLASSROOM

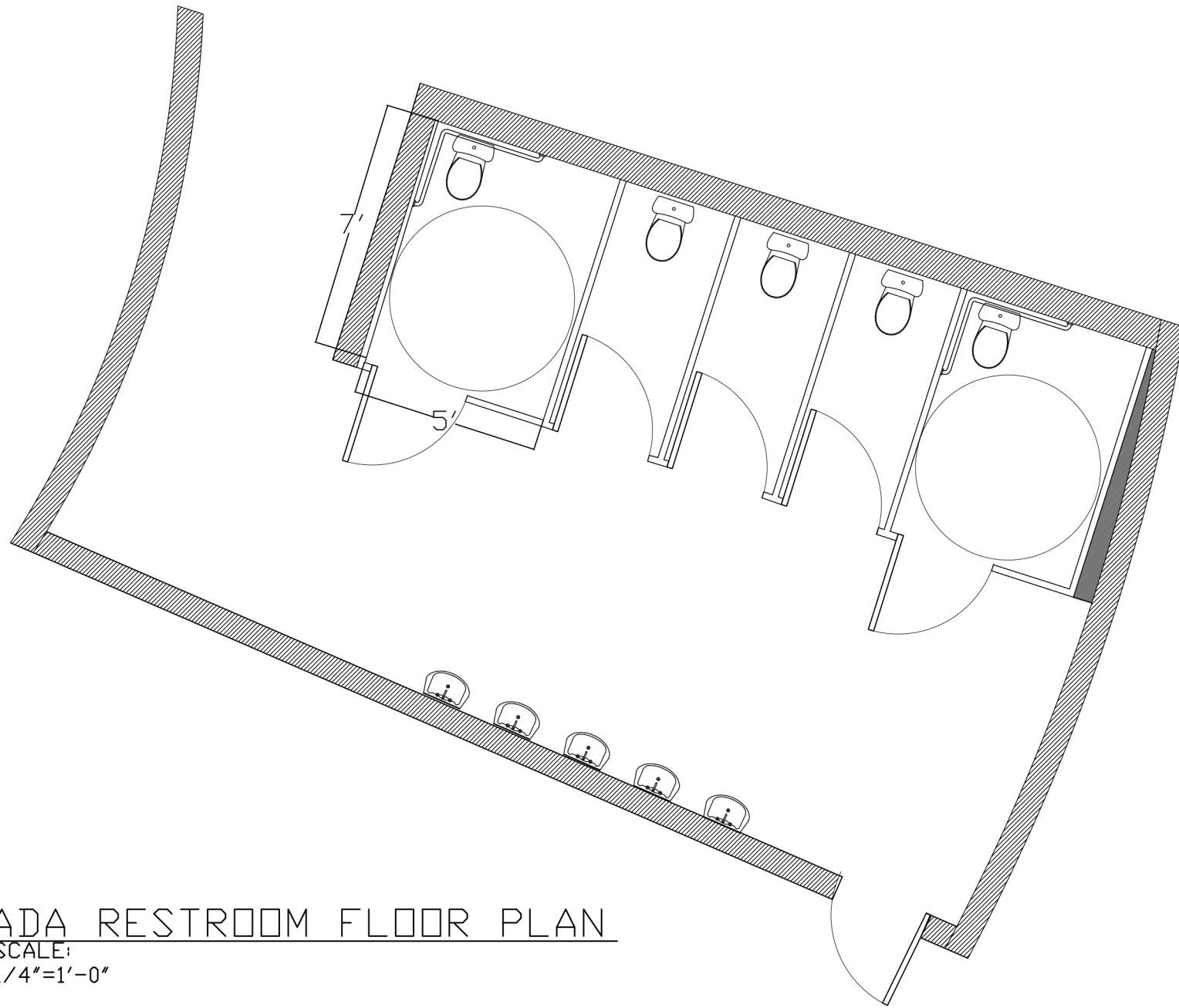
10. RESTROOM



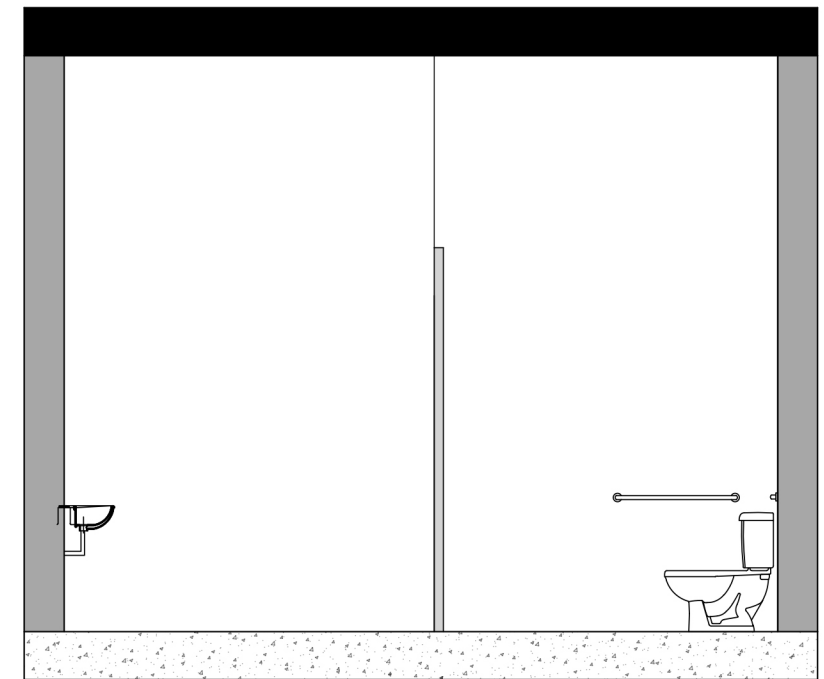
SECTION

SCALE:  
1/8"=1'-0"



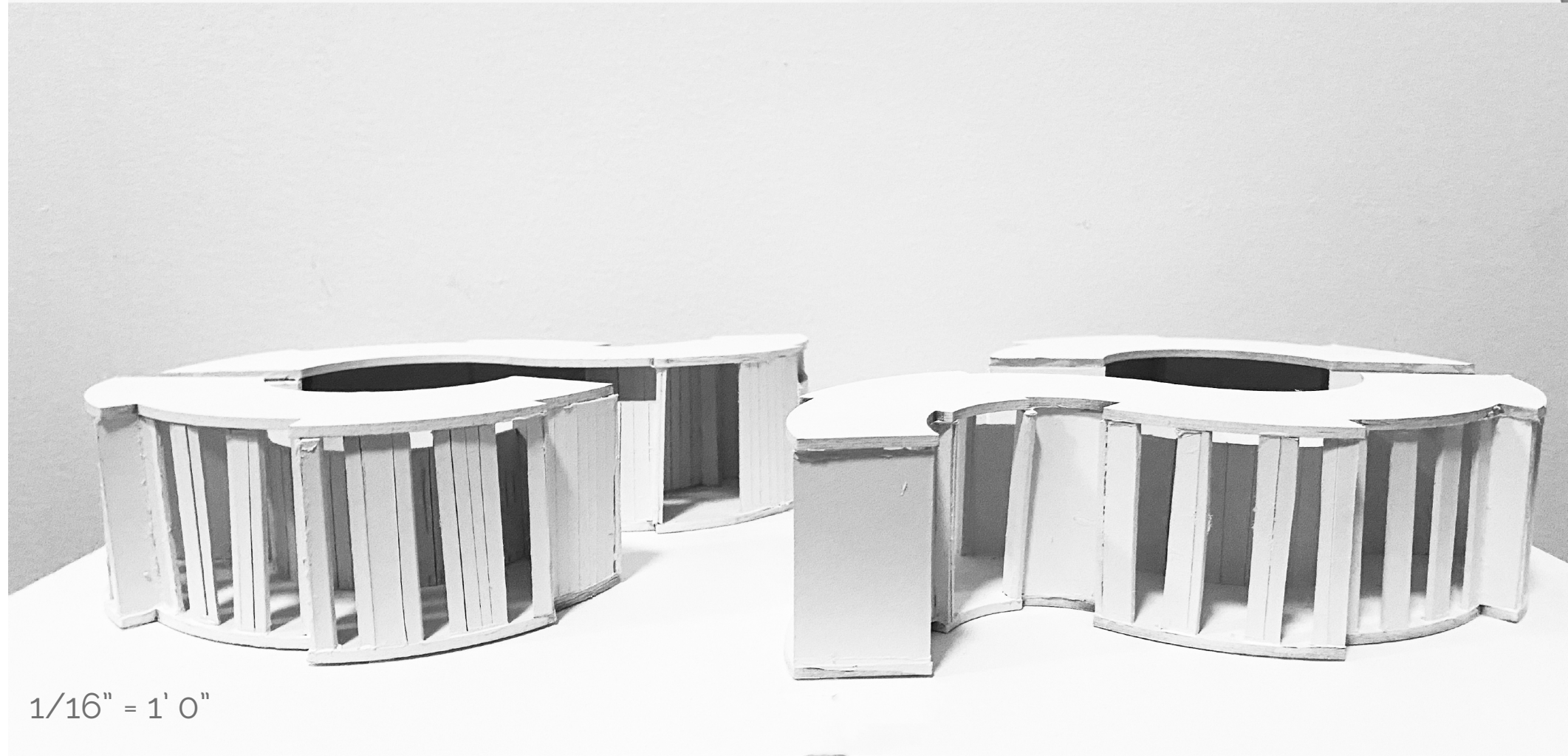
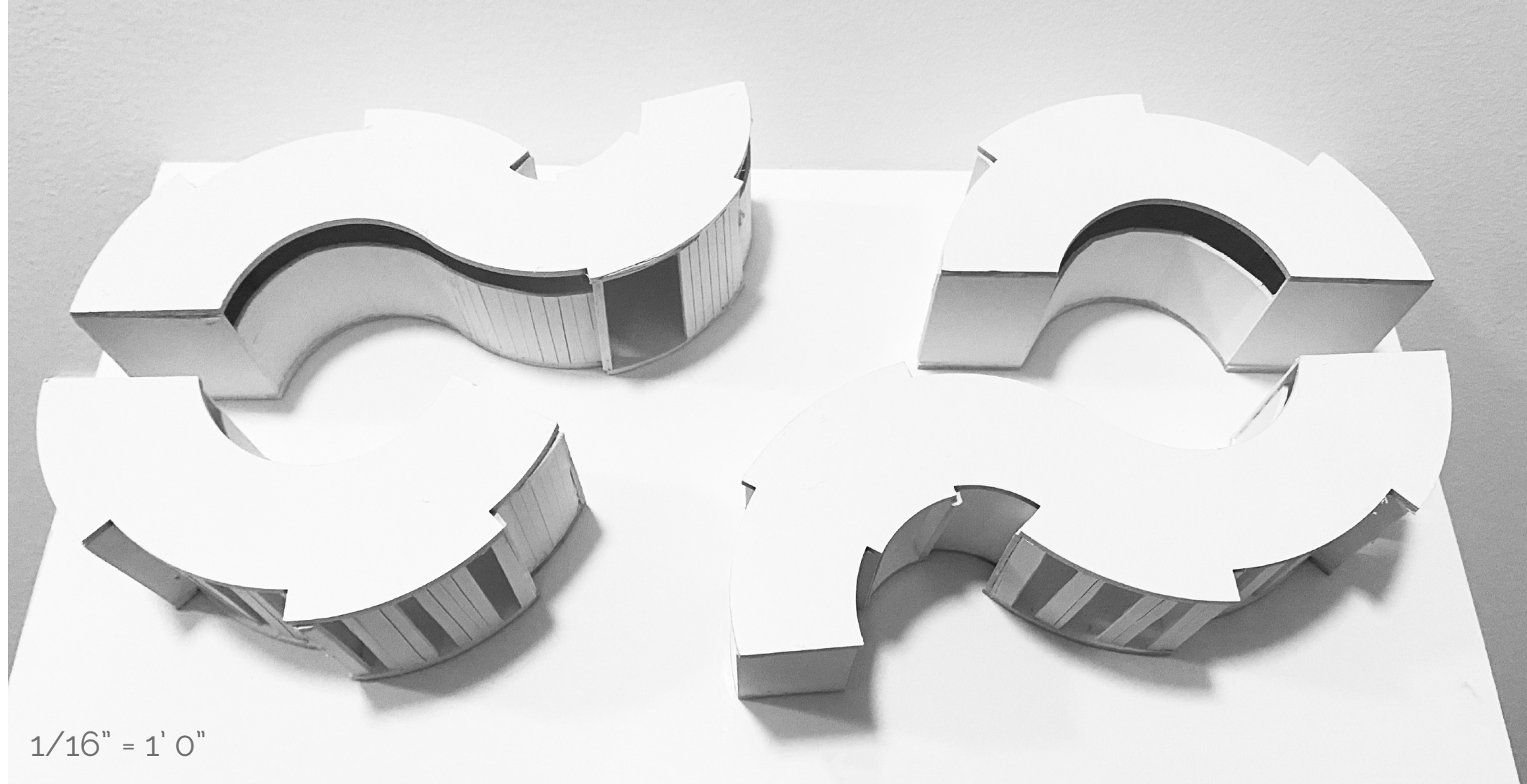


ADA RESTROOM FLOOR PLAN  
 SCALE:  
 1/4"=1'-0"

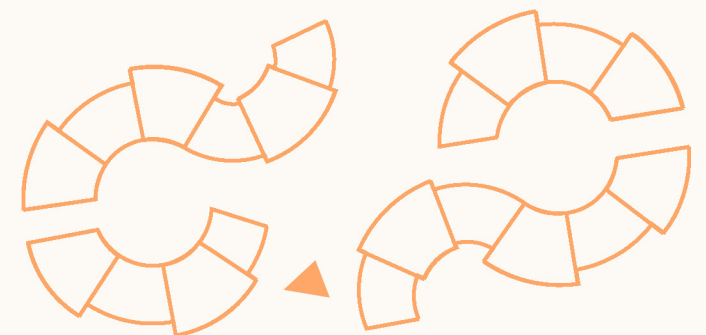
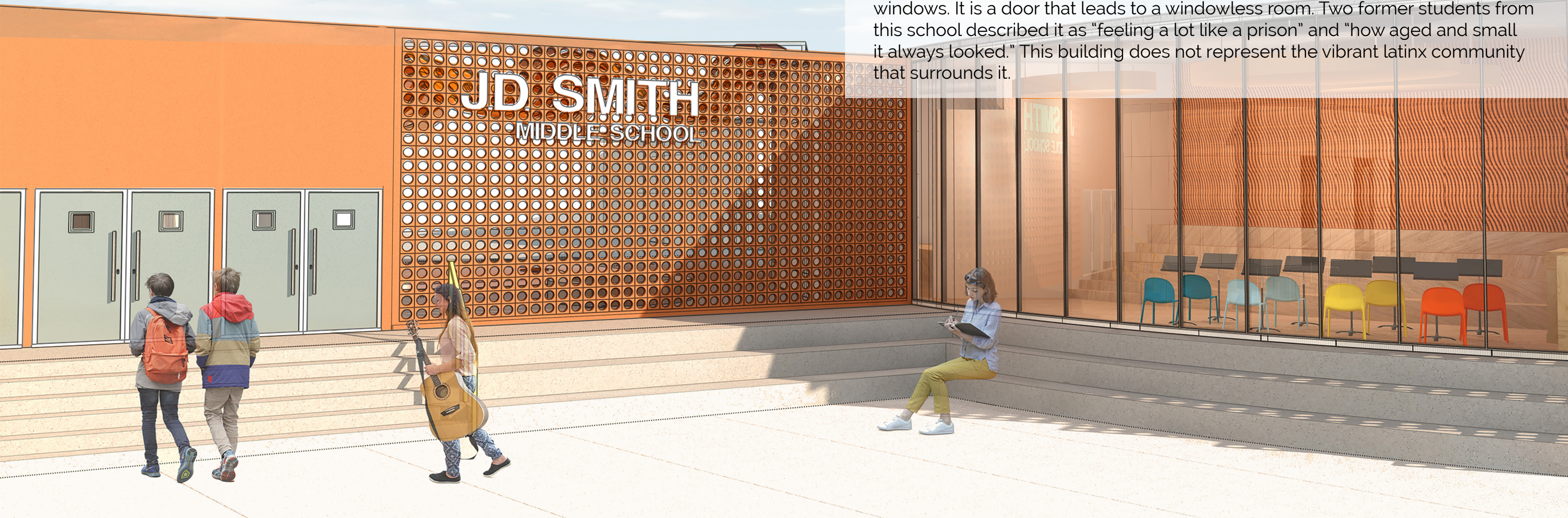


ADA RESTROOM SECTION  
 SCALE:  
 1/4"=1'-0"

# Model



The schools in Las Vegas, NV are predominantly outdoor schools since the climate is pretty warm throughout the year there is a lot of opportunity for natural lighting and a mix of indoor outdoor learning experiences, but the schools particularly in the lower income neighborhoods are being designed poorly and unkempt. J.D. Smith middle school in Las Vegas is one example, built in 1952 with little renovations done since, the exterior has these large metal gates and when you walk through them you are met by a separate cement building with no windows. It is a door that leads to a windowless room. Two former students from this school described it as "feeling a lot like a prison" and "how aged and small it always looked." This building does not represent the vibrant latinx community that surrounds it.





One-third of the population in Las Vegas is Latinx and that shows through in many ways with artistry and food being spread around the city, but there is a lack of representation in the schools and history. (Las Vegas, NV | Data USA). J.D. Smith middle school is one of those schools who predominantly focus on music and art as the main majors with an emphasis on the mariachi instruments. There is a large connection between mariachi music, fine arts, and the community in this area. There are some murals painted in the neighborhood and festivals that showcase the students' performances. Even as a kid I remember going to a quinceanera or any other gathering and seeing kids in the mariachi program from school performing at the party.





This project focuses on tightening these strings. The main focus of this project is creating a courtyard that connects the art and music classrooms. This main courtyard would be the center and would branch out into smaller courtyard areas connecting the other classrooms. Every area would be interconnected by these courtyards. Courtyards are a significant part of the history of Mexican architecture and are still used a lot today in Mexico and in parts of the U.S. like California, Nevada, and New Mexico. These are often used as a way of creating connections between the inside and outside (Messina). They are also a way of letting natural light into the space. This is a warm climate that can allow for people to be outside for longer periods of time especially during the school year. One big aspect of this project is really connecting the latinx culture to this space and cultivating a community. The importance of this courtyard would be not only to make these connections between the school, but also the neighborhood. The entrance of this space would be more open connecting more space to the outer neighborhood. This is meant to allow this space to be used as a place for performance and celebrations. It is a space that can transform and be used by the community. There are many celebrations that happen in this neighborhood. Across the street there is a church parking lot that is transformed into a place of celebration for things like Guadalupe day or other significant cultural events that occur throughout the year. Having a space in the school that could be easily transformed into a space for community is important.



As stated earlier one-third of the population in Las Vegas, NV is Latinx. There has been a lack of representation for the latinx community and an important need to celebrate the culture and teach aspects of our history and I think starting with this school in a neighborhood that is predominantly latinx is a great place to start.

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